



DEBATES AND PROCEEDINGS

Speaker: Honourable Danielle Barkhouse

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First Session

TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025

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HALIFAX, TUESDAY, MARCH 25, 2025

Sixty-fifth General Assembly

First Session

1:06 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

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

LISA LACHANCE: In debate yesterday, I made reference to a number of Hansard arguments to reassure the members gathered here that we have, in fact, spoken about economic development over the past three and a half years in this House. I'd like to table a sample of those Hansard debates.

THE SPEAKER: Tabled.

Also, before I move on, I wrote a note and I always check my paperwork. I noticed yesterday that the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier quoted from a CBC article and also another article - did you table them? Thank you so much. I missed that part. I appreciate that.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS**GOVERNMENT NOTICES OF MOTION**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Opportunities and Social Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 147

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

Whereas to be effective, government policies and programs must be designed to meet the needs of the people we serve and delivered in a way that ensures access; and

Whereas the Disability Support Program Advisory Committee, which includes Nova Scotians with disabilities and the people who support them, has helped ensure that the Disability Support Program is rooted in the committee's values of openness, new ideas, choice, diversity, inclusion, and hope; and

Whereas those values will continue to serve as north stars for government as we work to transform the disability support system in Nova Scotia as part of the human rights remedy;

Therefore be it resolved that the members of this House recognize the members of the Disability Support Program Advisory Committee for the work they've done to ensure the voices and choices of people with disabilities have been heard and considered in shaping the future of disability services in Nova Scotia and express gratitude for their dedication as the committee concludes its work and transitions to a new, regional advisory council.

I request waiver of notice and passage without debate.

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

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the Speaker's Gallery where I would like to introduce Cassidy Megan, the founder of Purple Day. She is certainly no stranger to this Legislature. Cassidy, do you want to stand? There she is. (Applause)

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

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

MICHELLE THOMPSON: Sorry, Speaker, I am not done with my introduction yet. She's so famous that everybody stood up.

Cassidy created the idea of Purple Day in 2008, motivated by her own experience of living with epilepsy. The Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes came on board to help develop Cassidy's idea into what is now known as Purple Day.

In 2009, the Anita Kaufmann Foundation and Epilepsy Association of Nova Scotia joined forces to launch Purple Day internationally. Together, they were committed to working with individuals and organizations around the world to promote epilepsy awareness.

Cassidy currently sits on the global youth team of the International League Against Epilepsy. I'd also, at this time, like to introduce the person joining Cassidy, who is Angela McCarthy, the president of the Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes and the interim executive director. Angela is also Cassidy's mom. If you would like to stand and accept the warm welcome of the House. (Standing ovation)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 148

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

Whereas epilepsy is one of the most common neurological conditions, estimated to affect over 50 million people worldwide;
and

Whereas one in 10 will have at least one seizure during their lifetime and the public is often unable to recognize common seizure types or how to respond with appropriate first aid; and

Whereas Purple Day is now internationally recognized and is a day dedicated to increasing awareness about epilepsy, encouraging conversation on the topic to dispel myths, and reassuring those with seizures that they are not alone;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Chamber recognize March 26th as Purple Day and thank the Epilepsy Association of the Maritimes and its advocates for providing education, support, and advocacy for individuals living with epilepsy and their families.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed? It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Growth and Development.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

COLTON LEBLANC: Joining us today in your gallery are a number of our community housing partners. I ask them to rise to receive the warm welcome of the House: Angela Bishop, executive director with the Housing Trust of Nova Scotia; Michael Kabalen, executive director, as well as Adriane Salah, who is director of Planning and Development with the Affordable Housing Association of Nova Scotia; Carrie Chiasson, director of Operations and Programming for Rooted; and Veronica Marsman, executive director, and Kathy Mitchell, board president of Acoma Holdings Limited.

Also in the East Gallery, we have my ADM, Vicki Elliott-Lopez, and Michelle Waye, who is the executive director of Housing Programs and Services. (Standing ovation)

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

The honourable Minister of Growth and Development.

RESOLUTION NO. 149

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

Whereas Nova Scotia's community housing partners play a role in preserving, improving, and building affordable housing for all Nova Scotians; and

Whereas our community housing organizations are some of the best landlords in the province and they work tirelessly to ensure every opportunity is explored so more Nova Scotians have a place to call home; and

Whereas because of their work and our investment of over \$120 million, over 1,400 affordable units have been created in the last two years, and with their passion, continued partnership, and commitment, even more will be coming;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House support our community housing organizations and the critical work that they do to help our most vulnerable residents find safe and affordable housing faster.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed? It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of Health and Wellness.

RESOLUTION NO. 150

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

Whereas vaccination supports our health and well-being throughout every stage of our lives, from infancy to older adulthood, and helps us stay healthy so we can participate in the activities that matter to us, like staying active, enjoying time with loved ones, travelling, and going to school and work; and

Whereas diseases that were once controlled effectively and safely by vaccines like measles are now being seen close to home and can have devastating effects on individuals, families, communities, and health care systems; and

[1:15 p.m.]

Whereas a week that highlights the importance of immunization helps to increase public awareness and reinforce that we have a shared responsibility to keep our communities healthy and safe;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Chamber recognize April 21st to 30th as National Immunization Awareness Week and take special note of this year's theme - to not let history repeat itself, to protect our futures, and to get immunized.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed? It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Minister of African Nova Scotian Affairs.

RESOLUTION NO. 151

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

Whereas yesterday the member for Sackville-Cobequid told the House it was wrong for the Premier to call out people who wear Ku Klux Klan costumes and say that he would fire them if they worked for the province; and

Whereas white hoods and robes are the most recognizable symbol of the KKK's legacy of racial hatred, violence, and terror; and

Whereas there are no circumstances where representations of the Ku Klux Klan can be condoned in our province;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this Legislature have the courage and moral fortitude to call out hurtful and hateful acts of racism in our province - no matter the circumstances.

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. 109 - An Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Residential Tenancies Act, Respecting Fixed-term Leases. (Susan Leblanc)

Bill No. 110 - An Act to Expand Work-integrated Learning Programs. (Hon. Derek Mombourquette)

Bill No. 111 - An Act to Protect Whistle-blowing by Healthcare Workers. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

Bill No. 112 - An Act to Amend Chapter 7 of the Acts of 2011, the Fair Drug Pricing Act, to Expand Access to PrEP. (Lisa Lachance)

Bill No. 113 - An Act to Create a Medically at-Risk Registry. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

Bill No. 114 - An Act to Amend Chapter 18 of the Acts of 1998, the Municipal Government Act, and Chapter 39 of the Acts of 2008, the Halifax Regional Municipality Charter, to Empower Municipalities to Tax Vacant Properties. (Suzy Hansen)

Bill No. 115 - An Act to Amend Chapter 194 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority Act. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

Bill No. 116 - An Act to Provide Transparency and Accountability Respecting Hospital Emergency Departments. (Susan Leblanc for Rod Wilson)

Bill No. 117 - An Act to Amend Chapter 293 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Motor Vehicle Act. (Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin)

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

NOTICES OF MOTION

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

RESOLUTION NO. 152

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

Whereas Jean Laroche has been a reporter since 1985, covering the highs and the lows, the silly and the serious, and the whole of the political landscape of this province, including countless elections since 1995, longer than any sitting member of this House; and

Whereas he has been the president of the parliamentary press corps for over 15 years, a near-constant presence in the halls of this House, which, as he reminds us, ain't a home, mentoring, terrifying, and coaching successive cohorts of reporters, and doggedly pressing generations of politicians of all political stripes; and

Whereas his wife, Catherine, and his three sons, Christian, Samuel, and Joseph, have sometimes perhaps grudgingly shared Jean with the CBC and with the people of Nova Scotia for over 40 years so he could serve the public as a reporter and ensure Nova Scotians have remained informed about the laws that govern them and the goings-on of this House;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House wish Jean Laroche a happy, active, and long retirement; urge him to be kind to all of us in any future fictional endeavours; and thank him for his dedication to our province.

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

THE SPEAKER: There has been a request for waiver.

Is it agreed? It is agreed.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried. (Standing ovation)

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Lunenburg.

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

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: In the gallery, it is my honour to introduce Samantha Babin, an integral member of our caucus staff. Sam, I ask you to please rise and accept a warm welcome from members of the Legislature and your fans. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome, Sam. We hope you enjoy your time here and feel the love from your caucus members.

The honourable member for Lunenburg.

BABIN, SAMANTHA: CONSTITUENCY WORK - THANKS

HON. SUSAN CORKUM-GREEK: It is my personal pleasure today to rise and celebrate and express our collective gratitude to an exceptional member of the PC caucus office, Samantha Babin. This month marks Sam's five-year anniversary working with us, and she has been, throughout that time, an invaluable part of our team. She works hard to make sure we are all prepared and organized for things like statements by members. That task has been substantial this year, with more than 400 statements read by government members so far. That's more than the past three sittings combined.

Of course, that's not Sam's only role in the office. No task is too big or too small for Sam. Whether she's stepping in as our office seamstress, assisting in caucus preparation, or being that cheerful voice you hear when you call the office, Sam continues to go above and beyond. It doesn't matter if you text her in the evening or on the weekend - she always gets right back to you with an answer. Her diligence, positivity, and commitment to her job have made a lasting impact on our office and everyone she works with. She is truly one of a kind, with vibrant energy and fashion sense that is on point.

I ask all members of this House to join me in celebrating Sam Babin and the contributions she continues to make for our caucus. Her hard work, kindness, and dedication do not go unnoticed, and we are truly fortunate to have her as part of our team.

[1:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I'd like to draw the members' attention to the gallery opposite where we're joined by Kat McCormack, director of Eastern Front Theatre, and her father, Angus McCormack. I'd ask you 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 Dartmouth South.

MCCORMACK, KATHRYN: THEATRE ARTIST - CONGRATS.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise today to recognize Kathryn McCormack, a talented theatre artist from Dartmouth and the Artistic Director of Eastern Front Theatre. Kat is a passionate creator, director and performer, whose work has helped to shape the Atlantic Canadian theatre scene.

Kat has contributed to over 15 new works with companies such as Zuppa Theatre, Shakespeare by the Sea, and Mermaid Theatre of Nova Scotia, among many others. As artistic director, Kat fosters a supportive and accessible space for artists to experiment and push the boundaries of storytelling. Her latest work, *Fat Juliet*, now on stage at Eastern Front Theatre, is a testament to their commitment to fresh, bold and engaging theatre. A five-time Best Theatre Actor in the *Coast*, and four-time Robert Merritt Award nominee, as well as the recipient of the King Charles III Coronation Medal, Kat's impact on the arts community is undeniable.

I ask all members of this House to join me in congratulating Kat McCormack for her contribution to Nova Scotia theatre, and for continuing to inspire audiences and artists alike.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

LIBERAL OFFICE STAFF: SUPPORT - THANKS

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: As we all know, we come in here, and we've been here for a few weeks. We all have caucus office staff who work day and night to support us as we do the work here on behalf of the people.

My colleague and I are very needy and we have a lot of demands, but our staff has been so wonderful to support us. I want to recognize them on the floor of the House: Chris Abraham, Grace Evans, Nora Ahmed, Ray Anjoul, Carson Rafuse and Braedon Clark. This is the team that supports my colleague and me. They have a lot of experience. They've been around politics for a bit, and I can tell you they are absolutely wonderful. They've been wonderful to us. They've been wonderful to our families. I know they have great relationships with staff from the other caucuses and staff around the Legislature.

I rise in my place to recognize the staff in the Liberal caucus office and thank them for all the support that they provide, not only to me and my colleague but to Nova Scotians.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Guysborough-Tracadie.

COSGROVE, CHARLA: CONSTITUENCY WORK - THANKS

HON. GREG MORROW: Bear with me; my constituency assistant normally writes most of my member statements. However, this one is for her because Charla Cosgrove is celebrating a birthday today - and it's a big one. It's 50. I didn't know Charla when she turned 40, but she tells me she took it so hard that she cried. I think she's doing a little better today.

Before this turns into a roast, I do want to be a little serious. The first thing I did when I was elected in 2021 was ask - maybe beg - Charla to come work with me. It turns out that it was also the best thing I did. Charla doesn't just maintain our office when I'm away, she runs it smoothly and compassionately, no matter the issue. It's one thing to win an election as a first-time candidate, but it's another to try to win as an incumbent. You have to run and win on your record. That's why our celebration on November 26th was as much for Charla as it was for me. I wouldn't be here without her.

I know she and her sassy CAs are watching, so please join me in wishing a happy 50th birthday to Charla Cosgrove.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth South.

EASTERN FRONT THEATRE: ACCESSIBILITY PROJECT - RECOG.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: I rise in recognition of Eastern Front Theatre and the work that they have done in championing accessibility initiatives across this province. In 2021,

they launched the Accessibility Project, an ongoing initiative aimed at guiding theatre organizations in moving forward to reduce barriers to accessing and working in performing arts, no matter what capacity.

In addition to a full report on the current state and future of accessibility in Nova Scotia theatre, this project has also seen the creation of the Accessibility Hub, an online community resource that creates a shared vocabulary, provides access measures, and normalizes access plans. The hub includes a search tool that allows the user to find recommendations to make their activities more accessible, depending on their timeline, budget and target community. Users are able to add the recommendations to their plan and can export the list that can be then used for grant proposals, infrastructure changes or strategic planning.

Eastern Front Theatre is currently in Phase 3 of the Accessibility Project and is working on the development of accessible venue audits to help organizations and facilities assure that they are creating welcoming, accessible spaces. Theatre is for everyone and these efforts by Eastern Front will bring more theatre to a greater number of Nova Scotians. I ask the House to rise and thank Eastern Front and their entire team for their services.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

COOKE, BLAINE: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

HON. IAIN RANKIN: Speaker, I want to recognize the sudden passing of Blaine Cooke, known as Mr. Cooke to nearly thousands of kids who grew up in Timberlea, including me and my sisters. Mr. Cooke was the gym teacher at Timberlea Junior High and later at the Ridgecliff Middle School for over 30 years, retiring in 2009.

He won many awards, including the highest standing in physical education and an Outstanding Service Award from the Nova Scotia Athletic Federation. He was a great ball player himself, but he was also a coach of a lot of the sports teams. I think all of us remember him as wearing his classic track suits in either red or blue. That is my recollection. Most importantly, he was a kind and patient man who cared a lot for encouraging everyone to participate in school activity.

To the family of Mr. Cooke, on behalf of the Timberlea community and all of us down here at the Nova Scotia Legislature, we just want to extend our deep condolences. He was a great man.

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

HON. SCOTT ARMSTRONG: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

SCOTT ARMSTRONG: I'd like to introduce in the gallery today our Director of Outreach at the caucus office, Paula Henderson. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome, Paula. I hope you enjoy your time here. You're going to help me get some road paved.

The honourable member for Colchester-Musquodoboit Valley.

HENDERSON, PAULA: CAUCUS OUTREACH WORK - RECOG.

HON. SCOTT ARMSTRONG: Speaker, today I rise to celebrate one of the hardest-working individuals I've had the privilege of knowing and working alongside: Paula Henderson, our Director of Outreach at the caucus office. Paula, as we know, is a force to be reckoned with. She is someone who speaks her mind with clarity and is never one to mince words. Her colleagues, including me, know that when we need honest advice or a fresh perspective, Paula is the person to go to.

What sets her apart is her remarkable personality. Paula knows when to roll up her sleeves and focus on a task at hand and will lighten the mood with her dry sense of humor. Her ability to balance hard work and a good laugh is also a gift that makes her not only an exceptional colleague but also a friend to many. Paula's contributions to our team cannot be overstated. Her efforts of strength and connections build bridges and ensure that the voices of our communities are heard.

I ask my fellow members to join me in celebrating her remarkable career, her unwavering commitment to public service, and the incredible person she is. (Standing ovation)

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 are friends and family of Kim McGregor Caven. I will introduce those who are here: Erin Casey, Heather McDougall, Liz McGregor, and Kath Perry. Welcome to the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

MCGREGOR CAVEN, KIM: DEATH OF - TRIBUTE

LISA LACHANCE: I rise today to share the joyful legacy of Kim McGregor Caven. Cue a soundtrack of Bon Jovi, Guns N' Roses, and more. Kim is described as the coolest person you ever met. She prioritized fun, joy, and play in everything she did, and she didn't gatekeep these treasures, finding gatherings, costumes, and more. She was a karaoke queen, embodying: "I am not a singer. I am a performer."

All of this fun cemented her close relationships. As a sister, daughter, partner, and mother, Kim was dedicated to her family. They held each other up. Kim was close to her friends, having an annual May long weekend gathering with friends from preschool on through the years. Kim was deeply kind and compassionate and worked throughout her career in disability support.

After growing up in Amherst, Kim attended teachers college and then worked with a range of organizations getting people back to work, including the Ontario College of Teachers, the HRCE, the RCMP, and Nova Scotia Power.

Speaker, I will end by asking all members to honour Kim by grabbing life by the lapels and living our best days with the people we love.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

MAYFLOWER CURLING CLUB: NEW LOCATION - RECOG.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: The Mayflower Curling Club is moving to Timberlea. Their open house is taking place this Saturday in Timberlea. The exceptional facility promises to be a true gem for the region, offering a state-of-the-art rink that is poised to become a cornerstone for both residents and visitors alike.

