



## DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

**Speaker: Honourable Danielle Barkhouse**

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### First Session

**WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2025**

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**HALIFAX, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26, 2025**

**Sixty-fifth General Assembly**

**First Session**

**1:00 P.M.**

**SPEAKER**

Hon. Danielle Barkhouse

**DEPUTY SPEAKERS**

John White, Marco MacLeod, Tom Taggart

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

**PRESENTING AND READING PETITIONS**

**PRESENTING REPORTS OF COMMITTEES**

**TABLING REPORTS, REGULATIONS AND OTHER PAPERS**

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**

**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

**RESOLUTION NO. 16**

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

Whereas school support workers, including teacher assistants, inclusive education staff, early childhood educators, school bus drivers, custodians, trades, maintenance, library administrative staff, and more play a vital role in ensuring the success and well-being of students across Nova Scotia; and

Whereas these dedicated professionals provide essential support in classrooms, keep our schools safe and clean, transport students safely, and ensure that schools operate smoothly every day; and

Whereas their hard work and commitment contribute immeasurably to creating positive, inclusive, and supportive learning environments for all students;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of the House of Assembly recognize and celebrate the invaluable contributions of Nova Scotia's school support workers and express our sincere gratitude for their dedication to students, families, and school communities across the province.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed? It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

**Bill No. 43 - An Act to Amend Chapter 3 of the Acts of 2019, the Coastal Protection Act. (Claudia Chender)**

**Bill No. 44 - An Act to Expand Home Efficiency Programs to Small Landlords. (Hon. Derek Mombourquette)**

**Bill No. 45 - An Act to Support Local Action on Climate Change. (Kendra Coombes)**

**Bill No. 46 - An Act to Amend Chapter 41 of the Acts of 2010, the Personal Health Information Act. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)**

**Bill No. 47 - An Act to Amend Chapter 13 of the Acts of 2012, the Patient Safety 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 member for Cumberland North.

### **RESOLUTION NO. 17**

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

Be it resolved that the Rules and Forms of Procedure of the House of Assembly are amended by adding immediately after paragraph 5C of Rule 60 the following paragraph:

5C(a) Notwithstanding anything contained in these Rules where a member of a Standing, Select or Special Committee, including the Committee on Assembly Matters, is not able to attend a meeting of the Committee, an independent member may be substituted for that committee member by the independent member attending the meeting as a substitute with the written permission of the House Leader of the committee member's party and the permission being filed with the Committee.

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 Kings South.

JULIE VANEXAN: I beg leave to make an introduction before reading my statement.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

JULIE VANEXAN: In the gallery, I'm so pleased to introduce two wonderful leaders from Benjamin Bridge, Nova Scotia's sparkling wine house. Joining us today are Keltie MacNeill, the director of sustainability, and Brittany Parker, the director of hospitality. Brittany and Keltie, I would ask that you please rise and accept a very gracious welcome from the members of this Legislature. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Kings South.

**BENJAMIN BRIDGE: BUS. AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.**

JULIE VANEXAN: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Benjamin Bridge for being named the Innovator of the Year at the Annapolis Valley Chamber of Commerce 2024 Business Awards. The recipient of the Innovator of the Year award showcases a forward-thinking vision in pioneering new and enhanced technologies, products, services, and processes. Benjamin Bridge displays a willingness to take calculated risks and shows a strong commitment to our community. They continually add value by tapping into new markets through enhancing productivity and by focusing on employee well-being. I ask the members of this Legislature to please join me today to congratulate Benjamin Bridge, the 2024 Innovator of the Year.

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

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

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

LISA LACHANCE: Joining us in the gallery today are Teri Appleby and Alex Biafora from Stardust Bar + Kitchen. Would you please rise and accept the welcome of the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the House. I think I lived just down the road from you, Teri, at one point.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

**STARDUST BAR + KITCHEN: NEW BUS. - RECOG.**

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Stardust Bar + Kitchen, a vibrant queer bar and kitchen in downtown Halifax that has recently opened its doors. Located at 1688 Barrington Street, very close to here, this establishment is more than a bar. It's a welcoming 2SLGBTQIA+ space that enriches our community.

Stardust offers a diverse menu. Their drinks menu also is diverse, featuring spirited beverages and refreshing non-alcoholic options, ensuring that there is something for everyone. I'm also told that their dill hollandaise at brunch is out of this world. It's been a while since Halifax has had a queer space that's physically accessible to so many people, and I'm heartened to know that we do now and that it's thriving. Stardust was voted Best New Bar and Best Trivia Night in *The Coast's* Best of Halifax 2024. They host karaoke, trivia, and an always-sold-out drag brunch. It seems like there's always something on the go.

Thank you, Stardust, for providing somewhere to meet, somewhere to grab a bite to eat, and somewhere to dance, sing, laugh, and connect. We all need a bit more sparkle in our lives today.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

**PAUL, CHIEF TERRY: 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIV. - RECOG.**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Speaker, I rise on my feet to recognize someone we all know. This past Fall, we gathered as communities to celebrate Chief Terry Paul's 40<sup>th</sup> year as chief. Terry came home from Boston and started his career as an economic development officer and then became the manager. He was elected chief in 1984, so for 40 years Terry has not only led Membertou to prosperity but also has been such a pillar of hard work and dedication to the entire Island and beyond. I'm so happy to rise and recognize one of our great leaders: Chief Terry Paul.

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

RICK BURNS: Speaker, before I read my statement, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

RICK BURNS: In the gallery, I'm honoured to introduce Andre Comeau of Moulding Warehouse. Andre, I'd ask that you rise and accept a warm welcome to the Legislature. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Hammonds Plains-Lucasville.

**MOULDING WAREHOUSE: RESILIENCE - RECOG.**

RICK BURNS: Speaker, I'd like to recognize Andre Comeau and Courtney MacKay of Moulding Warehouse for their dedication to providing top-quality service to the Hammonds Plains community and beyond. Each day, they provide materials for three to five building units, and they employ 17 people. Moulding Warehouse sponsors a sports team in the community every year and have been sponsors of a local elementary school.

[1:15 p.m.]

Above all else, I would like to acknowledge the resilience of this family-run business. During the 2023 wildfires, they lost their business and ran out of a trailer for a year while waiting for their new plant to be ready. In that time, they were able to supply all their customers with the material they needed to finish their projects. Now with their new plant, they're purchasing their door slabs from Canadian companies and using Canadian-made, medium-density fibreboard to make mouldings in Hammonds Plains. They also convert their waste to wood pellets for home heating, therefore keeping the prices 25 per cent to 30 per cent cheaper than anywhere else. The Moulding Warehouse is a prime example of how Nova Scotians face adversity: that when faced with hardship and misfortune, we rise from the ashes like a phoenix, stronger than ever.

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

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

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

LISA LACHANCE: Joining us in the gallery today is Debbie Adams, whom I'll tell you more about in a minute. She is with her friend Joan Jessome. I ask them both to rise and accept the warm welcome of the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

**ADAMS, DEBBIE: LITERACY PROM. - RECOG.**

LISA LACHANCE: I rise to recognize Debbie Adams. Debbie is a mom, author, and native of Newfoundland and Labrador living in Halifax. Debbie was part of the first cohort of women mechanics in the Canadian Army from the age of 17 to 29 but had to leave after developing retinitis pigmentosa. The disease took away her peripheral vision

but not her passion. Debbie graduated from Mount Saint Vincent University in 2008 with a BA in political science. She also was the CEO and founder of PeopleCan Training and Development. Debbie is constantly supporting others to improve their skills because of her passion for lifelong learning and development. In free community sessions, she teaches Nova Scotians about financial literacy and supports adults to pick up a pen and start writing.

Debbie is on the board of the Alumni Association of Mount Saint Vincent University. She is a fierce accessibility and disability rights activist and was recognized as entrepreneur of the year by the Nova Scotia Entrepreneurs with Disability Network. She wants us to know that we are all more capable than we think. I ask all members to join me in recognizing Debbie Adams.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

### **PARENTS & WIFE - BIRTHDAY WISHES**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: February is a big birthday month in my family. Today is my father's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday - former councillor Reg Rankin. (Applause)

Tomorrow is my mother's birthday. We celebrated her 70<sup>th</sup> last year. She's retired. She used to work at the Marguerite Centre, the only house of its kind, which houses women with addiction, for many years. I'm very fortunate that both my parents are healthy and that they continue to instill the values of public service and helping people.

Friday is my wife's birthday - Mary Chisholm. I think many of you know that Mary is a fantastic person and partner and the best mother. She knows more about government and administration than I ever could. It's going to be a busy week, busy weekend. I'm going to be flipping my famous omelettes in Timberlea. Happy birthday to all three of you from the House. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Northside-Westmount.

### **HEART MONTH: REDUCING RISK - RECOG.**

HON. FRED TILLEY: February is Heart Month, a time to raise awareness of heart disease and shine a spotlight on the heart conditions that more than 2.6 million Canadians are living with today. Sometimes present at birth and other times developed with age, heart disease affects the structure or function of the heart. Common forms of heart disease include congenital heart disease, heart attack, heart failure, and cardiac arrest. Today, more than 72,000 adults in our province are living with heart conditions.

This Heart Month, I encourage everyone to learn more about how to reduce the risk of developing premature heart disease. A major risk factor for developing heart disease is high blood pressure, which affects nearly one in three Nova Scotians. While not all risk

factors, like genetics, can be controlled, nearly 80 per cent of premature heart disease cases can be prevented.

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada for their important work in educating Nova Scotians about heart disease, the risk factors, and the steps they can take to protect their health.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

### **JANITORIAL STAFF: JOBS AT RISK - SUPPORT**

PAUL WOZNEY: I rise in solidarity with 12 dedicated janitorial staff facing termination at Alderney Gate in Dartmouth. Some of these folks have kept it clean and safe for more than two decades. These 12 members concluded a freely and fairly bargained collective agreement late in 2024 that included livable wages, health and dental benefits, and a well-deserved pension. These gains which are good for workers, good for HRM, and good for quality service to community are at risk today. Halifax Regional Council recently awarded the service management bid for Alderney Gate to Imperial Cleaners, which threatens to terminate these workers and wipe out their collective agreement by this Saturday and replace them with precarious minimum-wage jobs.

In Nova Scotia the right to unionize runs deep in every community. I urge all members present to contact their Halifax Regional councillor and Mayor Andy Fillmore to ensure the collective agreement of current workers is integrated into the new service agreement, and date the service agreement to ensure these staff keep their jobs and keep making a vital public area of HRM clean and safe for all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

### **SOOD, AAYUSH: SHAD CANADA CERT. - CONGRATS.**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I want to recognize Aayush Sood, a Grade 11 student at Bay View High School. Aayush has been accepted into the Shad Canada program. Shad Canada is a natural enrichment program that brings together high-achieving students from across the country.

Aayush has worked hard to excel both academically and beyond. Among his accomplishments are several academic awards, such as the Mathematics and Citizenship Awards, Innovative Mind Award, and honours in the Canadian Computing Competition. Additionally, he secured first place in a regional improv competition.

Beyond his academic success, Aayush is actively engaged in advising Nova Scotia's Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development through the Minister's School Advisory Council, where he provides policy feedback on issues affecting the

education system. This involvement reflects his commitment to making a positive impact on the educational landscape.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Aayush on his long list of impressive accomplishments to date, and his ambition to continue excelling academically in leadership roles.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings West.

### **PINK SHIRT DAY: PROMOTING KINDNESS - RECOG.**

CHRIS PALMER: I rise today to celebrate Pink Shirt Day, a day where we can come together to raise our voices against bullying and to promote kindness, inclusion and respect. Pink Shirt Day originated from a simple, yet impactful act at Central Kings Rural High School in Cambridge, Nova Scotia. Two students stood in solidarity with a classmate who had been bullied for wearing pink.

This simple yet profound act of kindness ignited a global movement that continues to inspire us today. Pink Shirt Day is more than just wearing pink - it's a symbol of solidarity, compassion and a responsibility to stand up against bullying. This day challenges us to reflect on how we treat one another, and to actively work towards creating environments where kindness prevails, even in this House. It's a day to reaffirm our commitment to speak out against injustice.

As we wear our pink shirts today, let's remember the importance of this movement. Let's use this day as an opportunity to take meaningful steps toward a world where empathy and respect are the foundation of our interactions.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

### **PINK SHIRT DAY: KINDNESS PROMOTION - RECOG.**

SUZY HANSEN: I rise today to recognize this special day, Pink Shirt Day. This is an annual day to raise awareness and take a stand against bullying and to promote kindness and inclusivity.

Bullying is an intentional harm that is repeated over time in a relationship where there is an imbalance of power. It can be physical, verbal, or even cyber. Bullying can have some serious negative impacts on mental health and physical health. Wearing pink is not just a movement. The meaning of this day should be something we embody in our day-to-day.

We can all participate, not just by wearing pink, but by speaking out and up against bullying and encouraging others to be kind and inclusive. As members of this House, we

hold a responsibility to do so. We should not be silent, and we should stand up for all Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

**VOLUNTEERS: HOCKEY COACHING - RECOG.**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I rise to recognize that in our community and communities across the province, you'll see this time of year - and most of the year, really - you'll see a lot of hockey tournaments, you'll see a lot of basketball tournaments, where kids are on the move all over the province. There are a lot of great volunteers. There are too many from the Sydney area to name here in my member statement, but a lot of volunteers step up to coach our kids in various ways each and every day. As I've said, there have been a number of big tournaments in Sydney, whether it's been curling or hockey or anything, the list goes on and on. I just want to get on my feet and recognize all those wonderful volunteers who are coaches of our kids, but also great role models to them as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

**SHIVARATRI, MAHA: HINDU FESTIVAL - RECOG.**

TIM OUTHIT: Today I rise to recognize Maha Shivaratri, a festival celebrated by Hindu communities around the world. It marks a time for reflection and spiritual renewal. Maha Shivaratri, or The Great Night of Shiva, honours Lord Shiva, who represents transformation, compassion, and the eternal cycle of life. For many Nova Scotians, this festival is a time to fast, pray, and seek blessings for strength, peace, and wisdom. It's also a celebration of light overcoming darkness, reminding us of the importance of unity and truth.

Here in Nova Scotia, our Hindu community enriches the province by sharing their traditions and values. Festivals like Maha Shivaratri bring people together, fostering understanding and respect among diverse communities. As we take this time to reflect, let us remember the values this day represents: compassion, self-discipline, and the pursuit of knowledge.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

**TEAM WAVE: WORLD COMPETITION - RECOG.**

SUSAN LEBLANC: I rise today to extend my sincerest congratulations to a group of exceptional young athletes: Dartmouth North residents Mackenzie Devanney, Ashley Harvey, and Mia Murphy and all their teammates on Team Wave. Team Wave is an Adaptive Abilities Advanced Co-Ed cheer team composed of athletes from throughout

Nova Scotia. They are a diverse and fully inclusive team that is adapted to the needs of those who are with and without a physical, sensory, or intellectual disability.

Recently, Team Wave competed and earned the honour of being named Team Canada and will represent our country at the world's International Cheer Union competition in Florida this April. This is the highest level of competition for any cheer athlete and Team Wave has earned this most prestigious of honours in their first year together. I ask the House to join me in cheering on Team Wave and coach Amanda Brown, as they prepare to represent Nova Scotia and Canada on the world stage.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Yarmouth.

**PACE: OPENING - RECOG.**

NICK HILTON: The Physician Assessment Centre of Excellence is now open. Announced in the Fall, the centre will see internationally trained physicians get licensed faster to practise in communities across the province. Right now, four internationally trained physicians are participating in a 12-week assessment program overseen by Nova Scotian doctors. They are providing care to 2,600 patients, all from the Need a Family Practice Registry. The Centre will expand to assess more internationally trained doctors and eventually serve 6,500 patients. More Nova Scotians will get the primary care they need.

There are many talented and in-demand internationally trained doctors who are eager to call Nova Scotia home. This centre is the first of its kind in North America, providing more doctors and the quality care that Nova Scotians expect. We are committed to fixing health care, but we couldn't do this alone. This is a partnership between the Province, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia, and the Medical Council of Canada. We are very grateful for this collaboration. We look forward to welcoming these skilled doctors to communities across the province.

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

**ORGANIZERS: WOMEN'S MARCH - RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise to recognize the Every Woman's Centre in Cape Breton and the Cape Breton Feminist Group collaboration, which hosted the Women's March on January 18<sup>th</sup> in Sydney. The march mantra was: "We all march for different reasons, but we march for the same cause: to defend our rights and our future." It was a privilege to lead the march, chanting and addressing those in attendance about the need for core funding for the organizations doing the frontline work. Since declaring gender-based violence an epidemic in Nova Scotia, we have lost at least seven people whom we know by name - seven too many, and many whom we don't know. One is too many, Speaker.

Thoughts and prayers are not enough. Action is required by this government, including the full implementation of the Mass Casualty Commission's recommendations.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Shelburne.

[1:30 p.m.]

### **MACLEOD, COLLIE ROY: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE**

HON. NOLAN YOUNG: Speaker, I rise today to remember Collie "Roy" MacLeod of Lockeport, who passed away earlier this month, leaving a legacy of hard work and commitment to his family and also our community. Roy had a keen interest in politics, spending countless hours working with candidates and volunteering for elections. He also served for many years as a councillor in Lockeport, including a time as deputy mayor. He was a man of great faith. Roy served for many years on his church board and was very active in our community, serving on the school board, the housing board, and Roseway Manor board. His working career was long and varied, from teaching school to working for the provincial Department of Transportation.

I respectfully ask all members to join me in sending condolences to Roy's family and friends. He certainly will be missed.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

### **MACDONALD, AVEN: CAMPAIGN WORK - THANKS**

SUZY HANSEN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Aven MacDonald. Aven messaged me on the first day of my campaign in 2024 with a lovely message about helping out with the work that we are doing in the riding. I gave Aven a call that evening to let her know about some volunteer opportunities and just to have a little chat - because I do like to talk. From that point on, Aven and I became a really great team. She was on every door with me and was a huge asset to the campaign. Working long hours in the cold and in the rain, we were both able to knock on over 12,000 doors by the third week of the campaign. I would like to ask all members of this House to join me in showing my gratitude for all of the work and time put in to making my campaign a huge success. I couldn't have done it without her. Thank you so much, Aven.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

### **RILEY, GLADYS: 95<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today, I rise to extend birthday greetings to Gladys Riley of Amherst who turned 95 this month. Local residents know Gladys as a true

matriarch of the African Nova Scotian community in Amherst, where she freely shares her immense wisdom and experience.

Gladys is the true epitome of a going concern. She is still frequently seen walking at a quick pace through downtown Amherst as she greets the young and old alike. Many of you will recognize Gladys's son Bill, who is only the third Black hockey player in the National Hockey League and the first of African Nova Scotian descent. Please note: I said Gladys's son Bill and not Bill Riley's mother Gladys. She is very quick to let people know that she is not Bill Riley's mother, but rather Bill Riley is Gladys Riley's son.

I would ask my colleagues to join me in wishing Gladys Riley a very happy 95<sup>th</sup> birthday, and wish her many more years of health and happiness.

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

#### **FRASER, CHRIS: HOCKEY COACH - RECOG.**

HON. BRIAN WONG: I would like to recognize a local hockey coach and volunteer from Beaver Bank who goes out of his way to ensure the children of our community and the surrounding area have a safe, fun environment to play.

Chris Fraser's dedication to our community is apparent in all his endeavours as he consistently prioritizes the community and invests countless hours into his volunteer work. Whether he's fundraising or coaching, Chris approaches every role with enthusiasm and precision. He is working tirelessly with the Lake District Recreation Association, which is actively competing for Kraft Hockeyville to upgrade their arena in Lower Sackville.

Chris is not only a coach, but he is the heart within the local hockey community. Please join me in thanking Chris for everything he does.

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

#### **COAL BOWL: HIGHLIGHTS - RECOG.**

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, from February 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup>, Brighton Education Centre hosted the 41<sup>st</sup> annual New Waterford Coal Bowl Classic. The games were fun and, at times, real nail-biters. One highlight from this year's Coal Bowl was the Special Olympics unified basketball game. The unified game has been a highlight since 2019. It was a game full of fun, competition, and teamwork. Another highlight was watching the BEC Lady Bears play against the alumni Lady Bear players. At the end of the tournament, Etobicoke Collegiate Institute came away victorious with gold and the Coal Bowl trophy, the Beck Bears walked away with silver, and the Riverview Ravens went home with bronze. Congratulations to all the participants and volunteers on a successful week.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Truro-Bible Hill-Millbrook-Salmon River.

**CLYKE, JUDE: JONES AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.**

HON. DAVE RITCEY: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Jude Clyke, who received the 2024 Nova Scotia Human Rights Award: the prestigious Dr. Burnley Allan “Rocky” Jones Award. His unwavering dedication to advocacy, mentorship, and community building has profoundly impacted Truro and beyond. As a leader in fostering youth engagement, creating spaces for wellness, and bridging gaps in justice, Jude truly exemplifies the spirit of this award. His words about the importance of justice, equity and collective action inspires all to lift someone up and make meaningful change. This recognition is a testament to his tireless efforts to uplift the African Nova Scotian community and create a legacy of empowerment. Congratulations, Jude, on this well-deserved honour.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

**BOOKER, SHARRY: COM. SERV. - RECOG.**

PAUL WOZNEY: Sackville is home to a large and vibrant community of seniors who spent decades serving and contributing to our community. I rise today to honour Sharry Booker, the president of the Sackville Seniors Advisory Council, who recently received a medal from the federal government. The Sackville Seniors Advisory Council provides seniors with recreation, meals, education, and assistance with government services. Sharry is an instrumental figure in the organization and was recently honoured with the King Charles III Coronation Medal, awarded to those with a record of significant service to Canadian communities.

Speaker, I ask all those present to join me in recognition of Sharry Booker’s outstanding service to the Sackville community, and in thanking the Sackville Seniors Advisory Council for their continued support of our senior citizens. Sharry is watching us from her home, so make sure she hears you loud and clear.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland South.

**LAIRD, GEORGE: PARTY VOLUNTEER - THANKS**

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Speaker, I rise today to recognize George Laird, a longtime supporter and party volunteer with the Cumberland South Electoral District and our association. George has dedicated his time to our association since 1975, initially supporting the election and re-election efforts of the honourable George Henley, who happened to be my grandfather. Throughout the years, George has served in numerous roles in the association, including the official agent for MLA Gardner “Bud” Hurley, and

is currently serving as the EDA president, and has also put tremendous time in as my campaign manager and fundraiser since 2018. Last month, George was recognized for his valuable contributions, receiving the District 5 Volunteer of the Year Award at the PC AGM.

I would like to thank George and his family for many years of volunteerism with our association and congratulate him on this well-deserved recognition. I don't think you can find a better couple than George and Betty Laird out in Mapleton, just next to Springhill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth East.

**DAUGHTER, ELLA: ACCOMPLISHMENTS - RECOG.**

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Speaker, I rise today to speak about my beautiful daughter, Ella Halman, who continues to inspire me every day. Ella selflessly dedicated her time volunteering at our local Square Roots program each month, and was also an incredible help to me on the campaign trail, offering her advice with enthusiasm. Ella passionately pursues gymnastics, a sport that has become a cornerstone of her life. Ella competed in the PEI Classic Invitational this past January, where she placed first in Atlantic Canada, a remarkable achievement that showcases her dedication, discipline and talent.

Ella is so much more than a skilled gymnast. She is strong, smart, beautiful, kind and caring - a truly remarkable young woman. I am beyond proud of the person she is becoming, and I am constantly in awe of her maturity and generosity at such a young age. Her mom would be very proud. Ella is truly an inspiration. I am so fortunate to be her dad.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

**ARNOLD, CHRIS: HOCKEY EQUIPMENT MGR. - RECOG.**

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: On any given weekend at the West Hants Sports Complex, you will likely see Windsor's number one hockey fan, Chris "Sticks" Arnold, rushing around the rink. He is also a familiar face at Sobeys in Windsor, having worked there for more than 20 years. He always arrives with a big smile on his face and wearing his personalized jersey for the Valley Maple Leafs Junior B team or the Avalanche School Team. He never misses a community event or tournament. He is often the first there and the last to leave. Sticks stays busy as equipment manager, helping to fill water bottles, sharpen skates, and is always the first in line to give fist bumps. It also isn't uncommon for Sticks to make some road trips because he is more than just a hockey fan - he is part of the team.

Speaker, every community needs someone like Sticks, and I would like to recognize him for his dedication to our local hockey teams, even if he is a Leafs fan.

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

**CABOT SNOWMOBILE CLUB: WARMING SHELTER - RECOG.**

DIANNE TIMMINS: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the incredible efforts of the Cabot Snowmobile Club, Jenny and Stanley Symes, and the many dedicated volunteers who made the grand opening of the new Pig & Whistle warming shelter on January 25, 2025, a reality. Located in the heart of the highlands, for more than 60 years, the Pig & Whistle has been a gathering place for snowmobilers exploring the breathtaking Cape Breton Highlands. It has already proven its worth when it was used to rescue a snowmobiler who became lost in a blizzard.

This re-opening is not just about a shelter; it's about strengthening Winter tourism, boosting the local economy, and ensuring that more people can experience the Winter magic of the Cape Breton Highlands. Congratulations to everyone who helped bring this project to life.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg West.

**OICKLE-CONRAD, DEANNE: VOLLEYBALL COACH - THANKS**

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: Speaker, I rise to recognize Deanne Oickle-Conrad, an extraordinary coach who leads with warmth and positivity.

Deanne has a passion for volleyball that is infectious. Her coaching journey began as an assistant in 2016. In 2019, she became an NCCP Level 1 Community Sport volleyball coach and honed her skills with the South Shore Smash Volleyball Club. That same year, she took on the role of head coach of the Bridgewater Junior High Tier 2 Girls. Under her guidance, the team triumphed at Districts and earned silver at Regionals. Deanne also coached the school's development team, giving all the girls a chance to learn and enjoy the sport she loves. Her guidance has led to numerous successes for both the Vikings and Smash teams, including her 13U Smash winning silver at the 2023 Tier 1 Provincial Championship.

Deanne's impact doesn't stop at volleyball. She teaches Bridgewater Recreation mini-volleyball and runs VolleyGirls. On top of that, she works full-time with the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency and even leads fitness programs. I ask the House to join me in thanking Deanne for her amazing leadership and the positive energy she brings to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

**WEYMOUTH FALLS COM. LAND TRUST: WORK - RECOG.**

HON. JILL BALSER: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the incredible Weymouth Falls Community Land Trust and the excellent work that this non-profit organization is doing for the community of Weymouth Falls. Weymouth Falls is one of over 50 land-based African Nova Scotian communities in our province. It is a rural village that has historically been home to Black settlers, Acadian settlers, and Mi'kmaq peoples. The organization is diligently working to preserve, protect, and steward the ancestral lands for the community use and to prevent the erasure of community culture. The Weymouth Falls Community Land Trust has been established for residents and descendants of Weymouth Falls who have the desire to return home.

I'd ask that all members in this House join me in recognizing the Weymouth Falls Community Land Trust and acknowledge the important work that they are doing to preserve the memories, stories, and contributions made by the beautiful community of Weymouth Falls.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Richmond.

**ORGANIZERS: MACNEIL HOCKEY TOURNAMENT - RECOG.**

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: Speaker, I would like to recognize the efforts of the organizers of the Freddie MacNeil Memorial Royals Hockey Tournament, which is held in April in Richmond County annually. The tournament marked its 46<sup>th</sup> successful year in 2024. Organizers Joan Burke, Leon Burt, and Natasha Mury are proud of its enduring success, and continue to dedicate their time and talents to ensure its longevity.

The Royal Gents Hockey Tournament - renamed to honour former organizer Freddy MacNeil following his passing 11 years ago - now includes a women's division named after Aimee Burns, a local female hockey player whose competitive spirit and love for the game endured despite her tragic passing. In the past 12 years alone, the tournament has raised more than \$55,000 for Strait Richmond Minor Hockey and provides all local high schools with bursaries for graduating players.

Please join me in honoring Joan Burke, Leon Burt, and Natasha Mury for their outstanding efforts.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cape Breton East.

**THE RED FARM: NEW BUSINESS - BEST WISHES**

HON. BRIAN COMER: Speaker, today I would like to congratulate an exciting new business that opened last year in the community of Howie Centre. The Red Farm is an ambitious development on a property formerly run as a farm by the Tobin family. CEO

Christoph Mertinitz and property owners Johann and Brigitte Luxbauer are investing several million dollars into converting several buildings on the property into venues for weddings, concerts, and other large community events. There's a newly built 12-room hotel that's almost complete, and the plan is to build a beer garden, restaurant, and other amenities coming in the near future. Already the venue has proven a hit, hosting numerous weddings, receptions, and corporate events. Many nights throughout the Winter, the Red Farm has played host to some great local musicians, bringing community members together in song and dance. I look forward to visiting the Red Farm soon and wish them all the best.

[1:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Argyle.

**KIDZACT: DANCING WITH THE STARS FUNDRAISER - CONGRATS.**

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate Kidzact, a non-profit dance group for youth in our region, on its 4<sup>th</sup> annual fundraiser: its own version of *Dancing with the Stars*. The popular sold-out event was held over four nights, with the audience enjoying highly energetic hip hop performances by Kidzact dancers and their stars. Amazingly, each dance was choreographed by the Kidzact dancer. Some of the stars included moms, dads, brothers, teachers, or friends. Many of the stars had no previous dance experience, and although out of their comfort zone, they embraced the experience with much enthusiasm. Judges were on hand and - new this year - a golden buzzer.

Speaker, I ask all members of this House to join me in applauding every team on their hard work, dedication, and fabulous performances. You are all winners.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou Centre.

**MACLEAN, SCOTTY: S. MACLEAN TRUCKING SERVS. - RECOG.**

DANNY MACGILLIVRAY: Speaker, for more than five decades the name Scotty MacLean Trucking Services brings to mind the saying "No job too small or too large that can't be done." The only thing more dependable than Scotty showing up when he says he will is his signature smile and work ethic.

A long-time resident in New Glasgow, along with his lovely wife Gloria and their children, grandchildren, and now great-grandchildren, he is a pillar of our community and beyond. Scotty is always supporting those in need. He is also a loyal member of the Second United Baptist church in New Glasgow and can always be found in the corner of anyone who is most in need. A lifelong member of the Progressive Conservative Party, he is always the first name on the list when it comes to volunteers to knock on doors with our candidates over the years. At the age of 80 years young, Scotty is on the road with his trusty truck six days a week regardless of the weather.

I would ask that all members of this House join me in acknowledging the value of small business operator Scotty MacLean.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

**STARTING BLOCKS DAY CARE: 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIV. - RECOG.**

MARCO MACLEOD: Speaker, I rise today to recognize a successful business story in Pictou West. Starting Blocks Day Care & Preschool began in a church building in 1994. Thirty years later, the daycare now owns a two-storey building in the Town of Pictou and has the capacity to look after up to 87 children.

Sherri Kilburn is the owner and operator of Starting Blocks Day Care and shares its success with 12 qualified staff members. Sherri values her staff as they are each valuable contributors to a supportive and skilled team who provide quality care to children in Pictou County. Starting Blocks focuses on early childhood development and offers age-appropriate activities and educational opportunities to support each child's individual needs.

I ask all members to join me in celebrating Starting Blocks Day Care & Preschool owner Sherri Kilburn and the incredible staff as they celebrate 30 years of providing a nurturing and safe environment for children to learn and grow.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Inverness.

**L'ACABIE: TRANSPORTATION SERVICES - RECOG.**

KYLE MACQUARRIE: I would like to commend the Chéticamp transport co-operative, commonly known as L'Acabie, for their dedication to the residents of Chéticamp as well as the health care system in this province. This community-focused, charitable not-for-profit co-operative was established in 2010 and began operations in 2012. L'Acabie offers transportation services to residents of northern Inverness County and neighbouring areas whenever needed. This service continues to support seniors and individuals with disabilities and special needs, as well as anyone requiring reliable and affordable transportation to the hospital.

Speaker, I cannot thank L'Acabie enough for providing cost-effective support to those who need it. I ask members of this Legislature to join me in applauding everyone involved with this co-operative for their dedication to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Preston.

**TITANS GYMN. & TRAMP. CLUB: PROGRAMS - RECOG.**

HON. TWILA GROSSE: Speaker, I rise to recognize the Titans Gymnastics & Trampoline Club, a non-profit club that promotes gymnastics and trampolining for all. They offer programs for all ages and abilities, from walking toddlers to athletes with physical and mental disabilities to their seniors programming that promotes balance, strength, and mobility.

Along with these programs, they pride themselves on competitive programs, which includes an incredible young lady, Ella Halman, the daughter of honourable Tim Halman. This past year, the club had some great accomplishments. Autumn Brown was the only high-performance junior in Atlantic Canada, and Bentley Jenkinson represented Canada in Portugal and won a bronze medal on the double-mini trampoline. The club has now hired a new men's coach from Ukraine to push their performance standards even higher.

I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to please join me in recognizing the Titans Gymnastics & Trampoline Club for their great work in promoting the sport of gymnastics and trampoline for all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

**BEDFORD MINOR HOCKEY ASSOC.: 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIV. - CONGRATS.**

DAMIAN STOILOV: Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the Bedford & District Minor Hockey Association - this includes Bedford Basin, by the way - which reached an incredible milestone of 50 years in operation. Minor hockey has been a cornerstone of growing up in Bedford for thousands of young people spanning many years. A quick note on that: In 2025, Bedford Minor Hockey is the largest hockey association in Nova Scotia, with 1,100 young people participating. That's quite a number.

Thanks to the hard work and dedication of the volunteers who commit to countless hours of coaching the kids and running the association. Also key to its success are the parents who take the players to many early-morning practices - some of us remember those all too well - late-night games, and tournaments all over the province, the country, and even beyond our border. This includes a recent trip to Boston for the U13-AA squad to take part in a major tournament.

Speaker, I ask all members of this Assembly to join me in congratulating Bedford & District Minor Hockey Association on 50 great years and many more to come.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

**VILLAGE OF CANNING: NEW COM. MARKET - CONGRATS.**

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Village of Canning on the launch of their new community market. The market, which is open on the last Sunday of every month, is centrally located at the Canning Lions hall, where space is in abundance. It features a wide assortment of local vendors, including crafters, makers, farmers, bakers, brewers, and flea market vendors, along with live music from a local musician entertaining the guests. The community market has been a wonderful addition to the Canning community, with many neighbours and guests supporting local and spending time together. Please join me today to congratulate the Village of Canning and the Canning & District Lions Club on the launch of their new community market.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cole Harbour.

**SMITH, ANDREA: ANDREA'S MUSIC STUDIO - RECOG.**

HON. LEAH MARTIN: Speaker, today I would like to recognize Andrea Smith, a successful Nova Scotian entrepreneur, who established a thriving music lesson business in Halifax Regional Municipality. Andrea's Music Studio has been in operation since 1997 and has grown to four locations, the most recent of which was opened in our community of Cole Harbour in September 2020. It has served community members with private instruction in piano, voice, guitar, ukulele, and drums. Music is crucial to human development, regardless of age, and Ms. Smith is proud to offer services in Cole Harbour for everyone, from retirees to music students as young as four years old.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Eastern Passage.

**FISHERMAN'S COVE DEV. ASSOC.: SENIORS EXPO - CONGRATS.**

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: Speaker, I rise today to congratulate the Fisherman's Cove Development Association on their first-ever Seniors Expo, held on July 25, 2024, at the Fisherman's Cove Heritage Centre. This successful event was packed with information booths, demonstrations, refreshments, and more. Following the information session, many enjoyed a social paint-and-music event that was for a limited number of participants. Thank you to the Fisherman's Cove Development Association for recognizing the need for social events for our seniors. I ask all members of the Nova Scotia Legislature to join me in congratulating the Fisherman's Cove Development Association on their inaugural Seniors Expo. We also recognize the hard work and dedication it takes to succeed with such a wonderful event.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

**WILEY'S BY THE WHARF: AWD. RECIP. - CONGRATS.**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: Today I'm pleased to recognize Wiley's by the Wharf in Wallace on winning the 2025 Hospitality Award from the Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia. The award was presented on January 27, 2025, as part of the association's awards gala, where Wiley's and 11 other Nova Scotia restaurants were honoured. Wiley's by the Wharf is a quaint spot, directly on the waterfront in Wallace, where locally sourced food is served in a casual atmosphere. Chef Shane Robilliard and his wife, Stephanie Thompson, own and operate Wiley's, where everything is beautifully presented and always delicious.

Last year, my husband and I celebrated our wedding anniversary at Wiley's by the Wharf, and they made us feel so special. They had special decorations. You could not find better food anywhere in the province. It was incredible. Please join me in congratulating Shane and Stephanie on receiving this prestigious award and wishing them the very best. I invite everyone to go to Wiley's by the Wharf.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

**TOPSIE CRUNCHIES SNACKS: SUCCESS - CONGRATS.**

ADEGOKE FADARE: Today I rise to recognize the remarkable success story of Topsy Crunchies Snacks and its visionary CEO, Odutope Macauley-Okoro. Based here in Clayton Park West, Topsy Crunchies Snacks has become a shining example of entrepreneurial excellence and innovation. Under Odutope's leadership, the company offers delicious, high-quality snacks while celebrating the rich flavours of its cultural heritage. Odutope's dedication to her craft and her unwavering commitment to excellence have made Topsy Crunchies Snacks a source of pride for our community. Her journey as an entrepreneur is a testament to the power of hard work, vision, and the entrepreneurial spirit that drives so many in Nova Scotia.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Odutope Macauley-Okoro and her team for their success, innovation, and contribution to our local economy.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

**BOBBITT, TERRANCE DONALD: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE**

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Today I rise to honour the memory Terrance "Terry" Donald Bobbitt, a cherished member of the Spryfield community who passed away January 19, 2025, at the age of 85. Deeply rooted in Spryfield, Terry dedicated countless hours to coaching youth hockey and baseball. He played a pivotal role in fundraising efforts for the local rink, ensuring a space for all to enjoy. His commitment to the environment was evident through his participation in the annual McIntosh Run River Cleanup.

As a proud member of the Spryfield Royal Canadian Legion Branch No. 152, Terry served multiple terms as president, visiting seniors and schools and embodying the spirit of community service. Terry's legacy is carried forward by his six devoted daughters and numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Our community owes a debt of gratitude to Terry Bobbitt for his unwavering commitment and the positive impact he made on so many lives. He will be deeply missed, and his legacy will continue to inspire us all.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

### **KALI CAKES: OPENING - CONGRATS.**

TIM OUTHIT: I rise today to welcome a new business to Bedford Basin. Kali Cakes Bake Shop, owned by Savannah Kali, has opened recently in the Sunnyside Mall. From cupcakes to themed cakes to wedding cakes to classic cookies, I have heard nothing but good things about the items that Savannah bakes. My CA, Donna Lugar, loves and recommends her almond croissants. With a B.Sc. in Biomedical Science and a love of the outdoors, Savannah focuses on serving wholesome indulgences. That's the rationalization I use for visiting her shop. I ask all members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Savannah Kali for taking what had been a hobby and turning it into a successful new business.

[2:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time for member statements has expired.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

#### **ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

THE SPEAKER: The time is 2:00 p.m. We will finish at 2:50 p.m.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **PREM.: BYPASSING MEDIA - EXPLAIN**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: This government owes Nova Scotians an explanation about their plan to bypass the media. Those are the PC Party's own words from a recent email. We know what happens when governments attempt to paint journalists and the media as the enemy. All we have to do is look across the border. My question is: Does the Premier approve of using this specific language and of attacking journalists to solicit donations?

THE SPEAKER: Your question is specifically about a PC email. I would like you to reframe it about government.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Listen, this government has an obsession with choosing enemies and blaming them for the woes of this province. First, it was Justin Trudeau. Next, on the floor of this House and everywhere else, it was unnamed special interests, and now it's the media. Over and over again, we have seen this government attempt to divide Nova Scotians rather than work with them, and this is a slippery slope. My question to the Premier: Is bypassing the media official government policy?

HON. TIM HOUSTON (Premier): Listen, if you look at just yesterday alone - I'm just talking about just one day, and this would be representative of pretty much every day:- two separate media availabilities, plus I went on with CTV. I don't think that can be considered in any world avoiding the media.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Yet this government fundraises - the letter has been tabled - "bypass the media when necessary." They are actively suppressing information from the public when they choose this tactic. Bypassing the media means not letting the media know what is happening, and it's in large part thanks to the media that the changes to the Auditor General are safe from government interference and that we know about so many issues facing Nova Scotians in this province. The depths of the housing crisis, issues with primary care - that's not something that's being put out by this government; it's something the media is reporting to serve the public. That's what the government should be doing, so I'll ask in a different way: Which issues do you need to bypass?

THE PREMIER: I don't particularly think fundraising letters from political parties are a new thing. Perhaps I should table some of the stuff that the NDP send out in their fundraising letters. What I would say to Nova Scotians is, look, this is a stressful time in the world, and the fearmongering that we see happening in our society from certain leaders - elected leaders and stuff - it's not helpful to Nova Scotians.

As a government, we will continue to focus on what matters. We're the only people in this Chamber talking about health care. We're the only people in this Chamber talking about housing. We're the only people who are talking about supporting Nova Scotians. I have yet to hear a question from the Opposition . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition with her final question.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I was under the impression that "fearmongering" was an unparliamentary word, but since it isn't, let's talk about who's fearmongering. Fearmongering is telling people that they are problem-solvers or problem-stretchers and implying they'll lose their job if they're stretching a problem. Fearmonger means that you get to decide what the problem is, you get to decide what the solution is, and the media

doesn't get to have an opinion, and neither does the Opposition. Fearmongering is when you call anyone who disagrees with you a special interest. So I'm going to ask the question again: Which specific topics does the media need to be bypassed on?

THE SPEAKER: Order. Before I recognize the Premier - it gets a little hot and heavy in here - you are speaking to me, through me, to the members opposite. At the end of Question Period, if someone would like to stand up on a point of order, please do, but my ears are wide open and I am playing close attention. Yes, I'm done.

The honourable Premier.

THE PREMIER: It is true, in my opinion, that there really are only two types of people in the world. There are problem-solvers and there are problem-stretchers and in this Chamber, we know who the problem-solvers are because they just tabled a budget that supports Nova Scotians across . . . (Applause) We know who the problem-stretchers are. We just have to look at their social media where they bypass the media and use social media. I look for problem-solvers. I love problem-solvers and fortunately, despite what you might see sometimes, this province is full of problem-solvers and I love them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Liberal Party.

#### **PREM.: BRIDGE TOLL REMOVAL - EXPLAIN**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: This question actually is a problem that the government created and they didn't need to. Our province is looking at a billion-dollar bill to replace the MacKay Bridge in the coming years. That bridge is an essential link supporting millions of commutes and billions in trade. Now because of the government's decision, taxpayers will be on the hook for every cent of it. On top of that, the government is already projecting a near-billion-dollar deficit this year. More debt, and no plan to pay for it. No one asked for this and I can tell you certainly, no one in Cape Breton is happy about paying the Halifax Bridge tolls. My question to the Premier is: Why is he making Nova Scotians foot the bill for this promise?

THE PREMIER: The simple reality is this was the last toll in the province. There used to be one at the Cobequid Pass; we got rid of that. There used to be one at the Causeway to Cape Breton; that's long gone. This is the last toll in the province and, quite frankly, I think it is unfair that certain people have to pay a toll to go to work and nobody else in the province does. Certain people have to pay a toll to go to a hospital appointment in Halifax, and others don't. It's just inherently unfair and we are not okay with that. Other members might be, but we're not.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: Again, I will reiterate that nobody was asking for this change. Even former PC MLA and Halifax Councillor David Hendsbee is worried about this commitment. He says that this move will make traffic worse on both sides of the

harbour and that we don't have the infrastructure to handle it, and I will table that. Other experts say that the traffic congestion could be 10 to 20 per cent higher because of this move. The government made this decision without a plan to deal with the congestion. Will the Premier admit that scrapping the tolls is just making traffic worse and creating more problems for commuters?

THE PREMIER: This is an unfairness we are addressing, and in this Chamber we should be focused on fairness. I can tell the member who started this discussion. It was a group of young people in the area where I grew up, in Fairview. They have to work in Dartmouth Crossing and they said: "You know, it's tough in life in general. The price of gas, the price of housing, the price of everything, just one, one, one, one." I said, You know, there is one thing we can do to take off your plate and that's we can remove those tolls. We are going to do it so they can go to work without paying a toll, just like every other Nova Scotian in this province.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: The government's decision to do this isn't just reckless, it's costly and one way to finance a new bridge is through grants and loans from the federal government's infrastructure bank. To qualify, a project needs a dedicated revenue stream and that would have been the tolls. By scrapping the tolls, the Premier is cutting off a critical source of federal funding and leaving Nova Scotians to shoulder the full cost of the reconstruction. Why is the Premier turning down federal dollars and making taxpayers pay the entire bill themselves?

THE PREMIER: This year alone, the Province will spend somewhere in the range of \$500 million on roads across the province. I wish it could be higher, but we're doing what we can. This single move will leave more money in the pockets of Nova Scotians, and in many cases, it will leave it in the pockets of Nova Scotians who, as I said earlier, are just trying to go to work. That's the type of work that I think we should be doing in this Chamber. We should be supporting Nova Scotians and helping them keep more money in their pockets. There's lots of other stuff that gets talked about in this Chamber. We like it when the discussion is about supporting Nova Scotians, and we'll do it every single day of the week.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

#### **PREM.: FREEDOM OF INFORMATION CONCERNS - ADDRESS**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The Information and Privacy Commissioner is the latest oversight body to speak out against this government's surprising slate of undemocratic legislation. She's warning that proposed amendments to Freedom of Information laws will weaken transparency and accountability, and I'll table that. Also, not surprisingly, her office was not consulted before these changes were introduced. Why is this government ignoring the concerns and expertise of the Information and Privacy Commission?

THE PREMIER: I had a good discussion with the commissioner yesterday. She comes to the end of her tenure. I thank her for her service on this. The changes came out of things that she had asked for initially. She's asked for some changes and some tweaking, and I'm sure we'll proceed with that. The record in this province on responding to FOIPOP requests is actually the best in the country. In this province, we respond to 80 per cent of the requests within 30 days - 80 per cent. That's the highest in the country. There are many provinces - I don't want to call them out - but 50 per cent, 44 per cent, 27 per cent. In Nova Scotia, 80 per cent in 30 days.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I am so glad to hear that some of the changes proposed are going to be walked back. I wonder if the media had anything to do with that. This government has come here with the surprising agenda to double down on avoiding accountability, including trying to pass legislation that would have allowed the Auditor General to be fired without cause, attempting to limit debate in this House, painting the media as the enemy. And now, pushing changes that make it easier to deny Freedom of Information requests, and figure out what's actually going on in here. The Premier was right to walk back proposed changes to the Auditor General's Office. Can he tell us when he's going to do the same for the Information and Privacy Commissioner?

THE PREMIER: The commissioner reached out, the commissioner sent a letter and outlined some - what she described as amendments and tweaking. That's the way the process works. It's actually built like that. Legislation is tabled. There's actually a process. Committee of the Whole, public engagement, second - that's actually the way the process works. I know it might surprise members opposite because the Liberals, when they were in government, they didn't take many changes. Whatever they introduced, that was it. The NDP - well we know what the NDP did. In this government, we have the courage to listen to Nova Scotians. We respect Nova Scotians. We will continue to do that. We will listen to Nova Scotians at every opportunity. When they put forward meaningful things like the commissioner did. If the Opposition put something meaningful forward, the day I see that, I'll be happy to listen to that too.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

### **GAD: TARIFFS PLAN - DIVULGE**

CLAUDIA CHENDER: There's another thing that most governments do, which is consult before they put legislation in, so they know what the concerns are going to be. Hopefully we'll get there. Donald Trump is threatening to impose 25 per cent tariffs on our imports in less than a week. The measures the Premier announced yesterday to remove barriers to interprovincial trade is a start. But workers need to know that there is a plan to support them. The Premier has not, in fact, addressed the questions of the promised changes in procurement. What Nova Scotian producers, workers and small businesses know, or should know, is the plan. What is the plan and when will we know it?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Growth and Development.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I could not be prouder of the leadership of this Premier. For weeks now, he's been taking this issue top of mind. He's been travelling to meet with his federal, provincial, and territorial counterparts. He's travelled to Washington on two occasions. He's met with business leaders. I've joined him on those meetings. We are leading the country in breaking down internal trade barriers. We want Nova Scotians and Nova Scotian businesses to know that we are taking action. We were the first province to come out with retaliatory actions and will have more to say.

[2:15 p.m.]

CLAUDIA CHENDER: That's just it: Nova Scotians don't know. I'm glad that everyone is proud of the Premier for his travel, but Nova Scotians don't know what is going to happen. They're working hard to afford their rent and their mortgages. They're making sacrifices so that they can buy groceries, and they are worried about the economic impact. Again, with less than a week before the deadline, when can Nova Scotians expect a plan from this government on how it will impact their families, and what help will be there for them?

COLTON LEBLANC: Breaking down internal trade barriers is exactly what we've heard from Nova Scotians. They want to make it easier to do business, not only in Nova Scotia, but across this country. I'll remind the honourable member that this is making national news. The Premier is taking the bull by the horns, taking this file seriously, breaking down these barriers, supporting Nova Scotia businesses, and will continue to do just that.

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

### **FTB: NO ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS - COMMIT**

LISA LACHANCE: Last week, the Governor of the Bank of Canada cautioned that this time, if tariffs are long-lasting and broad-based, there won't be a bounce-back. We may eventually regain our current rate of growth, but the level of output would be permanently lower. It's more than a shock; it's a structural change. Is the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board confident that this government's habit of spending without accountability and transparency will not worsen the impact of tariffs on our province?

HON. JOHN LOHR: I am happy to talk about the budget that we brought in, which was a historic budget, which will be a stimulus - a \$500 million tax break to ordinary Nova Scotians to help them with the affordability issues that the NDP raises, and investments in infrastructure. It's not just me. I will quote and table: "In the case of Nova Scotia it forecasts that U.S. tariffs are largely expected to be offset by stimulus provided by the province's capital spending and tax reduction." - Moody's. Morningstar DBRS: "The province's

ample fiscal flexibility, relatively strong balance sheet and resilient economy which provides a reasonable buffer . . .” (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: Nova Scotia does not have a requirement for the Legislature to review, vote or approve out-of-budget spending or additional appropriations. The members across have been abusing this by spending more and more outside of the budget process. In the last decade, there has been a total of \$7 billion in additional appropriations, and nearly \$4 billion of this, over half, has come in the span of the last three fiscal years. Will the minister to do the responsible thing and commit to no additional appropriations outside the legislative process in this coming fiscal year, in a time of economic and financial uncertainty?

JOHN LOHR: I want to assure Nova Scotians that we have received as a province 24 clean bills of health from the Auditor General. The additional appropriations process requires documentation with the House of Assembly, four fiscal updates each year. We are following that process. Which of the extra spendings did the member not want us to do? That would be my question. I want to assure Nova Scotians that we had projected four deficit budgets in a row. We delivered four surplus budgets in a row. The extra revenue was used to take a deficit budget and turn it into a surplus budget. We spent what we spent on Nova Scotians’ needs.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

### **HCR: QEII REDEVELOPMENT DELAY - EXPLAIN**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: My question is to the minister responsible for Build Nova Scotia. Last week, it was announced that the department is still finalizing the contract for the delayed QEII Halifax Infirmary, but the numbers are becoming more clear. Nova Scotians are getting half the hospital for three times the price, and it’s taking three times as long. My question is: With the later, more expensive QEII redevelopment plan and with patients waiting longer, is the minister concerned that a tariff war might continue to present cost pressures and future delays in this already-delayed project?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister responsible for Healthcare Redevelopment.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to point out that there actually was no plan when we formed government, unless maybe the one that was on the back of a piece of paper towel with a Class “G” estimate, if we were lucky. This new project is going to revolutionize care in Halifax. (Applause) So far with the early works, construction has met

all milestones. The fact that we have reached financial close means that the amount of money that we pay for this project is not going to change. The teams have done an incredible job. We have 216 more beds in the system. We have 16 more operating rooms in the system. We have a double-sized emergency department, all just on the peninsula.

IAIN RANKIN: What an insult to civil servants who are still working on the file in the Department of Health and Wellness. The governing party, when they were in Opposition, was actually opposed to the only bill that took place because it was already under construction when they took power - the Bayers Lake Outpatient Centre. They opposed that project. They came out against the rest of the VG build that was recommended by those same experts in the field whom the minister just insulted, and that caused delays because they wanted to put their own stamp on the project.

The fact is that we could have some new infrastructure built now at the VG site. Instead, it won't be ready until at least 2031. We all know how urgent this is. My question to the minister is: Because the main strength of the P3 project is to defer those risks to the contractor, can the government ensure that the contractor will absorb all those risks on the project?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: What I would say respectfully is that people knew that original plan was not achievable. There was no workforce that was going to be able to deliver this mammoth project that had not been thoroughly thought through. There was no plan to build from. There were thoughts, there were hopes, and there were wishes. Now we have looked. We have done more, faster. That building - that new facility - the cost is set. The teams have worked incredibly hard. Early Works has moved this project forward exponentially. Nova Scotians should be very proud of the civil service that finally had the opportunity to deliver a manageable and appropriate project in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

### **RTA: RENT REAL CONTROL - IMPLEMENT**

SUZY HANSEN: This government keeps saying that the solution to the housing crisis is more housing and that their plan to increase supply is working, yet newly constructed units in downtown Halifax are sitting vacant because Nova Scotians simply cannot afford to rent them. My question is: Can the minister responsible for housing tell us who this government's housing plan is working for?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: We know, as the member herself pointed out, that the solution to the housing situation in our province is more supply. That's why we put actions into words and words are now into action in building a plan: \$1.7 billion over five years to create the conditions to build more supply. We're 125 per cent of that 2028 target. We know that we need supply across the spectrum. That's why we're investing in more public housing - the largest investment in 30 years. I couldn't be prouder of that investment.

SUZY HANSEN: I pointed out what the minister had said. I would suggest that the minister read the report that I table. This government is also failing to maintain affordability for existing units. Because of the loopholes in this government's rent cap, new tenants on average saw rent increases of 28 per cent last year. I don't know about the minister, but I know folks in my riding are struggling to stay housed with these soaring prices. My question is: When will this government admit that their housing plan is not working and implement real rent control?

COLTON LEBLANC: I fundamentally disagree with the member opposite that rent control is going to fix our housing market. We need more supply. That is the truth. As I noted last week, Statistics Canada noted that from January of last year to January of this year, housing starts across the province have increased 38 per cent. Our housing plan is working. The CMHC released a report indicating some of the highlights that increasing housing starts - as I noted - higher vacancy rates, and lower home prices. We've made a number of program changes to our rent supplement program and to public housing to ensure that the most vulnerable Nova Scotians who need it can have access to it. I'll table that report.

THE SPEAKER: Did the member for Halifax Needham table the report?

SUZY HANSEN: I did.

THE SPEAKER: Thank you so much.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

### **OSD: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE PROGS. - FUND**

SUSAN LEBLANC: New Leaf is a program that addresses the root causes of gender-based violence. It provides group counselling and support for abusive men who want to stop hurting their loved ones. When we talk about gender-based violence prevention, these are the programs we need, but New Leaf is struggling to keep up with demand, and they need more funding to provide this vital service - and I can table an article about that. When will this government commit to providing stable core funding for groups like New Leaf to prevent gender-based violence?

HON. SCOTT ARMSTRONG: We know that any incident of intimate partner violence is one too many, and across government we are investing and making great strides in supporting groups across this province to intervene before incidents happen. New Leaf is a great example of that. Our department supports New Leaf. Over several years, our funding has been increased. They have a proposal in. We're reviewing that proposal, and there will be more to say on this later.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I am glad to hear that a proposal is under way, but what is needed is what was recommended by the Mass Casualty Commission - stable core funding for organizations that address and prevent gender-based violence. This type of funding would mean that groups like New Leaf don't have to keep putting proposals in. They don't have to keep wondering if they will be able to continue next year or the year after. Supporting groups like New Leaf - which focus on interventions for men - will help address the root causes of gender-based violence. My question is: Why won't this government commit to a funding model that will ensure important programs like New Leaf can continue year after year after year?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Justice.

HON. BECKY DRUHAN: My colleagues and I are eagerly wanting to answer this question because we are working cross-department. I do want to say that we recognize the need for core funding, and we have, in fact, started increasing core funding. That took place last year with respect to the transition houses - the largest increase in core funding in decades - and that was a significant investment. We're continuing to assess that. I wanted to draw the member's attention to the work that we are doing around supporting men, because this is an incredibly important issue, and we heard from Tod Augusta Scott - who is a leader in this field - in an article from the *Halifax Examiner*, and he said: "... while more money is always welcome for programs, including those for men, Nova Scotia is a leader nationally on this issue."

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

### **DHW: CANCER SPECIALISTS - RECRUIT**

ROD WILSON: Nova Scotians shamefully have the longest wait times for medically necessary care in Canada. A tabled document shows Nova Scotians are waiting on average 56.7 weeks for medically necessary care, 28 weeks from referral to family doctors - even longer if you live in beautiful Digby. When will this government solve the very real problem of Nova Scotians waiting for longer than other Canadians for medically necessary care?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I think the question is about medical assistance in dying. (Interruption) Oh, okay. Sorry, I don't understand the question. We've been working on wait times across the province. There are a number of things that have happened. Certainly, the investments in primary care have been an important part - e-referrals. We've been looking at a variety of ways in which we can increase the number of specialists throughout the province. We understand. We inherited a significant hole that we had to dig out of, and we continue to increase our workforce. We continue to look at technology and modernization of our system in order to move people through the system more quickly. The C3 technology that we've just implemented has saved 29,000 bed days since its inception.

[2:30 p.m.]

ROD WILSON: Speaker, long waits have real consequences for Nova Scotians. They're not just numbers. When a woman from Digby survived cancer back in 1990, she was told by her doctor that if she got cancer again, it would be a different type, and she probably wouldn't survive. Now she might be faced with the reality of waiting 9 to 12 months to see a specialist. Can the minister tell us why this government has failed to recruit, particularly in rural Nova Scotia, enough specialists to provide timely life-saving care Nova Scotians need and where they live?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I want to assure Nova Scotians we're working very hard to recruit. There are 160 new specialists that have been recruited to this province in the last year. We are looking at a variety of options. In particular to dermatology, there are some new things under way, like the teledermatology service. Not only does it provide service in community, but it also prevents rural Nova Scotians from having to travel. We also have a program where physicians can reach out to specialists on a virtual care platform to initiate treatment. We understand there are certain specialties with wait times, and we're looking at those constantly, trying to understand how to better support through practice optimization and recruitment efforts. I want Nova Scotians to know we have done very well, and we will continue to put our shoulder to the wheel.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

### **LSI: NURSES PAY DISPARITY - RECTIFY**

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: My question is for the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration. Here in Nova Scotia, the Nova Scotia Nurses' Union's latest collective agreement was settled in June 2024. Retroactive compensation for NSNU members dated back to 2020. Registered nurses working in long-term care who are not NSNU members only received three months of retro pay, from April through June. Disparity is particularly concerning, given that all nurses perform the same work in long-term care, yet they did not receive the same retro pay. My question to the minister is: Can he please provide insight into the rationale behind this decision and whether there are plans in place to rectify this decision to ensure there is equal pay for equal work here in Nova Scotia?