The facility will actually have eight pristine ice surfaces providing ample space to host both national events and international. In addition to the top-tier curling facilities, the modern, accessible complex will feature versatile spaces designed to accommodate a variety of functions from casual gatherings to significant events. The excellent meeting room rental opportunities will further enhance the facility's appeal, making it a valued venue for community events and social functions.

The Mayflower Curling Club rink represents more than just a sporting venue; it symbolizes our community's spirit of unity, inclusivity and dedication to healthy living. We eagerly anticipate the positive impact it will have on Timberlea and understand that there might be support from the Province to help with membership fees.

As we look forward to the grand opening, let us recognize and thank all those involved in bringing this incredible facility to fruition. Their hard work and dedication

ensures that the Mayflower Curling Club rink will soon become a beloved fixture in our community, fostering camaraderie, athleticism and pride for generations to come.

I ask the members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing and thanking all those involved in bringing this incredible project to fruition.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

CUMBERLAND CO.: NEW SERVICE CTR. - THANKS

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I rise today to thank the Municipality of Cumberland County for opening a new service centre in the community, the Village of Pugwash. Located in the new Pugwash library building, the service centre is open two days a week. The staff are able to assist both full-time and seasonal residents with a variety of matters, including development permits, tax and water billing as well as water connections and disconnections.

Having this centre available in Pugwash means it is no longer necessary for local residents to travel into Amherst to access county services. It also demonstrates a commitment on behalf of the Cumberland County Council to the future of the Village of Pugwash.

Speaker, please join me in thanking the Municipality of Cumberland for supporting the people of Pugwash and area and for recognizing this growing community.

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

FIREFIGHTERS: WILDFIRE PROTECTION - THANKS

JOHN WHITE: Speaker, as Spring settles in, many of our firefighters begin their seemingly never-ending response to wildland fires. As we all know, grass and brush fires are a real concern in many communities across Nova Scotia. In Cape Breton, we refer to it as grass fire season.

The demand on firefighters' time and the wear and tear on equipment is significant. Firefighters are exposed to excessive smoke inhalation and increased risk of breaks and strains. Cardiac arrest is a real concern, especially after exhaustion sets in on long hours necessary to fight wildland fires. Structures such as homes, trailers and sheds, as well as parks, wildlife and scenic trails, are often at risk, and the water consumption on the scene is significant.

More than 70 per cent of firefighters are volunteers, and they protect 80 per cent of Canada. We all love our volunteers, and we can help protect them by being extra vigilant

this Summer. I wish all firefighters a safe season. I want to thank them for all they do to protect our beautiful province of Nova Scotia.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

LISA LACHANCE: In the gallery today, we are joined by Kevin Corbett and Stephanie Domet. I'd like to welcome them to the House. (Applause)

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

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

DOMET, STEPHANIE: HELP FOR WRITERS - RECOG.

LISA LACHANCE: I rise to recognize the contributions of Stephanie Domet to helping Nova Scotia writers of all ages find their voice. Stephanie is the author of *Homing* and *Fallsy Downsies*, as well as the youth book *Amazing Atlantic Canadian Women*. She is also the co-founder of the Afterwards Literary Festival, which is now enriching our lives in Nova Scotia throughout the year.

For the past number of years, Stephanie has also encouraged writers of all ages to make friends with their writing process through the Tiny Empire Writing Workshop. In groups of adults and youth, Stephanie teaches people that it is worth noticing the curiosities and the beauty in life, and that what is noticed can then be noted. She supports everyone to find their voices in authentic and genuine ways. So many words have flowed over the years.

Stephanie is going to be focusing on her own writing and gardening, and creating her own hand-sewn wardrobe as well as continuing to lead the incredible success of Afterwards. For the people of Tiny Empire Writing Workshop, it is our turn to encourage the noticing, the throat-clearing, and the pathways to expression.

On behalf of all members, I thank Stephanie for her ongoing devotion to literary expression in Nova Scotia and beyond.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Digby-Annapolis.

[1:45 p.m.]

WEIR, LINDA: RETIREMENT - BEST WISHES

HON. JILL BALSER: I rise today to recognize and celebrate the exceptional service of Linda Weir, who retired in December 2024 after 28 years of dedication and commitment to Digby Pines.

Linda has truly exemplified the spirit of Digby Pines. Over nearly three decades, her unwavering focus on guest service has made her a cornerstone of the Pines experience. While she is stepping away from her day-to-day duties, Linda's legacy will live on in the countless events, conferences, and meetings she helped bring to life.

As the event manager, Linda has touched the lives of thousands of guests. She has been an integral part of nearly 200 weddings and countless gatherings, ranging from milestone celebrations to reunions, and from major conferences to intimate meetings. Through her hard work and passion, she has created memorable experiences that will last a lifetime for so many.

Linda, your dedication and spirit will be greatly missed. We wish you all the best with everything you do next in your well-earned retirement.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

DAFFODIL MO.: CANCER AWARENESS - RECOG.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: As we all see, many of us are starting to wear the pins - the daffodils. I just want to rise in my place because we're probably not going to be here next month, but it is Daffodil Month. It is, of course, about cancer awareness - raising awareness and funds to help those who are battling cancer across our province. Many of us know someone or have had a journey with cancer. It takes a village, it takes heart, and it takes bravery to take cancer head-on.

I rise in my place to recognize everyone who will be involved with Daffodil Month and raising funds and awareness to fight cancer. Also, I want to recognize all the families who continue on that journey and offer our love and support.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

PAUL WOZNEY: Speaker, I beg leave to make an introduction.

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

PAUL WOZNEY: Speaker, we're fortunate today to have in your Gallery - the Speaker's Gallery - some true history makers. With us today is Geoffrey Clyde, owner of the Halifax Hoopers. Mr. Clyde is notable because he is the first professional sports franchise owner of African Canadian descent in the entire history of our country.

I also learned, in welcoming Mr. Clyde to the Legislature today, that he has deep roots in this province. He's the great-great-grandson of William Hall, whose portrait hangs on the wall downstairs - the first Black man and the first Nova Scotian to receive the Victoria Cross in our history. He's also the nephew of Viola Desmond. Mr. Clyde has deep roots in the province and he is contributing to transformation in our province.

With him are Brandon Beloti from Brooklyn, New York; Antonio Davis from Flint, Michigan; Lansana Nwosu from Scarborough, Ontario; and native son Josiah Tynes from North Preston - all members and athletes with the Halifax Hoopers, our newest pro basketball franchise in Halifax.

Please join me in welcoming them to the People's House. (Standing ovation)

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

The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

HALIFAX HOOPERS: INAUGURAL SEASON - BEST WISHES

PAUL WOZNEY: Nova Scotia is a basketball hotbed in Canada. Our athletes and coaches have forever changed the game at the university and pro levels and through the legendary annual provincial Black basketball tournament. Our love affair continues through the Halifax Hoopers, a locally owned and managed pro basketball franchise competing in The Basketball League, which operates in 37 cities across North America.

The Hoopers are owned by Geoffrey Clyde, a Cape Breton University graduate and two-time AUS champion, showing African Nova Scotian and Black youth that hoop dreams include franchise ownership. Beloved son Agassou Jones, known to many as Augie, is one of the finest basketballers and coaches this province has ever produced. He serves as GM and head coach. Augie was a national champ as a player at StFX and a coach with Canadian national team experience. Together, Mr. Clyde and Coach Jones have built a roster of high-skill, high-character athletes that are showing our youth that you can play, coach, and professionalize the game at its highest level right here at home.

The Hoopers play their home opener on April 18th at the Zatzman Sportsplex in Dartmouth, and tickets are available now at halifaxhoopers.com. Please join me in celebrating the Hoopers and wishing them the best during their inaugural season.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

DONNA CROSSLAND: CONSERV. EFFORTS - THANKS

DAVID BOWLBY: I rise today to recognize the tireless efforts of Donna Crossland in her work to protect Nova Scotia's hemlock forests from the invasive hemlock woolly adelgid. Donna has been a steadfast advocate for the use of biocontrols to safeguard our precious old-growth hemlocks, which play a critical role in carbon sequestration and climate mitigation. Her dedication to this cause has brought together experts, woodlot owners, and government agencies, all working toward a common goal: preserving these iconic trees for future generations. Donna's advocacy highlights the importance of moving forward with a biocontrol program, which offers a sustainable, cost-effective solution.

Donna's passion for conservation and her commitment to protecting Nova Scotia's natural heritage are truly inspiring. I ask all members to join me in thanking Donna Crossland for her invaluable contributions to our environment and for her unwavering determination to ensure the survival of our hemlock forests.

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

DAVIS DAY: 100TH ANNIV. - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: I rise to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the murder of William Davis and the striking miners of 1925. In my community, June 11th marks Davis Day. In June of 1925, striking miners and community members made their way to the power plant on Daley Road, New Victoria, where company police shot 300 rounds into the crowd, wounding and killing Mr. Davis.

One hundred years ago, miners in my community went on strike for better pay, better wages, and to protest union busting. That night - after William Davis was killed - troops went into my community and they beat up members of my community. For that, we will always remember William Davis, his family, the sacrifices made by the striking members, and by the Davis family. They are forever in our hearts, and we will honour them.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Premier.

HON. TIM HOUSTON (The Premier): Permission to make an introduction?

THE SPEAKER: Please do.

THE PREMIER: Seated in the Speaker's Gallery today, I have my mom, Sharon Houston. She is a very, very strong person. She married young to a sailor who was here in Halifax and then raised three kids. As my dad travelled the world in service of our country, Mom was often left to make sure that we got to all the places the three of us needed to get to, so she's an incredible person.

Thank you, Mom. I love you, Mom. With her is my sister. My sister is certainly the glue that holds our family together in so many ways. Thank you for joining us today, and good news for the Opposition: I'll be on my best behaviour in Question Period today. (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: Welcome to the House. You did a fine job raising your son.

The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

DARTMOUTH WHALERS: CH'SHIP WIN - CONGRATS.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Last night, the Dartmouth Whalers U13-C Orcas won the Dartmouth regional gold medal, winning 2-1 in sudden death overtime against the Eastern Shore Mariners. The game was fast, intense, and the whole season has been full of fun, skill-building, and most importantly, team-building. I am super-proud of Number 13, Françoise Labelle, who upped her game significantly this year. I want to send a huge congratulations to her, her whole team, and a giant thank you to her coaches, Neil Fisher, Joe Triff, Jason Murphy, and manager Maya Belanger.

On the weekend, the Whalers U11-C Dolphins earned a bronze medal in the Dartmouth division. Number 5, Aimé Labelle, scored a beautiful goal toward the end of the game, and tears came to my eyes with pride. I am very proud of him for working hard all season and being such a supportive member of his team.

Shoutouts to the Dolphins and big thanks to their coaches - Matt Watt, Sam Blondeau, Adam Gordon, and Daniel Rice - and manager Lisa MacDonald. Thank you to everyone who makes the Dartmouth Whalers organization run to provide young Dartmouthians an opportunity to learn, develop, play, sleep, eat, and breathe hockey.

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

ACADIAN FISH & CHIPS: SUCCESS - CONGRATS.

RICK BURNS: Speaker, today I rise to recognize Acadian Fish & Chips and Enzo Pizzeria, a fantastic local restaurant in Hammonds Plains that serves up incredible fish and chips and, more importantly, genuine hospitality.

Acadian Fish & Chips prides themselves on offering fresh, local Nova Scotian ingredients and takes pride in delivering some of the best food in the province. Acadian Fish & Chips is more than just a restaurant. From the moment you walk in or call to place an order, you're treated like family. The owner, Brendan Chahine, and his staff are always welcoming, ready for a chat, and genuinely interested in learning about their customers. Yes, I'll admit I'm there quite often. Their kindness, warmth, and, of course, amazing food make them a true staple in our community.

To the team at Acadian Fish & Chips, thank you for your incredible service and for always making everyone feel right at home. Our community is lucky to have you.

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

SYDNEY STEEL PLANT: REMEMBRANCE OF STRIKE - RECOG.

KENDRA COOMBES: In June 1923, workers at the Sydney Steel Plant went on strike with the hope of gaining union recognition and better wages and working conditions. The strikers blocked scabs from entering the plant and removed workers from the boiler rooms. The steelworkers' resolve was strong.

BESCO had requested and got 350 troops and 74 horses sent from Halifax from the Royal 22nd Regiment. The provincial special police joined the soldiers, and on Sunday evening, July 1, 1923, the provincial police attempted to drive the strikers away from the plant gates. The police recklessly pursued the strikers along Victoria Road and the pier, attacking pedestrians and strikers and damaging property.

The events were described as a reign of terror and became known as Bloody Sunday. We will never forget. We will always remember.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Clayton Park West.

MOODY, ELLEN: 101ST BIRTHDAY - BEST WISHES

ADEGOKE FADARE: I rise today to celebrate a remarkable resident of Clayton Park West, Ellen Moody, who turned 101 years old on March 9th.

Ellen's life is a testament to strength, wisdom, and resilience. Over the past century, she has witnessed extraordinary changes, from a world without television to where we can carry the power of the internet in our pockets. She is a cherished mother, grandmother, and friend. I had the pleasure of meeting her, along with her son Fred with his wife, who came in from out of town to mark this beautiful occasion. It was a time filled with love, laughter, and admiration for a woman who inspires us all. She still has many beautiful stories to share.

I want to ask all members of this House join me in congratulating Ellen Moody on reaching this incredible milestone and for the legacy of kindness, grace, and strength she brings to our community.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

MACKARACHER, DORIS: FREEDOM FOUNDATION - RECOG.

SUSAN LEBLANC: Doris MacKaracher is a beloved member of the North Dartmouth community, especially so at the Freedom Foundation of Nova Scotia, where she delivers monthly homemade cookies.

The Freedom Foundation is a not-for-profit and transitional home that helps men recover from addictions. As one Freedom Foundation staff member remarked, “A house is not a home without the smell of freshly baked cookies.” Doris’s cookies and other sweets bring back fond memories, create comfort, and help the men take a break from their daily struggles. Doris’s sweet contributions have earned her the nickname “The Cookie Lady” among residents and staff, most of whom can’t remember a time when she wasn’t part of the foundation. Her actions let the folks at the Freedom Foundation know they are a valued part of the North Dartmouth community and their neighbours care.

I ask this House to join me in thanking Doris for using her considerable baking skills to fill bellies and lift spirits at the Freedom Foundation in Dartmouth North.

THE SPEAKER: With 28 seconds, I beg leave to make an introduction.

I would like to introduce someone in the East Gallery. Her name is Julie Chiasson. She is a highly intelligent, loving, articulate, and funny lady. I would like everybody to give her the warm House welcome. (Applause)

[2:00 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. The time allotted for Statements by Members has expired.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY**ORAL QUESTIONS PUT BY MEMBERS TO MINISTERS**

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

PREM.: HEALTH CARE FUNDING - ACCEPT

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Last week, the Premier sent a letter to the Prime Minister outlining priorities for the Province that require federal partnership. Unfortunately, the thousands of Nova Scotians who use birth control and diabetes medication and devices didn’t quite make the Premier’s list. While people in other provinces can access the health care they need free of charge, the government is making Nova Scotians pay directly through expensive copays for their medications. At a time of increased financial insecurity,

why isn't this government taking the money on the table and getting Nova Scotians a break on medication costs?

THE PREMIER: Indeed, I sent that letter to two party leaders, the two party leaders who have the potential to be Prime Minister of the country. I sent that to the Liberal Party of Canada and to the Conservative Party of Canada, outlining the priorities for Nova Scotians: building the economy, creating jobs, getting us to a better place. There are other issues that the Province is working on with the federal government. We did a deal a couple of weeks ago for rare disease medication. We'll continue to work with the federal government. If the deal works for Nova Scotians, it works for us. We just need to make sure we get the right deal.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: There's a third federal party that got pharmacare passed for all Canadians, and yet this Premier has dragged his feet on taking the money that's on the table, and Nova Scotians are paying the price. Diabetes medication isn't a luxury item for thousands of Nova Scotians who rely on it, and copays can be thousands of dollars. Barrier-free birth control gives women and gender-diverse people options about their bodily autonomy and their health - especially when they find themselves in controlling relationships. The Premier is denying the people of this province free medication. What does he have to say to the people who are paying out of pocket for medication when they don't have to?

THE PREMIER: I did send the letter to the people who have the potential to be the Prime Minister of the country. Those are the ones we wanted to focus on. I would just say to the member that as the government, we have a responsibility to Nova Scotians. We have a responsibility to make sure it's the right deal because we have seen also what happens when the wrong deal is signed. Members of this House will remember the Liberal government on the eve of an election signing a child care deal. We're still trying to clean that mess up. We have to make sure it's the right deal for Nova Scotians. We're doing that. We will continue to do that work. We'll try to clean up the Rankin government child care mess as well. That's an awful shame. We can't make the same mistake as they did. (Interruptions)

THE SPEAKER: Just a reminder: We can't say members' names who are still sitting in the House.

The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Cheap shots at the federal party don't change the fact that the window for securing free diabetes and birth control for the people in this province has likely closed. British Columbia made contraception free years ago and signed a pharmacare deal six months ago to get the money on the table. Manitoba and Prince Edward Island have signed since then, and every week that goes by without a deal means Nova Scotians

are paying out of pocket. The Premier has been to Ottawa three times this session. Why couldn't he find time to sign on the dotted line and get free medication for Nova Scotians?