HON. NOLAN YOUNG: I'd be happy to chat with her sometime offline about this and look into it.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I look forward to having that conversation.

Speaker, am I allowed to direct a question to someone else?

THE SPEAKER: You could always re-ask a question. You need to stay on topic. Just frame it up. You have 16 seconds,

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I do want to express my concerns that nurses in this province are not being treated fairly. Earlier, we heard the Premier talk a lot about fairness. I want to stand in my spot and say on behalf of all nurses and many other people, including teachers, in this province: They do not feel like they're being treated fairly in many circumstances. This example of not receiving the same retro pay - equal pay for equal work - is just one example. I'm hoping that the minister will stand and make a commitment to fix this and ensure that all non-unionized nurses are paid the same as the unionized nurses, since they completed the exact same type of work here in the Province of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I feel that nurses - as a nurse - do feel valued in this province. We have settled a very generous and respectful contract with nurses. We have also settled 289 other collective agreements with very minimal labour disruption. There are people who work outside of a unionized environment, and those relationships - my understanding - are with the employer. I can't speak to those cases directly, but we have worked very hard to make sure nurses are well-paid and very much respected. We work hard every day with them to make sure we implement changes to attract and retain our nursing workforce.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

### **EECD: INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY - IMPROVE**

PAUL WOZNEY: This government's implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy is leaving too many families between a rock and a hard place. Without adequate classroom supports, more parents are facing the difficult decision to home-school or move to a different province that offers greater one-to-one support. Can the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development explain why this budget is forcing vulnerable students out of Nova Scotia and its classrooms?

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: First and foremost, we deal with facts, not hearsay. If the member has the facts on that, they can actually table it. What I can say is, we're working with RCEs, we're working with PSAANS, we're working with the teachers union. We are investing in our schools like never before. We are hiring more staff. We appreciate and love our staff, and we'll continue to support them and the families that need it.

PAUL WOZNEY: And yet, not enough is being done to improve the situation. Nova Scotia Teachers Union President Peter Day reports that the current caseloads of school psychologists, social workers, and speech language pathologists are not only

unrealistic; they're unsustainable. Without additional funding for staff, the policy risks remaining words on a paper rather than reality. I ask: Why does this budget include so little new funding for inclusive education to address the crushing workloads of vital specialists in our system?

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: What we do know is that this has been an issue for a lot longer before we were in government. In fact, we are addressing it now. We have continued to address it over the last five years. This was an issue when that member was president of the NSTU and we didn't hear a peep out of him on that. What I will tell you is if you look in the budget, you'll see investment in ECEs, you'll see investment in teachers . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Quiet, please. The minister is speaking. The member is speaking. We're a little too rowdy.

The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: When the NDP were in government, they cut education. What I can tell you is there are more teachers working now than ever before. In fact, under this government and this current NSTU president, they ratified an agreement. (Applause)

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

### **RTA: AFFORDABLE HOUSING - PROVIDE**

KENDRA COOMBES: Allan MacKay has spent years searching for an apartment in Cape Breton that is both accessible and affordable without any luck. As a last resort, he's paying \$1,200 a month to live at the Northside General. My question for the Minister responsible for Housing: How long will this government keep folks like Allan MacKay waiting for appropriate, affordable, and barrier-free housing?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: We understand, of course, the need for more housing. That's why we are building more housing, even in Cape Breton, in the member's area. We're building more public housing. In addition to that, we're also making significant investments in converting a number of units into accessible units. We had a media call on this, and we asked the reporter to provide us some contact information, because there's a little bit more to the story, I think, that we have to dive into, and we'd be happy to look into it.

KENDRA COOMBES: Unfortunately, Allan is not the only one. These situations have been sent to the Minister for Housing and now the Minister responsible for Housing for a while now. The Province's Housing Needs Assessment released years ago stated clearly: "A lack of accessible housing means many people are placed in unsuitable living conditions, with varying degrees of impact on their lives and autonomy." I'll table that.

Knowing this, why has the government been so slow to increase the supply of accessible housing across the province?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: We are making significant investments in public housing. Yesterday the Opposition was talking about if only 15 years ago that things were done. Well, perhaps during their time in government, if they would have done something with public housing . . . As of March of last year, the Provincial Housing Agency has invested over \$40 million to create 51 barrier-free units and complete accessibility upgrades to an additional 165 units to meet accessibility targets established from the nine-year National Housing Strategy by our agreement. That's not moving slow.

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

### **OSD: CHILD PROTECTION RECOMMENDATIONS - IMPLEMENT**

LINA HAMID: Nova Scotia's Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives released a report recently showing that the conditions for frontline child protection workers have deteriorated dramatically. Workers are faced with overwhelming caseloads and high turnovers within the department. I have an easy yes or no question for the Minister of Opportunities and Social Development: Is this department actively implementing the recommendations from this report to improve the working conditions of child protection workers?

HON. SCOTT ARMSTRONG: The answer is, Speaker, absolutely we are. We've increased funding by over 60 per cent since 2021. We've implemented a new practice framework for our social workers when they interact with families and children. We're supporting those social workers, but I will say I believe it is one of the most difficult and challenging jobs in government that I have ever seen, watching what these social workers do every day, and I want them all to know we hear them, we respect them, we know what they are doing for the children of this province, and we're there behind them 100 per cent.

LINA HAMID: Speaker, and yet we are hearing things such as this quote from a worker, and I will table that: "We're literally crying for help. We're going to our supervisors and our managers and anyone who will listen and nobody's doing anything to help us... We have social workers down there having panic attacks, people talking about going on short-term leave or resigning . . . so burnt out." When will these workers receive the help that they need?

SCOTT ARMSTRONG: I want to thank the honourable member for her question. Recently, I and several members of our staff met with social workers directly in the Truro office, which is very close to my riding. We listened to their concerns, and we've directed departmental staff to take some action on some of these. One of them is in the area of professional development because, as we all know, since the pandemic the challenges young families are facing are probably at the highest they've ever been. We are going to

be doing more professional development. We are going to be supporting the social workers more, and we put the budget in place to provide them with the direct supports they need to effectively do their jobs, because that's really what they want to do - support children in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

### **DOE: CIB FUNDING CUTS - PREVENT**

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, in 2019 the federal and provincial governments came together to create the Green Choice Program and at that time they would look at financing for these projects that were approved through the Canadian Infrastructure Bank. These renewable energy projects are economically advantageous for large customers, including the provincial and federal governments that can get to 100 per cent renewables in their buildings. However, one of the candidates for Primer Minister, Conservative Pierre Poilievre, has said he will scrap the CIB funding if he gets in. Will the Minister of Energy speak to their cousins in Ottawa to stop advocating for cutting the CIB funding, putting all of the recently approved projects at risk?

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: Speaker, I am really pleased to be able to stand up here and talk about this exciting program here for Nova Scotia. The Green Choice Program is putting wind to work. This is about our natural resources being put to work.

We have incredible onshore wind speeds. This program will have the single largest addition of clean electricity in this province's history. That's 19 per cent more clean electricity to the grid. We're committed to the success of this program and we're looking forward to seeing these Green Choice Program projects to fruition.

IAIN RANKIN: According to the timeline on the Green Choice website, the target execution date for the Power Purchase Agreement is actually at the end of this month - with nearly \$80 million in collective securities due from proponents and Mr. Poilievre's looming threats to cancel the CIB program. In partnership with 13 First Nations communities in the province, NSP is also supposed to be getting funding from this for their big battery project. Nova Scotia had been working on wind and batteries projects well before this government took power. Now all these projects are at risk without this significant federal program that reduces costs for ratepayers. My question to the minister is: If the CIB is scrapped, is the provincial government prepared to backstop all this preferential financing to protect ratepayers in the province?

TREVOR BOUDREAU: We are absolutely committed to this program and the success of this program. Not only is it about getting to 80 per cent renewables, Speaker, but wind is also the cheapest form of electricity for Nova Scotia. This is about stabilizing rates for Nova Scotians and the ratepayers of Nova Scotia. We are really looking forward

to seeing this come to fruition. As I've said twice already and I'll say it again, we are committed to seeing the success of this program.

[2:45 p.m.]

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

### **EECD: END BULLYING - COMMIT**

LISA LACHANCE: My question is for the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development. Bullying is present throughout our society. It is in our schools, our workplaces and our communities. We owe it to Nova Scotians to stand up to bullying by being positive role models who always show respect and kindness to one another. My question to the minister is: Will the minister stand and affirm this government's commitment to ending bullying in all forms?

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Of course, Speaker, of course. I say this all the time: We need to make sure that our children and our staff, when they go into a school, feel safe so they can learn, and they can prosper. We have been working with our stakeholders right across the province on a new code of conduct and I'm excited. You want to talk about consultation - there's been more consultation on this than just about anything I've ever seen. I want to thank the former Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for that. I want to thank NSTU. I want to thank PSAANS. I want to thank CUPE. I want to thank everyone who was involved in this. We're doing everything we can.

LISA LACHANCE: It's a tough time for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth who report some of the worst experiences in the Student Success Survey. I'll table that. In 2014, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development adopted guidelines for supporting trans and gender-nonconforming students. I'll table those. In 2022 this government committed to updating the guidelines. The former minister confirmed in this House the current pronoun policy, in particular, would stand. By September 2023 the CBC reported that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development had draft guidelines. Recently in Estimates, the current minister denied that guidelines are coming. My question to the minister is: Will the minister today tell queer and trans youth if revised guidelines are coming or not?

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: I did not say they weren't coming. What I said was we are using the information, the committees, the surveys and all the outreach that was done by the previous minister to inform us on the code of conduct which the Auditor General herself said should be the top priority. What I also said, which was not said in the question, is that once the code of conduct comes out, if we missed anything, we will make sure that we go back and fix it. I want every single child in this province, no matter who they love, no matter where they live, no matter what they look like, to know that this government is behind them, and they deserve a safe place in every single school.

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

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: I'm rising on a point of order. Today during Question Period, the honourable Leader of the Official Opposition was, of course, reminded to speak through you and not make eye contact with others. Yet during debate, the Premier, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board, the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, and the Minister of Justice all responded making eye contact. I'd like to ask that rule to be applied equally.

THE SPEAKER: I've been watching very closely. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board stares at the floor and aims towards me. The Minister of Justice looks at the clock. The reason why the Leader of the Official Opposition was called out on that is because she was pointing across the floor, over her desk. You will be able to see that on the camera. I will keep a closer eye. I am very neutral in this position, because I have been calling order on anyone here. If you're going to go across the desk, it's a little different; but I will, like I said, keep an eye on everyone else. Let's hope they're not as aggressive.

LISA LACHANCE: Point of order: Certainly, the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board made direct eye contact with me, and leaned and pointed across the desk.

THE SPEAKER: I know for the second question, that did not happen. I will take it under advisement for the first response and review the tape.

Before we move on, I should have done this earlier today, which is the topic of late debate by the honourable member for Sydney-Membertou:

Whereas there has been no focus and limited investment given to growing Nova Scotia's economy during the past three years;

Whereas public debt and debt-to-GDP continues to rise at the expense of our economic interests, resulting in a 1.8 per cent GDP growth estimate, continuing the trend of spending outpacing our economic growth;

Whereas Nova Scotia's PC government's economic performance during this era of unprecedented overspending is either last or second last in almost all categories;

Therefore be it resolved that the government consult with all parties, business leaders, workers, and public sector organizations

to create a real economic plan for all parts of Nova Scotia's economy.

THE SPEAKER: I should have done that this morning, but I forgot. I apologize for that.

### **OPPOSITION MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

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

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Private Members' Public Bills for Second Reading.

### **PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

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

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 25.

#### **Bill No. 25 - Finance Act (amended).**

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

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I move that Bill No. 25 be now read a second time.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I'm happy to rise and talk about this proposed bill. Because there are some new folks in the room, I'm going to take a bit of time to walk through what this bill is about and why we're concerned about it.

The current Finance Act that we operate under was most recently revised in 2010. It's true, that was under an NDP government, although it was really an important process at that time because the bill needed to be updated. Thirteen, 14, or 15 - or however many years later at this point - 15 years later, we know that there are some weaknesses within the current Finance Act. There are ways to make it better for the accountability to Nova Scotians, ways to make it more transparent how we in this House are spending Nova Scotians' money, and ways to ensure we are getting value for money for Nova Scotians.

We're here during a budget session. We have received a budget from the government, and we're in Estimates, where we're reviewing the content of the budget and the proposals therein. We have a chance on this side of the House to ask questions about the provisions in that budget, and eventually we will bring the Estimates back to be

recognized here in this House. Eventually, we will also respond to a Financial Measures Act to enact whatever actions are needed.

Of course, it is true that sometimes, after that budget process is complete and during the fiscal year, it might be necessary for government to respond to emerging events: emergencies and that sort of thing. The authors of the 2010 Finance Act foresaw this need. They had two processes, one of which was the additional appropriations route. Basically, government ministers are able to go to Executive Council and explain why they can't meet their obligations within their current budget, within the budget that was debated and approved in this Legislature. Executive Council can consider that, and if they approve it, an Order in Council is filed.

That sounds like a reasonable approach. If you had - you might have a problem that you need to fix. I'm going to talk about a few of the problems with this process. First, it's ballooned since 2010-2011. In 2010-11, there was just \$63 million approved in additional appropriations. In the past year - in 2024 - there was \$1.3 billion. We're not just talking about an increase in absolute numbers, but it's also relative. In 2014-15, it was 1.3 per cent of the budget, and in 2024, it's 8.2 per cent of the budget.

Government will tell you: What did we want them to do, not respond to what Nova Scotians need? That's not telling the whole story. First, we're out of line with other provinces, and we're out of line with the federal government. Other provinces - other governments - can respond to emergencies when they need to almost instantly and provide financial assistance if needed. However, if other governments want to add money to an existing budget line item - to an existing program or service - in fact, they need to go back to the legislature and have that information tabled. It can be discussed. We have been calling for what this amendment outlines, which is essentially bringing additional appropriations back to the House to be discussed so they are more transparent and accountable.

There are a few other issues that are important to think about with this process. First, it's the question of value for money. In the budget-making process in departments, as most of you would know, departments look at what they're doing, what's coming up, what they spent in past years, what the pressures are for coming years, if the departments have agreements with community organizations or other associations - there's probably a contract guiding that. If the organization didn't deliver A, B, C, then perhaps they don't get the same amount of funding this coming year. If the organization says, Hey, we actually did A, B, C, and now we need to do D, that's considered. All of that is taken into account when we develop the provincial budget.

What the Auditor General has found when they did a test of the over-budget spending in terms of value for money is actually that the argument that this was money well spent and needed fell apart.

[3:00 p.m.]

The Auditor General looked at a small amount of the over-budget spending from 2023. Basically, none of it responded to the test of being immediately needed when it was disbursed. That really draws concerns in terms of: Why did the government choose to spend hundreds of millions of dollars and send it to organizations, and send it out of the government coffers without any protections in place?

There was little to no analysis that supported the financial decisions. In most cases, there were no contracts in place, so lots of money was being given to third-party organizations with no provision to talk about: Well, what if that program that they've been asked to stand up or whatever doesn't come to fruition? What if they decide they can't do it? What if they don't expend the full amount in the coming fiscal year? In fact, you know what would happen to the money - the government money, the money of Nova Scotians - that we gave them? Well, actually, we don't know, because there wasn't a contract, so there was no way for the money to come back. There was nothing in there about the interest provisions, and these were significant amounts of money.

Basically, it is not clear that in the current process this Finance Act is being used appropriately. What exists is the possibility to respond to emergencies, and that is completely valid, but in the case of the funding that was provided to folks - and I'm sorry, I'm just digging through my files - there was a bunch of money given in post-secondary spending: huge, year-end grants that were for future programs. They were not things that were going to be spent by March 31<sup>st</sup> of that year. In fact, they were not going to be spent by March 31<sup>st</sup> of the following year. Yet there was no provision for a report, accountability, returning the money, who got to keep the interest money.

Because there weren't contracts in place, there was no ring-fencing of the money, so it wasn't like we said to SMU, Here's the \$25 million for health data analytics, stand it up in September, and SMU said, We can't stand it up in September because there's a whole process of accrediting new programs. There was no provision for ring-fencing it, so that organization could take the money and frankly do whatever it wanted with it - not based on outcomes, not based on expenditures.

I'm going to try to wrap up here pretty quickly. It's all in a number of Auditor General reports. So for the new folks here, I would suggest picking those reports up: *Value for Money of Over-Budget Spending* and the most recent financial report, which also looks at the lack of accountability and how we are out of sync with other provinces. I want to really say that the concern here is value for money. Why are we giving away hundreds of millions of dollars without contracts? I mean, this is not acceptable.

Why are we allowing financial decisions to carry on through the year that are not emergency responses? I would say that the other issue around what the effect is for Nova

Scotians - besides not knowing where the money is or how it's going to be managed or having any contracts in place for results - is also the long-term impact.

All of this extrabudgetary spending was on the basis of non-permanent growth in our economy. It was basically a windfall. We have population growth, and we have federal transfers, so it's not actually building the economy of this province. In New Brunswick - whose government's decisions I don't really agree with - they had the same windfall, and you know what they did? They paid down their debt. In our case, we now have a four-year fiscal plan that takes us to the point where our net debt to GDP ratio bumps at 40 per cent, which is the limit this government wants to go to, yet we don't have the results we need.

We are concerned that this is continuing. We want more transparency and accountability. We want to know, and we want Nova Scotians to feel confident in, how their money is being used and allocated within government.

With that, I will take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I have a few comments on the bill before us. We obviously support the bill. It's pretty close to a bill that we previously tabled in the House in this session. We also tabled this bill last year. My former colleague for Kings South, the honourable Keith Irving, when he was finance critic, tabled a bill that would comply with the Auditor General's recommendation to amend the Finance Act.

There is good reason, if we're talking about best practices and looking at other provinces, when virtually every other province and the federal government comply with making sure there's authority for spending in the House of Commons or the legislature. It seems like a no-brainer and low-hanging fruit for us to level up, so to speak, in terms of the way our precious public financing is approved. There was an audit by the Auditor General's Office, *Value for Money of Over-Budget Spending*, last year. The key message off the hop was that over-budget spending does not adequately value for money or safeguard public funds.

I'll table this, but that's essentially the recommendation the Auditor General has said she will continue to make every year that she is the Auditor General of our province. It's that important to her. I would say it's Priority No. 1.

It was the one example the Auditor General gave when she was asked if there was any bone of contention with the current government when she had the threat of being let go without cause. I think she was loath to give examples, but that certainly has been a recommendation. The Minister of Finance and Treasury Board has said over and over that they complied and agreed with over 200 recommendations from the Auditor General's

Office, but they regularly disagree that they should have to go back to the Legislature and simply be here to answer questions.

This bill proposes an Estimates kind of forum where the ministers who are asking for additional appropriations simply have to answer questions. I could see why they may not want to answer questions on some of these allegations. There are a number of departments that the Auditor General has scrutinized in terms of grants given out. It would be helpful if members knew where some of these grants were going - which constituencies that some of this public funding is ending up in.

The House Leader tried to keep every department out of this Chamber - except for the Department of Health and Wellness - in terms of asking questions to ministers during our budget session this time as well.

My colleague who introduced the bill mentioned New Brunswick. It was also P.E.I.; both provinces that are next door were able to reduce their debt to GDP with the windfall revenues the province has been taking in. That is one way we can be better prepared for what's before us today in terms of the looming tariff situation.

We could have better fiscal health, despite everything that the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board is pointing to. We could have positioned ourselves to be able to respond to these threats that are before us economically. We had choices to make. The extra funding that was available was simply spent. The population growth that was unprecedented, the transfer payments that were unprecedented - this is slowing down. In fact, federal transfers could be reduced, whether that's their federal cousin in Ottawa - if he ends up being elected - or that's recessions.

Other governments had to make tough decisions when they were in power, because of dried-up funds. This government likes to spend the gravy train that's now 38 per cent of total aggregate revenue - 38 per cent of it comes from the very federal government they used as the bogeyman. They're searching for new bogeymen. They were happily spending this money, happily forecasting tripling the public debt of our province, and happily forecasting going to 40 per cent debt-to-GDP when the Ivany report goals were very clear on the ways that we could bring it down to 30 per cent so that we had a better economic foundation for attracting venture capital, for attracting larger businesses, and ensuring that we actually are open for business.

One way that we can make sure that we have prudent spending overall is ensuring that we don't have this additional appropriation problem. I think some future government someday will make this change. It's just standing out in Canada why it's there. People will talk about the good old days when, you know what? In Nova Scotia they used to just be able to sign something across the street and just get a quorum of four ministers, I think it is to simply agree with the Premier and how much more that we can spend. I don't want to

pretend that this was a practice that was invented by this government. In fairness, the mechanism to spend outside of the budget was there before this government.

If you look at the Auditor General's report, she actually presents graphs. I won't show it because you are not allowed to use props, but the graph will show you just how rare and small disbursements were made previous to this government. Then in 2021-22, that number just shot up every year. We're now talking about billions of dollars at the end of the year that is used as a March Madness - as it's called in many media circles - where we know at the end of the year if there is extra revenue to be spent then it ends up being rushed out the door, whether that's in Progressive Conservative constituencies or other priorities that the government has. Fair enough. If you want to spend in those areas, what's the problem with getting scrutiny amongst the elected members who represent all Nova Scotians?

There was a pandemic that the previous government had to endure and make changes. I will pre-empt what the next speaker is probably going to point to, that the Liberal government was spending money when the whole province was locked down and businesses needed support. I don't apologize for authorizing some of that funding that needed to go to people who needed it the most. Now they are spending more than that - overspending more than when the economy was shut down - on their priorities.

It's pretty easy to see why that is problematic. It's pretty easy to see why \$3.6 billion in extra spending over the last three years is problematic. It's pretty easy to see when public debt is tripling under the two terms of this government and why that is problematic. This bill isn't even about spending less, which I am obviously pretty passionate about, and I believe our government is too big in this province. This bill is about ensuring that there is that same check and balance that every other province has. We simply need to go back to the House and ask the Legislature, of which you have two-thirds of the votes anyway.

We know whatever the members want to spend at year end is obviously going to be achievable. This bill prevents quick, unscrutinized spending from the 7<sup>th</sup> Floor across the street. That's simply what it does. That's why I would support this bill. I think it is virtually the same as the bill that we've introduced as well. We are going to continue to introduce it, and I do believe the Auditor General is going to continue to sound the alarms. I don't expect the government is going to support it, so I won't speak too much longer. I will say that a future government will make this change. I can guarantee it.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clare.

RYAN ROBICHEAU: Regarding the additional appropriations that were previously mentioned, spending authority is established under the Finance Act. Through this legislation passed in 2010, the Legislature has authorized the Governor in Council to grant additional appropriations when departments have identified unexpected or unbudgeted costs.

We have an obligation to report to Nova Scotia how their taxpayer dollars are being spent in a transparent and accountable way, and I am sure the minister agrees that we've been meeting those obligations. The Finance Act allows the government to direct more funds throughout the year to respond to emergencies and areas that matter most to Nova Scotians. The Province continues to manage our finances closely, following the Finance Act, to assure accountability and transparency and will continue to use this approach.

This process is transparent and accountable, and it has been in place since 2010. Every government since then has followed it, and that includes the Liberals and the NDP. Additional appropriations are shared openly with media and the public four times throughout the year so that Nova Scotians know how the government is spending their taxpayer dollars.

[3:15 p.m.]

We continue to look for further opportunities to enhance communication regarding the nature of, and need for, additional appropriations. The province's entire fiscal reporting cycle - from budget estimates to public forecast updates and public accounts - provide a high standard of public financial reporting.

Government requires that flexibility to react to the changing needs of Nova Scotians throughout the year. Examples include health care, extreme weather conditions, housing, cost of living measures, as well as uncertainty due to external threats, like tariffs. We are accountable to Nova Scotians for our decisions and release public updates and post information online, and will continue to do so, as I said previously. We'll continue to monitor the province's finances and update the public four times a year.

This process has a high degree of accountability built into it already. Once approved by the Treasury and Policy Board, the additional appropriations are tabled in the House, or with the Clerk if the House is not sitting. The context in which the province operates is important. Nova Scotia requires forecast updates multiple times a year with legislated dates for the forecast. While there is a requirement for additional appropriations to be reviewed by the Legislature in some other provinces, this is after the spending has already occurred. There are no legislated dates for forecast updates.

To conclude my remarks, we know that we are accountable to Nova Scotians for our decisions and will continue to work tirelessly to manage the province's finances effectively and efficiently.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

KRISTA GALLAGHER: It's my pleasure today to rise to discuss Bill No. 25, an Act to Amend Chapter 2 of the Finance Act. These changes would increase transparency and accountability in government spending at a time when we need to strengthen our

province's economy to make every dollar count. Another member mentioned that we should always be striving for fiscal responsibility - that we can always do that. I feel like that is something we should always be striving for.

This bill will amend the Finance Act by introducing reporting and approval processes for additional appropriations. That means that the Legislature will have to vote to approve any out-of-budget spending except for, of course, in highly specific cases. The Auditor General has repeatedly flagged this government's unbudgeted spending.

In her most recent report, the Auditor General found that \$7 billion had been spent outside the budget process in the last decade. That's a lot of money. Of that, almost \$4 billion from this government alone. That means that this government has spent more outside the budget process in the last three years than McNeil's government did in seven, including at the height of COVID.

Budgets are created and democratically voted for for a reason. As MLAs sitting on the government side, you may have the power to make these decisions, but it's the people of Nova Scotia who gave us this power. They deserve a government that is transparent with how they spend their money, and where their money is going. By consistently spending so much outside of this legislative process, this government is not serving the best interests of Nova Scotians who want to know where their dollars are going, and where they're being put to use. I believe they deserve to know that.

We understand that sometimes there are reasons to spend outside the budget process - things like public health emergencies, environmental disasters, which are happening more and more frequently, and the unexpected events that require some additional appropriations. I fully support emergency measures. The government should be here to help when Nova Scotia needs it. Our legislation is written to account for that.

That's not what we're seeing here in the last three years. Instead, we're seeing unbudgeted spending on programs that could have been budgeted for - hundreds of millions of dollars of untendered contracts, and lack of accountability. We know about this spending only because of the Auditor General's very hard work bringing these numbers to light.

Before rightfully backtracking earlier this week, this government had said they wanted a change in the laws to limit the Auditor General's work, and that the government was doing so to align with other jurisdictions. If you're so interested in bringing Nova Scotia in line with other provinces, you should follow her advice to amend the Finance Act. Nova Scotia is the only province that doesn't require extra spending to be vetted by the MLAs who were elected to represent voices of all Nova Scotians, not just the ones who might agree with the government.

This is the third year the Auditor General has recommended that the Finance Act be amended to improve accountability, transparency, and over-budget spending. If this

Premier truly respects the work of the Auditor General, as he has claimed earlier this week, and if this government respects Nova Scotians who want to ensure that their money is being spent responsibly, then we urge you to amend the Finance Act. Bring Nova Scotia in step with all other provinces and increase transparency around the government spend so that Nova Scotians know how and why we're spending their money.

With that, Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 22

**Bill No. 22 - House of Assembly Act (amended).**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

PAUL WOZNEY: I move that Bill No. 22 be now read a second time.

I am proud to rise today to discuss this bill. Bill No. 22 seeks to enhance public trust in the legislative process by setting out clear, consistent rules about when the House must sit. I listened with interest as colleagues, members for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley and Clayton Park West, spoke loudly in the House last night about their desire to modernize the procedures of this House to bring it in line with legislatures that operate differently and better than ours currently does.

I heard words like “modernization,” “predictability,” “efficiency,” and “effectiveness.” I’m glad to know that an appetite for this kind of change exists in the government caucus. Bill No. 22 seeks to achieve these priorities. It will ensure that committees can continue their work even when the government decides to prorogue the House.

At its core, Bill No. 22 aims to protect our democracy and ensure that Nova Scotians can get the information they need about how their government and this Legislature works. It seems reasonable to provide the people of this province with clarity about when their elected representatives will be here in Province House doing the work they elected them to do.

For too long in Nova Scotia, in the absence of a legislative calendar, Nova Scotians have seen key decisions made behind closed doors, debate cut short, and accountability pushed aside. Unless anyone in the House thinks that's a partisan slap, the Opposition agrees that these are tactics that can be ascribed to parties that have formed government at various times.

Speaker, I draw to the attention of the House that we are the only province in Canada without a legislative calendar. The member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley identified a number of legislatures across the country in his remarks pointing to a need for change. I'm happy to do the same. Prince Edward Island, British Columbia, Ontario, and Newfoundland and Labrador are all legislatures that have regular calendar dates for when they sit.

This simple step will allow Nova Scotians to know when the business of the House is under way, when we will be here, when we will be debating issues that will affect their lives, and - as the member for Clayton Park West identified and rightly pointed out - making decisions that impact the lives of the people we represent. Nova Scotians deserve to know when these issues are up for debate in the House so that they can make sure their voices are heard.

Sadly, this House sits fewer and fewer days over time. Around 2010, this House sat, on average, for more than 60 days a year. Several years later, that number declined to 42. In the last two years, that number has shrunk again to 30 days. These increasingly shorter sittings mean that important decisions are often made with a lack of second thought or meaningful consultation. They also mean that the opportunity for Nova Scotians to engage with decision-makers, and the decision-making and legislative process is truncated and limited.

Speaker, our bill is about more than just dates and schedules. It's about the fundamental responsibility of this House to serve the people of Nova Scotia - something that a number of my government colleagues have made clear is a priority for them in their remarks at various times in debate over the past few days. I take them at face value in those remarks.

This bill aims to create a legislative calendar and enhance the system so that it works better for the people of Nova Scotia, not merely the people who sit in this House. All we have to do is look south of the border to see what happens when governments suppress information from their citizens and try to dodge accountability. This bill pushes back against that type of governance by ensuring the rules of democratic engagement remain clear and consistent. This bill is a step toward normalizing stronger and more accountable democracy for Nova Scotians regardless of the party that happens to form government.

To sum up: Nova Scotians need to know what work is being done on their behalf and when. Governments of various stripes have resisted that call, such that we remain at the mercy of whatever party happens to form government to determine when committees start, when the Legislature is called back, and when and if any legislative activity takes place. This legislation aims to address the matter of a declining number of sitting days over time, which limits legislative activity, and - as expressed by government speakers to various motions and resolutions - the concern about addressing public trust in the legislative process and faith in the government's decisions, and the work that all of us do together here on behalf of Nova Scotians.

Some may recall that we previously introduced this bill in 2021, when this was a matter of concern. We are reintroducing it here today for debate because clearly, this topic remains front of mind for Nova Scotians and for members who represent all parties in this House.

[3:30 p.m.]

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of this bill. I would invite members from the other caucuses to support it as well.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'm happy to rise in my place to offer a few comments on Bill No. 22. It is a bill we endorse ourselves as a caucus. As my colleague from the NDP said, there has been a lot of conversation over the last number of days around modernizing the Legislature and some passionate discussion from government members about . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Someone has their phone on. I ask them to turn it off. I heard it from this side.

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: There has been a lot of passionate conversation around modernizing the Legislature. This bill is part of that. I have had the opportunity to be here for many years on both sides of the floor. There's something to be said about having some predictability around when the House is going to sit. Why not do that? If you want to set certain hours, if the government wants to set the time for debate, this would just be one of the next logical steps in that process, seeing that we're the only province without a legislative calendar.

As I said and as members on all sides passionately talked last night about modernizing this House, why not do this as well? Really, for us, this is something that we

have supported in the past as well when this has come forward. This wasn't the first time this conversation has come up in the Legislature.

My colleague referenced the sitting days of this House in the last number of years, and there has been a steep decrease in the number of days the government has sat. We could debate that all day long back and forth about who sat more in government and governments being shut down, but there is a trend where there's less time we're spending in here.

A calendar would give predictability to MLAs and their staff. It would give predictability to the staff in the Legislature, who help us run the Legislature while we're here. It would give predictability to the media, knowing that having a legislative calendar would allow for the media to know when we're here and set a schedule as well when it comes to telling the story to Nova Scotians about what happens here and the decisions that government makes and the debates that happen in here. Ultimately, it would support Nova Scotians in the sense that Nova Scotians would know when the government is sitting. It may . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. I'm finding it getting a little noisy in here. I ask that members quiet down.

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: A good point my colleague just made - passed it over to me - is it would help families in their work-life balance as well. If there was a calendar in place, that would also help a lot of people who may want to run who may not now due to the unpredictability of when they have to be here and sit in their seat to represent their community.

With that, we believe it would be more efficient, and we support this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Pictou West.

MARCO MACLEOD: I'll be speaking on Bill No. 22, which is a bit of a stumper for a couple of reasons. I'll start with the technical reason.

For the last three decades, the rules of this House have been amended 19 times. Each and every time, it has been done by way of a resolution: March 6, 1981; March 25, 1983 - I'll skip ahead - most recently, October 13, 2022. It's right there in the green rule book. The opposition assumes that legislation undergoes more scrutiny, and maybe with this bill, the NDP is doubling down on that assumption. I'm not sure, but I think we can all agree that the ongoing debate on Resolution No. 5 proves, without question, that resolutions are given careful consideration by this House.

While it's true that this bill is in order, it's not necessary. All the actions contemplated in this legislation could be spoken about later tonight in debate on Resolution No. 5. I find it strange that the Opposition would use the limited time they have to debate their bills to talk about something they have ample time to talk about later today or tonight.

This brings me to the second reason I am puzzled by this bill. Yesterday, the member for Fairview-Clayton Park expressed her frustration at debating rule changes instead of other issues she said had a bigger impact on the people she represents. All members understood how sincere she was when she made those comments. Honestly, we are all inspired by the member's journey here to Province House, but now, here we are, less than 24 hours later, debating rule changes for the first of two times today.

Earlier today, I consulted the Order Paper to see the issues the NDP had to choose from when they selected Opposition Business today. There are bills about food security in agriculture, energy affordability, labour standards, mental health, and residential tenancies. These are all important issues. There is no doubt of that. Despite that array of bills and the sincere passion I know members of that party have for those issues, today the NDP chose to talk about rule changes even though they criticized the government for introducing a resolution to change the rules just yesterday. I struggle with the logic, but I respect the Opposition's right to call whatever business they want to on Opposition Day, and I am pleased to be able to say a few words on Bill No. 22.

In the House of Commons, I believe they are scheduled to sit for about 150 days. We have seen them on TV - arguing, debating, adjourning, debating - and you know what? For the amount of time they are scheduled to sit, I can't help but feel that they don't get much done. This is a government of action. We sit, we get the job done, and we go home to our constituencies, where the real work happens.

When I sit here in Halifax at my little desk, I am here to represent and to lead my folks, the good people of Pictou West, who are 90 miles away. I'm here to help pass bills, get the job done, and then get back home where my other responsibilities lie - supporting my constituents and listening to my constituents. In Pictou West, that means showing up at the harvest festivals, community engagement meetings, Wednesday luncheons, municipal meetings, road inspections, and constituency meetings, and coaching the wonderful kids at Pictou Academy. I don't mind being in the legislature if we are getting things done, but I do mind if the only reason I am here is due to a parliamentary schedule and if it makes me miss all the responsibilities at home.

This past Fall, we sat for 10 days. That is what was needed to pass the legislation required to move Nova Scotia forward - 10 days. No more, no less. Bill No. 22 suggests sitting for the month of October and the month of November. Is that required, or is that a make-work project? I believe that the requirements of Nova Scotians, a.k.a. the bills we need to pass to move Nova Scotia forward, are to be the determinant of how long we sit

here. This could be fewer days than what Bill No. 22 proposes; this could be more days than what Bill No. 22 proposes.

No one knows how long the hay season is going to be. All you know is that you make it when the sun is shining, you go until the barn is full, and then you get on with your other chores. Nova Scotians aren't asking us to spend a designated or scheduled amount of time in this beautiful, historic building. They are demanding an effective government. For that reason, I won't be supporting this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I'd like to stand today in support of this bill that's been tabled by the NDP caucus. Of course, this bill is regarding the sittings here of the House of Assembly. I stood in support of this piece of legislation a few times, as an independent but also as a member of the PC caucus. I debated along with my colleagues, who are now in government, and they all supported this when they were in Opposition. I remember the many arguments that they stood and shared. I don't know what has changed, other than perhaps there is a desire to be able to control and minimize the number of days that we are here, which does not support good legislative work. It doesn't support strong democracy and responsible government here in the province of Nova Scotia.

Having a legislative calendar is just practical. I think all of us would like to be able to know year to year, month to month, when we can plan to be here in Halifax. Over half of us are from outside of HRM, and it's important to be able to plan for travelling.

The other point I do want to make, and I'll table this document - I have not done this research over the last 12 months, but I've had this information updated a couple of times based on previous times we've debated this bill. I want to just share some of the numbers here in the Legislature today. These are numbers that I'm sharing just to emphasize that here in Nova Scotia, we sit the least number of days in all of Canada. I believe that reflects in our work. I believe that one of the reasons that we continue to see so many problems in health care, why we continue to see so many problems in education, why we continue to see so many problems with affordability, is because we're not in here doing the important legislative and policy work that is needed to make the changes that are needed here in the province.

We need more than communications being put out that everything is okay when we know, similar to *The Emperor's New Clothes*, that children's storybook, that everything is not okay. When we talk to our nurses who are drowning right now, they reinforce to us that things are not okay. They are chastised and threatened if they speak out. I've had nurses reach out to me and then be threatened by their managers that they're not allowed to reach out to their elected official. Can you imagine, in a democratic country, we have government employees being threatened by Nova Scotia Health Authority management because they dare speak to their elected official? Shame.

I've reinforced to them - just this morning I had one who is now scared. She has been told by her manager that she didn't realize what she was doing was such a bad thing. She had shared that she had reached out to me, and she was told she's not allowed to do that. Now she's scared to, which I think is terrible. I think that is a terrible culture to have here in our health care system.

Teachers who continue to work short-staffed every day, who do not have enough teachers in the classroom, in their schools, principals who can't carry on their administrative work because they're trying to fill in in classrooms when they have no teachers on those days - these are just some of the examples of why I believe we should have a parliamentary calendar, a legislative calendar where we are in here doing the work that is needed to improve legislation for this province, where we can have healthy debate, change this workplace culture that we have here in this Legislature, lead by example, and start having a healthy workplace in here.

[3:45 p.m.]

I do believe leadership matters, and that having healthy leadership here and having a healthy workplace here in the Legislature would trickle down and make a dramatic difference in all the different government departments and in government employees, including in health care and in education.

Back to my information here, going back to my point that we sit for the least number of days in all of Canada here. In 2024, British Columbia sat for a Spring sitting for 43 days and in the Fall for 26 days. In Nova Scotia, we sat for 20 days, as opposed to their 37 days, so almost half. In Alberta they sat for 40 days, and we sat for 20.

In 2023, for example, British Columbia sat for 43 days; in Nova Scotia we sat for 14 days, keeping in mind that we would have even passed a budget and still sat for only 14 days. Prince Edward Island even sat for more than us; they sat for 23 days. In 2024, they sat for 28 days.

In Manitoba in 2024 they sat for 42 days . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. I apologize. There's a phone on.

I ask that everyone up in the viewing area please make sure your phones are turned off.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I will table this document. It is a document. It goes from 2024 back to 2018. It shows that between 2018 and 2024, on average, British Columbia sat in the Spring for 38 days, Alberta 35 days, Saskatchewan 35, Manitoba 41.5,

Ontario 43, Quebec 34, New Brunswick 22, Nova Scotia 19, P.E.I. 30, Newfoundland 27, Yukon 25, Northwest Territories 30, and Nunavut 23. Nova Scotia sat for the least number of days: on average, between 2018 and 2024. I'll table that document.

If you believe, Speaker, that the number of days of work correlates to the quality of work, then that's an argument you could use for why we need to be here. I agree with the member opposite that we all want to be in our constituencies and doing the hard work there. Former Premier Roger Bacon always said to me - God rest his soul - Never forget who you work for and never forget home. Never forget the people. I agree with him, and I will never forget those words.

However, we do have a responsibility. We are the lawmakers for this province of Nova Scotia. This is more than about political gamesmanship.

Being an Independent here in the House, I do have a unique experience and a unique view. I've sat in Opposition with many members of the government. I've heard them debate and support this piece of legislation that we are debating here today, and I don't understand why they would not support it.

The NDP do have, in this bill, some suggestions, such as that we would meet from the second Tuesday in February until the last Thursday in May, inclusive, and from the first Tuesday in October to the last Thursday in November, inclusive.

If the government - MLAs and the government - truly supported this, which I believe they do because I've heard them debate it in support - then why not take this bill, tweak it, maybe add some arrangements that they would want to see, but put it in place so that we have a dependable schedule that we can all plan our lives and better plan? I would argue we can better plan our constituency work and that we could have healthier hours.

I want to just say as a registered nurse, being in here, the hours that we sit - listen, I'm a hard worker. I'll be the first to say - last week I had probably never been sicker, and I refused to miss an hour of being here - but it's not healthy, and we all should be striving to have a healthy workplace balance and a healthy family life.

Do you know one of the worst things that was ever said to me when I first was elected in 2017 that was said by the PC caucus staff? They said: Everyone - all the new MLAs, by the way - everyone gets divorced after you become an MLA. I thought that is just a terrible, terrible thing to say to someone. I love my husband, and I value him and my marriage. For someone to joke and say that - and then when I challenged it, I said: That's a terrible thing to say to someone, and they said: Well, it's the truth, so we're just letting you know. I said: Well, that's not going to happen to me. My husband and I have a plan where we're going to make sure we take time to spend with each other in our work. He has a busy job. I have a busy job. But we put each other first.

Having a legislative calendar where we can have set working hours, where we can make sure that we have time for our spouses, that we have time for our children, that we have time for our families - that is not a negative thing to do. That is the right thing to do, and we're setting the right example for all Nova Scotians to put our family first. I can also say as a nurse, when you have a healthier workplace balance, in the long run your overall work, and quality of work, is going to be better.

The other comment I want to make on this bill - and I've heard members of the government when they were in opposition also make this point - in (2A) of this bill, it talks about, "A meeting of the House of Assembly that does not include the daily routine of business of the House and oral questions put by members to ministers is not a sitting for the purpose of subsection (2)". Calling hours on Monday, where there's no Question Period is, I would say - I do support this part of the bill because I don't believe we should be here without a Question Period. I remember the MLAs who are now in government arguing this very point and saying to the Liberals when they were in government: They're only calling hours on Monday so they don't have to face QP and they don't have to face any questions. Now, I don't know if that's true, but that is something that was argued at that time.

I will iterate again something that I made a comment on the other night when were debating Resolution No. 5. That is the culture and the type of work, the way that we work in this House, does not have to be this way. The other extreme, of course, is in Nunavut and in the Northwest Territories, where they have legislative calendars. They also have all independent MLAs where people work for the people who elected them and not for a political leader. Wouldn't it be refreshing if we could do that here in Nova Scotia, or wouldn't it be refreshing if we got rid of the party Whip so that people wouldn't feel that they were going to be punished if they voted based on what is right for the people who sent them here? I am so blessed; I feel some days that I am the most privileged in this House because I have no conflict. I have no conflict between, Oh, I need to keep the party leader happy versus who do I represent and why am I here? There's never a doubt. There's never a conflict with me because I know I'm here to represent the people of Cumberland North, and that is such a blessing that I have.

This parliamentary calendar, I believe, would improve the quality of our work here in Nova Scotia. I believe it is needed. There's been a little bit in the media, and I've heard it from a few people back home about the raises that have been recommended. Not everyone supports that raise. One of the reporters from CTV asked me what did I think, and I said: Well, I do support the raises - the base raise. An argument, on behalf of the people of Nova Scotia is, Yes, we are the least-paid, in Nova Scotia, among MLAs. We also sit in the Legislature the least number of days in Nova Scotia, so if we're going to increase our wage by 29 per cent or more, let's start working in this legislature 29 per cent or more to reflect the wages that we're getting.

I do want to table this document here. This is an article that was written April 6, 2021. It is an article about the NDP when they tabled this bill to seek more consistency

here in Province House. The Premier is quoted: “Tory Leader Tim Houston said having regular calendar dates for the spring and fall sitting - as well as fixed election dates - would be something he'd welcome.”

My question to the Premier today is: What has changed between then and now?

I stand in support of this bill.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I am also happy to stand in support of this bill. I want to address a couple of the comments that I heard from other members in the House. Number 1: The member for Pictou West was clearly stumped by the reason we would call this bill today. I want to clarify a couple things for him, who was so confused by this bill.

Number 1: When he said we will be talking about these issues later when we debate Resolution No. 5, he is incorrect. Resolution No. 5 does not contemplate anything about sitting days or a legislative calendar.

Whereas we are talking about changing some rules of the House, we are also suggesting some changes ourselves. It's rather fitting - not that I have to defend why we would call this bill today. I wanted to clarify for the member who was so stumped by why we would be talking about this. He seemed to be struggling with the logic of calling this bill, as he said. I am sorry that he was struggling with it.

I will also let him know that the bill does not extend the days that we must sit. Really what it says is that there would be a start date, and we wouldn't be able to call extended hours until a certain date. Therefore, it would require us to be sitting at predictable hours, e.g. 1:00 to 6:00, 9:00 to 2:00, or whatever it is - 9:00 to 1:00 - until a certain date. If we can't get the business of the House done within those two dates - the start and the finish - then the government would be able to call extended hours. I rather think we would be able to get all the business of the House done in that time.

I will remind the member that we are not making hay. God love and huge respect to all the farmers in this province, but we are not making hay in this Legislature. We're making laws. Sometimes laws take time to get right. If they are rushed through, we know what can happen. There are constitutional challenges on laws. We also don't get a chance to hear from the very Nova Scotians whom we represent.

The member has suggested that he would rather be home in his constituency, working for the people of Pictou West. I work for the people of Dartmouth North while I am in here. My job is to bring the issues that North Dartmouthians face every single day to this microphone, to this desk, and I will never stop that. If it means I'm out of my constituency office for a few extra days because we are making laws better in this province,

then so be it. I know that my constituents, who put me here with a pretty good mandate, appreciate the work I do in this Legislature every single day. I wanted to clarify that.

Now, we in Nova Scotia are outliers on this. The government loves to talk about all the changes that need to be made in this Legislature to get us in line with other jurisdictions. As colleagues have said, most jurisdictions in Canada do have legislative calendars. They're treated in different ways in different places, but the only province, aside from Nova Scotia, that doesn't have any kind of legislative calendar or prescriptive dates for sitting is New Brunswick. Everyone else has either a set calendar or a mechanism by which they plan the days when the government is elected. I appreciate that would be confusing for some members to understand, but we are, in fact, outliers.

[4:00 p.m.]

I want to focus my comments on why this matters. Why does a legislative calendar matter? Certainly, it's not because we want to sit less time or take more time out of our constituencies. No. I will propose to you that a legislative calendar is actually a feminist issue. I will explain that.

This was a very controversial thing to say. There's an awful lot of chirping from the other side about this statement. Well, I will tell you. First of all, Speaker, as you know, I sit as the Canadian Chair for the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians. I've said that before, and I'll say it again. I'm very proud of that. When I go to meetings of other steering committee members of the CWP, everyone is shocked that we don't have a legislative calendar.

I can't say to them that I'll be at that meeting or that I can make it because I don't know when we're sitting. They're like, "What?" Let me tell you this. Most people in Nova Scotia at least know when they're working a week or two weeks in advance. Even when I worked at Lawtons on Spring Garden Road, I got a two-week schedule, and I was just a cashier at the front. No one needed to give me any special preference, but I was always given a two-week schedule, so I knew how to plan my classes, how to plan my life around that two-week schedule. Most people have that. Let me tell you, if you don't have a schedule like that, it's chaotic.

You know how if you don't have a schedule and chaos is there, it's largely around the way you function and care for the people in your lives. Of course, I'm talking about child care, and I'm talking about elder care. Guess what? In case it's a surprise to the other members of this House, largely, in Nova Scotia and elsewhere, child care and elder care fall to women. Not to the middle-class men who are making really good salaries, but to the women of families. That is a fact.

It is very difficult to attract women to work in the public service, to run for office, to work at Legislative TV, for goodness' sake, anything to do with an unpredictable

schedule. It's very hard to attract women to those jobs because women are largely in charge of child care and elder care. If they can't figure out how to plan their year or plan their month or plan their two weeks, then very often they can't do the care at home that they need to do.

Why does it matter? Why does that part of this matter? Well, if we can't attract women to run for office, then we don't have women in this Chamber discussing things like gender-based violence, talking about how feminist the Premier is, what a great ally he is. We won't have women doing that, and this House will devolve . . . (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order. No need to start counting how many female MLAs there are. There is a member speaking. I ask that we respect that.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North. (Interruption)

SUSAN LEBLANC: Centre? (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order. Order. Order.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I find it shocking what I'm hearing from the other side. I'm finding it shocking. I guess it doesn't matter how many women are elected. You have to be a progressive feminist woman to actually make some changes in this place. That's the difference.

As I was saying, when women are not here, this place turns into what it has been for hundreds of years: full of upper- and middle-class white men who do make decisions for everyone in the province that are not reflective of the people who sit in this place. It is essential that we make it a place where women are welcome, where women can do their work, and where women can represent the other women in their ridings who are experiencing the same struggles. I will never apologize for asking for a legislative calendar. It is truly a feminist issue.

I spent last night asking questions of the Minister responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and I have to tell you that in her opening remarks I was heartened. I even said to her in the moment: This minister really gets it and it's really exciting to hear some of the things that she is talking about. Well, I have to say, I guess I've learned my lesson. What I have heard today is deeply disturbing. Deeply disturbing.

We need to stand together. We need to make it easier for as many people as possible to be able to work in this Legislature. Just because one woman can do it with no problem - they have kids, they've been able to manage it - doesn't mean that lots of other members can. I also have young children. When I was elected, my children were 2 and 4, and now

they are 10 and 12. I have managed absolutely, but it has been difficult to make sure I have child care coverage for them. I have aging parents in their 90s. It's difficult to make sure that someone can get them to their appointments. I certainly can't when I'm in this Legislature. Thank God I have four siblings who are doing that work for me.

We cannot judge and blame each other for wanting a little bit of stability and equity in this room. It is what we would fight for for our constituents, and we should be able to do it here. Just for all the people who might be confused again about what we are actually talking about, all we are talking about in this bill is that we know what day we start on and we know what day we might end on, or we know what day extended hours would go for.

You could be like: Oh, actually, no I can't do that thing because I'm in the House. Oh, wait a minute, I have to book child care for those three weeks because I am going to be in extended hours, or I'm going to be in the House in general. All it does is add a little bit of predictability to one's life. It cuts out a little bit of the chaos of this extremely toxic workplace.

I would encourage my colleagues across the floor to take a second look at the bill and get us in line, as they like to do with other jurisdictions. Let us have a legislative calendar and make life easier for everyone. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Atlantic.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate the debate tonight. I wasn't going to stand, but as I am listening to some of the arguments, it's clear to me. We talk about being able to schedule our lives around this Chamber and around this Legislative sitting. I've been on that side. I've been on that side as we as Opposition, including members sitting there today, used the bells and rang them for hours and hours and hours, and laughed because it was delaying this side, including the women on this side, from going home to be with their families.

I watched as they did that - and I was part of it. I was part of it. Listen, I am tired of this, Speaker. Every time we get up to speak, the Official Opposition is chirping us. We sit here and listen, yet they think they are above the rules - and I am tired of it. We heard the member for Sackville-Cobequid call Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba draconian rules. Now they are saying: Let's have the same rules as them.

They talk about debate in this House and that somehow this is going to enable better debate in this House. Like I said, I've been part of it. I've seen 10, 12, 15, 20 hours of bell-ringing. So if they're so concerned about debate, I am proud to hear that they're going to support Resolution No. 5.

The ironic thing about all of this is that we've sat here for a week and a half and been chastised about changing the rules of this House without consultation, and without

talking with the experts - and this is literally what this bill does. The member for Dartmouth North said this is just about a calendar. Actually, it's not. It actually restricts extended hours. So if something happens where we need to extend hours - not allowed to do it. Not allowed to do it even though that's been a practice in this House since the beginning of time.

What gives them the right to change the rules? Then they picked dates. Where did the dates come from? What legislative experts did they talk to? Did they do consultation with all three parties? I would be interested to know how they came up with the dates for this House to sit. Did they talk to the member for Sydney-Membertou? Did they talk to this side of the House about it? Absolutely not.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander. They sit there and they accuse us of doing things when they do the exact same thing. They talk about the traditions in this House, yet they introduce bills to fix it and change it.

I agree. I agree that we've got to bring the temperature down. Again, they're laughing. This is what I mean. This is what we hear non-stop since we've been in here - the amount of disrespect.

I heard the member for Cumberland North say, Let's get rid of the party Whip. I guess some pieces of legislation they're okay with. Others, as long as it doesn't fit their agenda, say, let's get rid of them. It's easy to live in Halifax. I'm one of the ones who live in Halifax. We stay here until 11 o'clock or 12 o'clock at night, and we get to go home to our families. But when they're ringing the bells, they know that's preventing members of this House from spending time with their families. They know that. I've heard it. I've been part of those conversations. Every member over there who's returned, I've heard them say it. I've heard them say it. I've watched them ring bells and leave and go home to their families. I've watched them ring bells and go to events and then say, Where's the government? How come the government's not here?

It's just mind-boggling that we're standing here talking about debate when last night our members stood up to debate Resolution No. 5, and members of the Opposition got annoyed about it. Are we allowed to debate or are they allowed to debate? How does this work? Then I heard the member for Cumberland North make accusations against bureaucrats and people who work in the public sector and party members, knowing that they can't defend themselves, and knowing that you have the ability to say whatever you want in this House. You say that nurses are under threat, that they're scared to go to work, and you have nothing to table, no proof to show. Is it a difficult job? Absolutely. Are we proud of the work they do? Absolutely.

To say those things is just offensive. It's offensive to those human beings. These are people you're talking about. It's not just words. It's people. When you're sitting there

and lumping people together and accusing them of things, there could be people watching, and it could be about them, or they think it's about them. What does it do to their morale?

Do we need to be more collaborative and find a better way? Yes, we do. Do we need to figure out a way that we can work together? Yes, we do. I will say this: I've been in two governments. One government I never saw pass a single Opposition bill. This government has passed a ton of Opposition bills. Do they pass them all? No, they don't. They don't pass every bill that comes forward from the Opposition, but I've seen discussions around things. I've seen bills come forward that have been passed. We can't even get the simplest of bills through this House with unanimous consent - bills that are court-ordered, Speaker. We can't even get it through the House with unanimous consent. What does that say about the system we're in?

[4:15 p.m.]

The members are absolutely right. I've worked in a lot of environments in my life. It is toxic. I hold no ill will against anyone in this House. In fact, I have respect for every single person in this House, no matter what party they're in. I have a lot of respect for them, but this - we just need some civility in this place.

The member talked about women wanting to work in this place. We want more women in this place. We want more 2SLGBTQIA+ community in this place. We want more diversity in this place. Absolutely we do. A more diverse Legislature is a better Legislature. A more diverse Nova Scotia is a better Nova Scotia. I don't pretend to stand here and act like I know any of the experiences of any other member in this House. I know it's not easy, whether you're a sitting MLA, a Cabinet minister, a Leader of a party, a Whip, a House Leader - none of these jobs are easy. We need to figure out a way. We just have to figure out a way to make this work and to attract good people to this House.

When people come on and they see us fighting and bickering - one of the members mentioned the House of Commons. When was the last time when it was sitting that you watched it and were like: "Well, that democracy looks great. That looks like everything's flying along perfectly." You watch it and you're like: "Just get along. Just get things done."

It doesn't have to take six months to pass bills. I understand. I understand it's advantageous for the Opposition to be in the House longer. I know. Nobody's disputing that. More Question Periods, all that stuff. They have a job to do: to hold the government accountable. That's part of democracy. That's what they've been tasked by Nova Scotians to do. We've just got to figure out a way. It can't be personal. It can't be just back and forth all the time.

I try. Listen, I'm not going to pretend like I'm innocent in all this. I do get into it. I do get emotional, but then you step back and you think: I don't know what that person's going through. That's what goes through my head. I don't know what pressure that person's

under. People have seen it, where I've - and listen, I've attacked lots of members on this side. The Minister of Health and Wellness is drilling a hole through me right now. Then I come over and apologize, because I feel bad. That's not who I am. It's not who any of us is, and it's bringing it out. I apologize - no, wait.

I have three minutes. I don't know where to look. Speaker, I don't mind if they look at me when they speak. I'll be honest with you.

The truth is, I know most people in this House - not the new people as much. I know some of the new people over there, particularly the member for Halifax Armdale - a great human being, he has dedicated his life to public service as a doctor - and the member for Sackville-Cobequid. We stand up in Question Period and chirp each other a little bit, but I know where his heart is.

The member for Halifax Needham - I've known the member for a long time. I went to church with the member for Dartmouth North - and the rest of them.

We've got to figure this out. (Interruption) Listen, I have a problem. I am a visual person, so I need to see things, and I don't know what to do with my head except to look at you, Speaker. I'm thinking in my head: Where's this person?

The member for Dartmouth South - I see the Leader of the NDP pretty much every other weekend, sometimes. When I'm with my children, she's with her children. When I'm walking down the road - my kids are usually bombing down her road on a bike, a skateboard, or something like that. There are very pleasant, exceptional people in this House.

We just need some civility in all of this. That starts with me; it starts with us and every individual. Some of the things we can do are stop with the over-the-top. If I can stand here as probably one of the most over-the-top individuals who has been in this House in the last 15 years and say on the record that I will stop with the over-the-top - let's have civil conversations, and let's work through this - if can do it, anyone in this House can do it.

We know the tools of the House that have been used to agitate, to irritate, and to get under people's skin,,because everybody in this House who is not new has used them, and they have gleefully used them.

To all the members involved: Do we need changes in the House? Absolutely. We have a proposal in front of the House right now that I think will make a massive difference in the lives of every person in this House. I think it will help people, there will be less political theatre, there'll be less fighting, and we'll get along.

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time allotted for debate on this bill has expired. Pursuant to Rule 22, the debate is deemed to be adjourned.

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

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Motions Other Than Government Motions.

### **MOTIONS OTHER THAN GOVERNMENT MOTIONS**

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

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, would you please call Resolution No. 15.

**Res. 15, Govt. Decisions: Reversal - Consider (C. Chender) - notice given on Feb. 24, 2025.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, I move that Resolution No. 15 do now be read.