THE PREMIER: How socialist to just say, "Take the deal, take the deal". We have a responsibility to Nova Scotians to make sure that we get the right deal. We led the way on diabetes and providing care for those living with diabetes. We're leading the way on the health care file in general - incredible progress we're making. We want to make sure that it is the right deal for Nova Scotians, that it's a deal that's sustainable for Nova Scotians, and we will not look away from our obligation to Nova Scotians. We will do what is necessary. We will continue to do that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Liberal Party.

PREM.: DIVERSITY FLAGS REMOVAL - INTERVENE

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: The Premier's own Facebook page announced over 200 child care seats, and the first thing they referenced was the national child care deal that was signed - this week, on his Facebook page. We all strive to make schools places of learning, inclusion, and respect. The decision to remove flags that represent Mi'kmaw, African Nova Scotian, 2SLGBTQIA+, and other communities sends the wrong message to students who deserve to feel safe and supported.

These flags are more than symbols; they represent the history, identity, and belonging of communities that have fought for recognition and equality. At a time when we should be fostering acceptance and inclusion in our schools, this move does the opposite. Will the Premier intervene and direct the South Shore Regional Centre for Education to reverse the decision?

THE PREMIER: I would be very happy to debate the record of the former Liberal government, but that has been debated very publicly at least twice by Nova Scotians, and they've spoken loud and clear on how they think that government did for Nova Scotians. That child care deal is the worst in the country, and it was signed so they could call an election the next day - the very definition of putting politics before people. We won't do that. We will stand for Nova Scotians.

On the issue of flags, I would say we all need our schools to be welcoming places. We all need our schools to be safe places. In terms of flags, here at the Legislature, we raise them periodically as well, and we'll talk to the Centre.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: We weren't the first to sign; B.C. was the first to sign. As I said, the government has made announcement after announcement and cut ribbons on child care deals, and the first thing they reference is the national child care deal that was signed.

To my question around flags, we don't want a patchwork approach to inclusion in our schools. What is allowed in one region should be allowed in all. Some school boards are choosing to remove flags that represent historically marginalized communities. It creates division instead of unity. Will the Premier commit to a province-wide policy that ensures schools can continue to fly these flags?

THE PREMIER: I just have to say how remarkable it is that the entire Liberal caucus, both members, continue to try to rewrite history on the deals they signed for this province - that child care agreement, the worst in the country. We're trying to clean that mess up. We're committed to cleaning that mess up.

But listen, at the Legislature here, we have certain flag raisings, we participate in them. I've participated in a number myself. I don't know the full background of the decision of the South Shore Regional Centre for Education. We'll have those discussions to see what drove their decision, what they're trying to achieve. We'll have that discussion with them. That's not something that we were aware of. Certainly not myself, and I don't believe the department, either. We'll have those discussions and see what they're trying to achieve there.

DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I'll finally just say we're proud of that deal and there are members who cut ribbons on daycares all across this province. We're proud of that deal, too, before the election.

Students of all backgrounds - African Nova Scotian, Mi'kmaq, 2SLGBTQIA+ - all students deserve to see their identities and histories reflected in the spaces where they learn. This government has spoken about supporting diversity, and we want them to stand proud and clear on this one.

Will the Premier take immediate action to ensure that every student in Nova Scotia knows their government stands with them, by allowing these flags to fly in all schools?

THE PREMIER: We'll have those discussions with the Centre to understand their thought process. Our schools need to be welcoming, safe places. We absolutely agree with that. Every place in Nova Scotia should be a safe place. There is no room for hate in this province.

I was blown away yesterday when I heard the member for Sackville-Cobequid talking about the KKK and not a single member of his caucus, or not a single member of the Opposition stood up and said, Hold on a second, too far. I'm proud of the minister for standing up and saying: There is no place for hate in this province.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the Official Opposition.

DHW: DENSE BREAST CANCER SCREENING - PROVIDE

CLAUDIA CHENDER: Speaker, I'd like to share the results of a diagnostic test that I got last week. Like thousands of women across this province, I got a mammogram that didn't detect cancer but did confirm that due to areas of dense tissue, there was a significant chance that it could not detect cancer if cancer were present. The report itself comes with a warning that reads: "Dense breast tissue can hide cancers on a mammogram."

Other provinces have dense breast screening to detect cancer care more often, but we do not. When will this vital cancer screening be available to women in our province?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: Again, I thank the member for bringing this to the floor of the Legislature. We know that dense breasts is one of the high-risk factors, but it's not the only one, it's not the single one, and so we do have a high risk. We are one of two provinces in the country that have a high-risk breast screening program. The reason that information is on reports offered to women across the province is so they understand that this is one of several high-risk factors and it is important for them to understand that.

We continue to work with the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program. This is not something we're holding back. We are working with those experts to understand what the emerging evidence says. We continue to work with them. I have faith in those individuals. We have an excellent screening program here and we will continue to have ongoing conversations with them.

CLAUDIA CHENDER: For a high-risk diagnosis, if you can be in the high-risk program here, you have to have dense breasts and family history, et cetera, et cetera. In Ontario, if you have dense breasts, you can get an ultrasound or an MRI which can, in fact, detect cancer, but women in Nova Scotia can't. We're also hearing from many women in the province who are waiting for weeks just to get a basic mammogram.

The current options for screening breast cancer are letting Nova Scotians down. The government's own website shows that women in Bridgewater are waiting 157 days for a mammogram, and in Kentville it is 145 days. When will this government make timely and accurate detection of women's cancers a priority?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: I just want to reassure Nova Scotians that, again, we are working very closely with the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program, and with this ongoing discussion, I've been able to reach out to them. Nova Scotia's breast cancer detection rate meets or exceeds national targets in all age groups across our country, and Nova Scotia exceeds the national target of less than 70 per cent of breast cancers that have not spread beyond the breast at time of screening diagnosis.

Despite the member's comments, we really are doing an incredible job in Nova Scotia in terms of detection. We know that dense breasts is one risk factor, but it's not all

of them. What's important is that there is a thorough screening process with a clear pathway to care. Certainly, the results . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

EARI: DIVERSITY FLAG REMOVAL - PREVENT

PAUL WOZNEY: Nova Scotians are deeply concerned about the hate spreading south of the border, where the president is actually scapegoating equity-deserving communities. Nova Scotians are worried that such dangerous sentiments might be finding a home here.

The South Shore Regional Centre for Education quietly removed flags celebrating the Mi'kmaw, African Nova Scotian, and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities from school flag poles. Instead, they will be treated as second-class symbols and displayed indoors because it is too costly to keep outdoor flags in good repair. Is the Minister responsible for the Office of Equity and Anti-Racism prepared to allow equity-deserving staff and students to be treated as second-class citizens in our schools?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, we want all our schools to be inclusive, we want them to be welcoming, and we want them to celebrate everything that is Nova Scotian. We will step in, we will talk to the RCEs, and we will make sure that this issue is addressed. We just found out about it, and we are going to continue to work to make sure our schools are inclusive, but at the same time the member yesterday said that we should not - the Premier should not - interfere when somebody dresses up as the Ku Klux Klan. You can't have it both ways.

What I will tell Nova Scotians is that this is a welcoming province. No matter what you look like, who you love, or who you are, you are welcome here. We will support you in our schools and in everything we can do within the provincial government.

PAUL WOZNEY: Under current law the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development is ultimately responsible for the operation of all public schools. The responsibility for this divisive decision clearly rests with the minister. At a time when equity-deserving Nova Scotians fear the kind of treatment being normalized in the United States, this government must act decisively to protect their rights. My question to the minister is: Will the minister stop this policy and ensure that flags celebrating the Mi'kmaw, African Nova Scotian, and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities are proudly displayed at every school in this province?

[2:15 p.m.]

BRENDAN MAGUIRE: That was the time to show some humility and say I made a mistake. I shouldn't have said that, Speaker, really. Nobody should remain silent when they see racism. No one should remain silent when they see sexism and homophobia, whether you are the Premier of this province or whoever you are. It doesn't matter if you lead this problem or if you are just somebody who lives down the street, we have a responsibility as human beings to speak out. Nothing will stop this government or Nova Scotians from doing that.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

FTB: PICKING FIGHTS - STOP

SUZY HANSEN: Wow, there's a lot of silence in this room when legislation gets passed. Speaker, when this government is busy pushing an agenda that no one voted for, Nova Scotians are struggling with high rent, emergency rooms are overwhelmed, and too many people can't keep up with their bills. Instead of getting people the help they need, this government is spending this session pushing a secret agenda to consolidate their own power. My question is to the Premier: Why has this government been attacking special interests and picking fights instead of working for Nova Scotians?

HON. JOHN LOHR: We are working hard for Nova Scotians. We realize the pressure on Nova Scotians to make life more affordable. That's why we've instituted a \$500 million tax cut. That's why we've done it. An absolutely historic school lunch program and I ask that member: Why did her party vote against our school lunch program?

SUZY HANSEN: This government has patted itself on the back for walking back some of the worst ideas ever after public outrage. There are many more overreaching policies Nova Scotians have protested, emailed, and spoken out against. Nova Scotians are seeing this government dismantle protections for workers, strip away academic freedoms, and recklessly remove bans designed to protect our land and water, all without consultation. Speaker, my question is: What does the Premier say to Nova Scotians who feel betrayed by this government's secret agenda?

JOHN LOHR: I continue to be happy to stand on this government's agenda. When we have to backtrack on something, we'll do that. We are willing to say, Okay, we'll change that plan. We are working hard for Nova Scotians. We are in an existential crisis for our country right now. Our province is strong. We have a strong budget. We have a strong mandate from the people of Nova Scotia. We will continue to work for the people of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

ECC: RESOURCE EXTRACTION - CONSULT

HON. IAIN RANKIN: The government has justified ending the long-established bans on uranium mining and fracking, saying that this must be done in order to allow for mature conversations. Many believe these conversations have a pre-defined outcome. When asked, the government only points to the environmental assessment process. My question for the Minister of Environment and Climate Change is: Is this all the government is prepared to offer in terms of public consultation?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Only environmental assessments, the former minister and Premier says. That's ridiculous, Speaker. The fact of the matter is that Nova Scotia is recognized by the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia as having a very strong regulatory framework. Nova Scotians can be assured that we have strong regulations in place to protect the environment, to build up the economy.

I recall that a few weeks ago, folks - they like to throw quotes out. Well, I've got a quote here for this House for anyone who doesn't say we can do it. It's from the Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw: "People who say it cannot be done should not interrupt those who are doing it."

THE SPEAKER: Thank you. I had a confirmation that the minister is going to table this afterward.

The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

IAIN RANKIN: We were at Public Bills Committee, where we had many presenters and submissions, and there wasn't one presenter who actually spoke in favour of opening up to fracking. Given the highly technical nature and the short public input timelines in the EA process, the average citizen is unlikely to be able to participate in that. It's hardly public consultations. The EA, for example, has a 30-day process for public submissions, not consultation. Will the government conduct a proper public consultation on these important issues, which are obviously of great public concern, or are they simply going to direct people to the EA process and call that mature conversations?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: In a time of unprecedented challenges for Nova Scotia and Canada, casting shade on our robust process is not helpful. As the Premier and other ministers have indicated, we're going to have a mature conversation, and a mature conversation implies recognizing the facts.

The facts are that Nova Scotia has a strong, common sense regulatory framework. We are always looking to improve that. As responsible resource development takes place, I want to assure all Nova Scotians that we have the resources and the mechanisms in place to protect the environment and to build up the economy of Nova Scotia.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Needham.

RTA: FIXED-TERM LEASE LOOPHOLE - CLOSE

SUZY HANSEN: For most Nova Scotians, the cost of their homes is their biggest expense. We recently heard from a Dartmouth woman whose son is a Red Seal tradesman but he still can't afford to rent a home in the community where he wants to raise his son. Nova Scotia needs tradespeople to build more homes people can actually afford. How does the Premier expect people to be able to afford to stay in Nova Scotia when the fixed-term lease loophole allows rents to increase more and more each year?

HON. JILL BALSER: As we are proceeding through the House and thinking of some of the comments that I have made before - we've always been focused on making sure that Nova Scotians have choice. When we look at the investments that have been made in housing, it's so important to make sure that Nova Scotians can see that choice so they have the ability to be able to choose either a home or an apartment that is right for them.

I also know that my colleague, the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration, through the Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency, is doing everything that they can to encourage young people to move into careers in the skilled trades. We have to have people building the homes that we need right now. It is an across-government approach and we're going to continue to tackle those challenges.

SUZY HANSEN: We do want people to have choice, but choice doesn't make homes more affordable. What we know, and what the minister knows, is that people across the province are facing higher and higher rents because landlords are using fixed-term leases to get around the cap. When rents are sky high, it's nearly impossible for young people to save for a down payment on their first home. People will leave and move to other provinces if they can't afford a home in a community that they love. Why isn't this government closing the fixed-term lease loophole so that young people can build the life they want in the province we all love?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Growth and Development.

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I know the member opposite disagrees about the success we have with our housing plan. We are seeing supply increase. We're seeing vacancy rates increase. We're seeing rents start to stabilize. That work is ongoing. I start to wonder if the member wants to backtrack and actually maybe support our government's initiatives, like the More Opportunities for Skilled Trades program and like our investments in housing. I also ask the member which of the \$31 million - almost \$32 million - invested in the last number of years in her constituency would she want to backtrack and maybe support now?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

RTA: MAKING EVICTIONS EASIER - EXPLAIN

SUSAN LEBLANC: I want to get back to George Bernard Shaw for a minute. He also said, "A government that robs Peter to pay Paul can always depend on the support of Paul." When we want to start quoting Irish playwrights, just look me up. That also applies to my question.

We know this government intends to make it easier for landlords to evict renters by slashing the non-payment grace period from 15 days to just three. I have asked about this several times now, and each time the minister has stood and said that she believes the Residential Tenancies Program is working. If what we have is truly working, why is this government making it easier for landlords to evict their tenants?

THE SPEAKER: I'm going to have to ask you to table that quote after you're done, like the minister has to as well.

The honourable Minister responsible for the Residential Tenancies Act.

HON. JILL BALSER: I want to thank the member for this important question because it gives me the opportunity to speak to Nova Scotians to say, Yes, there are changes coming to the Residential Tenancies Program around eviction timeline, but it's important that Nova Scotians do reach out to the Residential Tenancies Program when they have any questions. Yes, there will be a three-day period of late or unpaid rent, but that is aligning to other jurisdictions across Canada.

It is important that Nova Scotians know that we do have a Residential Tenancies Program that does work, and that individuals who work for Service Nova Scotia - who are located across Nova Scotia - are there to answer the questions that anyone might have in their time of need because we want a balanced program that provides respect and dignity to all Nova Scotians.

SUSAN LEBLANC: The relationship between a landlord and a tenant is inherently unbalanced, and nothing is going to change that; that is the relationship. Many tenants in the province are living paycheque to paycheque and struggling to pay for their rent, food, and medications. Even if the eviction process is paused when someone goes to Residential Tenancies, many people will miss the shortened deadline because three days simply isn't long enough to contact their MLA, do the research and find out the process, or get themselves to the quite inaccessible Access Nova Scotia.

Speeding up evictions right now will result in Nova Scotians setting up tents in homeless encampments. Will the minister stand today and assure renters that this government will not make it easier for their landlords to evict them?

JILL BALSER: I want to thank the member again for this important question because it is important for Nova Scotians to know the changes that are coming. It's a three-day period that then can start the eviction process. That does not mean that someone is going to be evicted from the place that they live in after three days. It starts the eviction process.

As the member had said - which is important - when a tenant comes to the Residential Tenancies Program, that's when the eviction stops. It stops the clock so they can provide information to a residential tenancies officer; then a hearing can begin. Also, recognizing the changes that have come to the Residential Tenancies Program, where hearings are being seen and heard in a timely manner - within three weeks. Again, we do have a program that works.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Halifax Chebucto.

GAD: CSA PGM. DISCOUNT - EXPAND

KRISTA GALLAGHER: On Friday, I asked this question, but I only got a testimonial as an answer, so I'll ask again on behalf of a few farmers I've been speaking with. Folks on the ground would like to see the 10 per cent discount for Wolfville Farmers' Market 2 Go expanded. Farmers right now are selling their CSAs for this growing season and harvest season. Will the minister act to expand the 10 per cent discount for community-supported agriculture programs?

HON. COLTON LEBLANC: I'm certainly excited with the progress we're seeing with Nova Scotia Loyal - even growing interest in this House. I think more people than ever are Nova Scotia Loyal. That said, when we look at the programs we're offering and the vouchers we've discussed, we're looking at ways to get those out perhaps sooner in the school year for students.

I take the member's question regarding discounts and vouchers. We're always looking at ways to continue to grow and strengthen the program. We'll have those discussions at the department.

KRISTA GALLAGHER: We all want Nova Scotia Loyal to work. We know that producers have feedback aimed at making the program better. For example, Anna Hutchinson drives her products to every Sobeys store in the province and stocks the shelves herself. She's concerned that Nova Scotia Loyal branding is not noticeable enough. Will the minister tell us: Is there, or will there be, a feedback process for producers like Anna?

COLTON LEBLANC: We have an open door. I have to commend the staff at the Department of Growth and Development, who are really leading the charge on this. They have put blood, sweat, and tears into making sure that Nova Scotia Loyal is a success story

- the movement that we are seeing today. The feedback that we get from producers and retailers is invaluable. That is what has driven our government to actually launch the Nova Scotia Loyal labelling program, supporting producers directly to get the Nova Scotia Loyal label directly on the products before they hit the store shelves. We also work with brand ambassadors who go from one end of the province to another to ensure that visibility is getting better every single day.