We just heard a lot about making Nova Scotians' lives better, yet what . . . (interruption).

No, I can't look at the member for Halifax Atlantic because I am not permitted to do that. Instead of getting to work for Nova Scotians, though, what we've seen from the legislation and the rules that have come forward is a movement toward less accountability, less oversight, and in the Premier's own words during the election, less opposition.

That's what we're seeing, and that's what we want to discuss today because this is not what Nova Scotians expected. This is not what I expected. We've had a good chat today about some history: what it has been like in the Chamber and what has history been like.

I'll say for the record that I have passed legislation both with the consent of the governing Liberals and with the consent of the governing Tories. These things can happen in this House. I don't think one government, in my estimation - because I've been in opposition the whole time - is particularly better than the other on that scale.

This slate of legislation that is before us and that this resolution deals with is not what Nova Scotians went to the polls on. I sat here in Opposition, and as the member for Cumberland North said, heard my colleagues in the PC party support the idea of a legislative calendar, but I also heard them argue time and time again for increased transparency, for order-making powers for the Information and Privacy Commissioner, for information on health care. This was the PC brand - accountability - and I will say that in

the first term of this government, they went to the polls and said: We're going to fix health care, that's what we're going to do. While we had lots of debates about whether they were doing that in the way that we would have done that or whether we thought that the approach that they were taking was right, the focus was on health care.

[4:30 p.m.]

This time in the election the focus was clear and remains clear if you ask Nova Scotians what they care about: They care about affordability. They care about health care. They care about housing. Yet we have a slate of legislation and resolutions before this House with a singular goal, and that is to limit opposition, limit transparency, limit accountability, and ultimately to prohibit the voices of Nova Scotians who elected all of us to be heard properly in this House and outside of this House through the independent offices of the Legislature such as the Auditor General, such as the Freedom of Information and the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

I think this is something that we need to be really concerned about. I just want to take a moment and go through it because this is not democratic. What I will say is that this resolution is really about this kind of slate of lack of transparency that I just outlined, but certainly a part of that is Resolution No. 5, which the member for Halifax Atlantic so valiantly defended in his speech. Resolution No. 5 seeks to change the rules to limit debate and to limit the voice of the Opposition.

Guess what else would do that? The hours we had to abide by. Those were changed by the Liberal government, so the Liberal government in their first term also didn't love Opposition and were trying to do a lot of things that the public was upset about, and so what did they do? They stood up, and they made a resolution, and they said: You know how it says that we have sitting hours and that those sitting hours are Tuesday to Thursday from 1:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. except for 1:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. on Wednesday, the hour of interruption, and then from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Friday? That's only unless we change our mind, and if we change our mind, then the sitting hours are whatever we want them to be.

If we wanted to take it down, if we wanted to be less over-the-top, if we wanted to be more responsible to the people who elected us - which is really what this debate is about - we would give them some certainty, and we would give the members some certainty, but instead of that, what we've seen is something that I would say is common to Conservative parties across the province and across the continent - the unilateral decision to move bans on uranium mining and fracking with no consultation; we're going to remove the ban so we consult. I think that was the language in the Throne Speech which - there's an English teacher in our caucus - is not rhetorically sound, I would say.

They're raising money to "bypass the media where necessary." That's terrifying to me. They're changing the access to information system or maybe not. We heard today from

the Premier, and I look forward to details on that from the Premier or from the House Leaders, but as the legislation stands, the head of a department, institution, or municipality can veto requests instead of leaving it to the commissioner to do that, and this at a time when very strange changes are being made - very subtle changes - to our independent public service, people can be fired more easily. They can be fired without cause. They are being fired more easily. Those are the people who are supposed to decide if things are frivolous or vexatious, or maybe they're just supposed to decide whether they might be harmful to the government. It's really difficult to tell. If those people have to risk their jobs to make information public in the public interest, if they have to serve both the public interest and the political interest but the political interest pays the bills, I think that's going to be a tough choice for people.

This government is doing away with the emergency room accountability report. We're told that our apps are going to do that for us. Certainly, we have information through that reporting but it's not the same information. It's not a point in time. It's not year-over-year. It's not showing us whether things are getting better or worse. Again, this government's core commitment was to fix health care. That's what they were elected to do. Speaker, you would think they would want to track and broadcast how they're doing on that commitment. Instead, that commitment is disappearing.

We've already talked about - but it bears noting that this government appointed a Minister of Communications Nova Scotia whose job seems to have been to dismantle Communications Nova Scotia and then, quickly on the heels of that, let the supporters of the PC Party know that they were going to need some money to bypass the media. We're seeing that play out in other places. It's not in the public interest. It's not doing a service to people. It won't do a service to people here.

Last, as we'll be discussing tonight, they're restricting debate on important issues facing Nova Scotians. When we debate - because that's what we're doing - when we debate things like Resolution No. 5, we're not keeping people here. When we ring the bells on Resolution No. 5, we are giving the public and the media - that this government is trying to bypass, in their own words - time to tell the story. We're not debating Resolution No. 5 at four o'clock in the afternoon. We're not debating Resolution No. 5 at two o'clock in the afternoon. We are debating Resolution No. 5 at nine o'clock at night. That's when this government calls business.

Every government before this one, in the Estimates process, would call Estimates after business. We would sit, we would do Question Period, we would debate bills. The media would file their stories on those bills so people knew what we were talking about in the House, and then we would go through the Estimates process. This government got wise that it made it a lot harder for people to know what was going on, to turn that around. Now, in the last four years, every important piece of legislation that has come before this House has come after the hour of 6:00 p.m., 8:00 p.m. That is not something that Nova Scotians can easily understand.

Again, I have to ask: Why? We have heard so much about this vaunted majority. It's true, all the MLAs in this Chamber were duly elected by their constituents to represent them. I take them at their word when they say that is what they want to do. It's true. I will also say that none of the things that are before us right now allow them to do that. To the point of our being here and what's happening in terms of the accountability and the decisions that are being made, these are things that affect all Nova Scotians.

When we're in our constituencies, when we're in our offices, and someone comes to us and says, I don't know where I'm going to sleep tomorrow night, or I didn't get my cheque, or my immigration status is about to expire - whatever it is, we can help them with that, either ourselves or usually our staff - in my case my staff, because I'm often here or somewhere else - that is so great. That is such an important part of this job. It's such a meaningful part of this job.

But for every one person we're helping like that, there are a hundred other people, minimum, who are never going to come to the MLA office, who are never going to know that they can do that. Here is where we help those people. Here is where we change the laws and we change the policies so that those people can be helped, and we are not doing anything about any of that while we're in this House.

The people of this province have a right to know how their money is being spent and what is happening in here, and none of that is clear. It's not about partisan politics. Taking information away from Nova Scotians, imposing policies on them without consultation and debate, is wrong and it's undemocratic.

I'm going to close with an example. We've talked a lot about the changes that are going to be made to walk back the provisions that impact the Auditor General. Well, we haven't accomplished that yet in this House, Speaker, and here's why: because at some point this government and this Premier listened to the public and determined that they had to walk that back. They didn't reach out to the Opposition about that. They didn't let us know about the elaborate legal instrument that was required in order to do this on the floor of this House. They didn't even let us know it was happening. Instead, they stood up and they read a long script that wasn't available in paper form and that we had no notice of, so we were not able to respond to it.

Then we were asked yes or no, and we said no, because we wanted to see it. We wanted to have the basic decency of this government to understand the changes and to know if the changes were the right ones. The last time the House Leader had stood up and read a resolution - the last two times - one was to limit debate on Estimates and No. 2 . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Getting chatty.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: The first time we had heard a resolution, it was to try to shut down the Estimates process in the Chamber, and the second was Resolution No. 5. So when the House Leader sprang a new resolution on us, we didn't know what it was, and so we voted against it. It hasn't come back yet. We have asked. We have said we're ready to support it. We've had the opportunity to read it. It hasn't been provided to us, but we've read Hansard and we've consulted - we've gotten legal advice and we've understood that the legal avenue by which they are attempting to amend the bill is valid, so we invite them to bring it back.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I guess I'll pick up on that last point that my colleague makes around lack of consultation in the context of how a lot of the changes that are being brought forward in this sitting came to be. I think that's really, overall, what probably bothers me the most.

As I listen and I'm surprised by the first session when Resolution No. 5 was called, and then some of the changes that the Premier walked in and made and left the building - it's very clear that the government does not want support from the Opposition. They actually - maybe they get pleasure out of it, but they certainly want to make changes without . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. I'd ask that you rephrase that. You're not allowed to state when a member comes or goes.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

IAIN RANKIN: I'll rephrase: when the Premier had tabled amendments to the bill that the Opposition was unaware of.

If they want support from Opposition members, you would think that we would get some kind of heads-up at least the day of. In practice, you actually get briefings on bills and things like that before the day that they're presented in the House.

I guess it's odd to me that the attitude of this government is that they have this supermajority, and they can do what they want and they don't need the support or votes of the Opposition members. I think this sitting - if there is a theme ever since February 18<sup>th</sup>, when some of these changes were being brought down, the theme is that this government is looking at worst practices. The term "best practices" has been brought up quite often, and looking at some of the changes that they've made, but the list is getting pretty long on some of these changes that they're asking for and the resolution that we are debating is to bring back some of the impartial bits of information that the Opposition, the media, and the general public at large have access to.

They brought down some of these changes after a jurisdictional scan. I mean, that's what the Premier said, is that his understanding was there was a scan and they were trying to level up to bring auditors general up to a certain code. Somebody - even though that was the Premier's own bill and so that was his understanding, but he was the one who brought the bill forward to make the changes to the Auditor General.

Out of the long list of changes that are being proposed here, the only ones that I believe are being stepped back from are the Auditor General and the Freedom of Information is potentially being stepped back, but we still have areas where they want to limit the Opposition. That means changes that are based on a scan that looked across the province and the country to see who limits the Opposition the most. Well, the House of Commons: The members just talked about how the House of Commons is not a good practice in how things don't get done there, and yet they want to look at the House of Commons to try to limit debate with closure notices of motion.

They are limiting Opposition by not allowing deputy chairs to be appointed. Only government members can be deputy speakers, which isn't the normal practice. They are limiting committees - another way for Opposition members to not have their say during the House sitting. They must have had a jurisdictional scan looking at access to media. What province doesn't allow scrums within the House? They must have had another scan to say, What about that Law Amendments Committee? We're probably the only province that has a Law Amendments Committee. Geez, that's a pesky committee. Let's change the name and let's not allow anyone to say what changes should be made to bills.

I know there are a lot of new members in the House, but I could think of examples where there was valuable feedback being brought forward by the public. I think most members know that there is an intention to make our province accessible by 2030. I can tell you that that Law Amendments Committee experience brought forward significant changes to that bill. So much so that we actually changed the bill from a Department of Community Services bill to a Department of Justice bill. The bill was frozen at that - I was at that committee and made the motion myself, despite the Minister of Community Services even being aware of it. We didn't have to check with the Premier's office or the minister of the department. We were members on the committee - government members - who actually liked some of the amendments being brought forward by community. "Nothing for us without us" was the term that was being used. That was a functioning committee that made laws better.

They must have looked at how they could speed bills through the Legislature faster. Actually the House Leader, who just spoke, tried to prevent every single department from coming in the main Chamber, with the exception of Health, with a clarification they found in the rule book and was forced to apologize to the House. They must have looked at how to prevent non-partisan communications from coming out of the government by eliminating Communications Nova Scotia.

The FOIPOP stuff - which I won't speak to because I think they are over across the street trying to figure out how to get out of that one. They must have looked at how to control and make sure that their public servants get in line and are cheerleaders for whatever government proposes in policies and legislation that they bring forward. More emails going out to civil servants with a bill before the Legislature that hovers above them that they better get in line or they can lose their job without cause.

That's a list of about 10 things. Obviously, they looked across, and this isn't about best practices. This is a race to the bottom. Most times they can come up with one, two, maybe three other provinces. In what world is that levelling up our institutions? This is the oldest Legislature, and I believe that it is not a stretch to say that there is a cloak of darkness that is falling and descending over top of this House.

[4:45 p.m.]

Rule changes: I was going to speak to this later, but I think it's important to note that the House Leader brought it forward, we were completely unaware, and they know they have the majority. I remember the last time when we made significant rule changes, all three House Leaders worked on them together. That member was one of the few who were here. The Premier was here. The member for Kings North was here. I think it was Frank Corbett, Chris D'Entremont and Michel Samson who did some work on when the hours were set for the week, when Question Periods were held, and how long Question Periods were - and there was an agreement.

We used to read resolutions - all of us - in the morning, and then that changed to member statements. The government gave up their time during Question Period so government members could ask questions, just like the House of Commons you see today. That was true collaboration. It can happen again. We're all for modernizing the way this House runs. I just want the members to think about how this is institutional change. A lot of what we're debating has nothing to do with policy. It's about how our institutions function and protect the democracy.

These are the institutions that, by the way, have failed marginalized populations for generations. If you go back far enough, they've failed Catholics, Acadians - literally everyone who is not a white man who owned a certain amount of land and was able to vote. That is modern history. I'm not sensationalizing that they're trying to take us back to those times by any stretch of imagination. It is about protection of the institution and allowing the checks and balances, accountability, independence, and non-partisan ways that our officers run their business - free and independent media, freedom of information, and the Auditor General.

It's about protecting future PC Opposition members. They're making big changes here - not only about their government. Just think forward. They're not going to be in

government forever, despite if they'd like to be, but governments change, and they're making big changes here.

I think we do sit less than any other province in the country. I don't know if that's still the case as it was before, and it gets me thinking. We are already the low bar in that area, and I wonder if other Progressive Conservative provinces are looking to us to try to bring themselves down to that level. There were some areas that we were, I think, best practice, and that's the danger of what we're seeing today as the place that started responsible government in 1848.

That was a fight. That took a majority with Joseph Howe in 1836, when the Liberals came in and challenged those vested interests that had the ability to protect the merchants in Halifax and the special interests - the Council of Twelve that was appointing magistrates in Halifax. Just imagine if Joseph Howe was looking at worst practices then. Nova Scotia was a pioneer, leading the way in reform. Imagine if he looked across the country to see: Oh, I wonder what Lower Canada is doing. I wonder what Upper Canada is doing. We would never get to responsible government.

We led the way for the country, and we're doing the exact opposite here. That's something this legislature has never seen, certainly in the time that I've been here, but in generations we've never seen. It's not policy. This is institutional change that's taking place, whether that's the rules, Communications Nova Scotia, the AG, Freedom of Information, and the list goes on. I want to tell the members that they have a responsibility to the future . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order. There are no pictures to be taken from the gallery. I ask that anyone in the gallery please put their phones away and not be used.

The honourable member for Timberlea Prospect.

IAIN RANKIN: I know my time is running out here, but I think it was the Minister of Agriculture who quoted JFK the other day. I thought of a JFK quote that I think the member should think about. It speaks to the importance of all parties having different ideas, besides the supermajority and the Premier's Office. He said: "Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer, but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame for the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future."

The government members have a responsibility to the future. I just ask that they think about that and the members who will be serving all Nova Scotians in the House in the future.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants East.

JOHN A. MACDONALD: I'm confused. I guess when I got elected, they first said you don't follow Robert's Rules, and I see that because we've just gone through two speakers, and we haven't even talked about the resolution.

I just want to get to a couple of points before I go on to this. There have been some comments about how ringing the bells was for allowing people to realize what's being said. I would like to remind that in the last sitting with Bill No. 322 - which everybody unanimously wound up voting in favour of - the bells were run seven times for an hour. That was a bill that was affecting others, and we needed to get that bill passed. That was not for the betterment of Nova Scotians; it was to drag the bill along.

To get back to the resolution, one thing the resolution talks about is the emergency departments - the accountability report is gone. The accountability report is always old. It's all on the website. It's all in real time. The report from the last time I remember is nine months old. So it comes out - it was nine months ago. Right now, if you look at some of the data points that we actually have - Action for Health Care progress update dashboard, all the quarterly trends over four years - provides the care numbers Nova Scotians need and deserve; the per cent of ED visits by patients without access to a primary health care provider.

Solution No. 5 is: Be responsive and resilient. The per cent of ambulance response time within benchmarks; the per cent of ED wait times within benchmarks; the per cent of ambulance off-load within 30 minutes. This is in real time. This isn't nine months old. We're able to look at it now and see what it is to make adjustments. The Minister of Health and Wellness is doing a great job of when she needs to pivot and deal with it. She can now see it. It's not always after the fact.

For the Action for Health and daily dashboards, you can actually filter it by site: daily ED visits by site; two-week trend of ED visits; triage levels - it's a two-week trend; EHS response, number response in a six-month trend; average EHS response time in minutes; weekly EHS off-load by site; average ED off-load interval by minutes, by site, or all - six-month trend. This is the information we're giving to Nova Scotians so they can see it in real time.

I would be amazed if everybody in this Chamber has not once looked to ask what the wait time is at a hospital and make a decision. That information is now in the hands of Nova Scotians.

The Nova Scotia Health Authority website has a quick link for service interruptions, daily notice for posting of closures, and includes a site map. You're able to look and go, oh my gosh, this one is going to be closed.

Emergency department wait times, which I just talked about - I know, for example, that when a member in here hurt themselves, we looked for the best wait time. That's what decisions are made of.

For public engagement, to believe that this is all being done without it - there's public engagement. The Health Authorities Act continues to include responsibility of Nova Scotia Health Authority and IWK Health Centre to complete public engagement activities to support their business planning process. If needed, Section 40(6):

A health-services business plan must contain a public engagement plan that (a) describes the scope and purpose of the health authority's planned public engagement activities; (b) explains how the health authority's engagement activities will allow it to become informed about the views, opinions, and experiences of the members of the public whom the health authority serves; c) specifies the way in which health authorities will advise the public of the outcome of issues on which the public is consulted; d) includes all other requirements prescribed by the minister.

We're removing a report that staff have to spend their time doing, and by the time it comes out, all the data is already old. That is not being progressive; that is going and saying, We've always had this report; let's always keep this report. If you look at some of the stuff that goes on here, at one point we used horses, then it went to cars, and now in some cases, everybody's in electric cars. We advance. Staying in the past is not going to work.

I just wanted to give some updates on, for example, some of the things the government has done. In 2021, the first urgent treatment centres opened in Cape Breton. The Parrsboro Urgent Treatment Centre opened. In 2022, Annapolis Urgent Treatment Centre opened, and more funding for medical first responder training. Medical first responders are the first ones on scene in most cases, and we need to support them.

In 2023: the Emergency Care Improvement Plan; introduction of flow and off-load teams; assigning physician assistants and nurse practitioners to emergency departments - that has been a game-changer where they're there; making virtual care available for less urgent needs. I'd be amazed if not everybody in here knows somebody who's able to use that instead of being in an emergency room or trying to wait to get in to see a doctor.

YourHealthNS was launched and introduced wait-time viewing options. We've introduced waiting room care providers, patient attendants, patient advocates. Emergency department physician hourly rates are increased per the master agreement. Emergency department physicians qualify for enhanced travel benefits under the locum program. This is all helping to enhance what's there.

In 2024, Six Rapid Assessment Zones were introduced. In 2025: 101 waiting room care providers; patient attendants in 12 sites across Nova Scotia; 142 licensed practical nurses are at 24 sites across Nova Scotia; eight physician assistants are at four sites; 17 nurse practitioners are at 10 sites; patient advocates are at 13 sites.

Let's talk about the emergency department redevelopment expansions. We know there are millions of people watching, wanting to know what the government's doing. Cape Breton Regional, 2024 to 2028. IWK, 2025. South Shore Regional, Stage 1 is 2025, Stage 2 is 2027. Yarmouth Regional is 2027 to 2028. The HPA is to be announced. We also have Glace Bay and Cumberland Regional. We also have Northside General, opened in 2021. South Cumberland Community Care Centre, 2021. Victoria County Memorial was temporary, 2022. Annapolis Community Health Centre, 2022. Lillian Fraser Memorial, Eastern Shore Memorial, and Musquodoboit Valley Memorial, 2023. Yarmouth Regional, 2024.

[5:00 p.m.]

Some key data that you can get on the website, but I'll give it for everybody anyway: At Nova Scotia Health, off-loads are down 40 minutes. It was 64 minutes in December 2024 compared to 104 in December 2023. IWK off-loads are at about 21 minutes below the 30-minute benchmark. The total patient wait for a bed in an emergency department is down 2.6 hours - 30.2 hours in 2024 compared to 32 hours in 2023.

Let's look at some of the things we've done to help out Emergency Health Services. In 2021, we expanded the patient transfer units. In 2022, a new licence allows paramedics to work sooner; a restricted temporary licence allows new grads to work alongside a paramedic with two years' experience; 65 new power loaders, 78 new power stretchers - directed triage was implemented. It allows paramedics to deliver low-risk patients to triage staff to eliminate waiting in the EDs with patients.

Hired 100 transfer operators to handle routine patient transfers - at least 146 new ambulances. Nurses were added to the Medical Communications Centre. The first province to have nurses, physicians and paramedics. EMCI employee advisory council was formed.

Now 2023: EHS LifeFlight air medical transfer service. That program provides more efficient long-distance transfer for non-emergency patients from Yarmouth and Sydney to Halifax. I know for a fact that the member for Sydney-Membertou was extremely happy when that was done, because it was great for everybody in Cape Breton and in Yarmouth.

September of 2023: The OAG reported on ground ambulances. The Department of Health and Wellness and EHS kept expanding training locations for paramedics to Yarmouth, Stellarton, and Sydney. A pilot program for free tuition for PCPs in exchange for a three-year return of service. New contract for paramedics signed. Negotiated 8.5 per

cent increase, 16.5 per cent classification adjustment, and a \$5,000 retainment bonus.

2024: As a result of the positive pilot changes, the tuition program expanded to the ACPs and the PCPs and EMRs, in exchange for multiple-year return of service agreements. Introduced EMRs. Created pathways to recruit paramedics from Australia. I would have never expected that we were getting people from Australia wanting to come to Nova Scotia to be a paramedic but it's great.

2025: A new recruitment path for international recruitment of paramedics from the U.K., South Africa, and New Zealand. So just a little bit of the key data, which is 39 EMRs have joined the workforce since summer of 2024. Hired 11 ACPs from Australia in 2024. We're expecting 49 new recruits from Australia in 2025; 267 paramedics have been hired since 2021. That's a net new of 64.

Ambulance response times in 2023 were 29 minutes, down to 25 in 2024. Since January 2023, SRUs have responded to an average of 1,300 calls per month, and 53 per cent did not need to go to the hospital. Only 15 per cent of EHS transfers are currently completed by ambulance, down from 62 per cent in 2021. Can you imagine what 2025, 2026, and 2027 are going to be?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I stand in support of Resolution No. 15. I stand before you today as not just a representative of the people of Cumberland North, but as a voice for democracy - a democracy that I believe is under threat here in Nova Scotia.

The actions of this government, under the leadership of the Premier, have set a dangerous precedent, one that erodes the very foundation of transparency, accountability and the democratic principles we hold dear here in Nova Scotia. The Premier's actions are a threat to democracy. The decision to silence impartial voices of the Auditor General, Communications Nova Scotia, and the *Annual Accountability Report on Emergency Departments* is nothing short of an attack on the people's right to know.

These institutions exist to ensure that government actions are scrutinized, that tax dollars are spent wisely, and that our citizens are informed of the policies that shape their daily lives. Yet this government has chosen to dismantle these pillars of accountability. We ask the question, Why? What is the reason behind proposing these changes? Because transparency is inconvenient. Because accountability challenges power. Because when people are deprived of truth and unbiased information, it becomes easier to rule without question.

This not governance, Speaker; this is an abuse of power. Silence is complicity. We must remember the words of Deitrich Bonhoeffer, a man who resisted tyranny at great personal cost, "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil: God will not hold us guiltless. Not

to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.” Today I direct those words not only at those in power but to every Nova Scotian who chooses to remain silent.

We have seen quite an outrage across the province, really more than I’ve seen in quite a while. We have seen the government backtrack on one of these threats to democracy but what about the rest? Democracy is not merely the act of casting a ballot every three or four years. It’s a living, breathing institution that requires vigilance of its people. We cannot stand idly by as this government strips away oversight and transparency.

Resolution No. 15 highlights these. It calls us to reconsider these disastrous decisions and demand the restoration of impartial information sources for Nova Scotians. We cannot allow this government to dictate what the public has a right to know. We must act now before it is too late.

To those who sit in this House today: Will you be complicit in this erosion of democracy or will you stand on the right side of history? To the citizens of Nova Scotia: Will you allow this government to take away your right or truth or will you demand better? Will you speak up or will you remain silent, knowing that silence itself is an action with consequences?

Democracy does not die in a moment. It dies in a slow, steady silence of those who refuse to act and notice. Earlier today, I spoke to another bill. When I was gone from the Chamber I was attacked by another member and criticized for the words that I shared here in this House. I was simply speaking for the nurses and for the teachers of this province.

Speaker, each one of us should be able to stand and speak in this Legislature and speak the truth that we know for our constituents without being harassed, without being criticized by fellow members, without being diminished and demeaned. It’s not right. When we do that to each other we’re harming democracy. We should be able to debate and share the truth of the people we represent without having to worry about others demeaning us here in this House.

Let us not be those people. Let us fight for the principles that make this province strong, fair, and just. Stand up for transparency, stand up for accountability, stand up for democracy, and restore what the Premier is trying to take away from this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ROD WILSON: I feel like I would be remiss if I didn’t speak to the data we were just given about emergency times. First of all, I want emergency care to get better. I love dashboards because it’s real-time data. However, there are limitations in every data, every dashboard. It could be garbage in, garbage out.

If you look at the wait times, it doesn’t speak to the level of severity of the wait

time. There are five classifications of wait time or CTAS in emerg: 1 being life-threatening, 5 being the lowest, usually can be seen within two hours. We don't have that data on there, so what is the two-hour wait time?

I want to speak personally. I was in emerg at the QEII Health Sciences Centre Monday night because of a chest infection. The wait time was two hours. It was probably a CTAS 3 or 4. My oxygen level was a bit low. I was there for six hours, which I get.

We've got to be careful in quoting data as the Ten Commandments, because it's not accurate all the time. It can be sorted out. The one thing - there's another tool that's helpful, probably at a higher level - the NEDOCS, which is the National Emergency Department Overcrowding Study. That also includes how many beds are full within the department. In any given day, there can be 80 per cent to 90 per cent of the beds full, and that's often part of the solution.

Before we praise the data - I want to praise the data - we have to acknowledge that there are limitations and there are some challenges for that. I want the data to be better, but I also think we need to put it in the context as how it's being measured, and it's not always accurate. If you asked any emerg doc in this province, Are things getting better? Comme ci, comme ça. Most would say not.

I have all respect for the data and the efforts for dashboards, but we need to use a little bit of critical appraisal when we speak to that data.

THE SPEAKER: Third time is trying time.

The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: You're right, absolutely right. I want to bring us back to Resolution No. 15. I kind of want to speak to - just so folks are aware of what we're actually talking about and what is important. We talked about the Auditor General and how important their role is in understanding how their government is spending and managing tax dollars, and then as well about Communications Nova Scotia and how they've helped Nova Scotians to understand what their government was doing and why: "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."

This is why we're having this discussion. We're having a discussion on transparency and accountability. From the start - I've been here since 2021, and I'm so happy to be in my seat. I love the job that I do. A lot like my colleagues around the table in this whole entire room, we do this work because it's of us to do and people expect us to be here to do that work.

Transparency and accountability: It's really important for us to have impartial information sources - non-partisan so that folks can have their eyes on it in a different way and so that there's no influence on how the information is being given or how it's going to be distributed. It needs to be impartial completely. Some of us may not like that, but unfortunately, that's the law of the land. I mean, like any job or any business - and I know a lot of us here have had other roles - we've been assessed. We've had assessments done by outside parties which tell us the work that we're doing and how well or not we're doing and how we can get better. If we don't have that, how else are we going to know the indicators in which we need to do the right thing and do better for Nova Scotians?

[5:15 p.m.]

The Auditor General helps Nova Scotians understand how government is spending and managing tax dollars. We've received reports. We know that the Auditor General has given us reports on reports on reports, which is exactly what we want. I say this because - as I said, being here from 2021 - some folks have been here longer than myself, and I don't know if this is the way that we do things, but the member for Halifax Armdale said communication is really important and collaborating is really important. I wholeheartedly believe that. My work previous to what I've done here was to be a community navigator and to be someone who connects services and people so that we can build a trust and gain an opportunity to have these tough conversations or have really good conversations so that we can do better for each other.

When I heard "communication" and I heard how it was important to work together in a collaborative manner - to me, I think about getting information. I mean, we get information on the floor and are expected to vote on it or agree on it two seconds after we hear it. I think if we had a respectful workplace and we had a place in which each of us could do our work effectively, that wouldn't happen. I don't see any resolutions or any changes in legislation or any of that stuff coming forward to say, How do we work effectively here in this House to do the best work for Nova Scotians? That is why Resolution No. 15 is what we're bringing forward, so that we can actually continue to hold the government accountable for the public.

It's really important. As a public member as well - yes, I am a member of this assembly, but I also would like to know what's happening, where our money's being spent, and who is responsible for certain things. There are a lot of things that are happening right now in the dark of night - no media coverage. There are a lot of things happening where Nova Scotians aren't kept abreast or kept aware of the things that are happening. We want to protect the institution, and as my colleague for Timberlea-Prospect mentioned, we are the birthplace of responsible government. We should hold that high.