[2:30 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

DHW: MASSAGE THERAPY - REGULATE

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: My question is for the Minister of Health and Wellness. Almost two years ago, I asked the Minister of Health and Wellness why massage therapy is not regulated here in the province of Nova Scotia. For example, if you're not a nurse, you cannot call yourself a nurse because it's a regulated profession. To protect the public, no one should be able to promote themselves as a massage therapist if they are not qualified to do so. Someone in Amherst had a shingle out offering holistic massage and several other services. No one could shut him down, and he has been charged with several counts of sexual assault. I'm going to table that. Can the minister please update this House on where they are - progress to date - on getting this profession regulated?

HON. MICHELLE THOMPSON: The Regulated Health Professions Act that we passed a couple of years ago brings the current 21 regulated health care professions under one piece of legislation. We are working with a number of health care professionals like naturopathic doctors and massage therapists. There is title protection, but it is very important that when people seek services, they do ask for the qualifications of the people who are providing services for them. Currently, massage therapists are not under the Regulated Health Professions Act, but we do expect that they will migrate under that Act over time. I don't have a timeline just now.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I am disappointed that there has been no progress since I asked this question two years ago. Here in this House, I brought this up, and it was the same practitioner who has been charged with several accounts. If massage therapy had been regulated, several victims could have been prevented from experiencing sexual assault in our community. Will the minister please make regulating the profession of massage therapy a priority for Nova Scotians? Two years ago, I brought this up, and it's still not done. Will the minister please make this a priority to protect the people of Nova Scotia?

MICHELLE THOMPSON: First of all, I want to thank the folks in the department and the massage therapists across this province who have been working very hard for the

last number of years to make sure that this profession is brought online under the Regulated Health Professions Act.

I think it's unfair to say that there has been no work done. We have to make sure that there are a number of things in place. It is very important that when people seek private services, they understand the qualifications of the individuals who are providing care for them. It is essential that people ask questions. It is a buyer-beware environment. We are working very hard. There's always the RCMP. Bad people do bad things, and we need to make sure that when people feel they have been treated poorly, the RCMP or police are contacted.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Sackville-Cobequid.

PREM: SURPRISE AGENDA - WITHDRAW

PAUL WOZNEY: This is the sixth week of the House being in session. We have seen many shocking and alarming moves by this government: lifting bans on fracking and uranium without consultation, moving to fire public servants without cause, and threatening the academic freedom of our province's universities. Nova Scotians didn't ask for these changes, and they sure didn't vote for them in November. My question is: Can the Premier explain why this government still charges ahead with a surprise agenda despite widespread opposition from Nova Scotians?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Deputy Premier.

HON. BARBARA ADAMS: When we were on the doorsteps several months ago, Nova Scotians spoke loud and clear about what they wanted. They wanted our government to continue to build hospitals and nursing homes, to expand the school lunch program, to expand daycare programs, to continue to look for opportunities to grow this province. Then there were existential threats that we were not campaigning on because they weren't evident at the time. This government does more, faster, and we're going to continue to do that.

PAUL WOZNEY: The Premier has said that sometimes his government gets it wrong. This government got it wrong when they tried to fire the Auditor General - and they walked that back. They got it wrong when they tried to pick and choose what Freedom of Information requests to respond to - and they walked that back too. Nova Scotians have clearly told this government that it is wrong about other changes. They've rallied in the streets, they've written to their MLAs, and they've turned out to Public Bills Committee to tell them. My question to the Premier is: Why won't the Premier listen to Nova Scotians and walk back changes nobody asked for about environmental protections, civil servants, and universities?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Communications Nova Scotia.

HON. LEAH MARTIN: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. I've listened to a lot of - for lack of a better word - mansplaining from the member opposite over the last couple of hours and days. I would like to say that while Nova Scotians respect a government that can walk back on things that maybe they don't get perfectly, how come the member opposite didn't apologize when he didn't get it right yesterday, standing with the Ku Klux Klan? I'm not sure.

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

OSD: CHILD AND YOUTH ADVOCATE OFFICE - CREATE

LINA HAMID: An Office of Child and Youth Advocate is desperately needed in our province. The authors of a recent Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives report explained that this office can be the difference between life and death for many marginalized children and youth. My question to the minister is: Given the importance, why is Nova Scotia one of the only provinces in this country without an Office of a Child and Youth Advocate?

HON SCOTT ARMSTRONG: I want to thank the member for her question. We want Nova Scotia to be the best province in this country - in fact, the best place in the world to raise a family and have children. That's why it was our government that put forward the legislation that enabled this office in the first place. The NDP talked about it and the Liberals talked about it, but this Premier and this government did it - and credit to them for doing that.

Work is well under way in the department. We are setting up the regulations, including the staffing and some of the certifications around this, so work is under way. Stay tuned, Speaker.

LINA HAMID: While we do appreciate that the work is ongoing, youth, children, and families involved in the child protection system are not able to wait. Telling them to be patient is not good enough. My question to the minister is: How much longer is this government planning to make young people wait to have their voices heard and their needs met?

SCOTT ARMSTRONG: As minister, I have to make sure that this is done right. We don't want to put something in place that isn't effective or efficient. We're going to take the time we need to make sure this is a very effective office. You know what we don't want students waiting for? A school lunch program. Every member of the two Opposition parties voted against school lunches last night when they voted against that budget. Why are they not supporting children getting meals at lunch, at schools?

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

LSI: FIREFIGHTER JOB PROTECTION - PROVIDE

KENDRA COOMBES: Speaker, Bruce Masales is a long-serving Halifax volunteer firefighter. Now retired, he was diagnosed with Stage 4 bladder cancer last Summer. Unfortunately, even though his type of cancer is covered for firefighters by the WCB, Bruce's claim was rejected, as he fell through the gaps in the coverage. What will the Minister of Labour, Skills and Immigration do to ensure others like Bruce, who volunteer to protect people across our province, don't fall through the gaps?

HON. NOLAN YOUNG: First, firefighters face risks every day to keep their communities safe. I seriously want to thank them for their service. It's heartbreaking any time that we hear of a first responder who may face health challenges - and our thoughts are definitely with them. I've been looking into these circumstances that the firefighters are facing. I want him to know that as policy-makers, it's critical that we understand the whole process of the journey.

KENDRA COOMBES: I hope that leads to action on these gaps. Volunteer fire departments are struggling with recruitment and retention, especially of younger members who have full-time jobs. During the historic wildfires of 2023, many volunteer firefighters told us that they were concerned about their job security when they had to miss their day jobs to help control the fires in Shelburne and Tantallon. When will the minister ensure that volunteer firefighters have job protection and their employers have support when these dedicated volunteers are working to keep Nova Scotians safe?

NOLAN YOUNG: Having experienced wildfires and having gone through that whole experience, I can't thank them enough for their efforts. I can't thank them enough for their dedication and service. I'm in regular contact with members from the fire department. My appreciation goes out to them, and we'll continue our conversation.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

ECC: CLIMATE CHANGE FIGHTING PROGRAMS - FUND

HON. IAIN RANKIN: This morning, we learned that the government is cancelling the Electrify Nova Scotia Rebate Program with just 10 days notice. This program was originally funded by the Green Fund, with money that was collected through cap and trade. During Estimates, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change confirmed that \$17.4 million has been collected from the replacement system, OBPS. Can the minister tell this House how much money is left to fight climate change from this fund?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: OBPS is the system we use in Nova Scotia to ensure large emitters, large industries, don't have an adverse impact on the environment - that we regulate the amount of greenhouse gas emissions. Speaker, I can't resist, though: Why does

my family minivan have more seats than that party has seats in this Legislature? Because of the Liberal carbon tax. Good riddance to the worst tax in history.

IAIN RANKIN: As George Bernard Shaw said, “You see things, and you say, ‘Why?’ But I dream things that never were, and I say, ‘Why not?’” I’m dreaming of someday getting an answer in Question Period.

The Green Fund was separate from general revenue to ensure that the funding actually went to fight climate change. When the government moved away from that model, I was concerned that these initiatives would not be safeguarded. Now with the Electrify Nova Scotia Rebate Program ending, can the minister tell us what other programs previously supported by the Green Fund might be at risk now?

THE SPEAKER: You’re all cute today with your quotes, but I’m going to ask you to table that. You’ll be able to find it, I’m pretty sure.

The honourable Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

TIMOTHY HALMAN: I’ll table my quote. I want Nova Scotians to be assured that their province is a leader in climate change action. Last Summer, we were recognized by Pembina Institute. We ranked third in our overall climate change response, and to our energy response. We have the first fully funded climate change plan.

I challenge the previous government and the previous NDP government to table their fully funded climate change plan. Guess what, Speaker - they can’t. But we can. Nova Scotia is a leader on climate change, and I humbly submit our climate change plan to this House.

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

OSD: METROWORKS CLOSURE - ADDRESS

LINA HAMID: After almost five decades, MetroWorks has filed for bankruptcy. Among other social enterprises, MetroWorks operated Cunard Learning Centre and employment skills programs for newcomers. With the closure of MetroWorks, the future of these important programs is up in the air. How will this government ensure these crucial services continue to be available?

HON. SCOTT ARMSTRONG: As she knows, MetroWorks was an independent body that we were partnered with. For years they did very good work; however, the board has made a decision that they’re no longer financially viable. Our department was a good funder of that, but they just couldn’t make things continue to go. We’re reaching out to, of course, the employees who have been displaced. LSI has been working with them so they

can find new employment opportunities, and we will again make sure that we provide necessary services to anyone in that area who needs supports through our programs.

[2:45 p.m.]

LINA HAMID: MetroWorks also operated Stone Hearth Bakery, the Ampersand Café, and Common Roots Urban Farm. These social enterprises helped Nova Scotians overcome barriers to working, gain work and life skills, and get valuable on-the-job training. Now those Nova Scotians will be thrown into a challenging job market with little support. How will this government help the Nova Scotians affected by the MetroWorks closure, and will it save these social enterprises?

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Department of Labour, Skills and Immigration.

HON. NOLAN YOUNG: First and foremost, I know it's a difficult time for all the MetroWorks staff and the learners there. I want them to know we're here to help. We're working with other education providers to help the learners there have a smooth transition. It's my understanding that the department's already reached out and has been working with them. As for the employers, we have teams, as well, to help them find new job opportunities.

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

ECC: WELL DRILLING - SUPPORT

KENDRA COOMBES: Increasing drought conditions in the province are causing taps to dry up in rural Nova Scotia. Cathy and her husband live in southwestern Nova Scotia. Their well goes dry every Summer, and even when they have water, it is contaminated and cannot be used for drinking or cooking. They know they need to drill a deeper well, but like many others in their position, they can't afford to do it. Will the Minister of Environment and this government support Nova Scotians who need to drill deeper wells?

HON. TIMOTHY HALMAN: Certainly, the issue specifically with southwest Nova Scotia - I'm certainly aware that's been a long-standing issue. Most certainly, this is something that is definitely on the radar screen. As a matter of fact, this weekend, the MLA for Truro and I had the opportunity to visit a water expo to learn from the industry about some of the incredible innovation that's taking place.

By the end of 2026, in the Environmental Goals and Climate Change Reduction Act, we have the commitment to develop a strategy to help Nova Scotians with their well water. It is a top priority. Over 40 per cent of our population is rural, and certainly this is

something that is on the radar screen. I'll continue to work with communities to find solutions.

KENDRA COOMBES: Almost half of Nova Scotians rely on private wells for drinking water, and over half of the province's private well owners have never tested or can't recall testing the quality of their well water. Making this testing free is a simple way to help Nova Scotians make sure that their water that they're drinking is safe. Will the government do the right thing and help Nova Scotians who rely on well water to test for things like uranium, lead, and ammonia?

TIMOTHY HALMAN: One of the functions we have at Environment and Climate Change, with respect to the regulatory rule, is we have an education component. We always encourage residents who have well water . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Order. Order, please. The time allotted for Oral Questions Put by Members - can I finish closing this up first - Oral Questions Put by Members to Ministers has expired.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: Speaker, I know the last time I wasn't loud enough, so I wanted to make sure. I rise on a point of order during debate. The member for Cole Harbour used unparliamentary language with the word "mansplaining," and I would ask that it be retracted.

THE SPEAKER: I just looked through the records of unparliamentary words, and it is not there, but in the context, I don't find it unparliamentary. Your point of order is dismissed.

Is this a new point of order? Okay.

The honourable member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island.

LISA LACHANCE: I rise on a point of order. Throughout the debate, various members did refer to a previous debate without tabling documents. The members were for Preston, Pictou East, Cole Harbour, and Halifax Atlantic. I would ask that they table that debate.

THE SPEAKER: I'm going to dismiss that point of order. Okay, so the reality is, and I said this a few weeks ago, if it's government - if it's stated in here, if it's government's paperwork, you do not have to table those. If we had a discussion here, it's in Hansard. You can find it.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Pursuant to Rule 5C, I move that the hours for March 26th be not from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., but instead be 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

THE SPEAKER: Pursuant to Rule 5C, there has been a request for the hours for Wednesday, March 26th, be from 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Government House Leader.

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

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

We will have a short recess while the committee sets up.

[3:11 p.m. The House resolved into the CWH on Bills with Deputy Speaker John White in the Chair.]

[3:44 p.m. The CWH on Bills rose and the House reconvened. The Speaker, Hon. Danielle Barkhouse, resumed the Chair.]

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

THE CLERK: That the Committee of the Whole House on Bills has met and considered the following bill:

Bill No. 24 - Temporary Access to Land Act and Joint Regional Transportation Agency Act (amended).

with certain amendments, and the Chair has been instructed to recommend this bill to the favourable consideration of the House.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Private and Local Bills for Third Reading.

PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 30.

Bill No. 30 - Windsor Curling Club Continuation Act.

[3:45 p.m.]

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: I move that Bill No. 30 now be read a third time.

The Windsor Curling Club has been a staple in our community for the last 117 years. After suffering a devastating fire in September 2007, the community rallied together, with help from the Province, and rebuilt a new club that opened the following year on their 100th anniversary.

The club, originally incorporated under the Companies Act prior to the existence of the Societies Act, have requested to convert the Windsor Curling Club from a company to a society. Windsor Curling Club has never been run as a profit-driven enterprise but rather by a dedicated team of volunteers with no paid staff. The only aim of the club was to continually invest in keeping the club operating and updated with proper equipment and to provide a good curling surface and space for all its members and the community at large.

As I mentioned in my remarks at first reading, this change is a big deal for the over 240 members and the long-term success of the club.

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize the honourable member for Hants West, it will be to close debate on third reading.

The honourable member for Hants West.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: As a former member of the club, I am proud to have been able to assist with this legislation and can attest to the contribution this club makes to our community. With these few comments, I move to close debate on third reading of Bill No. 30.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 30.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

Bill No. 30 - Windsor Curling Club Continuation Act.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, would you please call Public Bills for Third Reading.

PUBLIC BILLS FOR THIRD READING

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 6.

Bill No. 6 - An Act Respecting Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources.

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: I move that Bill No. 6, An Act Respecting Agriculture, Energy and Natural Resources, now be read a third time and do pass.

This bill is primarily about unlocking the full potential of our natural resources to benefit all Nova Scotians. The world is looking for solutions to the clean energy transition. We can contribute to those resources and products in an effort right here in Nova Scotia and create good-paying jobs for Nova Scotians along the way.

There is no path to clean energy and a secure future without critical minerals. We need lithium and graphite for EV batteries. You need zinc for wind turbines, indium for solar panels, and copper for electricity transmission. You need uranium for nuclear energy, medical isotopes, and food production. That's why uranium is on Canada's critical mineral list. That's why Saskatchewan is so successful as a safe uranium producer, and Nova Scotia could be too.

Everyone wants a reliable source from places where mining is ethical and sustainable. Nova Scotia could be that safe, responsible, and reliable as a supplier, but first we need to know more about our uranium resources. The only way to do this is to lift that blanket ban. It has prevented us from doing research about the quality, quantity, and

locations of uranium, both for the purposes of developing it and for the purposes of keeping Nova Scotians safe.

Even we in government cannot do the research while this ban is in place. We're at a different moment in time now. We need to take advantage of our natural resources. We can do it safely and responsibly. We can reap the rewards for generations of Nova Scotians to come.

This bill also repeals and replaces the Agrologists Act. The changes will better address industry needs by providing the ability to make regulations, moving current detailed aspects of the Act into regulations and bylaws to allow for more timely updates to match the industry's best practices, and updating the Nova Scotia Institute of Agrologists' membership classes and their complaints and disciplinary processes.

This bill will also include changes to modernize the Agricultural Weed Control Act. The changes will ensure that the industry is better protected from the introduction and spread of noxious weeds. They will better align Nova Scotia with other provinces to ensure the protection and sustainability of the farming community.

All of these amendments advance opportunities for Nova Scotia. They will allow us to capitalize on our abundant natural resources and create prosperity for Nova Scotia today as well as into the future. I know my colleague the Minister of Energy will have more to add on his side of the conversation in moments to come.

With that, Speaker, I will take my seat for the time being.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Minister of Energy.

HON. TREVOR BOUDREAU: Speaker, natural gas is part of our transition to clean energy. We can't flip a switch and be off fossil fuels. We need cleaner fuels like natural gas to help us reach net zero by 2050. Today, we are importing all of our natural gas. We import it from places that are doing hydraulic fracturing safely and responsibly. We should be using our own natural resources to our advantage.

We have tremendous onshore natural gas potential beneath our feet. Developing this resource could make us more energy-secure. Exploration could bring \$100 million each year. Production could bring billions in royalties that would pay for schools, roads, hospitals, and more. That would bring new, good-paying jobs that would keep our money here in our own economy and in our own communities.

With a blanket ban, we can't even try. We want to have the tough conversations. Lifting this ban sends a message to industry that we're open to having those conversations. Nova Scotia has a proven track record of developing our resources while maintaining safe environmental standards. We're already doing the research now to update our regulations.

We'll make sure they reflect today's best practices and the advances of the past 10 years. When companies come to the table with their projects, we will be ready to regulate.

Speaker, building on our natural resources is part of the route to make Nova Scotia a clean energy powerhouse. This bill makes an amendment to the Public Utilities Act to help us keep moving on that route. We're adding a clause to allow Efficiency Nova Scotia to extend its current demand-side management plan by one year. Efficiency Nova Scotia is moving from three-year to five-year planning cycles. The extension of its current plan will give time for key changes in the electricity system to be put in place.

The changes we are making mean we will keep people here at home in good-paying jobs. They mean Nova Scotia will be more self-reliant and less dependent on other countries. They mean a bright and prosperous future for everyone.

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

LISA LACHANCE: I think I do want to start where I started before on this bill and on these issues, back in terms of how this was lined up and framed by this government. I've had a chance to review a lot of the historical documents related to Nova Scotians' consideration of uranium mining. I would say that they strike a much more reasonable and compassionate note than having this government come out swinging in its Speech from the Throne, which I really value as an honourable and visionary document, but that's not what Nova Scotians got this time. The constant reference to special interests, folks who are - if you're not with us, you're against us. That was simply not the tone and the type of consideration.

I'm going to say this a couple of times through this, but off the top, I'll just be clear. We could have had a much different bill. I am convinced that we could have had a bill that changed the ban on uranium, in particular, so that consultations could have taken place. I am convinced that we could have had a bill that - particularly on the uranium provisions - could have allowed for better consideration of the very real health risks of radon to Nova Scotians.

That's not what we have here. What we have here is a government that's come forward not in the election, but in their second Speech from the Throne, which bore little to no resemblance to their election platform that, I think, had been published three months previously, and accused lots of Nova Scotians, whom we haven't yet defined, as being special interests not worthy of consideration.

I'm going to start in 1981 and just read the preamble to one of the reports that led up to the inquiry. The Minister of Development stated that it was the intention of the government, by undertaking this study, to:

investigate all scientific and technical information related to the protection of workers, the public, and the environment associated with the uranium mining cycle, and, in particular, the relevance of this data to potential uranium mining environments in Nova Scotia; to receive public input on these matters; to allow for the opportunity for meaningful public review of all aspects of the investigation; and to determine terms and conditions, submission requirements, and approval procedures to be established as provincial regulations prior to any evaluation of applications for leases to mine uranium, to ensure that, if approved, mining will be conducted under acceptable standards of worker and public safety and the protection of the environment.

While this is a government document, I am pleased to table this following my speech.

No one got called “special interest” who were trying to block development; no one got accused of conducting lazy policy. In fact, there was a recognition that public policy is complex and that to argue that it’s not, that it’s just a matter of going forward without asking questions, is not acceptable and is not going to lead to good policy.

I’ll also just read from Hansard in 2009, when the moratorium, supported by all parties, was put into law. The minister at the time said:

I’m not sure that anyone would say the McCleave Inquiry definitively came down one side or the other in terms of the mining of uranium. The issue that seemed to be raised as the biggest concern on uranium mining was the tailings and how to deal with the tailings. That was one major component that Nova Scotians really had worries about.

They’ve told us that the risk to their health and their environment and the potential for nuclear proliferation make uranium mining unwelcome in this province. There will always be those who extol the virtues of uranium mining and they make a strong case, but the people of Nova Scotia do not want to be part of the world’s uranium economy.

That’s another snapshot of a moment in time. Again, it’s speaking of the concerns and the opinions of Nova Scotians with respect and in a way that takes seriously the very real concerns that are raised by this question of uranium mining. I think we’ve heard from the ministers again today. We’re very concerned - that’s why I tabled 50-some pages of documents referencing economic development in this province today - about the lack of a

rural or economic development plan in this province. We've been asking about it. We had no public COVID recovery plan, unlike most other jurisdictions in Canada.

We are very concerned. We are concerned about Nova Scotia's future. At the same time, I take great exception to waving around well-paying jobs that honestly haven't been quantified. When I asked the minister in Estimates - I can't remember the exact number, but it was over the lifetime of the critical mineral strategy, which doesn't include fracking or uranium. They're not tied to an actual plan. What's going to happen this year? What's going to happen next year? I understand there's this feeling that we have to raise the ban, but we actually have a fulsome critical mineral strategy, also, that we want to implement.

I actually think it's a fundamental disservice to that strategy that I think only about \$200,000 has been allocated this year to support supplementation. Why the government then turned around after passing that last Spring and decided to throw some uranium and fracking into the mix is hard to understand.

[4:00 p.m.]

I would say that the assertion that we've proven that we could do it safely - I think Nova Scotians are concerned about that assertion. We heard from folks - well, we heard from one folk - but I have spoken to folks who lived through the test wells for fracking around Kennetcook. We had someone come see us. People are still concerned about the effect of that on their wells.

We've talked about it and I've tabled before the increasing cost of contaminated sites in this province. We have a huge liability in contaminated sites. We have a huge liability with Boat Harbour. I think Nova Scotians would be right to ask: How is it going to be different this time? This government has not provided a true answer other than to express that by questioning that, we are just not on side with going forward.

I won't spend a lot of time on this but a couple of times the reference has been made to the need to undertake global solidarity with production of mines in other areas of the world. I agree 100 per cent. I think there are a lot of practices that Canada has been a leader in, in terms of corporate social responsibility, that allows Canadian organizations and Canadians to work with other governments and to work with other businesses and organizations in other countries in ways in which in fact all living standards, workers' standards, and health and safety are raised instead of just not interacting in an ethical way. It is our responsibility to look at how things are produced and be part of those conversations.

I also hear the minister and the government's concerns about moving forward in terms of our economy. We do need to do things differently. We are facing a fundamental structural change, in fact. I don't think it's whether or not more tariffs come on April 2nd,

whether they're in place on May 2nd. I think we can all agree that we are in a period of deep instability that's not about to end.

I just want to share with the House some of the concerns I have around economic development where I think that we need to start - we have a lot of opportunities to start addressing some pretty serious deficits, specifically in the Nova Scotia context.

We have a very low labour productivity. In the private sector we have the second-lowest after P.E.I. in the country. I'll table that. It's only getting worse; it has been on a downward trend from 2017 and to 77 per cent. I'll table that. As we've noted here in the House before, Nova Scotia actually ranks 60th out of 60 provinces and states in terms of GDP per capita. I'm always hesitant to throw states in there because there are a lot of different measures of inequality.

The point is we have not done a good job of supporting Nova Scotians to have the jobs that they need and access to the investments that they need. I guess the question then is: Is this now the time to look at natural resource development or where else are the areas of potential?

When I look across in terms of Canada, I think mining actually ranks pretty low. There are other sectors that are showing much more, a greater mass of labour productivity that we should be looking at and considering: How could Nova Scotia do better in those areas?

In Nova Scotia's labour productivity by business sector - and again I'll table this, this is from the Conference Board of Canada - in fact, and the member for Dartmouth North will be thrilled, the highest-performing sector in labour productivity . . . (interruption).

Arts and culture, that's right. I also tabled a look at what the knowledge economy is. We know we have amazing work being done in this province in oceans and in other technology sectors. I'll leave those to be tabled so people have access to them.

We have some huge opportunities - in fact, what we've done in this sitting has started to undermine those opportunities in terms of Bill No. 12 and others. I also want to understand the business case for opening the doors, specifically to uranium mining. I've asked this question before in terms of what sort of expression of interest they have seen. What are the goals for this year? How many jobs? Do we actually have the right kind of uranium?

I know folks point to Saskatchewan. I've also talked about Saskatchewan, but we've talked about the fact that the location of the mines makes it a different proposal. They have Indigenous partnership of 48 per cent in the uranium mines, which is much different than having to have Mi'kmaw chiefs write open letters to try to get a response from this government. I understand there was a meeting, but we haven't heard what comes

of that. As far as we know, they are still very much opposed to this bill. It would be great if the ministers could confirm or deny that, but it is such a fundamental issue.

I'm going to dig through my pile of documents here.

Again, we have this dismissal of folks who might want to talk about what this all means as "special interest." When we look at Saskatchewan, it is disingenuous. Do you know what is happening in Saskatchewan in the uranium mines? Monitor, monitor, monitor. There are ongoing monitoring studies that are updated annually that look at the environmental and health impacts of what's happening. Mines need to meet certain standards. It's not like it's without risk. The risk is well recognized. Again, saying, "We have to get rid of the ban" and "Let's go" disregards those real risks and is insulting for Nova Scotians.

I also printed the Regulatory Oversight Report for uranium mines in Canada, as produced by the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the federal regulator of this. This is just the table of contents. It is several pages long, and I want to use it to illustrate that there are real issues and that to date, the government has not proven its capacity to be ready to undertake discussion and consideration of those important issues.

We had a little back and forth at Estimates when we were talking about the different scientific reports that had been done and, of course, that is why we need to have discussion. It is true that in health research, environmental research, and industrial research, not all studies have the same result. That's why you look at things like the peer review of those, who has used those, and who has confirmed those. I am going to table a couple of those types of reports. I don't know which member or who wanted to dismiss those as dated; they are not. Fundamentally, this information is still useful and needs to be respected in our conversations about this.

As well, through the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, there is a huge Canadian Uranium Workers Study that is coming to a close. This would provide us with important information. I believe they have data from 90,000 workers up until present day about the health impacts from working in uranium. This will be an amazing amount of information. Why are we not - we can change the ban, if that's desired, in a way that we can wait for the results of this so we make sure workers are safe.

I guess what I would say is that I can't even call it a faulty process because there was no process. This is a faulty bill. The rights holders of this land were forced to publish open letters to be consulted not once but twice. I've heard the minister refer to the government's Mi'kmaw friends but, indeed, they are much more than that; they are the rights holders of this province and should have been the first stop. I know that no member in this House has any intention or any desire to harm the environment of Nova Scotia or the people of Nova Scotia, but I'm not convinced that the economic case is there.

I think Saskatchewan is sitting on enough high-grade uranium that's being put into the global commodity market that our business proposition is hard to see when we're going to be in people's backyards taking out small amounts of uranium. We don't process uranium in the province, so we will be exporting it. That's the way we would be making money with it.

We have the knowledge economy. We have the blue economy. We have a critical mineral strategy that doesn't include uranium. We've been asking about - in terms of self-reliance - more attention to agriculture. Right now is the time where we could make a difference in this season for folks. I know that the minister is working very hard around fish and aquaculture, and it's no secret that we didn't support the Appropriations Act or the FMA, but I would actually say that the investments allocated to that endeavour in terms of promoting our seafood products to more markets is actually quite underfunded. We could make a difference now.

Again, I think we're, for some reason, all engaged in this very controversial decision, and the government must have known - the government surely knew - that proposing a bill that ended the uranium ban and cleared the way for fracking was going to be controversial. They had to have known that. That's how they positioned the Speech from the Throne. That's how they positioned the Budget Address. It's a deeply disappointing approach to working with Nova Scotians, and I would encourage the government to take a step back and to think about pausing these actions until Nova Scotians can be properly engaged in a conversation. We won't be supporting this bill, and with that, I'll take my seat.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Timberlea-Prospect.

HON. IAIN RANKIN: I just have a few points to make as we're in the final reading. The first point is around the new Public Bills Committee, formerly Law Amendments Committee. The former Committee on Law Amendments was partially designed so that Nova Scotians could come and bring their views forward but also to bring specific amendments on how they could strengthen the bill or modify the bill. So now we have a committee that is not interested in looking at potential ways that the bill could actually be amended. Nova Scotians can no longer bring forward ideas on how to strengthen or how to change the bill to make it more palatable for Nova Scotians.

You would think that the process of Public Bills Committee is now meant to gauge general support for legislation that comes forward, and since Nova Scotians can't say what they would change the bill to, they're limited to say whether they basically endorse moving forward to the next reading or if they oppose legislation.

We had 21 presenters and 87 written submissions to the Committee on Public Bills, and not one of those presenters or even written submissions spoke out in favour of ending the ban on high-volume hydraulic fracturing in the province as it is today, and I wonder

why we would go through that process. Obviously, the government is interested in backtracking on many bills. They've done that - this is one of the few that they haven't - though 100-plus Nova Scotians have spoken out through the process that the government has changed themselves, presumably to look at support in opposition, but virtually every single person who participated in that process did not speak up and say, Keep going; we're ready to start fracking today. That's the first point.

[4:15 p.m.]

Secondly, the matter of consultation that I asked about, and that the answer from ministers and the Premier himself is that: Well, we just need to remove bans so that we can start to have a conversation. The language around consultation, I think, is important because consultation means something very specific, that you don't have your mind made up on an issue, that you have meaningful dialogue back and forth with stakeholders. In fact, constitutionally it is required for our First Nations communities. That would be treaty-holders, the Mi'kmaq.

I think starting with changing the bill before you engage in those meaningful consultations is backwards. It could actually be even worse than backwards if there really is a predefined outcome on what the government intends to do. I think many people are coming to the conclusion, and they're surmising, that the predefined outcome is that they will start entertaining applications and start hydraulic fracturing in communities.

The only answer we've been able to get so far is that the process by which we will consult is existing environmental processes, that our regulations are so strong in our province that we have everything we need here to have that conversation.

That process has been under review since last October. Why is it under review if it's so strong that environmental assessments need to be looked at? Right now, the Class 1 environmental assessment entertains a 30-day period for public submissions. There's no back-and-forth with the minister or staff. This is just a period of time once a project is registered when people can send in their thoughts. Somebody may read it. I know for a fact that some ministers do read it. I read them, and I had some pretty important applications brought forward, but some may not.

In no way, shape, or form can the government say that the EA process, as it stands today, involves meaningful consultation. That would lead me to believe that passing this bill is in bad faith and that they are prepared to start the process without any broad consultation with communities.

The third point is around the environmental concerns that folks bring up and just generally when you begin to start down this road. As a caucus, of course, we support resource development. The member for Sydney-Membertou and I have served in

regulatory portfolios, where we've supported and effectively regulated activities when it comes to resources. We need them. It's still the backbone of our economy in Nova Scotia.

We're not saying that we are against certain activities when it comes to resource extraction altogether, but we're not comfortable right now stripping the bans off without any conversations with communities that will be impacted. This is especially when it comes to an issue that, once brought forward, you've had literally every single person bring their view forward and not one of them said, Go ahead, we're fine with removing the ban, and then we'll start to engage in an environmental process to express our views on any given specific project that might be impacting us.

There are issues around hydraulic fracturing, what the chemicals they use are. It's a lot of fresh water; it's sand, and it's chemicals. In Canada, there is no requirement for companies to list the various chemicals used in the process. This is why in some states in the United States there are requirements for companies, proponents, to actually say what is going to be injected into the ground. This is important stuff, given that such a wide range of our province is on wells. It's not that we're against the possibility of it being safe, it's just that absent those conversations and absent strong public consultation and transparency around what these companies are about to do, it's hard to support something without having those requirements, when arsenic and various forms of PFAS are found in groundwater in jurisdictions that don't have the mass concentration of homes.

I might not be able to go the hour. Just getting a cold. (Interruption) Yes, I'm good. Who's got the podium? I've got fifty-two minutes left. I think I'm good. Thank you, Speaker.

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

KENDRA COOMBES: Before I go into my remarks on Bill No. 6, I do want to address a motion that was made on Thursday of last week. Last week, the government put forward a motion commemorating Davis Day, which would have been a very beautiful commemoration of William Davis. But for some reason, the government decided to plug their controversial Bill No. 6, which would allow fracking and uranium mining, into that motion. As a member of the New Waterford and area community, I found it in poor taste.

William Davis was a father, a husband, a family member, and a friend. He was a miner and a member of the UMWA. In 1925, he was brutally murdered by the BESCO company police during the strike of 1925.

For those who don't know, in the 1920s, the miners went on strike for better pay after BESCO announced a 20 per cent wage reduction - also for safer working conditions and for better hours and to protest BESCO union-busting tactics. On March 2, 1925, BESCO cut off credit to the company stores, and the union - 12,000 miners - went on strike

four days later. By June, families were on the brink of starvation in my community, but the miners and the community members stood the gaff.

On June 11, 1925, at 11:00 a.m., a crowd between 1,000 to 3,000 people marched to the power plant, William Davis among them. Company police opened fire into the crowd, shooting off 300 rounds, wounding many, many community members. Keep in mind: Those who went to the power plant were not just the miners who were on strike but community members, including a pregnant woman.

Bill Davis was deliberately shot through the heart that day and died. The actions taken by the community members and the miners on June 11th and the sacrifice of William Davis deserve better than to be used to promote uranium. The Davis family continues to mourn and celebrate William Davis's life and legacy.

I found it hard to listen to a minister whom I have never seen at a Davis Day commemoration use that legacy to prop up Bill No. 6. It was very hard for me. It was very emotional for me to see that. William Davis and his family deserve better. William Davis deserves a motion in this House that was just about what occurred and about the legacy that was left behind.