Yes, I understand change is difficult. I have yet to see changes that are actually going to help my communities. When we talk about difficult change, I'm ready to have those conversations, but until then - until I see any type of change that includes me or my

view in there - I'm sorry, I have a hard time swallowing some of the information that we get sometimes from the government side.

Back to transparency and accountability: From a government who, from the time I came in here, stressed transparency and accountability, I have yet to see transparency and accountability. We are literally saying let's remove this, which means let's not talk to the people who are important or consult with those folks. Let us just tell them what we are going to do, and half the time we don't tell them, we just do it. When I say transparency and accountability, I'm going back to the member for Halifax Atlantic about collaboration, working together, being respectful, and coming together to have conversations about these things.

As well, the member for Timberlea-Prospect mentioned limiting committees and limiting the things we do. If for some strange reason there was information, legislation, bills, or resolutions put forward that actually had the input of the House leaders from all sides or members in this House, I would look at it a bit differently, or at least we would consider it a bit differently because we are able to take a look at it, absorb the information, and maybe give some input. Until then, I feel like the hems and haws from the government side when we're asking questions about certain things are absolutely absurd - how do you expect us to make a decision on the floor like that when they expect us to make a decision on the floor all the time?

I'm bringing it back to accountability and transparency and how impartial information sources are crucial to the work that we do here in this House because reports are being brought forward, and the government side gets to see it. There are recommendations for the government to do some great work. We hear from the government that they are taking the recommendations in, or they're going to go and follow through with all the recommendations. When we ask questions about where we are with these recommendations and the government side looks at us as if to say they don't need to answer these questions, there's a problem with that. Accountability and transparency are key, especially when we have to ask questions about something that should have been put forward a year ago or two years ago that still hasn't been implemented. This is what I mean by reporting. When the reporting comes through, it's through a lens that is impartial and doesn't have anybody's party line on it, which we respect because they are doing the work of Nova Scotians, which is what we should be doing here on the floor.

Going back to things that are happening on limiting committees and shutting out the media for important conversations that could be happening: As we know, things happen on the fly here in the House - literally. We don't know from the next step up - from the House Leader stepping up to tell us what bill it is, we have no idea what could come forward. I say this because this is an open, honest conversation. If we knew more and we were able to get information, sometimes some of these things wouldn't be something that we would have to feel like we need to really think this through. We don't have that open communication, and we don't have those conversations that we should be having as a

government because we were all elected here, not some of us.

Some of us weren't appointed. We were all elected by the people whom we serve in our ridings. I said this last time, and I'll say it again. Our voices matter - every one of us. My take on it might be different from someone else's on another side or even on my own side, but it matters because these are the voices of the people whom we serve.

The next point I want to make is annual accountability reports on emergency departments, to see the progress, to see what government's doing. We don't get this information. If we don't get this information, imagine how many Nova Scotians don't get this information. It's really important for us to continue to be open and transparent, even if it's outdated, to make sure that Nova Scotians have an idea of how this government is working. If you're doing so well and everything's working so great, you wouldn't be uneasy about showing your track record, showing what's happening, letting folks know exactly where we stand in Nova Scotia based on the government that is governing right now.

I wanted to say that I went on the website for the Auditor General, and these three words are crucial to the work that we do, which we should be adopting: independence, integrity, impact. Viewing it from a lens - we do this often, because we get up and we talk about how great our constituencies are and we talk about the people in our constituencies and how wonderful things are. That is our independence as MLAs. We actually represent an area in which we can give information to folks around the table about how our area is doing or what works for us.

Integrity: We should all have integrity in this room. Everything that we say and do in this House should be of an integral point. Yes, we may not always agree, because we can agree to disagree. That can happen, but we need to come to a consensus about what it is that Nova Scotians want in this province. We hear so often that Nova Scotians voted and this is what they decided. I don't disagree that point, and I congratulated folks the last time I spoke. Congratulations. Enjoy that time.

Impact is the third word. How impactful do we want to be as legislators in this House for our constituencies and for all Nova Scotians? Do we want to be remembered for the crumbling of Nova Scotia? Do we want to be remembered for the overreach and undermining of the things that happen in Nova Scotia? I don't think that's the case, but if we don't do things in the right manner, with the proper procedures and processes, these things are going to sound like that.

I want to also point out I received a number of emails. I'm not going to read the emails, but I received a number of emails from one end of the province to the next. I got one from Pictou East, which is really interesting to hear. I got one from Preston, I got one from Victoria-The Lakes, Cole Harbour-Dartmouth, Cape Breton East, Lunenburg West, Cumberland South, Eastern Shore, I got a few from Clare, and Bedford South. I received a

number of emails, and I know each and every one of you received them as well, because you are also on the email line.

I would be curious to know: What would be the messaging that you would be telling Nova Scotians? Some of the words were, over the last two weeks - and this is me saying this - we have been flooded with messages from Nova Scotians who are deeply concerned about what they've been seeing from this government. Nova Scotians didn't vote for less accountability from this government, they didn't vote for policies to be pulled out of thin air, and what we've been seeing is just that from this government. We want more accountability. We want transparency.

Coming from a government that started off - when I got there, I was like: This is great. We're going to work together and we're going to have conversations. We may not always agree, but you know what? That's life. Let us work and do the best work for all Nova Scotians. And yet, I have yet to see anything that has to do with helping Nova Scotians with their cost of living. We have yet to see anything that has to do with affordable housing. We talk about housing being built all the time, but affordable housing and housing that is built right now where people can live in it. We don't talk about how we can make health care better for everyone.

I know that the member for Hants East mentioned about the app and all that wonderful stuff, but let me tell you, working in community, I know there are multiple ways we have to give information. It's called a good way of communicating. Multiple ways is not just one way. Multiple ways is something like a written letter or - I've seen a brochure in the mail by this government. Why aren't we giving out that information with the data that's crucial for folks, and phone numbers and everything else that folks can access in their hands.

I have a number of seniors in my constituency who are consistently calling me about, How do I do this? They have a flip phone. Apps do not exist on a flip phone. When we talk about apps, that is not accessible. Absolutely not. Data to scroll down? Not accessible. Let's make it better for Nova Scotians.

If people think that reports are outdated and things are just not great, let me tell you - I have a lot of smart people in Halifax Needham, like a lot of you folks in here have a lot of smart people in your constituencies - people look for those reports. They read them. That's why we get inundated and flooded with emails about the things that have been happening in eight days. Eight days, yet we haven't seen anything moved to Law Amendments Committee. We haven't seen anything moved forward. Why? Because accountability and transparency are important, but I don't think that's what we're seeing from this government, which is why it's so important for Resolution No. 15 to be presented in a way that every one of us can do this work together.

It's not complicated. You're not losing anything. There's no ringing of the bells.

There's no extra debate. There are literally two words: accountability and transparency. That's all we're asking for.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: It is a privilege to rise today to speak a bit to Resolution No. 15 and put some facts on the record. First and foremost, when you look at the first "whereas" clause in the notice of motion, it talks about the Auditor General and helps Nova Scotians to understand.

I get that. I sat on the Public Accounts Committee with her and understand and appreciate the important work she does. That was never challenged. To consider reversing these decisions - the Premier did reverse that decision. Unfortunately, the members opposite did not actually support that. Hence why we're standing here tonight putting it in a debate to debate whether we're going to debate it. That issue has already been addressed by way of that amendment.

The second "whereas" speaks about Communications Nova Scotia and reversing that decision. I do want to touch a bit on that, to specify that communications is a critical and fundamental part of a functioning government, ensuring that citizens do understand what our government programs and our services are.

The structural change in no way is taking away any of that. In fact, the structural change that's being made through Communications Nova Scotia is similar to the exact change that is made in many other jurisdictions in this country. It's obsolete in some of the ways it was functioning. It's modernizing it. It reinforces a commitment to communicating with Nova Scotia using a variety of different channels and means.

There was some discussion on whether all these civil servants were going to be out of work and lose their jobs when many of the CNS staff have already been reassigned to the Executive Council Office. Others have been reassigned, for example, to different government departments, and vacant positions that were sitting there vacant because of non-necessity have been eliminated, creating more government efficiency, not less, and saving Nova Scotians money not spending more when we're trying to table a budget that puts the interests of Nova Scotians first. The total compliment has been reduced by approximately 10 per cent because of those changes. That's an effective change.

Changes to CNS are not about centralizing or controlling communications or the media. There are all kinds of media in and around this Chamber, but there's also media in other parts of our province. I have a reporter with my local paper - and yes, I'm lucky to have post-media production still at home - who can now participate and ask questions to the minister or ask questions to the Premier and speak about things that matter.

We have the *Laker News*, which I believe is in Cape Breton. Fall River . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time allotted for Opposition Members' Business has expired. Pursuant to Rule 21(2), the debate is deemed to be adjourned.

[5:30 p.m.]

We have now reached the moment of interruption. The notice of the topic for the adjournment debate was submitted by the honourable member for Sydney-Membertou and reads as follows:

Whereas there has been no focus and limited investment given to growing Nova Scotia's economy during the past three years; and

Whereas public debt and debt to GDP continues to rise at the expense of our economic interests, resulting in a 1.8 per cent GDP growth estimate, continuing the trend of spending outpacing our economic growth; and

Whereas Nova Scotia's PC government's economic performance during this era of unprecedented overspending is either last or second last in almost all categories;

Therefore be it resolved that the government consult with all parties, business leaders, workers, and public sector organizations to create a real economic plan for all parts of Nova Scotia's economy.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### **MOTION UNDER RULE 5(5)**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

### **GOV'T. (N.S.): REAL ECONOMIC PLAN - CREATE**

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'll take the next few minutes to talk about something that's very important for the future of this province. I'm honoured to put this forward as the late debate. I'm sure we'll hear from all sides of the House on this topic. I suspect the government will come back with a rebuttal regarding all the work they're doing, and that they have a new economic plan, and they're breaking down trade barriers, which we all support. That hasn't happened yet.

I do think this is important. We have had this conversation before in this House. I've said this before. I said you have a government that had historic federal transfers coming in. You had a government that had historic revenues that were generated through

population growth, and a strong economy coming out of COVID. I want to recognize the many people who were involved during that pandemic, who were on staff and supported the economy. We came out very strong - one of the strongest economies coming out of the pandemic.

As a result of that, the government has had the flexibility and capacity to spend. What we have seen is the government overspend - historically overspend - to the point now where we're looking at a budget with a deficit. When you include the potential money that is needed for a tariff response, you're looking at a deficit of \$700 million. The government over the years has tabled deficit budgets only for them to become surpluses, and that is not the result of anything that the government has done. That is the direct result of population growth, and that is the direct result of a federal government that has given this government historic transfer payments - period. That's it. It has nothing to do with great investments in the economic engine of the province.

It has been budget after budget after budget of growth - growth that started during the pandemic because we came out of it strong. By the way, they pounded and pounded away at the federal government to win another election. Congratulations on the supermajority. That was their whole campaign against a government that gave them more money than any other government gave a provincial government in the history of this province. That's how they won, and that's how there's 43 seats here. It has nothing to do with a strong economic performance.

I'll say this and put it on the record, Speaker: This province has the second-lowest productivity. We are the lowest in international exports. We have the lowest household consumption. We're second-last for research and development. That statistic is one that says the government has not invested in the economy and has not tried to diversify in the face of what we potentially will see.

The government is talking about resource development. That's part of their economic plan, which we support as a caucus - resource development - but we know that is years away. It is years away. I say this back and forth, and the government is going to have to make some interesting decisions around mineral deposits and critical minerals in this province that are going to impact communities. They say they're going to have those tough conversations.

It will be interesting to see. I know some of those projects myself and I know there are members on that side who are already opposed to those projects. Now they're not going to have to be opposed to those projects. They're going to have to support those projects, which will be very interesting when the time comes. As I said, the province has a deficit of \$700 million.

We know that there could potentially be a change in transfer payments with a new government. God help us if Pierre Poilievre wins, because his mandates - their federal

cousins. Their federal brothers and sisters, Conservatives. They want to slash the budget. They do. They want to slash the budget. They have indicated that. Goodbye to \$10 a day child care. All these things, the government is going to have to pick up if they want to continue to have these services available to families across the province. There are many examples I could provide.

We're in a situation right now where - and I use statistics - Nova Scotia's economic growth rate sits at about 1.8 per cent, which is far behind what is needed to keep up with the inflation, rising costs, and the investment required. We are overspending way more than we're actually growing. We hear the conversations about investments that the government has made. Every government makes investments, and every government is different in a sense.

I come from a government where we had six balanced budgets. We were Liberals balancing budgets. I've talked to Progressive Conservatives across Nova Scotia who questioned a lot of the decisions that the government has made around the Auditor General. I ultimately think it was Progressive Conservative supporters who were telling the Premier this, and that's why he reversed it. Now you're looking at the Privacy Commissioner and FOIPOP. I'm talking to Progressive Conservatives across the province who are not very happy right now with their government on some of this stuff.

They're also not happy - and this is coming from Progressive Conservatives - when they see a \$700 million deficit. That is a monstrous number for a traditional Progressive Conservative party to put forward. Every government will make investments. Investments were made around the pandemic to support Nova Scotians - because you have to make those decisions. This government has made the decision to put a \$200 million contingency fund in, just in the event of tariffs, which we're hearing now are another month away, apparently.

When you look at the trajectory that they're on for spending, and how the economy is not growing, and they haven't invested anything in the economy to date or even talked about it, for that matter. For the new members who are here, the conversation about the economy was non-existent for this government's first mandate. It was non-existent. There were no big stories about: We're going to invest in research and Nova Scotia is going to be a leader in A, B or C.

It was: We're going to fix health care. We're projecting hundreds of millions of dollars in deficit budgets. Then the federal government would provide more money for transfers. The economy and the population grew substantially, which helped spur big revenues. The government ultimately - that's how they spent, and they continue to overspend. They've been corrected by the fact that the economy itself - not by any doing of the government; they were propped up by federal transfers and they were propped up by population growth, which ultimately was bringing in more revenue.

That is now changing. That is changing and the relationship with the federal government is going to change, especially if their Conservative brothers and sisters win in Ottawa. If the Conservatives win, their team, their family, is going to slash the budget. This is the largest projected deficit that this government, I believe, has put forward since they've become the government - \$700 million. That is a significant number for a population of just over one million people to put forward, and you are now just going to start talking about the economy.

Conservatives. Three and a half years it took for them to actually have a conversation about the economy because now we are under threat. We are under threat of potential tariffs, but it shouldn't have taken a threat for the government to actually start having the conversation. I don't think I have ever heard the word "entrepreneur" used in here. I very seldom heard the words "small business support" used in here. I don't think the word "economy" has been used itself very much in here. I know that because I have listened to a lot of the debates.

There was a lot of blaming the federal government for the despair that Nova Scotians need to face, and we need to fight the carbon tax, and fight the federal government that is giving us historic transfers for child care and everything else. We're gonna fight those guys. It's their fault. Now the polls are changing federally, and I find the government trying to distance themselves even from their brothers and sisters and Conservative family in Ottawa. They don't want to talk to them either.

In my last 23 seconds I will say this: I appreciate the opportunity to talk on this topic. The economy is so necessary for us to succeed as a province, and this government is coming really late to the game to start talking about it. Thank you, Speaker.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

KRISTA GALLAGHER: Speaker, I am honoured to stand again today but this time to speak to the resolution introduced by my colleague the member for Sydney-Membertou.

New Democrats have been concerned about the lack of planning and investment to grow our local and rural economies. Economic development was something that we only heard from this government after the threat of Trump tariffs that have become real. It's not something that was discussed on the PC campaign trail, and it was never a focus during their previous mandate.

We believe that opening the door to interprovincial trade is a great first step. We believe, but we have yet to hear about any details of how this would be implemented and the impact it would have. Of course, I want to make sure that all the right people are consulting and at the table. The rest of this government's plan seems to rely mostly entirely on overturning long-held bans on natural resource exploitation.

These decisions are being made without consultation and vague business cases. I think we need to look at the complete picture here. We need full accounting of the resources that we have available to us in this wonderful province, and how those resources can help us both diversify our existing industries and nurture new ones. I think we need forward-thinking solutions here that will not only expand upon what we already have, but ensure that our land, our water, and our bountiful resources will be here for Nova Scotians to enjoy in the future.

Nova Scotia's economy is built upon its natural industries. From farmers and fishers who produce the food we eat, to the loggers and miners who provide us with the resources we need to build homes and infrastructures, they all deserve to be a part of the plan to grow our province's economy. I've mentioned before that these are the experts. They must be included in the conversation.

[5:45 p.m.]

As the potential threats of tariffs loom, we've been calling on the government to create a task force to bring together key stakeholders who can help us develop a great plan - stakeholders like industrial and business leaders, labour unions, and Indigenous representatives. These people and industries will be most impacted by economic upheaval, yet we have yet to hear about how this government is including them directly in this work.

We understand that the Premier has had conversations, but we don't know what came of those conversations and what specific advice or recommendations he has achieved or acted on. A task force would bring all the necessary players together to develop a comprehensive plan that would benefit our economy as a whole. More brains at the table sounds like a great idea.

It's been almost a month since the tariffs were initially delayed, and we've learned earlier today that they may now be delayed as long as April, but I know that there are Nova Scotians in our province who are losing sleep at night. They're up trying to figure out what our government is going to do to support them and they're worried if we can be relied on. The Premier has had a month to assemble such a task force, yet he has not taken this opportunity. Now we have more time to plan for potential tariffs or more time to think about it for small business owners. This could uproot the lives of thousands of Nova Scotians.

So far, the only plan the government has communicated to the public is a single piece of legislation on interprovincial trade and the lifting of natural resources bans that may or may not have some kind of impact in the near future. There are so many opportunities to develop our economy here in Nova Scotia. Why isn't this government talking about developing and expanding sustainable fisheries and aquaculture? Why aren't we talking about the future of ocean sciences, clean energies, technologies, and agriculture, tourism, e-commerce? Why isn't it talking about local businesses, and why aren't we

talking about local businesses here that are looking for support in uncertain times? I can name a few who are worried and who are feeling alone, and being a small business owner is already lonely enough.

To answer: Our economic future does not just need to lie in one single idea. We need a whole host of solutions that can provide solutions to Nova Scotians in a variety of sectors across the province. We have so many options to pick from, and we must explore, and these should be a part of ongoing discussions with our business leaders and our labour organizations.

As a small business owner and an entrepreneur myself, I can understand the uncertainty our small business owners are feeling right now, and I'm so proud to stand here today and bring them a voice in this House. Small business owners - and business owners in general - work hard to provide the best goods and services possible to our fellow Nova Scotians, and for years, we've heard nothing from this government.

I will end by saying that New Democrats are glad that an economic future of our province is finally on the government's radar. Nova Scotians deserve a government that plans for a future with clear, thoughtful, and inclusive approach for economic development. We need a government that listens to industry, collaborates with stakeholders, and invests in long-term sustainable solutions. There's no shortage of opportunities to grow our economy, but it requires leadership and action.

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

HON. BRIAN WONG: I just want to start off by saying I am very proud to be part of the most diverse government this province has ever seen. I just want to correct a few statements made by the members opposite. One of them is really about investment into research and investment into our economy. I don't know if the members would remember, but in 2022, Nova Scotia government made a \$50 million investment into Research Nova Scotia - \$25 million each two years in a row.

In 2022, we also made a \$13 million investment into Mitacs, which created 3,500 internships with Ph.D.s and Master students. When we invest money into research, from that research, we start incubators. We start small businesses which grow into large businesses. That's a huge investment into research and into our economy, so I just wanted to correct that.

The \$700 million debt that we've accumulated in Nova Scotia - \$700 million is a lot of debt to some people, but the measurement of how healthy an economy is the debt-to-GDP ratio. To put that in perspective, if I were going to the bank for a loan, the bank looks at my debt and then looks at the income I have and needs to make sure that I have the income to cover the debt.

Nova Scotia is in a very healthy place when it comes to our GDP ratio. There are two factors when we look at that ratio. It's a really simple math formula. It's the amount of debt that we have as a province over the amount of economic activity, GDP, underneath. There are two ways to improve it or there are two ways to make it bad.

If I want to improve my GDP - because GDP measures the amount of productivity we have in our province - I can either decrease the amount of debt I have or I can increase the amount of economic activity. By that I mean creating good jobs, creating more businesses, investing in businesses, making sure that people have good jobs so that they can go out and make more money and spend in Nova Scotia - spend it on Nova Scotia Loyal products, spend it on products, spend it on housing, spending it on vehicles, buying their groceries. The more money we have, the more GDP we'll have.

When we take that formula in perspective, we're doing exactly that. Not only are we keeping up with our campaign promises to improve health care, build more homes, and have more money in the pockets of Nova Scotians, but we are also doing the other things. We are improving that bottom line, that GDP. That's our economic development plan.

In 2013, the Ivany report said that a healthy Nova Scotia economy would function around a 30 per cent GDP. A 30 per cent GDP in 2013 was probably commissioned by the NDP government at the time. Then for the next two terms it was the Liberal government that was performing that.

Unfortunately, the government of the time didn't invest in Nova Scotia. We did not increase the GDP. We didn't increase economic activity, but we spent a lot of money. Our plan in Nova Scotia to pay for the things that we need, to pay for the health care, to pay for the housing, is that we are going to invest in the natural resources we already have.

We didn't have to wait for the Trump tariffs to be threatened to us, to look at wind energy, to look at what's going on in Nova Scotia with companies like EverWind Fuels and Bear Head Energy. We didn't have to wait; they were already there. Guess what? Most of that money is private investment. Of course we are supporting that. That is major.

We are probably standing - right now, as I speak - on top of natural resources, mineral resources, that have value not just to us but to the world. If we can actually start taking advantage of the resources we already have, we can support our economy and grow the economy for the next 100 years. We can start bringing people back to Nova Scotia instead of exporting our youth to work in resource activities out west. We can have them do it right here.

When we have a student who graduates from a Nova Scotia Community College or goes into the apprenticeship program, instead of them going west for good-paying jobs, buying houses out there, buying their groceries, buying their cars, raising their families, we'll do it right here. That is going to be worth billions of dollars.

When we start putting those billions of dollars and all the spin-offs from those billions of dollars that they're spending, we are going to increase that bottom GDP. By doing that, we're going to have more income, we're going to be able to start paying down our debt. With that \$700 million we have a very healthy Nova Scotia economy. We can afford to pay our debt. If I want to buy a new car or if I want to buy a new house, the bank looks at that ratio. It doesn't matter what the number is of your debt but can you afford to do it? The Auditor General of Nova Scotia says, Nova Scotia, you can do it. We gave you a good rating.

Our future is bright. Our future is absolutely bright. If we look at a challenge as we do at the Trump tariffs right now, we can look at all kind of ways that it can hurt us. We can look at it as opportunity, and we are looking. We have a Premier who just put the first-ever economic plan - a made-in-Canada, made-in-Nova Scotia plan - to allow interprovincial trade. He has put that out to all the Premiers and territories right across this country - a real plan to help mitigate potential tariff threats. Come on.

There are billions of dollars in other provinces right now waiting for Nova Scotia to take advantage of them. 80 per cent of the businesses in Nova Scotia - or 80 per cent of their business is actually outside of Nova Scotia. Now we're going to open it up even more so Nova Scotians can make money from and make their living off of other provinces. Once those barriers are taken down, thanks to our Premier, we are going to benefit here in Nova Scotia.

It's still going to be a challenge. They have a long way to go, and we don't know what's going to happen in a week. We don't know what's going to happen in two weeks, because it's unpredictable. The only thing that we can do are the things that we can control. The things that we can control, we are doing it.

My honourable colleague across the way who spoke last said we need a government that looks at all the barriers, that is transparent, that understands economic development, that understands trade. We already have it. We are here, and we are willing to do the work to move Nova Scotia forward. As far as our debt goes, as far as our GDP goes, we already have a plan.

Since I have a little bit of time left, I'm just going to read a little bit from something that I can certainly table, but it's from our budget. It's under the economy and resources piece:

Nova Scotia's economy and support for the conditions needed to capitalize on our untapped opportunities come front and centre. In pursuit of greater self-reliance, we will pivot to more profitable endeavours, diversify our products, services and trading partners, and expand the opportunities we consider. The Department of Growth and Development will lead government efforts and work

with our partners to make our province competitive. Working with Crown corporations, this new department will encourage entrepreneurship, attract venture capital and grow key sectors of the economy. Nova Scotia is saying “yes” to business, smart resource development, better-paying industries and jobs and a higher standard of living. And we are saying “no” to barriers and red tape that stand in the way of growth.

THE SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, I wish to thank all the members who participated in the adjournment debate this evening.

Before I recognize the honourable Government House Leader, I would like to rule on that point of order. I thought I would take it under advisement and look over the tapes. Maybe I was seeing a mirage. Maybe what I was hearing was wrong. I looked over the tapes. I then showed them to the Clerk.

[6:00 p.m.]

Like I said earlier, pointing aggressively at a member with vitriol is a lot different than one point. The honourable Minister of Finance and Treasury Board did make one point. He did. He pointed his hand once. Everyone in this room has pointed from time to time. As a matter of fact, we rolled back the tape - a member of the Official Opposition pointed at 45:33 in - during the member’s speech, pointed at the Opposition. It’s how you do it. It’s intent. Just like the words. It is not a point of order.

I ask and suggest that members take a look at the difference between the honourable minister’s and the honorable Leader of the Official Opposition’s responses and questions, because there is a big difference. You can laugh and smile all you want, but there is a big difference. We don’t want to stoop to the low of that aggression.

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, pursuant to Rule 5C, I move that the hours for February 27<sup>th</sup> 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: Pursuant to Rule 5C, the motion is for the hours for Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup> be 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

### GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

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

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

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

LISA LACHANCE: I think I have a little bit of time left from yesterday's debate and I won't speak long. I just want to run through and summarize some of the key themes. I think it is really important to think about the standards that we want to uphold in this House. We built from the Westminster model, which was the creation of an executive branch that holds decision-making power but is accountable, in fact, to all of the legislators, all of us in the legislative branch, and that recognizes the role of the diverse parties within that institution, including an Official Opposition. I think that was a really important step in balancing out the power of one person or a small group of people with the views and perspectives from across a state or unit - in our case, our province.

Then government changed again. After 1950, as I said last night, government really took on an increased role in terms of having many departments and offering programs and services. This led to the development of what's called new public management. This is where this ethos around accountability and transparency comes from - a focus on results. These are actually words that have depth. They have decades of depth in many different democracies in terms of what they mean.

I did a Master's of Public Administration, so I spent a lot of time understanding these words, looking at examples of these words. I also worked in government a lot, where we took the words very seriously in terms of what this means, how we're accountable, how we're transparent, what our results are every year, what are the expected outputs and outcomes every year. If you don't have a plan when spending the public's purse, you don't know if you get to where you wanted to be. You actually don't know if you're making a difference.

Part of that, too, was the development of standards and models around values, ethics, and public procurement, which I have spoken about several times in this House. Public procurement and public accounting are different from managing your own budget. I appreciated the member for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank walking through how they personally manage their financial life. It's actually completely different when you're

working with the public purse. There are actual standards around public accounting that we have to adhere to.

We do that for a number of reasons. We do that so that we know we're getting value for money, so we know that - we've got our plans, we've got an idea of what we want to do this year, and we know how much money we have, and then we figure out who can best do that work. How are we going to make sure that we build buildings that are safe and bridges that are safe? How are we going to make sure that we have gotten a number of proposals from different proponents? How are we going to make sure that one person - one organization, one business - doesn't get all of the public money? There's an inherent part of public procurement that's about fairness and including as wide a range of provincial organizations and businesses as possible.

So that was new public management. Now we are definitely, most definitely, and sadly, in the era - in this province, at least - that has been termed the new political management, and not as a compliment. This is about consolidated power in the executive branch or in a small number of people in a politicized Premier's office - or the Prime Minister's office - a decreased reliance and respect for the professional public service, and measures to lessen the role of legislatures.

As I said before, I approach this work with a great deal of humility. I approach this work with a great deal of curiosity. I want to learn and hear from all of you. I want to learn together and consider together how to make things better for Nova Scotians. I want to hear from stakeholders. I want to hear from every special interest, actually, and I will let you know that there is - I have in my own constituency work - I will meet with anybody. I will meet with folks who maybe don't think I should be married or be able to adopt children. I will meet with those folks and will have a conversation because I want to understand. I am curious about what the concerns are and I'm curious - well, what have we missed? If that's a concern someone has, what else should we be thinking about? I just really want to put it out there.

If this proposal was in the context of a Legislature that did meet the least amount of time, if this proposal was in the context of a Legislature that had a set calendar so that - for me, it's not about my personal life. It's about stakeholders. If we knew that we were having sittings from September to December, stakeholders who are really interested could be ready to go. They'd know. They'd have an expectation that the House would be here and that members would be meeting.

Unfortunately, based on the track record of this government - the short sittings, no calendar, a bit of a hate-on for anybody who doesn't agree or even dares to question the direction of the government - stakeholders, media, independent offices - this exact proposal to change the rules is completely alarming. There can be a reasonable process to managing legislative business, but we will not support this change.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I would like to rise and speak to Resolution No. 5 about time allocation and just the necessity for us to be able to move the House along. I've heard stories about the blueberry monologues. I've also witnessed a number of monologues from some of my colleagues over the years.

Actually, in these epic debates, I think if we spoke to our predecessors on all sides of the House, there would be some epic monologues through debate that bring levity and joy to the House sometimes. I think of Alfie MacLeod, as an example, who undoubtedly held court here and entertained at the same time as he filibustered - one example.

I also think that long debate, and sometimes filibustering, actually provides us opportunity to respect those of us who are orators. Not all of us come to this House as orators, but some of us do. It's quite enjoyable to watch someone who can speak off the top of their head like that. They can speak for a long time. They can read the . . . (interruption).