Speaker, I will now go into my comments on Bill No. 6. The bill does not pass the sniff test. The first failure of Bill No. 6 is the government's failure to follow the law and treaties. This government had a duty to consult with the Mi'kmaq in accordance with three Supreme Court of Canada landmark decisions. There was a failure to do so.

Fracking is dangerous. Uranium is dangerous. My riding has many community members who are worried about the harms to the environment and to wells. Many in my community are still on wells. Fracking poses health and safety risks to communities. Looking to the past on resource extraction as a method of boosting the economy is quite lazy. It is looking at things we had discussed in this House long before my time.

We banned fracking for a reason. We banned it because it was causing harm and health risks. People were getting sick, wells were being contaminated, and people were against it. Physicians, health care professionals - I received quite a few emails from health care professionals requesting the government continue to keep the ban on fracking and uranium. They had serious concerns about the health of our communities. They had serious concerns about well water being contaminated.

As I said, it's lazy economic planning. Instead, our effort should be going toward a greener economy - an economy that is more environmentally friendly - and not looking to the past on something we already know is dangerous. We already know the health risks. I don't feel like I need to belabour it. I don't feel like I need to go into every single health care risk, except that we already have high risks of cancer in this province - extremely high risk.

In Cape Breton, our percentage of cancer is one of the highest. We already have sites that have contaminated our environment. We've already been part of what was left by the tar ponds and other environmental risks. Fracking was one of them. I remember when I was a kid, driving around with my mother and seeing the "Ban fracking" and "Say no to fracking" signs. We knew then that it was dangerous. We knew then that it was going to cause health risks and harm to our community members.

For the government to bring this forward without consultation, without bringing it to the public before a bill has ever been done, before talking to health care professionals about the risks posed by fracking and uranium mining - this is what the government failed to do. They failed to consult. As we are now in third reading on this bill, they've failed to listen to the will of Nova Scotians.

[4:30 p.m.]

A majority - 99 per cent - of those who came before the Public Bills Committee said no to fracking. I've not had one email, except for one person - and I'm sure we all get his emails - who said yes to it. That tells me something. That tells me this bill is not the will of Nova Scotians. This is definitely not the will of Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Dartmouth North.

SUSAN LEBLANC: I'm just going to say a few words on Bill No. 6, as well, and focus most of my comments on the fracking part of it.

Since we've been having a day of poetry and playwriting in this Legislature, I'll begin with one of my very favourite quotes by Walt Whitman from *Leaves of Grass*, where he says, "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself, (I am large, I contain multitudes.)"

Speaker, it's true that two things can be true at the same time. It can be Springtime and be snowing. Somebody can love Shakespeare and also love trashy television. Nova Scotians can want good jobs and a strong economy and want to protect our delicate environment.

This bill is changing a lot of things with few details. Creating new opportunities to make our province more self-sufficient is important, but we should not be putting our traditional economic sectors in harm's way. Nova Scotians care about the future of this province. They expect their government to protect their health, their environment, and their future; but instead of prioritizing Nova Scotia's health and environmental sustainability, this government is recklessly undoing careful environment protections with no clear benefit to Nova Scotians and with no consultation.

This government never mentioned their plan to drop these bans on fracking and uranium mining without consultation or debate during the election campaign. This government is driving its agenda forward with no regard for the impact it will have on our health, our properties, our environment, or our economy, as we have heard from my learned colleagues the member for Halifax Citadel-Sable Island and the member for Cape Breton Centre-Whitney Pier.

We in the NDP believe in responsible resource development. Yes, that's right, folks. We believe in responsible resource development that puts people and communities first. We should invest in clean energy and sustainable industries that create good jobs without putting Nova Scotians at risk.

In 2012, Nova Scotia's NDP government imposed a two-year moratorium on hydraulic fracturing. In 2014, the Liberal government introduced legislation to formalize the ban on fracking after several reports were released on the potential impact of fracking. When the fracking moratorium and ban were both put in place, fishers, for instance, had raised a lot of concerns about how fracking could negatively impact the fishing sector.

Just last week, the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment has released a statement raising concern about the potential health impacts of this government's move to lift bans on both fracking and uranium mining. The release noted that recent studies have shown strong correlations between proximity to fracking sites and increased rates of preterm births, low birth weight, congenital defects, childhood asthma, and leukemia.

Today in the gallery we have a guest - whom I forgot to introduce before I started speaking, Speaker. My kid is here - 12 years old, the gold medalist we talked about earlier. I don't want her to have to live with . . . (interruption). What?

Her name is Françoise Labelle. There she is, folks. (Applause) Her brother is in the library. I don't want them to live in a province where they have to worry about the health effects of resource extraction when such a thing is done without the proper process.

The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment's release also recognized that uranium mining presents its own set of health hazards, including increased risks of lung cancer and other respiratory diseases among miners and nearby residents due to radiation exposure.

The government has said over and over that they are going to do this safely, that they've got to lift these bans to get the conversation started. Well, I fundamentally disagree. I think we're doing things the wrong way around. Let's have the conversations. Let's do the science. Let's make the reports. Let's investigate. Let's measure the amounts of adverse effects versus the non-adverse effects - and then make a decision. More on that later.

At the Public Bills Committee, along with the Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, we also heard from many concerned people and groups. My colleague the member for Timberlea-Prospect mentioned the numbers. I don't have those in front of me, but gosh, there were many people and groups concerned about the lifting of the bans. The government has ignored the comments and actually gone further. Even before they came to speak, the government had already labelled them "special interests." In fact, some of them who represented groups were treated pretty badly by this government, to be honest, at the Public Bills Committee - pretty terribly. It was embarrassing.

The thing is that they are special interests. All the people who spoke and all the groups that represented larger organizations all have a special interest in the health and welfare of their families, their communities, and the natural resources of this province. So long live special interests.

Above all, the key issue with this bill is that it has been done by surprise - no warning, no consultation and most egregiously, no consultation with the Mi'kmaq. I will remind this House that the Government of Canada and, by association, the Government of Nova Scotia, has a duty to consult and, where appropriate, accommodate Indigenous groups when it considers conduct that might adversely impact potential or established Aboriginal or treaty rights. The duty stems from the honour of the Crown and is derived from Section 35 of Canada's Constitution Act 1982, which recognizes and affirms Aboriginal and treaty rights.

The fact that the Mi'kmaw chiefs had to write a public letter asking for a meeting to be consulted is irresponsible and reprehensible on the part of this government. It's shameful.

I'm going to finish off by leaving a few questions on the table. Even though we're about to pass this bill, which will lift the ban on fracking and uranium exploration and mining in this province in 2025, and no one will answer these questions, I'm going to put them out there for people to listen to: Why is this government ignoring warnings from physicians and environmental experts about the dangers of uranium mining and fracking? Who exactly benefits from lifting these bans? Why will the government not name the special interests who oppose lifting them? Can the government guarantee that uranium exploration and fracking won't put public health and the environment at risk? What evidence does the government have that uranium mining and fracking would bring real economic benefits to Nova Scotians? Why is the government rushing forward to do something that Nova Scotians don't want and that they didn't campaign on? How does the government plan to safeguard Nova Scotia's longstanding industries like fishing and forestry and agriculture? Has this government done its homework on these ban reversals? Is there a cost-benefit analysis that takes into account future costs to the government?

Those are some questions we can all go out of this Chamber with today. I truly hope that the government has listened to these questions, listened to the concerns of Nova Scotians, and will tread very carefully as it continues these conversations.

Speaker, as I close my comments, I will quote from the great William Shakespeare. It will be out of context. It's a quote from Julius Caesar after he gets stabbed 12 times in the senate - or whatever it is, 15 times - on the Ides of March, which just passed. I believe Marc Antony begins his speech - Marc Antony or the other guy. Marc Antony, I think, says to Caesar these lines that I am about to say. Since Shakespeare wrote them - in fact, into the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s - they became sort of a rallying cry for environmentalists. These are the words I would like to leave with: "O, pardon me, thou bleeding piece of earth, That I am meek and gentle with these butchers!"

THE SPEAKER: I'll have to ask you to please table that and not in a teacup.

The honourable member for Sydney-Membertou.

HON. DEREK MOMBOURQUETTE: I am going to take a few minutes to rise in my place to talk about this bill. It's interesting in the sense that, as my colleague from Timberlea-Prospect said, we're all for consultation when it comes to resource development. This bill has the aspect of removing the ban on fracking, but we've heard messaging from the ministers about having to pass this bill so we can have a conversation about uranium exploration, which I can appreciate.

One of the reasons why you saw the bans come forward and you saw some of the decisions that were made and supported by folks on all sides of the floor, including the Premier of the day - there are a few of us here who were around for that, supported it wholeheartedly - all-party support for that ban. You are in a situation where you have this bill and there are aspects of it we can appreciate, but also it's been said over and over again in here that the issue of consultation is a real thing. Being involved with multiple projects around the province over the years, I had the privilege of being in energy and mines and lands and forestry for a period of time. Consultations matter.

That's what ultimately will get the public on side for a project when they have the opportunity to ask questions about how it is going to impact land and when they have the opportunity to ask questions around the scope and the size of the proposed project. What concerned me with this government - it started in the first days when the Premier was asked if it was okay to drill on Georges Bank. The response from the Premier at the time was: "Everything is on the table. We're going to enter resource development."

That told me that nobody did their homework, because for years multiple governments have worked with the fishers around Georges Bank - the importance of the fisheries, the importance of what it means to our economy, and the importance of what it means to the province. The Premier came straight out and said everything is on the table. I

think that was a mistake and the Premier realized that after he said it. He came out and corrected it days later, but it raised alarms for me because I said, Well, is this messaging or is there something behind this thing?

Government is here now with this bill. They've explained why it needs to happen. Our caucus - in the conversations I've had with people - people are willing to have the conversation about fracking, but they are not willing to take that ban off yet. They're not. They don't know enough about it.

[4:45 p.m.]

It's one of those situations where - I've been involved with multiple mines around the province when it comes to - and there are examples. I've met with representatives from there. I've met with representatives from coal. I've used the example of Little Narrows gypsum all the time. Successful mine - they're gearing up. That is a great example, in my opinion, of social licence and a community rallying around an economic development project. It can happen. I've seen it happen.

We're supportive of resource development in that capacity when it comes to mining. I've been involved with the offshore, which I'll talk about briefly. I was involved with the decommissioning of the Sable Offshore Energy Project. That was over \$4 billion of revenue to the Province that built hospitals and built roads. That was a huge economic driver for 20 years. It helped develop a lot of young Nova Scotians who wanted to get into the resource sector. There were lots of scholarships and support through it. It was a success. It was a huge success. That is one of our greatest examples of resource development. When it comes to the offshore and natural gas, I still believe there's potential.

I had the opportunity to meet - over the years and in that time - with ambassadors from countries in Europe who all had the same message around resource development and trying to diversify away from Russian gas. It was something that was talked about for years. I happily went to Calgary and flew the flag for this province to support pipeline development. It was coming from the Liberals of the day. We supported the idea of a pipeline because we knew there was potential for us. If we could get gas from the west, we could take it to port in Guysborough, and then we could get it off to Europe. Then we started having the conversations with Germany back then, and we started having the conversations with the rest of the EU countries.

There's a lot of history around this. This is an important conversation about the economic growth of our province, but it's also an important conversation that residents will have a lot of questions about. That's why, as a caucus, we've been supportive over the years. My colleague for Timberlea-Prospect did a lot of the regulatory work around forestry - I spent some time there - and with the environment. He comes with a wealth of knowledge on this stuff, what needs to be done, and the steps we can take to help along the journey.

One of the most important things we can do as a Province - I've said this multiple times. I can table the article. I don't have it here, but I can get it printed off. In 2019, I was having the conversation with the Mining Association of Nova Scotia about this idea of mapping the land. We did this on the offshore. It was the fair play analysis. We would map the offshore, we would do the research, we would have the information, we would give it to the sector, and we would put parcels out for bids. Sometimes they would bite, and sometimes they wouldn't. For some of the parcels, there would be no bids, but they would go out and test, and all the information was provided.

From a mining perspective, you need to do that on land. That is an important thing for a whole number of reasons. You'll get a sense of where your best mineral deposits are. You'll understand the layout of community in the sensitive areas that may be surrounding any potential mineral deposits. It is a good investment. I wish we could have done it a couple of years ago - there is a process. People can prospect in the province, but the Province really could serve itself well if that work is done.

On the mining perspective, we're supportive. I've said this already in my comments on uranium - we need to have the conversation. As the minister has said, this bill allows that, because the minister has said by law, we're not even allowed to talk about it.

The fracking is the issue. That is the big one. That is the one where, when you have the First Nations chiefs express concern, and the government has said he meeting was great, it was productive, and we're going to continue to talk, the meeting happened ultimately in response to the fact that the chiefs had to send a letter saying, Why have you not consulted us on this idea of fracking?

In the conversations I've had with the chiefs over the years, we've worked together in looking at big gas projects and developments around big gas projects, if they happened. We also looked at traditional hunting grounds for the Mi'kmaq and what that looked like. There are certain parcels of land that you're just not going to mine on. The government can say we're open for business and do all that stuff, but you have to respect that. You have to respect those conversations and respect those traditions and respect the fact that you're just not going to be able to go in and drill wherever you want.

I strongly encourage the government to spend the resources to actually map the land. You may find yourself in a situation where there are resource deposits, critical minerals in the ground that we may not know about, that are in a less sensitive ecological area and the social licence and such would be a clearer path. You learn a lot by doing that. It's going to cost some money to do it, no doubt, but I think that it would be very important to do.

The offshore is a little more interesting because over the years, there have been bids put out. I went through some where there were no bids. We would put parcels out for bid. There was a bit of a delay, too, because of COVID, so that was a concern at the time

because nobody was active. From an offshore bid perspective, it would be interesting. The interesting thing, too, is offshore wind is much more of a player now in the energy sector than it was when I was there. We were talking about it, but ultimately land was cheaper. It was just cheaper to operate on land. Those costs will come down. Now you're into the hydrogen conversation as well.

Particularly in this bill and what's trying to be accomplished, I just wish they were separate bills. I think you want to have that conversation with communities. If the minister is saying that's what he needs to have this bill pass, then of course we would support consultation. The consultation on fracking never came. Colleagues in here have talked about some of the impacts they have heard, and there's some history around this. I just think, listening to Public Bills Committee and hearing from people across the province, that they're not ready for that. I can appreciate that, and I can understand that.

I do think there is lots of potential. I think infrastructure is going to be a big thing for this government and for the province moving forward - whoever's here. As I said, you'll find that you open a mine in a rural community, which happens - how are you getting product to port? That's why I have always talked about this idea. We hear some of the federal colleagues talking about infrastructure, about critical minerals. It's going to be a big conversation for this government because they're going to have to partner with other levels of government to figure out how that works. It will ultimately be a big part of some of the investments that you're going to see in this province.

Speaker, particularly on this - because I know I kind of went a little off there, a little bit. That's totally fine. I get it. I know I was getting there.

I just want to reiterate from our caucus perspective that we're not supportive at this point of hydraulic fracturing based on the fact that we have heard too much from First Nations communities, and we have heard too much from Nova Scotians. We're just not ready to have this completely lifted without consultation. I suspect that if you start to see a fracking project in a community right now with the limited information that people have, you're going to hear it.

From the rest of the bill, as I said, we encourage conversation about resource extraction. I also think the biggest thing for this government - if you want successful mines, if you want more opportunity, map out this province. Do the same thing we did in the offshore. I hope that the government does that. I hope that they find deposits. I hope that they find new resources - or old - whatever is in the ground. Find out what's there so you can actually do this right.

Again, this has been a theme of this session - especially with this one. You're about to lift some bans that people really fought for, and now you're going to do it without talking to anyone about it, which is concerning. The government talks about they want to do it right, and I believe them, and I believe that the government wants to do the right thing by

people in resource development; every government does, and that's why you've seen successful projects around the province over the years.

On this one here, the government didn't consult. They got called out on it. They're kind of playing catch-up now with some pretty major stakeholders across the province. And on fracking, before you lift that ban completely, I would strongly suggest that you do a better job of consulting with communities across the province. Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Cumberland North.

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I rise to speak to Bill No. 6 at third reading. As we all know, this is a sweeping piece of legislation that covers everything from agriculture to energy to natural resource development here in Nova Scotia. While the bill attempts to modernize several outdated frameworks, it also is about the process by which the government has pursued it, which is a concern to many Nova Scotians, including myself.

I also want to echo the concerns that were shared by my colleagues in Opposition around the lack of consultation - not only with all Nova Scotia residents but with our Indigenous leaders - and I do believe the Premier had shared with us that he had a meeting with the Indigenous leaders, but I don't remember hearing the outcome of that meeting. I could have missed that, but it would be - I believe - important for the Premier to report here to the House the outcome of that meeting and any possible impacts on this bill.

I got a lot of feedback on this bill. I wasn't 100 per cent sure what I was going to share in my comments here in third reading, so I do want to talk a little bit about the lack of public consultation before this bill was tabled. The government is asking Nova Scotians to trust them after the fact instead of involving them in the process from the beginning. The challenge with that is that it causes people to maybe have a lack of trust. When the consultation happens beforehand, that helps to build trust and rapport and collaboration, and that builds good legislation.

When this government ran in the last election, nowhere in the platform did it say, We plan to repeal the ban on uranium exploration and mining, or we're going to revisit petroleum legislation and make it easier to evaluate controversial practices like hydraulic fracturing. Never was this on the agenda. Nova Scotians didn't vote for this, and I think that is one of the reasons that we're seeing people upset about it, is that people are feeling a little duped. I know that the Premier has shared that the reason that it was never discussed is that it wasn't on the table, but now because of the threat of economic instability due to the Trump tariffs, that this is necessary.

The reality is we have a sad history here in Nova Scotia when it comes to mining, and I was listening the Public Bills Committee - of course, I had to listen because I'm not

allowed to serve on any of the legislative committees because the Premier doesn't want me to - so I listened to the Public Bills Committee, and it was quite emotional when people shared their concerns and talked about the Westray Disaster.

[5:00 p.m.]

We also have other mining history and disasters in Springhill, and my grandfather was one of those involved. He was in both of the Springhill bumps, and he was in the second one in 1958 when the mine closed in Springhill, and he survived. He was one of the last miners pulled. He survived underground for several days, was buried up to his neck in coal. If it wasn't for Dr. Arnold Burden, he would have died because when he was found, his leg was tourniqueted up over his opposite shoulder and the rescuers thought that was a leg from another miner, so they were going to cut the leg to make it easier to dig my grandfather out. Dr. Burden said: No, don't do that, that could be Leon's leg - Leon was my grandfather's name, Leon Melanson. Of course, if they had cut the leg off, he would have bled out. So the miners arduously dug him out and saved his life. He had a leg amputation after that, and he lost a kidney in that mining disaster.

I bring that up because that was part of the discussion at Public Bills Committee and it was important for some of the people here in Nova Scotia to recognize our history. I know we've had several successful mines in this province as well, so I want to recognize that. In Cumberland County, in addition to the disasters in mining, we have a long history of successful mining, especially in salt mining. Malagash actually was the very first salt mine in all Canada, back in the early 1900s.

Today we have two successful salt mines that are still in business and hopefully will be for many decades to come. Of course, we have the Pugwash salt mine and the Compass Minerals salt mine in Nappan. Mining brings a lot of emotion, I guess is my point, Speaker, when we talk about it here in Nova Scotia.

Not knowing how to vote on this bill, I decided to do a poll with my constituents. I have a fairly significant email distribution list, so I emailed out a survey. I believe it was Friday evening. I also posted it on my Facebook page, and from that survey I received 319 respondents from Cumberland North and about 100 respondents from people outside of Cumberland North.

I haven't had a chance to compile the data from the people outside of Cumberland North, but from the people inside of Cumberland North I had 185 people respond in favour; so 42 per cent of the people who responded were in favour of this bill and the contents, and 58 per cent of the people who responded were opposed. That is actually what I would have predicted.

It's a very divisive issue. There are a lot of people against and strongly opposed but there are also a lot of people strongly in favour of it. Once I get the data analyzed from people outside of Cumberland North, I'll share that as well.

I do want to share that I found while I was compiling the data, I did have a bias. When I first was elected in 2017, I came into this job as a businesswoman. I love business. I love starting new businesses and supporting other entrepreneurs. I was very well aware of the report that showed the mass - well a lot of people would consider it a massive deposit of natural gas here in Nova Scotia. It was part of my strategic plan in 2017, to try to help get that developed here in Nova Scotia.

I'm just being honest; I do have that bias. I get excited about revenue generation and development. I do want to say that since I've been elected, since 2017, I have met with a lot of my constituents. I'm not here to represent myself; I'm here to represent the people of Cumberland North. Not all of my constituents are supportive of this. It's important to recognize that and recognize them.

I do believe - and I'm going to share. I'm going to read some of the comments. I have permission from the people whose comments I'm going to read. Not everyone is directly opposed. There are some people who are saying, I'm opposed right now but if you can convince me that it will be safe, then I will support it. I think what I would encourage the government to do is to start over and consult with Nova Scotians.

Now this is an interesting topic. Back a few years ago in Pugwash, we had some people take this topic on and they actually had a formal debate. It was really fascinating. I was a little nervous to be honest, because before that, there was some contaminated water that had come from a formerly fracked area here in Nova Scotia, and they were trying to find a place to get rid of this water. Everyone was told it was very safe. Some of you in the Chamber may remember that. It was very controversial. They were trying to find a municipality in Nova Scotia that would accept it.

Despite everyone having said that it's safe and you can even drink it, people vehemently opposed that water - that fracked water or water from the fracking process - being dumped into their area. I remember there were huge protests in the Town of Amherst from people who were vehemently opposed to that water being dumped in our marsh area, and it wasn't placed there. I'm not sure where it ever went, to be honest. Because of that, I've seen a lot of passion behind this topic.

I was kind of nervous to go to this formal debate that was held. It was held at the curling rink in Pugwash and there was a formal moderator, Liz Roscoe. She is a resident of mine in Cumberland North. She is a retired judge, very intelligent woman. She moderated the debate and then they had a person from one of the universities here in the city who debated all the reasons why it wasn't a good idea to do - this was specific to fracking. Then we had somebody who supported it and they had a really good, strong,

respectful, vigorous debate on the topic. There were about 350 people in attendance, and after the debate, people could ask questions.

It was very informative for everyone in the room and some of the people who spoke and asked questions were people who had worked in the oil and gas industry. They were able to answer a lot of people's questions, too - people who had concerns. I thought it was a really great experience. A lot of people learned a lot that day and I do believe the more that we can learn and consult is the way to go.

I did this poll - this survey, and based on the survey, for now I do need to vote against Bill No. 6 because again, I'm not representing myself; I am representing the people of Cumberland North. I do want to read some of their comments, and I will table them. I will read first from Corey Siggett. Corey says:

Thank you for the opportunity to give my input. Please vote in favour of this bill. Natural gas is one of the resources that is an advantage for Nova Scotia. If we do not take advantage of our advantages, we are tying one hand behind our back. There are risks to fracking, as there are with everything. When the two Boeing 737s crashed, we did not stop flying planes; we worked to make them safer. Government should work to monitor and make sure that fracking is done with the safest reasonable methods.

The same goes with mining uranium or other minerals. We want social benefits including health care for our citizens in Nova Scotia and Canada. We need to support development and industry to provide jobs for our residents and revenue for the government.

Nova Scotia Power burns natural gas to produce electricity. Nova Scotia Power must do that to meet emission standards set by our provincial government. We complain about the cost of electricity, but using imported natural gas increases the cost of electricity. That is for sure, because there is a lack of pipelines which makes natural gas more expensive. Well, there is a lot of fees for that natural gas to come into our province through the various different pipelines that really adds to the cost.

That is from Corey Siggett.

Another email I received from Marney Simmons. Marney is a great lady from Northport. Marney says:

The issues of mining and hydraulic fracturing in Nova Scotia have been contentious for years. While the harvesting of minerals

is somewhat necessary in order to produce products that modern society requires, the after-effects of such activity are detrimental to environmental safety and the health of humans, animals, and plant growth. The resulting tailing ponds gather toxic elements that do not magically disappear, but rather pollute groundwater for hundreds of miles around for hundreds of years.

Tailings leech into major waterways and eventually into the oceans. Not much wonder marine life is in such trouble. Hydraulic fracturing - fracking - needs to be outlawed. It is the most respectful way to treat our earth. The environmental consequences are toxic and long-lasting.

The process requires copious amounts of fresh water which is completely wasted. Water is mixed with harmful chemicals that pollute the earth, more specifically, groundwater. People who drink the groundwater have developed many physical and neurological disorders that have altered their lives dramatically and irrevocably. In addition, statistics have shown that areas that have been fracked are prone to the increased likelihood of earthquakes, which we know are hazardous to infrastructure and human life.

Research the findings of Jessica Ernst in Rosebud, Alberta to learn about the effects of fracking. Jessica came to Cape Breton in 2014 to support those of us who were opposed to fracking in Inverness County, and we were successful in driving the fracking company out of Nova Scotia forever:

We cannot pursue these kinds of invasive activities any longer. The planet cannot withstand any more destruction. Our physical environment cannot withstand any more pillaging and raping. Our health systems cannot support any more people with serious illnesses resulting from the destructive harvesting processes that destroy the Earth. We all know the cost of health care these days is onerous. There are alternatives to creating the energies we need to live and to manufacture the products we want. Governments are unbelievably myopic and ignorant of what is available beyond the status quo. They need to educate themselves and legislate holistic methods that will benefit both the Earth and the people who inhabit it.

In solidarity,
Marney Simmons

Emily Gibbons says:

While I appreciate we want more jobs and growth in Nova Scotia, why are we moving backwards away from environmental protection? Uranium is dangerous, fracking is dangerous, and offshore exploration is dangerous for the people involved but also for the environment. We should be moving toward green energy, not going back. Can they not come up with anything better? They should 100 per cent be managing abandoned wells. That's nonsense that they're adding to this. It should be the responsibility of whoever was doing it.

I'll read from Jillian Foster:

I'll try to send you a message, but this should not be one bill. It should be at least 10 bills to amend others. To vote yes is impossible. It's clear there is some honourable intent, but too much is wrong with this Act. It smells like a Jody Raybould scandal in the making. Just to begin with the noxious weeds portion shows a huge potential for abuse and overreach.

There were quite a few emails that I received where people strongly felt that all this shouldn't be in one bill. Again, we have this omnibus-style bill, and some people who sent me emails said they were in support of uranium mining but not fracking, or they were in support of fracking but not uranium mining, or they were supportive of working with the orphan wells but not on the other two things. So it is impossible to vote yes when you could support one part of the bill and not another. It's hard to vote yes.

I want to read from a comment from Morris Haug:

Yes, you should support this government initiative but couple it with the proviso that a good portion of the economic benefits be used to develop cleaner energy production in our province. In other words, the extraction of resources can be used to improve human impacts on the environment.

The last email I want to read - I received hundreds. I wanted to highlight some of the pros and the cons in some of the strong emails I received. This is from Eric Fresia:

As a concerned citizen of Cumberland County, I walked the streets of Amherst and Halifax to protest the mining of uranium back in 1980s. My mother, Gail Kline, had fought hard against this uranium exploration and many other causes like roadside spraying, nuclear energy, nuclear weaponry, et cetera. Now, my mom passed away this year, and I feel like I need to take up her fight again due to the short-sightedness of our current provincial government. I

believe Premier Tim Houston doesn't have a mandate to change policy that has been studied . . .

THE SPEAKER: Order. Whether you're quoting or not, you're not allowed to say the name of - so I ask you to retract that and keep going.

The honourable member for Cumberland North.

[5:15 p.m.]

ELIZABETH SMITH-MCCROSSIN: I retract the Premier's name. My apologies:

I believe the Premier doesn't have a mandate to change policy that has been studied, discussed, and deemed not advisable for the Nova Scotia people, or else it should be opened up for public debate and another election should be called immediately.

It's an interesting comment:

Taking the 'No' out of Nova Scotia seems a rather callous thing to say when we have an epidemic of abuse and violence against women of Nova Scotia. Does he intend to take a 'No' out of 'No means no' as well?

I thought that was a really good comment:

Do you understand the amount of violence and abuse of women that happens around areas of resource extraction? We need to take a critical look at what these critical minerals and resources are being used for. As of this moment, they seem crucial towards proliferation of more weapons and wars around the world.

We need to take a critical look at how this rush towards resource extraction will affect our water, air, and soil. Will Cumberland County have to pay the toll of supporting the rest of Nova Scotia like we did with the Cobequid Pass toll highway? We are already being poisoned from the air by glyphosate. Will we now be poisoned from the ground and water below by hydraulic fracking and uranium mining? Where does the water come from that will be required, and where will that water end up?

A lot of the questions and many more have already been presented, studied, and discussed by many experts and the Nova

Scotia people. I believe Bill No. 6 is short-sighted and clearly an overreach by the Premier and his government.

I will table these documents that I read from. Confession: Back in 2017, I was really gung-ho for natural gas development, and from the reports that I read, it does look like we have a huge deposit in Cumberland and Pictou Counties. I have learned that in this role, I'm not the businesswoman; in this role, I'm the elected representative of the people. My job is to represent the people and bring their concerns forward. I'm not saying that it can't be done, but I think what we're hearing from people is that they have concerns, and there needs to be more public consultation. People want to be listened to.

I'll speak for a minute as a businessperson. I think, ultimately, the Premier's goal is to try to ensure we have another revenue source here in Nova Scotia. I think that in many ways is smart, as we do need to look for other ways to diversify and ensure that if our revenue sources changed due to what President Trump is doing, our province can still have our programs like health, education, and so on.

Without proper public consultation, this pathway really shouldn't go any further, until the proper work with the public is being done. The businesses that I've seen successful over the years are ones that do diversify and have not just one source of revenue coming in from one aspect - they have several. I just want to share a little example. It's from a family member I respected. It's my Uncle Wendell. Uncle Wendell passed away, sadly. A couple of years ago, unexpectedly, he died in his sleep. We were all so sad, but it's the way to go if you're going to go. He was 75.

Uncle Wendell, in my opinion, was the smartest businessperson I ever met. He was diversified. He had all the seasons covered. He had foxes - that was when furs were of value. He had blueberry land. He had maple syrup. He actually was the largest producer in all of Atlantic Canada. He had 60,000 trees tapped and was one of the first maple syrup producers to bring in the pipeline when he tapped his trees. He also was a part owner in the dairy farm with my father. I think I'm forgetting something. He had woodland. He sold a lot of wood. If there was a good blueberry season, and they had a good haul, they may not have a good maple syrup season. My point is that over the period of 12 months, he was not reliant on only one industry; he was very well diversified.

He taught me another thing in the maple syrup industry. There was a period of time when there was someone here who was looking to purchase all the maple syrup - all the supply here in the province and in other areas too. They offered a really good price. In fact, the purchaser was offering more per litre than a producer could actually bottle and sell in the store and get the money themselves, so there was a real incentive.

I remember Uncle Wendell saying, I'll never sell more than 50 per cent of my supply because then I lose control. As soon as I give up all of that control with my supply, then there's a chance that that purchaser will drop the price. He used to sell, and now his

son does. He sells at Masstown Market. He's the main supplier there for the Masstown Market.

Anyway, just a few lessons from Uncle Wendell. He was very diversified, a very successful businessman. I do believe that it is important for our Province of Nova Scotia, our government, to look at all the ways we have money coming into our province. One of our biggest areas of vulnerability is the federal government. Right now, we're getting - I believe it's \$5.2 billion this coming year from the federal government.

If something happened with our federal transfers, we're in big trouble here in the province of Nova Scotia. I do think it is smart to look for other revenue sources and to try to strengthen those so that we are not so reliant on the federal government for all the government services that we have here in the province.

I'll move on, Speaker, to other aspects of the bill that I would like to bring up quickly. The creation of the Orphan Well Fund, I do believe, is a positive step towards environmental accountability. Abandoned wells do pose real risks to communities and a dedicated fund to clean them up is long overdue.

The Agricultural Weed Control Act and the Agrolologists Act aimed to strengthen the agricultural sector by improving weed management, setting clear standards for the professionals in that field. That seems like something I could support as well.

Again, I won't go into any more detail about the uranium exploration and mining prohibition. I support it in theory, but because the proper consultation wasn't done and because my constituents have voted more in favour of not supporting this bill, that's how I need to vote.

I do want to bring up a couple of things that were not included. I've talked about geothermal energy here in this Legislature. I am really surprised that this government still doesn't have a plan to fully develop geothermal energy in this province. There's a lot of potential, especially in my neighbouring constituency of Cumberland South, with the old mines. I know there are already some businesses in Springhill that are using geothermal energy. They are able to reduce their heating costs for their businesses by 50 per cent. That's what they've told me. Can you imagine if we marketed that - the industry that we'd be able to welcome into Cumberland County in Nova Scotia.

Heating costs are a big portion of a large industry, so that is a real selling point. Let's develop that geothermal. Let's develop our local food production and bring in some greenhouses. What a great way to increase local food production. Develop that geothermal energy and bring in some commercial greenhouses to use that heat energy.

There were a couple of other emails I got from people on this topic where they were asking why the government is not developing their wood energy. We all know that since

the closure of Northern Pulp, there is an excess of low-grade pulpwood here in the province. There is some disappointment by some stakeholders throughout the province that there's no further development of wood energy projects here in the province, giving them a market. We all know that since the mill closed, there is a big need for that. Lots of potential there.

Finally, on this matter of hydraulic fracturing, while this bill maintains a prohibition, unless authorized, it still creates a new pathway for regulatory discretion. It's a slippery slope and Nova Scotians remember the hard lessons learned from fracking debates in the past. Once again, there has been no consultation on these changes. The government should be strengthening the ban, not quietly reshaping how it could be lifted.

Nova Scotians do want transparency. They want honesty. They want meaningful consultation. They want to be part of the decision when it comes to land, air, and water they depend on. I do believe the government's put the cart before the horse, rewriting laws and asking questions later. This is not how trust is built.

Those who are watching - I know there are a lot of people in Cumberland North who are curious about the survey results, and they're watching. I want them to know: I've heard you. I've read your emails. I've seen your votes. I've taken your calls. Because of the results of the survey, I will not be able to support Bill No. 6 at this time. I encourage the government to go back and do more public consultation.

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

The honourable Minister of Natural Resources.

HON. TORY RUSHTON: Speaker, I want to say a couple of quick things about the last speaker. Geothermal is being looked at closely right now. There's a two-year partnership. I started it when I was the Minister responsible for Energy.