Indeed, I don't know if I would use "enjoyable," but it is something to see when my colleague does filibuster. I haven't experienced it all that much in my three and a half years here.

The tools of debate are rarely about policy. In fact, they generally are used to tear down not just the government but the character of the MLAs in the government. Rather than debate policy, we debate our intentions. It doesn't always reflect what's in the best interests of Nova Scotians. I agree with my esteemed colleague for Clayton Park West that we should be modernizing and looking forward, and we should always be trying to provide the best experience for Nova Scotians as we make laws as part of our roles as MLAs, but the past can also help us inform our decisions.

I'd like to take us back, if I could, to October 2023 - the Fall sitting of October 2023. I introduced amendments to Bill No. 322, which was the Opioid Damages and Health-care Costs Recovery Act. The House went into Committee of the Whole - unfortunately, none of this is in Hansard, but I'm able to direct people to the video - to discuss nine clauses. This - for folks who weren't here - was a bill to tighten legislation to ensure we had jurisdictional alignment as we entered a national class action suit for the harms knowingly caused by opioid companies. Harms - as we are all aware when we're talking about opioids - mean loss of life, loss of function, and families and people destroyed - a bill that would help government advocate for and hold to account people who didn't care about the effects of these drugs.

As a government - I believe it was started under the former Liberal government - we were amending this legislation to stand up for the most marginalized people in our society. By all accounts, these were housekeeping - really changes just from a procedural

perspective. What was happening - and this is my opinion - in the backdrop of this Legislature was that we called, as government, long hours, which was deemed unacceptable by the Opposition. There was conflict over deputy speaker appointments, if memory serves. Of course, this is purely my opinion, but when you looked at the legislation itself, how could anyone argue the validity of the intention of this bill?

There were a couple of amendments that were tabled by the NDP in Committee of the Whole House, but I'd like to recap what happened. The bill was filibustered, and there was no discussion on the content of the bill. Again, that can go back to the video. Clause 1: no debate. The bells rang for an hour, and the clause passed with a vote of 40 for, zero against. Clause 2: The bells rang for an hour. The vote was 39 for, zero against. Clause 3, gratefully, carried. Clause 4: The bells rang for one hour. The vote was 38 for, zero against. Clause 5: The bells rang for an hour. The vote was 30 to zero in favour of the clause.

[6:15 p.m.]

As occasionally happens in here, at that point I got up, and I was mad - appreciating that I have just a scooch of a temper - but we were four hours into bell-ringing with no debate at this point. Clause 6: 35 minutes. The vote: 23 to zero. What you'll note is that, as the hours went on, the number of voters dwindled. To the member's point earlier, this was really about keeping government in the House. It wasn't about this bill. It wasn't about the harms. It wasn't about the intention. It was about teaching government a lesson because we don't have the same values as the folks across the aisle from us.

The remaining clauses, the title and the preamble, carried. The bill carried after 25 minutes of bell-ringing with a vote of 22 to zero. I can pretty much guarantee you, without naming names, there were likely three people on the other side. Again, video would show exactly who was and wasn't here.

I certainly was frustrated. It was disrespectful and it was not in the best interests of Nova Scotians - but it was self-serving. It was in the best interests of the Opposition parties. The contents on the purpose of that meaningful bill, in my opinion, were on that day irrelevant.

I want efficient, effective debate. I continue to learn how to do that in this House. Time allocation will cause all of us to choose our words wisely. We will be more effective communicators. Why shouldn't we expect that of each other and why shouldn't Nova Scotians expect that of us?

Just beyond the boundaries of places like Dartmouth North, Fairview-Clayton Park, Halifax Armdale, Halifax Chebucto, Halifax Citadel-Sable Island, Halifax Needham, Sackville-Cobequid, there's this beautiful, magical place. It's actually where the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier disappears to when she leaves here. When she comes back, it's where she comes from. It's called rural Nova Scotia.

The legislative work we do here is monumentally important, but so is the work that happens in each of our constituencies. An effective legislative sitting gives us an opportunity to come here as legislators and work together, and to work hard. When we are efficient and effective in our Legislature, it puts each of us with more time in our constituency, meeting with constituents, advocating for constituents, attending events, being present in our communities, and helping wherever we can.

When I am here, my ability to do that is strained. I am in an incredibly privileged position to be a minister, but when I am here, I am trying to manage my constituency. I am trying to support my family. I am trying to support a department and a staff who work there and be a minister they can be proud of when I stand here and represent the work they do in every department.

Long hours are worth it for me. They can be mentally gruelling at times, but I do believe the time allocation will actually limit the time that we waste in here and force all of us to do the work this House was intended to do.

Long sessions keep me from my community. When we talk about feminism, I am an important person in my family. I am a mother of three - granted, they are adults, but a mother is always a mother. I live across the road from my mother and beside my mother-in-law. I work really hard to stay connected in their lives. They are well and I'm grateful for that.

My sister and her husband and four young children live across the road. Actually, my mother is in the fortunate position to live with them. Those children are so important to me. As part of one of the women in their lives, I work very hard to be involved, to value them, to be present for them. So it actually is a feminist issue for me as well, Speaker, to be able to be here and be efficient and go home and be fully present for my family. The longer I am here, the more difficult it is for me to be here.

I appreciate my privilege. I have an apartment here and I have a bed here, but it's not my bed. It is a bed. I'm grateful I don't have to travel. For those folks who are just outside, I know it's gruelling. There are a lot of hours travelling, but a more efficient and a more effective legislative sitting will allow me to be present in my role as wife and mother and aunt and friend and MLA in my community.

The discussion around the rule change actually has not come out of the blue. Here in the House, we've been talking about it for a little while. In fact - and I'll table this - on November 9, 2023, Premier Houston was quoted as saying: "There's no question, I think every member has been frustrated at times with how things are proceeding or not proceeding. So that I think it's time to sit down and look for ways to make it (the Legislature) more effective."

THE SPEAKER: Order. I just want to remind the MLA you mentioned Premier

Houston. You're not to do that by name, it's by position.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Antigonish.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: This is another quote. Again, I'll table it: "'Ring the bells for an hour and then supporting the (bill's) clause, that didn't seem to serve Nova Scotians well,' said Houston, who added that any changes should be done by considering how other provincial legislatures operate."

But the NDP leader was quoted as saying: "We need to do what every other province in the country does, we need to know when we're required at work" - which she's talked about - "and have some reasonable expectation that when we're at work, we'll get things done."

Ring the bells for five hours with no debate on an opioid bill to support marginalized Nova Scotians certainly doesn't feel to me like that was being upheld.

We are here as change-makers - to create change for Nova Scotians. Our Premier and our caucus are a hard-working, focused government. Hours of debate off topic is not action. Debate should be focused and concise.

I do want to share my experience in this House because we all have a voice, and I believe that mine is equal to everyone else's here. I want to acknowledge, in fact, the former and current Liberal caucus, if you can believe it. We surely don't always agree, and I'm not always sure they like me. I am not here to be liked, but I will tell you that without exception, I almost always feel respected by my colleagues and the colleagues in the Liberal caucus.

I will say that I rarely feel respected by my colleagues in the NDP caucus. They cast aspersions on me and my colleagues. They deliberately use the wrong party name so that they can cast some sort of doubt on my character. They disrespect me. I'm not a member of the Conservative Party. I have been a member of the Progressive Conservative Party since I was a child.

Should I dare make a slip of the tongue, it's a five-alarm fire. I am human. I do my best to be respectful. I know I have a temper, but I certainly do my best to be a respectful colleague. What I would say is that if respect is demanded, it should be reciprocated. Debate should not be used as a moral high ground to push down any other member in this Chamber.

Debates, I felt, are often used to look down from a self-proclaimed moral high ground. We have proven ourselves to be a compassionate and action-oriented government. We may not always agree on the path forward, but we have invested an incredible amount of money and effort into addressing the things that Nova Scotians feel are the most

important.

I appreciate that we talk about our majority government, but we have to admit that what we do, and how we do it, resonates with a number of Nova Scotians. We are committed to being a government for all Nova Scotians, not just for the people who voted for us.

I don't believe that seeking an efficient use of time in the Legislature is a moral impediment. In fact, it is an attempt to modernize the Legislature so we can best serve Nova Scotians, pass meaningful legislation, work in our communities, and ensure government departments are effectively rolling out mandates of government. I do wish we could work together. I certainly do.

I'll just give you a little anecdote. In December - I think it was 2023, but I stand corrected, because I'm going from memory - I was asked to meet with the NDP about health care. I had to cancel the original appointment. I can't remember what came up, but I reached out to the two members I was expected to meet with, and I apologized profusely. Something had come up and I had to change the appointment.

I wanted to be a good colleague, and I wanted to show them that I had integrity, and I scheduled that appointment as quickly as I could in order to meet that commitment. I think we had about an hour, but I stayed a little longer than that. There were a couple of staff there with me, and we talked about health care. I thought, in good faith, maybe that was a productive meeting - maybe we can work on some things that are meaningful to both parties. Those two individuals walked out of my office after a discussion that I took at face value and walked right into a media scrum that had been prearranged. It was not about health care; it was, again, around self-promotion and an opportunity to tear down government.

Perhaps that's how government works, but if we want a collaborative and supportive environment here, it has to start with each of us. I learned an important lesson that day. I won't do that again. Why would I? Why would I meet someone in good faith, try to be collaborative, try to hear, try to understand, try to explain, only to be torn apart in the media without being told and working very hard to try to be respectful. Lesson learned. That's what happens when you're green around here. Sometimes you get taken advantage of.

Time is a finite resource. We all have a limited amount of time in these roles. I believe we should all feel the urgency to use our time on behalf of Nova Scotians to its best and highest use in the People's House. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Armdale.

ROD WILSON: I finally am able to speak. I apologize for the hacking and coughing

the last two weeks. Although not one to blame and shame, I did seem to start to cough on February 10<sup>th</sup> after I shook hands with the member for Bedford South, who was coughing at that time. I'm sure it's just a coincidence.

I came here not knowing what to expect. It was my second time at running. I've been surprised - some good surprises. One of the biggest surprises, naively, is how many men there are in the room. I haven't seen this many distinguished gentlemen in the same room since I was last in a gay bar pre-COVID. It's good. It's all good.

The minister for Waverley-Fall River-Beaver Bank spoke about - member. Sorry. I'm sure he'd be a great minister - diversity in this House, this Legislature, and I agree. I stand here as the first openly gay man to run and be elected in this Legislature in its history. Others may want to claim it retrospectively, but there's no retrospective membership. Either you got it or you don't got it.

[6:30 p.m.]

The reason I bring up the reference to the large number of men is not to be disrespectful, but it reminds me of some history I learned. In 2018, I read a book, *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk About Racism*, by Dr. Robin DiAngelo, and I had an aha moment. The aha moment was when she spoke about how our founders in British North America - our cultures, our institutions, mostly the big three - were founded under British colonization and the British culture. So health care, justice, education, and one could also say religion. The British model that North America adopted before the Americans became independent was really founded on a British model that was basically founded on a culture that perpetuated for hundreds of years - I don't have to remind people here - of all-male whites holding positions of authority in all of our sectors.

Things have changed - I won't speak for Indigenous members or Acadian members. The history we have speaks for itself. That culture was oppressive. I'm still surprised about how we continue to have this culture in our institutions. I can speak to it. I've spent my entire career as a nurse, as a physician working with diverse communities. First it was Indigenous communities in Labrador, Northern Ontario, and Yukon. I've also worked with the gay and lesbian community. I've worked with the African Nova Scotian community. I've worked with federal offenders out of penitentiaries - mostly Indigenous men and African Nova Scotian men.

What struck me was how often I, as the white male physician, was the go-to person and asked about how we help. What do you think needs to be done? The deference given to me as a white male and as a physician was striking. I can speak to data, but I can't speak to other people's experience. Time and time again, I was always the go-to person - in keeping with our cultural institutions, based on the history of it.

History has changed and become much better, but it still happens. I guess having

worked with those different communities, what really struck me was the lack of respect. Again, members of the community present here know this better than I do and also know how hard it is sometimes to be heard, the barriers to being heard, the struggle to be heard, and the struggle to be respected. Again, I can't speak for members of different communities. I can speak as a member of the gay community, but I know that I've been given deference from the fact that I'm a white male. I know what it's like to face changes, to face discrimination, and to be hated and attacked for that.

With the permission of a colleague and a caucus member, I also want to suggest that our culture and our institutions are still stuck in our British history. In the first week here, one of my colleagues in this caucus was stopped twice by security coming into this Legislature - a woman. What does that say? For me the lesson learned is there's a lot of work still to be done. People who haven't always felt respected or feel threatened by institutions - I can stand here with confidence as an openly gay man at age 60, but I'm not sure I could do it 30 years ago. There are barriers and there are reasons why people may not want to speak out.

I can speak also to when I worked at the College of Physicians and Surgeons for six years. We dealt with complaints related against physicians, and we had open community hearings. People filed their written complaint, and when they were asked to come to testify at a hearing often said no or were so nervous that we had to invest in support for patients and speakers because they were facing a board - the College of Physicians and Surgeons - that had a great deal of authority and power. It was stressful for the physicians, but there was an innate power differential in that room, and people were afraid or intimidated in that power differential.

I'm surprised - recognizing the courage and the strength it takes for people who are not in the majority and the bias in our institutions, I keep thinking of the courage it takes to come forward when people are struggling with everyday challenges of jobs, employment, paying bills, to something that is important to them. If we acknowledge that - and people have different experiences; I'm sure I do - I don't understand why we, in any shape or form, would want to reduce the ability to hear from more than the Legislature. Yes, there are opportunities, but I'm a bit concerned that any diminishment is also going to be a diminishment in inclusion.

I have so many times thought, as the white physician, that I had all the answers. I was proved wrong so many times. I will speak to when I worked in the North End Community Health Centre. We looked at our wait times, and as the physicians, we felt we needed to increase our same-day appointments and walk-in appointments, and I thought: How do we know that? Well, that's our experience.

We then advocated. We put together a wait time committee. We asked community members to be in that wait time committee and met huge resistance - No, no, no. They're not going to understand the complexity of the system - all excellent colleagues. I negotiated

for two and got one community member.

The community member said: You got it all wrong. We don't need more same-day appointments. I can be seen on the same day, but I have to wait three or four months for a regular check-up. We need decreased wait time.

That was a big learning curve for most of us as physicians, that we thought we knew best, and we thought we could speak for the community, but we didn't ask: What do you think?

That changed our culture there quite a bit. Again, I am all for efficiency. The last couple evenings have been way past my bedtime, but I want to suggest that, when we narrow any debate, someone is left out - probably not intentionally - but there is an unintended impact that the opportunities may diminish. We must recognize the courage it takes for people to come to a committee, so I ask us to think about that.

We have a lot of privilege here. I have a lot of privilege as a physician, but I've also been reminded by my mentors that privilege comes with fiduciary responsibilities. If we don't use them, we could lose them. Now maybe that's hard in the legislature. I guess you could lose your seat. Overall, I feel that I've been given so much privilege in the work I do, but I also have a fiduciary responsibility to make sure I listen.

I, too, am reminded of a quote by Winston Churchill. We heard a quote earlier this week - let me pull it up. I think the quote goes - my phone is dying: "Never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never . . . never give in except to convictions of honour and good sense." I am open to persuasion on anything and open to persuasion on good sense. To me, good sense is always listening to more than less.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Let my colleague go.

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

BRAD MCGOWAN: I had not originally intended to speak this evening, so I haven't prepared a flowery, long statement and I won't speak long. However, I do feel compelled to speak to and share my thoughts regarding our discussions on Resolution No. 5.

Speaker, like many in this House, I am new to this position and I am honoured to represent the good people of Cole Harbour-Dartmouth. What I know is that my constituents sent me here to get things done.

A couple of nights ago a member shared a mini-lesson on Shakespeare. While he

was delivering it I remember thinking that he must have spent a long time preparing that lesson and ultimately it seemed to me to be much ado about nothing. However, as I was driving home, it became clear how appropriate the member's comments were. I would even suggest they are central to our discussions regarding closure and time allocation.

What the people of Nova Scotia expect from me and each member of this House is action and public engagement. Far too often what I and the people of Nova Scotia see from the Official Opposition is political theatre - some of it well done and requiring a great deal of effort and preparation but I would suggest that the people of Nova Scotia would prefer that that effort be placed on improving their lives.

This government is working every day to improve the lives of Nova Scotians and I believe Nova Scotians celebrate those efforts. Nova Scotia has a Premier and a government that is laser-focused on providing more doctors and nurses, lowering taxes, providing higher wages, building more houses and modernizing and expanding our economy. Our Premier is now working on responding to very real tariff concerns and is a national leader as he works to eliminate interprovincial trade barriers. I would like to personally thank him for his leadership on these important issues.

What I would like to share with the House, as a new MLA, as someone who is focused on getting things done for my constituents, there is no attempt to eliminate debate on Resolution No. 5. To the contrary, Resolution No. 5 is an attempt to focus debate in an attempt to get things done for Nova Scotians.

I suggest that Resolution No. 5 should only concern those who prioritize political theatre over public engagement and it would see this House become a place filled with sound and fury, signifying nothing.

Our government believes that Nova Scotians deserve more from us than political theatre. They deserve action and that is exactly what this government will provide.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: The minister brought up the opioid debate. I remember those days. It was the Nova Scotia NDP that made a point not to engage in that debate, in that filibuster, because we felt there were other bills that deserved our attention because they were problematic. It was the Liberals filibustering, including the member for Halifax Atlantic leading the charge.

Our caucus has a mantra: Say what you need to say or want to say on any bill before the House and then take your seat. We have continued to follow that mantra. We save the longer speeches for the bills that call for it. We do not waste our time talking out bills that are essentially housekeeping. We want to talk about the bills that are important, and that Nova Scotians are talking about. The time we have taken to debate the dangers of

Resolution No. 5 provided Nova Scotians the time to send emails, make phone calls, and write letters to editors expressing concerns over such things as Bill No. 1 and Bill No. 6.

The Premier admitted he was wrong to attack the independence of the Auditor General and his attempt to undermine that office. However, this may not have occurred if on Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, the resolution read by the member for Halifax Atlantic and government House Leader had passed without debate. Had Resolution No. 5 passed on February 18<sup>th</sup>, the debate of Bill No. 1 could have started on Wednesday and gone to Public Bills Committee by Monday, because that's what it would be. It wouldn't be Law Amendments Committee. It would be Public Bills Committee. If we had hours on Monday, the bill would have been reported back to the House on Monday evening and possibly by Tuesday or Wednesday that bill would have been in Committee of the Whole and then . . . so, let's just say it was on Tuesday it was in Committee of the Whole, and then it would have passed third reading.

[6:45 p.m.]

Now, hopefully, I got my times straight. I may have miscalculated, but if things went the way they were supposed to go, that is kind of how it happened. Imagine if before anyone had a chance to bring forward discussions, to bring forward their concerns, the government's side would have the ability to limit the debate and quickly pass bills through this House. There is a chance - a good chance - the bill could have passed.

Bill No. 1 could have passed with the ability to fire the independent Auditor General. Let that sink in. Had Resolution No. 5 been passed on Tuesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, this government could have passed a bill with the ability to fire the independent Auditor General, because once Resolution No. 5 was passed, it could have been immediately implemented. In fact, it would immediately come into force. Bill No. 1 still includes dismissing non-union employees without cause, the removal of the PCs' own law - which they had passed - actually, I believe it was their first piece of legislation they passed as government on fixed election dates - and still includes more barriers to FOI/POPs. Bill No. 6 lifts a ban on fracking, allows petroleum exploration, allows for uranium exploration.

The issues laid out in Bill No. 1 and Bill No. 6 deserve the full attention of the House. Nova Scotians deserve to have their voices heard. The only way to ensure this is to allow for time to debate them thoroughly.

Again, if the government were allowed to limit the hours of debate on bills before the House, it would strike at the heart of our democracy, accountability, and transparency. In a February 21<sup>st</sup> article from CBC entitled "'Control-mania': N.S. premier accused of executive overreach with new bill," Professor Tom Urbaniak from CBU stated that:

Attempts by governments to reduce public scrutiny and stifle criticism are becoming increasingly common, said Tom Urbaniak,

a political science professor at Cape Breton University.

“This populist movement that we’re seeing across the democratic world weakens institutions that can provide objective information in favour of spin and propaganda,” he said in an interview. Urbaniak said there’s no doubt . . .

He goes on to talk about the Auditor General, that:

the auditor general has annoyed the government by repeatedly drawing attention to lax spending rules, and he agreed with the argument that the province’s access to information law is being undermined.

“We’re seeing a significant scaling back of the access to information regime in Nova Scotia,” he said. “It will make it much easier for the executive, the cabinet, to decide whether a request is too broad or frivolous or vexatious.”

He’s also noticed the lack of debate in the legislature:

“It seems the government will only keep the legislature going as long as it takes to pass these bills,” Urbaniak said. “Our House of Assembly seldom meets, if you compare it to most of the rest of the democratic world. We have a real case in Nova Scotia of an ailing democracy.”

I will table that.

“An ailing democracy,” Speaker. Dr. Tom Urbaniak was a professor of mine. He cares very deeply about the democratic process. I share his love and passion for it. He is correct when he says we have an ailing democracy. He is correct to say that we meet the least number of times, for the least number of days. I keep track of our days - 10 days, 17 days. That’s not how proper legislation should take place. That is not how a proper legislature should function, and it does curtail debate in this House. The fact that we have political science professors saying that in reality, debate is not occurring in this House - we have a problem. Curtailing debate in this House further ails our already ailing and weakened democracy.

This government has become well known for removing parts of bills or removing bills altogether. It has become a common practice. Every bill the government has amended or pulled back has been because of the debates in this House, because of the Opposition’s ability to debate and bring the voices of Nova Scotians into the House. Having that time to debate bills at every step of a “how a bill becomes a law” process allows Nova Scotians

the time to understand the meaning a particular bill will have for them. It allows the media the ability to report on bills and to provide a non-partisan and independent report to Nova Scotians.

I want to take this time to provide some examples of such bills because I think it's important for members - especially new members, and maybe for some of us to be reminded. The Antigonish bill, which I'm going to table - I'll table all of these - from an article from CBC on October 3, 2024, entitled "Tense public meeting on Antigonish consolidation fails to change premier's mind": "The PC government recently proposed Bill 407, which would dissolve the Town of Antigonish and join it to the Municipality of the County of Antigonish, after both local councils voted in favour of the consolidation - twice."

Then again on April 4<sup>th</sup>, CBC article: "Province shuts down plan for Antigonish amalgamation." In the article, it says:

In the face of mounting criticism and following a tense public meeting with the premier earlier this week, the Nova Scotia government has shelved a piece of legislation that would have led to municipal consolidation in Antigonish County. . . .

In response to those concerns, Municipal Affairs Minister . . . introduced an amendment to the legislation last week that would have required an analysis by the Utility and Review Board before the merger could proceed. . . .

The minister

said his government respects the vote by the two councils, but they could not ignore mounting opposition from the communities and evidence that there wasn't clear "broad-based" support for the merger.

I will table those. Those debates happened in the Legislature but also occurred in Law Amendments Committee. That was the importance of allowing the time for Nova Scotians to come before Law Amendments Committee and for debate. I believe that legislation was pulled during Committee of the Whole.

On April 5, 2024, CBC reported that the government removed a section on career firefighters within the FMA. CBC said: "It did, however, remove a section related to career firefighters being able to work in a volunteer capacity after concerns were raised about its compatibility with collective agreements." Again, these types of bills, once introduced, caught the attention of the public and concerns began to be raised.

On April 19, 2024, CBC reported on a controversial wine program that the

government had introduced. The article was entitled (PC government) “puts a cork in controversial wine program.” This change came out of Nova Scotians’ voices being brought to the Legislature. I daresay stakeholders - but I believe the government would call them special interest groups - came to the Legislature. They voiced their concerns, and they were heard that day. “Premier . . . announced the reversal at an impromptu gathering of wine-industry workers, who packed the foyer of Province House on Tuesday.” I’ll table those.

On May 5, 2022, a CBC article entitled: “N.S. scraps non-resident property tax; deed transfer tax to remain.” This change occurred after lengthy debate. There was a lot of debate. There were a lot of people at Law Amendments Committee who came before us. I’m sure some of the members would remember that time. Although it was long, how great was it to have those voices to bring forward the other side of things with regards to the non-resident property tax? I know in Committee of the Whole, our caucus put forward amendments that we thought would - that if they were to keep the non-resident property tax, we could actually use it for housing. We put forward our own, but then, from the CBC article, the Nova Scotia government has scrapped the plan to increase taxes for non-residents.

[7:00 p.m.]

The member for Pictou East said that “the ‘tweaks’ he announced Tuesday were to make the policy more fair, but as time went on, he understood that there was a broader risk. ‘I believe the risk of reputational damage to Nova Scotia is becoming more and more real, and it is something that I’m not willing to accept. So we’ll find another way to address the housing issue.’”

Again, this was a change for the government - a change that came out of a lot of debate in the House. I think that’s important. I think it’s important that we understand. Those are just a few examples. Those are just few examples that I pulled, rather than keep everybody here with every single bill the government changed. I pulled just a sample of them. I wanted the members to see that when real debate is happening and people are getting up to speak, just because people get up to speak and they’re speaking long, does not mean they are making a filibuster. Just because people get up to speak and they’re speaking for a long time on an issue, does not mean that we’re filibustering, and we’re trying to undermine the government. It has nothing to do with the government members.

When we, as the Nova Scotia NDP - I will not speak for the Liberals, because the Liberals have used interesting tactics in the past. It seems that we are trying to be lumped with them, but I dare say that that’s not true. I spoke a lot about the MOU agreement with the municipalities, because I was passionate about it - because it was going to harm my community and my residents. I spoke at length about it because it was too important to me not to - because I felt I had to. I felt that if I got up to speak, just maybe I could change the minds of my fellow CBRM MLAs. That was my hope. My other hope was that by getting

up to speak, I was explaining to the residents of the CBRM what was happening in the Legislature - what was occurring.

That time for those debates is so important. Just because people speak at length on bills or resolutions does not mean they are filibustering or delaying for delay's sake. I think the government has forgotten that part. I think the government needs to be reminded of that because someday - there's going to come a day - when the now-governing side becomes the Opposition, and they too are going to want to have the time to debate on bills. They're going to want to have the time to bring forward the voices of their community in those debates.

If this resolution passes as it is, and this amendment is not taken, the members, when they find themselves in Opposition someday, may not be able to speak in the amount of time that they would need to speak. Do unto others as you'd have them do unto you. I was reminded of that at Mass on Sunday. I sat there and I heard that at Mass. It was part of the homily: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It's a great scripture. There are a bunch of things about the Pharisees in there. I think we can all learn about the Pharisees. The Pharisees aren't well-liked in the Bible. It's a windy road.

Speaker, I digress again, and I'm coming back to this. I know members here were elected to represent their communities, so let's represent our communities. If we are really here to represent our communities, if we are really here for the people of Nova Scotia, then vote for this amendment. If we are really here to do the work and do it properly, let's vote for this amendment because someday, some of these members are going to find themselves over here, and they may have their voices silenced, and they are not going to like how it feels. Their communities are not going to like how it feels.

Debate is important, but it should not be rushed. Bills before this House should never be rushed. They are going to become legislation, and that deserves to be discussed. These bills deserve to be discussed. They're too important. They are affecting people's lives.

I heard a member talking in a previous debate - something about the real work happens in the constituency office. Do you want to know what constituency offices deal with every day? It's pieces of legislation from this House. The legislation, the policies, and the regulations that come from government are what affect our constituents every day. There's not much of anything in our constituency that we couldn't do the actual work here - housing, health care, education, public works, you name it - grants, affordability. It's all done in this House.

We are trying to help our constituents navigate government policies, government legislation, and government regulations every day. That work begins here. That's why rigorous debate is needed to understand the unintended consequences and the implications of bills in this House.

As I said, from just the few examples I provided, it is clear that when we allow for robust debate and discussion, sober second thought comes into play. Based on debate and hearing from our constituents, we can make better bills, better legislation.

The issue is that often when we are debating that legislation, and when the Opposition puts forward solutions to issues on those bills, they get rejected based on principle and based on the government not wanting to amend their bills based on an NDP or a Liberal or an Independent amendment. That's a problem here. The member for Pictou East constantly asks for solutions, and when the Opposition provides those solutions in debates, it is the government side that tries to shut them down - good interventions, good solutions.

I want to turn my thoughts now to what is done in Parliament and in other legislatures across Canada and within the Commonwealth. It's often joked about in my caucus about me: Don't send Kendra home because she's just going to watch the Legislature here or she's going to turn on some legislature or some House of Parliament in some other country. I'm guilty. I am guilty as charged. I do that because I like to know what others are doing and how they work now.

The House of Commons in the U.K. is quite chaotic, but what's interesting about the U.K. is that the Speaker of the House really has the run of the show for a bit of it. They are elected by the whole House, and they actually have to get support of the whole House in a formula. That's an interesting thing for you, Speaker. I don't know if you are aware. It's quite an interesting thing. They have ways of doing things that we don't.

Here's the thing that most of them have: They have legislative calendars. Some might have time allocations, but they have a legislative calendar. That legislative calendar tells them they will sit on this day to this day, how long they will sit, and the times they will sit for. The House Leaders come together, and they develop a guidepost of how those days are going to go.

It's kind of similar to what used to happen just a few years ago with House Leaders. You hear the stories of them going for breakfast, and they would map it out. Here are the bills that we're going to introduce. You're probably not going to like this one. How long does your caucus need to debate this bill? How long do you think we're going to be here for? I think they're going to want to talk about it for a couple of days. Okay. They go through it so they know what they're going to face coming in. They know the time for the debate. They know how long that debate is probably going to last. They stay in constant contact.

I remember coming into the House and hearing about a time when the House Leaders or the deputy House leaders would get together and say: I have this many people to speak. How many do you have? Then you sketch out a time. How long does your person want to speak? You would do that work.

That work has fallen to the wayside. That work is not done anymore - not for lack of trying, I assure you. It's not done anymore, though. A calendar would provide us with that opportunity to have all of those things sorted and created.

Let's talk about the committees. I'm going to get to the point. There is a point here, Speaker, I assure you. If our committees actually worked the way they do in Parliament, in other countries, in other legislatures - the work that those committees do actually goes to influence the bills. Instead of how we do it where we have people come before us, we ask questions, we might send a letter or we may not, the committees actually discuss potential legislation and do a lot of work on bills together. When it comes time to go back to the House that has a legislative calendar, a lot of the debate has occurred in the committees. A lot of the debate has been done, and people have worked their way through. Opposition may not be happy with where the government has landed on a bill, but there has been work done. Debate has been done on it, and we get it done. There is no need for extensive debates because it's been done.

[7:15 p.m.]

I will also lead with this because time is getting long, and that is, again, to the members. If we are speaking for our constituents - if we are really here for them - we will vote for this amendment. If we are really here for them - if this resolution is not amended, don't vote for the resolution itself or stay out of the Chamber.

With that, I end debate on Amendment 4.

THE SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[7:17 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: The Clerk will conduct a recorded vote.

[The Clerk called the roll.]

[7:25 p.m.]

**YEAS**

Claudia Chender  
Susan Leblanc

**NAYS**

Hon. Brian Comer  
Hon. Nolan Young

Lisa Lachance	Hon. Kim Masland
Hon. Derek Mombourquette	Hon. John Lohr
Hon. Iain Rankin	Hon. Brendan Maguire
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin	Hon. Barbara Adams
Paul Wozney	Hon. Michelle Thompson
Suzy Hansen	Hon. Fred Tilley
Kendra Coombes	Hon. Dave Ritcey
Krista Gallagher	Hon. Twila Grosse
Rod Wilson	Tom Taggart
Lina Hamid	Hon. Brad Johns
	Marco MacLeod
	Adegoke Fadare
	Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek
	Hon. Leah Martin
	Chris Palmer
	Melissa Sheehy-Richard
	Hon. Brian Wong
	John A. MacDonald
	John White
	Brad McGowan
	Kyle MacQuarrie
	Tim Outhit
	Rick Burns
	Julie Vanexan
	Dianne Timmins
	David Bowlby
	Nick Hilton
	Hon. Becky Druhan
	Hon. Timothy Halman
	Hon. Jill Balser
	Hon. Colton LeBlanc
	Hon. Kent Smith
	Hon. Tory Rushton
	Hon. Trevor Boudreau
	Hon. Greg Morrow
	Ryan Robicheau
	Damian Stoilov
	Danny MacGillivray

THE CLERK: For, 12. Against, 40.

THE SPEAKER: The amendment is defeated.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'm going to move one more amendment. Before I do, I just want to address what it is we're doing here. What we're doing here, despite opinions to the contrary that have been voiced, is trying to collaborate. This is actually the only tool we've been given to do that. We weren't given notice of this resolution; we weren't asked for our opinion on the resolution; and all things being equal, we would just love to vote against the resolution, because we think it's bad for all of the reasons that we've talked about. We're not going to do that, because we don't have the votes. The resolution is very likely to pass.

[7:30 p.m.]

The only avenue available to us is to put forward thoughtful amendments that we think address issues that we see and to compromise. In this case, I'm going to put forward an amendment about what we think is the other most ill-considered part of this resolution, which is doing away with the Law Amendments Committee. I understand the committee will exist under a different name, but amendments will not be allowed to move in that committee.

I will tell the members who haven't been around for a long time that when I was first elected, I really learned the rules of this House through putting forward amendments. Those felt like contentious times then, but I actually look back on them with some kind of sepia-toned recollection.

At the time, there were a lot of bills going forward that we thought were really problematic, particularly around education. Again, we knew the bill would pass, so our only option when the bill came forward - abolishing school boards, fundamentally changing the organizing rights of teachers, doing a whole bunch of other things that we disagreed with, and so did the then-Opposition, the PCs - we got to work. I think we probably put forward 100 amendments on that bill and we wanted to see every single one of them passed. It was not a filibuster - it was a compromise.

I will tell you that as I stood up time and time again, feeling like I was going to throw up because I was not used to standing up in this House, I found the government of the day very intimidating. They did lots of thumping and cheering and all the things that majority governments like to do. As a new member I had a different take on that.

I kept on going. The craziest thing happened, which was that as I got up over and over again to move amendments, these green notes started landing on my desk. The Pages started coming in every 10 minutes and putting a green note on my desk. I didn't really have time to look at them because I was talking. It was teachers from across the province who were watching the debate, who had been marching outside Province House, trying to make their voice heard, who felt they hadn't been consulted on the bill, just saying thank you.

That wasn't for me, it was for our staff, it was for our caucus. The PCs of the day

did some heavy lifting there too. It was an instructive moment.

The other thing that happened is that some of those amendments passed - not all of them, but a couple of amendments, where the government of the day looked at them and said, This doesn't take us off our core objective of this legislation and it's a compromise we can make.

I think that fundamentally that's what the Law Amendments Committee is. It's a place for a government to test its legislation against public perception, against expert opinion. With a majority government, they can decide what the outcome of that test is, and they have. In the example I gave of that very contentious education legislation, the teachers marched, people slept overnight, Law Amendments Committee ran and ran, and the legislation still passed. Governments can do that, but not without people's voices being heard and not without people being able to bring their best ideas forward about what should happen.

I think it's so important. We often talk about how we are unique in the country because we're the only jurisdiction with a Law Amendments Committee. At the risk of getting into trouble, I'll say that Law Amendments Committee isn't actually that great, it's just all we've got.

I think I've said this before, but just as a brief reminder - and I won't be long in my comments - in other jurisdictions, as I think the member for Cumberland North mentioned earlier, legislation will be provided to the other parties, to experts, to the public sometimes, in advance of their introduction. That's one way to do it. That doesn't really happen here. Or they go to a number of subject committees. If our committees were formulated differently, an energy bill would go to the Natural Resources and Economic Development Committee, and at that point, we could call experts who could talk about that bill and offer feedback, and maybe even the public could do it.

Law Amendments Committee is the only committee of its kind, but there are lots of other legislative bodies that have other ways of getting feedback from the public and experts, but this is the only way we have, so it's really crucial. This could be compensated for in other ways, but unless we give not just the public but often at Law Amendments Committee, we hear from experts. Some of those experts, I know, are currently in the special interest box, but that box has shifting parameters. Sometimes they're in, sometimes they're out.

Nonetheless, we hear from experts. We hear from regulatory bodies. We hear from environmental NGOs. We hear from law associations. We hear from municipalities. Those are the folks who have the capacity to bring amendments to consider. In almost every case, when they do that, they have not been asked ahead of time if they have suggestions for the legislation. I bet if they were, they'd offer those amendments at the front end and they wouldn't have to come there.

Law Amendments Committee is not the only path. I don't even think it's the best path, but it's the only one we have right now. As Opposition parties - now we've got nine. Before, we had six.

For the new government members, our staff is not like your staff. We have limited resources, we have limited capacity, and we have limited time. We're going to have less time after this passes. To understand where the public is on a piece of legislation, where the community impact is on a piece of legislation, we rely on Law Amendments Committee. That's how we know. We hear from them. Often people will call around and say, Please come to Law Amendments Committee and make your opinion heard. Half the time, we don't know what that opinion is, but we want to hear it because that's the best way to gather it.

I did ask the Legislative Library to tell me how many bills since 2000 had been amended at Law Amendments Committee: 295 bills have been amended at Law Amendments Committee - interestingly, very few of those under this government. There might be lots of reasons why, but I guess I'm saying I have some sympathy for this government saying, Well, it's not really a thing, bills don't really get amended there. But they did in pretty large volumes, and now there is no opportunity for those amendments to come forward other than in the Committee of the Whole House on Bills. The Committee of the Whole House on Bills is a really important committee. Please don't do away with that one. We'd like to keep it.

Again, we are all here - as we've heard from the government members, as we've heard from Opposition members - we are here to represent our constituents. We're here to do what's best for them. I really believe that's why we're all here. To the extent that ministers have Cabinet portfolios or those of us on this side might have shadow cabinet portfolios, we also want to do our best by those areas and sectors and people impacted, so we need to know what they're thinking. I often say my job is to amplify the hard work and brilliance of advocates in so many fields.

So much of what I stand on in this House and argue for and advocate for doesn't come from me. It doesn't even come from our caucus. It comes from people doing the work who don't have the microphone, who don't have the opportunity to bring those opinions, those ideas, those solutions into this House. Law Amendments Committee is the place where they can bring those solutions. Law Amendments Committee is the only place in our legislative structure, so I just really would love - you know what? If you have to ring the bells and take a recess, no problem. We won't hold it against you.

There are lots of things I'd love to address that came up from the government. I get it. I'm sure it sounds like we're being preachy, but every word we've said in here has been on the substance of this resolution and has stayed on the substance of this resolution and why we think it's important. On this in particular, we're open for another way forward. We're open for another opportunity for the public and for experts to see and understand

the legislation that comes before this House, but we don't have it right now.

With this amendment, we are asking the government to just pause on this. It's not going to make that big a difference. The committee still exists. The change that is being proposed is that people can't bring amendments. This government doesn't have a track record of accepting those amendments anyway, for better or for worse. It's five minutes of time in a committee that meets a handful of times a year. It's meaningful to the people who come forward, do the work, and bring those amendments. I don't think it costs the government anything to leave this as it is, to show a spirit of compromise and collaboration, and to let the public have their say and offer their expertise, whether that's lived experience, legal experience, or organizational experience, on the legislation that moves through this House.

With that, I'd like to move an amendment to Resolution No. 5, which can be found on change sheet NDP-2. Have those sheets been distributed? Can I ask the Pages to distribute those?

While the Pages are distributing them, I'll read it. Essentially what it does is change Public Bills back to Law Amendments Committee:

**Sections 3, 7, and 9, subsections 10(1), (2), (4), and (5) - delete.**

**Section 13, Clause 14(a) - delete.**

**Sections 10 and 14 - renumber accordingly.**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

SUZY HANSEN: Speaking to the resolution, I'm going to give folks a little understanding of what Law Amendments Committee is: "After Public Bills have received second reading in the House, the Standing Committee on Law Amendments gives them clause-by-clause consideration and hears representations from any interested persons or organizations."

Law Amendments Committee is an opportunity to do our due diligence, listen to the concerns of the people or the pleasure of the bill, and it is also an opportunity to have second or third opinions on what this bill might do for all Nova Scotians. Sometimes it's clarifying information for folks in community in a way that they understand.

In my few years here, I have sat on the Law Amendments Committee. I mentioned that the last time I spoke. I have learned so much from being a part of the Law Amendments Committee. We have heard from multiple stakeholders from different backgrounds and for many different reasons, all because of the bill that was being presented at that time. Folks will travel from across the province - from Yarmouth, from Cape Breton, from Digby, and

from everywhere in between - to make sure that their voices were heard. It was an opportunity for folks to really speak their piece for 10 to 15 minutes - sometimes five, depending on how many folks we'd have - to be able to say how they feel about the bill being put forward and the legislation that's being put forward by government.

It was another level of accountability and transparency - I spoke about that earlier, about transparency and accountability and how important that is in the work we do - that will help Nova Scotians understand the process of how bills go through legislation and how they go through here in the Legislature.

[7:45 p.m.]

Law Amendments Committee is an opportunity for folks to speak to a bill that has been debated on in this House, give feedback on and recommendations on how to make the bill better - bring it to another level, give suggestions, and maybe any type of oversight, if there might be something that's missing. We have had that, which is why there have been amendments made. Consultation with stakeholders who wouldn't have seen or known about the bill coming forward. Which is why it's so important that Law Amendments Committee was there for those folks, to be able to see the bill in real time and actually put some information forward that we might not know, or we might have missed. Sometimes it's to ask to have more information before passing of the bill.

Law Amendments - and this is where my feelings come in - is also an opportunity to hear from communities whose voices have been lost, as a representation of themselves is not always reflected in these halls. I say that because I feel that every day when I'm in here. I'm super-proud to be here, because I know I was elected by the people. But I understand what those lost voices are. I was one of those lost voices at some point.

It's a time for folks to come together and have a conversation about their own communities and their own people when we have Law Amendments - marginalized communities who have reached out to their MLAs with no response, trying to navigate the system and not being heard. That is what we see sometimes when we have folks come to Law Amendments. They haven't actually been seen or heard, so they come to express their concern about the legislation that's being put forward.

African Nova Scotian communities, who most times when legislation is going through this House, haven't even been consulted, or even given the respect to be heard, with a "we know what's best for you" response. Because we hear it and we're MLAs as well. We know what's best. Indigenous communities who have consistently been left out of this conversation.

All in all, the opportunity to have their voices heard here in this House, where the representatives are going to be diminished even more if we continue to change the rules of this House through this resolution. Our amendment is to make sure that their voices

continue to be heard, in community and in Law Amendments.

While people in this province face considerable uncertainty, whether it be housing, cost of living, health care and so much more, it is so disappointing that this government's legislative focus has been on consolidating power and silencing scrutiny, instead of meeting the needs of Nova Scotians. I mentioned that before. I think it's really important for us to understand what our role is here.

Instead of putting the government bills that are on the table right now to go through Law Amendments, where folks could show up and speak out for the bills put forward by this government - which by the way, could happen - we've been here and I know that folks have mentioned, it's delaying, it's a delay tactic. Absolutely not - it is not a delay tactic.

The government could have pushed their bills straight forward to Law Amendments, because they've already gone through the reading that was necessary. And if they couldn't have, they could have still done that, because it's their choice. The government makes the decisions, so they could have made that decision, and we didn't have to be having these conversations on this resolution in this manner. I want to say that it could have been done at any time - just saying.

Instead of hearing from Nova Scotians across the province on the bills, having stakeholders and communities speak out about the bill, making recommendations to any of the bills that are already on the table, we are here discussing this resolution and how important it is to continue to have voices in the House that represent all Nova Scotians.

Law Amendments Committee was one of the first times - and some folks are still here - was one of the first times I was able to speak in this House. I was quite nervous when I went forward in Law Amendments, because I was speaking on education. At the time - because I have young children in the education system, and I am so very passionate about it - but at the time I was very upset with the decisions that were being made by that government on the education factor.

I'd been in this House multiple times before, all thanks to the Sergeant-at-Arms, whom we see out front here, Mr. Delmore "Buddy" Daye. As a child I sang, and I continue to sing, but as a child I was invited here to perform multiple times. And so, it was always so refreshing to see a strong black man being in this House to give us hope that there is a place for us here.

I don't know about you, but if I hadn't seen that, who knows, I may not be in this seat, but I'm pretty sure I probably would be, because I have a number of really good support people. But I will say it's always important to see representation in places and spaces where typically there is none.

Law Amendments Committee was my first time as a concerned citizen. I was able to speak to the elected officials who would be deciding on a piece of legislation that would

affect my children's education. As it was said before, amendments typically aren't passed and the bill goes through. When you think about a majority government, you have the say - we have seen it through the votes just recently.

It's not like it's not going to pass. It's not like things aren't going to go through this House, but there are processes in place for a reason. For every single person in this House to be able to say something or speak about or have an opportunity to do that is really important.

Rewind back to my advocacy work to talk with MLAs before I went to Law Amendments Committee. The legislation that came forward - I was privileged to know about the bill beforehand because I had been a part of the school board. I had known the bill was coming, and I was able to prepare. I actually spoke to some MLAs, one of them here who I'm grateful gave me the time. Also one of the reasons why I'm sitting in this seat is because they gave me that opportunity to speak about something that was really important to me, and they listened. They actually voted in favour - in the way that I would want it to be voted at the time. Unfortunately, the bill passed because the government was the government at the time, but I respected that because they were speaking for their communities, speaking for the people who actually had concern for that.

I want to say I encouraged everybody and mobilized everybody to come together and come to Law Amendments Committee to come and speak. Like I said, fast-forward, went to Law Amendments Committee, had a good experience, was able to speak my piece - super-nervous. It was my time to be able to speak for people in my community who wouldn't have made it into Law Amendments Committee because they don't really trust government, or they don't believe that things are going to - that my voice matters. I felt like at that time that that was what I needed to do, and so I did that.

We in this House need to know that there are unintended consequences to limiting debate, to limiting Law Amendments Committee, and to silencing voices of Nova Scotians. Some folks in this room's experience is different from mine. I spoke about that a little while ago. I have come up in this world without the privilege that most of you have, that most of you have been born with. I still don't have that privilege. I wish I did.

I also want people to have an understanding of where I come from, because I have an understanding of being seen and not heard - not because adults were in the room but because of the colour of my skin, for my own safety.

When I hear that rules are being changed and folks are being limited to express their concerns, express themselves, and present to this government what our people expect of us, I can't help but to be skeptical about the intentions. I asked questions earlier about: Why now? What is the purpose? What is the reasoning? It doesn't have to be done.

In my experience trust with government was not something I had. Democracy was

definitely not something I had a whole lot of faith in. Some of my experiences are with the relocation of Africville through my mom and my family. It didn't give me hope in the process that I could believe in the government to do the right thing because we have seen and even now we see in our Black communities that we're still being left out of these conversations.

Watching communities that are Indigenous and Black being left out of those conversations consistently was not very hopeful to my trust and belief in government, period.

Fast-forward to now. Still, we see no promises or commitment to my communities and Indigenous folks; no legislation to help the African Nova Scotian community to become economically prosperous; no legislation on clean water in our communities; no legislation on access to water in our communities; no legislation on land access to our African Nova Scotian Black communities. I could go on and on about the lack of belief in this process.

I put forward solutions. Many members have said: Give us a solution, we'll take a look at it. Why don't you come up with a solution? All of these things I believe we could be working collaboratively on. We have talked about it multiple times. We have put forward solutions, suggestions, recommendations, and amendments.

I want to say, before it gets said - I have to keep a room - I want to say that, yes, the government passed my amendment on the Environmental Racism Panel - and I want to say for the record, I have requested an update and received huge walls of barriers by all departments on getting the report back for the Environmental Racism Panel. I want to say this: The reason why it was passed is because I spoke loudly to the minister and to the Premier.

Folks in here who aren't very aware of the process and how things go, I want you to understand that the reason it happened was because I literally walked across the floor to have a conversation with them and to point out the injustices and the inequities of why the amendment needed to be passed. I want folks to understand that, because it will be brought up, but I need you to understand the take on it. Yes, I'm truly appreciative that this happened. Yes, we need environmental racism panels. We need to have the report done so we can actually have a better grasp of what's happening across the province. The change was made, and it was more of a compromise. I would say that for many reasons I'm thankful yet not moved by that action.

I want to be clear - and I'm not going to keep us here for too long - I want to be clear that Law Amendments is a moment. It's our moment to do our due diligence. It's our moment to listen to the people. It's our moment to literally hear from stakeholders, smart people who know more than we do on what we're putting forward. There are lots of times that mistakes have been made. We have discussed a number of pieces of legislation that

have been pulled back or amended because of the mistakes that were made. That doesn't mean we can't continue to do that. It means that we need to listen and do the right thing and continue these conversations with community and stakeholders.

We need to also face the people we serve and stand by our decisions. If what we put forward as legislation is great and amazing and perfect, then we should stand by our decisions as government on the pieces of legislation that are put forward and face the people who you're going to affect the most: Nova Scotians. If the legislation is good, then you have nothing to worry about. You should feel good about it, but to not let folks have a say on the legislation is just plain wrong.

I want to leave folks with a few things. I'll tell you this is how I do my work. I govern with purpose. I work for the people who have elected me to be in this seat. I understand that it is not an easy job. Some folks are here for the first time, and it will be a rough road, but know that if you truly care about your community and the people you serve, this will not be something that will be taxing on you. You will be doing the right thing at all times because it feels right.

Decisions that impact the lives of the people we serve are done right here in this House. When we put forward legislation, these are decisions that will impact Nova Scotians. If the legislation that you feel is great and perfect for Nova Scotians - then Law Amendments Committee should just be a walk in the park. It should be a time where you hear from folks about the amazing things or things that could be done differently. The things that we do here should be meaningful for the people. The public has its say, so let the people speak.

We in the Nova Scotia NDP have made our points regarding our opposition to this Resolution No. 5 and are providing amendments. Our arguments have been thoughtful and substantive. We are not going to belabour the points. We want you to understand that this is what our constituents expect of us.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

PAUL WOZNEY: I'm speaking in favour of this amendment and I want to talk a little bit about why. I got interested in the question of where Law Amendments first arose in our history. How long is this practice? It's worth asking questions. Is this an idea whose time has come? Has this always been a feature? Do we just do this because we've always done it the same way? I talked to the good folks at the Legislative Library. The first reference that they can find in Hansard is from 1881. I'll read from that. It says:

The Committee on Law Amendments had before them when it was under consideration representatives not only of the miners but also of the mine owners, and after the most careful attention had recommended to the House, and the House had adopted certain

amendments to the present Mining Act, which embodied all that had been agreed to between the respective representatives.

[8:00 p.m.]

Lots of R words there. This is the first time that we have a reference to this committee, and the broader context of this is that legislation was being changed. It wasn't a new law. It was an existing law concerning mining in Nova Scotia, and this committee turned its attention to input not only from mine owners but also from the miners who were doing the work. Ultimately, the House stood behind the changes recommended as a result of hearing fulsome perspective. This was new. It was novel.

I have it from the Legislative Library that prior to this, the Law Amendments Committee was not comprised of people giving public input. It was largely made up of members of the House who were legal practitioners, and they would huddle up together and go over the legislation with a fine-tooth comb and decide whether or not the wording was in order.

We have this committee, and the spirit of the committee is to empower Nova Scotians who have valuable perspectives to offer about how legislation can be better.

Earlier in the day, we heard individuals on the government side remark how they're open to suggestions. If productive suggestions can be made about how things can be better, they're open to listen. Ultimately, that's what this committee is about, and I want to look at three examples of where this committee has had that impact. Has this committee become stale? Is it failing to yield the kind of feedback that helps governments deliver better, more effective, good-for-Nova Scotia legislation?

I have three examples I want to share. First is from October 2023. Bill No. 329 was put forward by the last iteration of the current government. Just a bit of background here. This law was being debated at a time when wildfires across Nova Scotia - but particularly in the communities of Lucasville, Upper Hammonds Plains, and Tantallon - had devastated the area. Close to 900 homes had burned to the ground. A number of businesses had burned to the ground.

As a matter of fact, one of the businesses was owned by an individual who was here and recognized with a member statement the other day. The government - I don't think, with any intent of malice - was moving ahead with this legislation. Unbeknownst to it, had the legislation as written passed, it would have further devastated businesses like the Moulding Warehouse that was here the other day. There were a couple other businesses that were in the same boat financially. The legislation would have further disadvantaged already devastated business owners and made it very difficult for them to recover under this new law.

Law Amendments gave opportunity for those first voices to come into the People's

House. They didn't have rocks to throw at the government based on the colour of the lawn sign. They were concerned with the law, and they were concerned about the impact that the law would have for them and for others like them in the future if the government didn't turn its mind to a change that would benefit them. To its credit, the government of the day heard that input, the specific amendments suggested by this input were adopted in the legislation, and that concern was remedied, and people who were looking at already very serious harm were not further disadvantaged. That was a good thing.

Another example I want to look at in the not-too-distant past comes from the dark days when a very tall, angry man was Premier. There were lots of pieces of legislation in this House about education. One of those pieces of legislation was Bill No. 72. Bill No. 72 is the bill - for a reference for those who maybe don't remember that bill - that terminated anglophone schoolboards. That was the bill that de-unionized principals and redefined them as managers in law and a number of other items.

During Law Amendments Committee, Dr. Cynthia Bruce, a noted activist within the disability community and faculty member at Acadia University, came to speak at the Law Amendments Committee with great haste. She actually arrived - the time to speak was suppressed by the government of the day - and she wasn't able to procure an opportunity to speak.

I happened to be registered to speak on that day and I ceded my time to Dr. Cynthia Bruce to deliver testimony to Bill No. 72. On that day, Dr. Bruce's expert, first-voice testimony as a member of the disability community changed the mind of the government, to be able to preserve representation for the disability community under the proposed legislation. The government of the day relented and heard that. That was a good thing.

I have a couple of other examples that I could turn to, but suffice it to say that the Law Amendments Committee isn't just good for the Opposition. The Law Amendments Committee is good for governments. It's good for governments that are New Democratic, it's good for governments that are Progressive Conservative, it's good for governments that are Liberal. It arms them with insight and input that they need to make sure that laws don't hurt - that laws actually help.

These concrete examples remind us of the value of the work of this committee. So again, our amendment is not about filibustering. We've heard the government say, Give us some good ideas and some food for thought and we'll entertain it.

This amendment would preserve the law amendments process as currently constituted. Speaker, if I may, just before I close, this amendment in no way precludes this House from having further conversation about how the Law Amendments Committee works. The previous speaker from the Opposition indicated that this is all we have. There are better ways that we don't currently have but it's what we have and to lose it would be a shame.

By supporting this amendment, it doesn't thwart the government's overall purpose or objective in terms of the original resolution. It preserves the first-voice opportunity of Nova Scotians to speak to legislation, and it affords us all a wide-open horizon, as members of this House, to have more fulsome conversation and collaboration about how the Law Amendments Committee might be an even more meaningful process, for both the people of Nova Scotia but also for government.

With that, Speaker, I thank you for this time and I say again that I will vote in favour of this amendment to preserve the Law Amendments Committee.

THE SPEAKER: Seeing no more speakers, is the House ready for the question?

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[8:08 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Order please. Are the Whips satisfied?

The Clerk will conduct a recorded vote.

[The Clerk called the roll.]

[8:12 p.m.]

#### YEAS

Claudia Chender  
Susan Leblanc  
Lisa Lachance  
Hon. Derek Mombourquette  
Hon. Iain Rankin  
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin  
Paul Wozney  
Suzy Hansen  
Kendra Coombes  
Krista Gallagher  
Rod Wilson  
Lina Hamid

#### NAYS

Hon. Brian Comer  
Hon. Nolan Young  
Hon. Kim Masland  
Hon. John Lohr  
Hon. Brendan Maguire  
Hon. Barbara Adams  
Hon. Michelle Thompson  
Hon. Fred Tilley  
Hon. Dave Ritcey  
Hon. Twila Grosse  
Tom Taggart  
Hon. Brad Johns  
Adegoke Fadare  
Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek

Hon. Leah Martin  
Chris Palmer  
Melissa Sheehy-Richard  
Hon. Brian Wong  
John A. MacDonald  
John White  
Brad McGowan  
Kyle MacQuarrie  
Tim Outhit  
Rick Burns  
Julie Vanexan  
Dianne Timmins  
David Bowlby  
Nick Hilton  
Hon. Becky Druhan  
Hon. Timothy Halman  
Hon. Jill Balser  
Hon. Colton LeBlanc  
Hon. Kent Smith  
Hon. Tory Rushton  
Hon. Trevor Boudreau  
Hon. Greg Morrow  
Ryan Robicheau  
Damian Stoilov  
Danny MacGillivray

[8:15 p.m.]

THE CLERK: For, 12. Against, 40.

THE SPEAKER: The amendment is defeated.

We will now revert to debate on the main motion.

I'm seeing no speakers.

Is the House ready for the question?

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[8:16 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: The Clerk will conduct a recorded vote.

[The Clerk called the roll.]

[8:17 p.m.]

**YEAS**

Hon. Brian Comer  
Hon. Nolan Young  
Hon. Kim Masland  
Hon. John Lohr  
Hon. Brendan Maguire  
Hon. Barbara Adams  
Hon. Michelle Thompson  
Hon. Fred Tilley  
Hon. Dave Ritcey  
Hon. Twila Grosse  
Tom Taggart  
Hon. Brad Johns  
Marco MacLeod  
Adegoke Fadare  
Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek  
Hon. Leah Martin  
Chris Palmer  
Melissa Sheehy-Richard  
Hon. Brian Wong  
John A. MacDonald  
John White  
Brad McGowan  
Kyle MacQuarrie  
Tim Outhit  
Rick Burns  
Julie Vanexan  
Diane Timmins  
David Bowlby  
Nick Hilton  
Hon. Becky Druhan  
Hon. Timothy Halman  
Hon. Jill Balser  
Hon. Colton LeBlanc  
Hon. Kent Smith

**NAYS**

Claudia Chender  
Susan Leblanc  
Lisa Lachance  
Hon. Derek Mombourquette  
Hon. Iain Rankin  
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin  
Paul Wozney  
Suzie Hansen  
Kendra Coombes  
Krista Gallagher  
Rod Wilson  
Lina Hamid

Hon. Tory Rushton  
Hon. Trevor Boudreau  
Hon. Greg Morrow  
Ryan Robicheau

THE CLERK: For, 40. Against, 12.

THE SPEAKER: The resolution is carried.

The honourable Deputy Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: That concludes Government Business for the day. Following Daily Routine tomorrow, Government Business will be Committee of the Whole on Supply.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House do rise to meet again on Thursday, February 27<sup>th</sup> from 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

We stand adjourned.

[The House rose at 8:21 p.m.]