The committee in Springhill met today. That includes the Department of Energy, NSCC, and the Municipality of Cumberland. I would have been there, except I was here today. There are some initiatives going on about geothermal - not just the greenhouse aspect but also the possibility of inland fisheries with the salmon fishery. There are also questions about more refrigeration units. The geothermal in Springhill is an energy that freezes the rink in Springhill. We've skated on it all Winter. They've been able to open the ice earlier. Geothermal is an energy that is being used. There's a lot of work that's going on in the wood initiative.

One other thing I need to - I have to stand here and correct it. The Davis Day resolution a week ago never said a word about uranium or natural gas. I have to clarify something about the record. I'm very respectful of our heritage with mining in Cumberland

South. William Davis spent some time in Springhill. His father and his brother were killed in the disaster in 1891 in Springhill.

I've worked hard not to disrespect any members of this House. I may have fun back and forth with debate, but I've worked hard not to disrespect any members of the House. That was not an intent to disrespect anybody.

When we're done here with politics, in the Legislature, we have to be human beings and Nova Scotians afterwards. I've worked hard on that.

To be honest, I have to be truthful too. I was quite hurt when it was said that I've never been at a Davis Day service. I start every June 11th - even before I was in politics, I started at Joggins in River Hebert. One of the very first coal mines in North America, some argue, was found in Joggins. I start the day there at the school in River Hebert area where they recognize Davis Day. I follow through to the service in Springhill. That was long before I was a member, the minister responsible, or even an elected member. I'm proud of the heritage we have.

As I said, I'm not here to disrespect anybody. I try hard to not follow that line and to pay respect. The intent of the resolution last week was to recognize the hundred years and the contribution that, even a hundred years ago, they were looking at critical minerals in our province in a different way. There was no intent to disrespect anything here a week or so ago.

With that, there's been a lot said. We can agree on a pathway forward. We can disagree on the pathway forward. With that, I move to close Bill No. 6.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 6.

There has been a request for a recorded vote.

Ring the bells. Call in the members.

[5:29 p.m.]

[The Division bells were rung.]

THE SPEAKER: Order. Are the Whips satisfied? The Clerk will conduct a recorded vote. Please remain completely silent while the Clerks record your vote.

[The Clerk called the roll.]

[5:34 p.m.]

YEAS

Hon. Brian Comer
Hon. Nolan Young
Hon. Kim Masland
Hon. John Lohr
Hon. Brendan Maguire
Hon. Tim Houston
Hon. Barbara Adams
Hon. Michelle Thompson
Hon. Fred Tilley
Hon. Dave Ritcey
Hon. Twila Grosse
Tom Taggart
Hon. Brad Johns
Marco MacLeod
Hon. Susan Corkum-Greek
Hon. Leah Martin
Chris Palmer
Melissa Sheehy-Richard
Hon. Brian Wong
John A. MacDonald
John White
Kyle MacQuarrie
Tim Outhit
Rick Burns
Julie Vanexan
Dianne Timmins
David Bowlby
Nick Hilton
Hon. Timothy Halman
Hon. Scott Armstrong
Hon. Jill Balser
Hon. Colton LeBlanc
Hon. Kent Smith
Hon. Tory Rushton
Hon. Trevor Boudreau
Hon. Greg Morrow
Ryan Robicheau
Damian Stoilov
Danny MacGillivray

NAYS

Claudia Chender
Susan Leblanc
Lisa Lachance
Hon. Derek Mombourquette
Hon. Iain Rankin
Elizabeth Smith-McCrossin
Paul Wozney
Suzy Hansen
Kendra Coombes
Krista Gallagher
Lina Hamid

THE CLERK: For, 39. Against, 11.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, would you please call the order of business Private and Local Bills for Third Reading.

[PRIVATE AND LOCAL BILLS FOR THIRD READING]

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, would you please call Bill No. 48.

Bill No. 48 - An Act to incorporate the Trustees of the Third Cornwallis or Billtown Baptist Church, Kings County (amended).

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings North.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I move that Bill No. 48, An Act to Incorporate the Trustees of the Third Cornwallis or Billtown Baptist Church, Kings County, do now be read a third time.

This is a small Baptist church in Billtown, which is halfway between Lakeville and Centreville. I realize most people won't know where that is. It's a gorgeous part of Kings County, with a large farm community around it. The church is active, and this bill is to update its articles of incorporation.

THE SPEAKER: If I am to recognize the honourable member for Kings North, it will be to close third reading on Bill No. 48.

The honourable member for Kings North.

HON. JOHN LOHR: Speaker, I move that Bill No. 48, An Act to Incorporate the Trustees of the Third Cornwallis or Billtown Baptist Church, Kings County, now be read a third time and do pass.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is for third reading of Bill No. 48.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

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

The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, I'm just going to skip ahead for a second and ask for unanimous consent to allow the House Leader of the Official Opposition to report Opposition business for tomorrow.

THE SPEAKER: Do I have unanimous consent?

The honourable House Leader for the Official Opposition.

LISA LACHANCE: Tomorrow, for Opposition debate, we are calling Bill No. 58, An Act to Establish a 2SLGBTQIA+ Bill of Rights; Bill No. 109, An Act to Amend Chapter 401 of the Revised Statutes, 1989, the Residential Tenancies Act, Respecting Fixed-term Leases; and Bill No. 116, An Act to Provide Transparency and Accountability Respecting Hospital Emergency Departments.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

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

GOVERNMENT MOTIONS

THE SPEAKER: The honourable Government House Leader.

HON. BRENDAN MAGUIRE: Speaker, would you please call Address in Reply.

ADDRESS IN REPLY

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford Basin.

TIM OUTHIT: Speaker, I rise today in response the Speech from the Throne to give apparently what is also known as a maiden speech. I have already risen in the House to provide member statements, and I will be speaking briefly in support of Bill No. 24 tomorrow.

I want to start by expressing my appreciation to my family, my campaign team, the Bedford Basin EDA, and the voters of Bedford Basin. Without their tremendous guidance and support, I would not be here today to give this speech.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank you, Speaker, your office, our clerks, the party office, the incredible caucus office staff, legislative staff, my CA Donna Lugar, the Minister of Public Works, the Deputy Minister of Public Works, the Deputy Minister of the JRTA, and several ministerial SAs for their support and guidance with my training and learning process to date.

In addition to them, I have been absolutely blown away by the tremendous welcome I have received from my caucus colleagues, all MLAs, and our Premier. I am so grateful for the mentoring and buddy system support from the Minister of Environment and Climate Change. When was the last time you saw three Tims in a room? What could possibly go wrong?

It has been a busy and tiring ride so far, but also very informative and fun. I feel fortunate to be part of this wonderful family and team. It's also fun at 63 years old and after 17 years of public service to once again be a rookie.

One of the benefits of being elected to the Legislature when I was is the fact that we were heading into budget season. I found the tabling of the budget and the subsequent Estimates sessions to be timely and extremely helpful. The remarks by the ministers and the questions from the members of the Opposition provided me with great insight into several of our departments. I was so impressed and intrigued by the knowledge and passion demonstrated by the Ministers of Finance and Treasury Board, Health and Wellness, Education and Early Childhood Development and Advanced Education, Fisheries and Aquaculture, Municipal Affairs, Environment and Climate Change, and the Minister responsible for L'nú Affairs and the Advisory Council on the Status of Women Act. I'm sure the others were impressive too, but I just didn't hear them.

I am blessed to have a wonderful and supportive family. I am shamelessly proud of them, and I love them more than I ever felt possible. My wife is Sandra Toze, Ph.D., a professor and a program head at Dalhousie University. We are celebrating our 30th anniversary this August. The exciting news is I will have finally completed my 30-year probation period - hopefully successfully. (Laughter)

My daughter Elizabeth Outhit, at 26, is a Bachelor of Science, a Master of Science, and she's completing her 3rd year of medical school at Dalhousie University. Daughter Emily has a B.A., and she's graduating next month with a master's degree in environment and resource management from Dalhousie. This wonderful kid is also a cancer survivor, who was on the dean's list while taking chemotherapy treatments during our pandemic.

Right now, I know what you're all saying, because I get it all the time. His wife must be very smart.

My love for Bedford and the desire to improve the life of residents led me to focus much of my energy during my time on council to working toward a central hub or a

community that would include a library and transportation links for Bedford. Although I was unable to get commuter rail or light rail - yet - I am pleased to say that the initial development is under way for a new library and ferry terminal that will commence shortly on our Bedford waterfront.

[5:45 p.m.]

In 1977, *Maclean's* magazine rated Bedford as the best community in Canada to live in, and I will table that. There have been a lot of changes and growth since then, but it is still a wonderful place to live and to raise a family.

Bedford Basin includes many interesting and notable locations, such as the Bedford Petroglyphs National Historical Site, Scott Manor House, the Moirs Ltd. Power House and, of course, the iconic Chickenburger and Sunnyside Mall. Bedford Basin also includes many excellent locations to unwind and recharge, including DeWolf Park, Admiral Cove Park, Bedford Lions Park, Fish Hatchery Park, Fort Sackville Walkway Bedford-Sackville Connector Greenway, Papermill Lake Beach, and Scott Saunders Memorial Park. The Bedford outdoor pool actually - in 2017 and 2023 - made the list of the top 10 “Dreamiest swimming pools across Canada to cool off” locations as reported by the CBC. It’s not a hidden gem, so I invite you and all members of the Legislature to visit and take in all we have to offer in Bedford Basin.

I come from a long line of public servants, but I am the first one to be elected to office. I was elected regional councillor for Bedford in 2008 in a by-election. I was then re-elected in 2008, 2012, 2016, and 2020. In fact, I have back-to-back acclamations in 2016 and 2020. I announced in October of 2023 that I would not be seeking re-election to council. Several parties then began to approach me to consider running for MLA for Bedford. The Premier and I began meeting and speaking in early 2024. I was impressed with his energy, enthusiasm, and his desire to try new things and approaches to fix our problems and to address potential opportunities. So here I am, once again a rookie, but an enthusiastic MLA.

I mentioned that I come from a long line of public servants. My great-grandfather Frank Outhit was a Clerk of the Upper House. My great-grandfather Melville Cumming was president of the Nova Scotia College of Agriculture and Deputy Minister of Agriculture. If you’ve been to Cumming Hall in Truro, that’s my great-grandfather. My great-uncle Dan Outhit was a long-time treasurer of Annapolis County. My grandfather W.D. Outhit was chair of what’s now known as the UARB for 30 years, and before that a judge and lawyer. My uncle Peter Outhit was the first president and CEO of a Crown corporation exploring offshore resources appointed by the Buchanan government in the 1970s, an organization known as Nova Scotia Resources Limited. My uncle Harold Betts was the first Parks and Recreation Director of Moncton. My father, William Outhit, was with the Nova Scotia Purchasing Agency and Procurement for 30 years. My sister Sarah Outhit was a special assistant to former minister Kelly Regan for about five years.

I've been fortunate to have a long and interesting career - almost 40 years. I have lived and worked in five provinces, and I've undertaken business in 33 states and seven countries. I graduated with a B.A. from Dalhousie, but I've also completed executive and management programs at Queen's University, the University of Toronto, and York University. The Premier and several ministers recently stated that it was time to take the "no" out of Nova Scotia. I agree with that, and I've stated it many times. An Opposition member reminded us that Nova also means "new" and I agree with that. A Bedford Basin resident reminded me recently that Nova is also in the word "innovation" which is critical to our knowledge, green, circular, resource and creative economies.

This ability and desire to innovate is entrenched in our people and in our post-secondary institutions. This will allow us to explore and potentially produce new natural resources, and - to quote our Premier and the ministers: "Smarter, safer, and cleaner." It also enables us to better produce a market for our existing resources. The Ministers of Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Fisheries touched on that during their Estimates comments.

Most of my career has been about selling or advocating for new - new methods, new technology, new policies, new industries, and even a new economy. Some examples include Seaman-Cross Limited. We sold electronic typewriters when everybody had electric typewriters. We sold fax machines when nobody knew what they were, and we sold word processors when nobody knew what they were. I spent years selling electronic security systems and closed-circuit TV for Chubb and ADT, having taken training in New York, New Jersey, and on the 95th floor of the former World Trade Center buildings.

I spent years at Quicklaw teaching judges, lawyers, law students, librarians, and accountants to conduct online research long before the internet existed, and Electronic Workbench software teaching educators, unions, electricians, and students to use electronic simulation software.

I had a great time working in Nova Scotia for a startup called InfoInterActive that was acquired by AOL. I spent six years there. We invented Call Manager, and we marketed it to telephone companies and Internet service providers throughout North America. I handled some key accounts, such as EarthLink and Sprint, and directed our value-added resellers. The company was acquired by AOL-Time Warner, and then we developed and marketed online voicemail and presence management services for AOL and other Internet service providers in North America.

I enjoyed five years as CEO of the economic development and think tank group known as Nova Knowledge. We advocated for the creative economy, the knowledge economy, and the circular economy, and we undertook reports on health prevention, defining the workforce of tomorrow, a call to action on our aging population, a need for immigration, a need for investment capital in NS, and support for the environmental

economy, which eventually set the stage for the Environmental Goals and Sustainability Prosperity Act.

We investigated the environmental progress and focus on our agricultural sector, and we contributed to the Ivany report. We also ran the Computers for Schools Program, which put computers that were refurbished into schools and into CAP centres throughout this province because we knew computers and access to computers and the internet would prepare our students and our areas for the jobs of tomorrow.

I spent 17 years advocating on building a way on Halifax Regional Council for a new economy, new growth, new developments, protecting our heritage and our environment, new ideas and policies, new facilities, new infrastructure, and new improved transit. We started and made progress on climate change and advanced new ways of addressing homelessness and truth and reconciliation.

While I'm comfortable with new, I've always tried to be balanced. I position myself as progressive while fiscally responsible: change for the better and not just change for the sake of change. I am a student of history who supports heritage buildings and districts while also supporting good development, good new facilities, and good new infrastructure. The Speech from the Throne and the budget brought forward by the Minister of Finance exemplify that balance. I ran for MLA and for the PCs because I saw a Premier and a government willing to try new things. If they work, that's great. If they don't work, we'll tweak it or we'll scrap it. That is what I have done in my life, in business at City Hall and in my personal life.

When I went to almost 6,000 doors in Bedford Basin, I received a lot of personal positive feedback on my accessibility and responsiveness as a councillor. I also heard tremendous support for this government trying new things to address health care, new things to address housing, and a new and regional approach to addressing our traffic and public transportation challenges, known as the JRTA - this coupled with a Premier who wasn't afraid of change.

Change and new will be controversial, and they are emotional at times. I saw this during my time on regional council. We had to deal with a sewage treatment plant failure, a concert scandal, an Occupy Nova Scotia encampment, homelessness, inflation, and a pandemic. However, we also saw rapid growth, froze taxes three times, approved a downtown plan, approved the Centre Plan, and built and improved things such as the Halifax Convention Centre, the Oval, the new YMCA, and the Central Library.

These were all controversial at the time and there were lots of noes. However, they are all now successful and have added tremendously to our community. We listened, like this government, and then we tweaked, but we moved forward. We also granted heritage protection to many buildings and established heritage districts. I always told new

councillors that you have to listen to everyone, but you cannot agree with everyone, and you cannot make everyone happy.

I love helping people. I love learning. I love making people laugh, and I love music. We've heard from George Bernard Shaw, and we've heard from Shakespeare. Well, I'm going to quote something that has probably never been quoted here in this House, and that's John Mellencamp the musician, and Bob Marley. I won't sing because I'm not allowed to sing. John Mellencamp has a song, *Peaceful World*, and the line in it is: "It's what you do and not what you say / If you're not part of the future then get out of the way," which I like.

To counterbalance that, Bob Marley, in a wonderful song that had a whole lot of deep meaning - a song called *No Woman, No Cry* - said: "In this bright future, you can't forget your past." That's the balance we will try to strike. This is the kind of vision and atmosphere of the provincial government that I wanted to join. I am happy to be here and to have done that.

The Speech from the Throne and subsequent budget demonstrate commitment to continuing to address our health care concerns, invest in infrastructure, invest in education, and invest in housing - all this while taking aggressive steps to grow our economy in order to fund these needs and wants, but also to address the new challenges from the U.S.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Bedford South.

DAMIAN STOILOV: Esteemed colleagues and residents of Bedford South who will be seeing this, it is an incredible honour to rise today in this historic House as the MLA for Bedford South to represent a community that's really vibrant and very diverse - for those of you who know it well. It is a responsibility that I hold with utmost seriousness, and I am beyond thankful to the many incredible people who helped get me here.

First and foremost, to my amazing wife, Monica: I am incredibly grateful for the love and support she has shown throughout this process and always; and my four kids, Connor, Brad, Corinne, and Danielle, who have become wonderful people, and really helped and supported me on the campaign.

I also owe thanks to the people who helped me on the campaign, who are too numerous to list. The volunteer list we had each and every day, knocking on doors - the list had 40 or 50 people. It was incredible. Also, with that, an incredible thank you to the 42 people - the members in the party - who from Day 1 with the text messages and the words of encouragement and "What do you need? Can I help you?" Those kinds of things. Thank you to all of you for that.

I look forward to working with all of you in the future. The first 30 days or whatever it has been here - it feels like 83 days (Laughter) - have really been a lot of fun and a real, huge learning.

I also want to give thanks to the volunteers who helped me. In our caucus office, I want to thank all the folks there. I'd be remiss if I didn't thank Steve Taylor and Paula Henderson, the Iron Lady. The work they did and the help with supporting me early on when I was volunteering was just incredible.

[6:00 p.m.]

My journey begins with my parents, whose lives were marked by things that most of us really can't imagine. They met in a concentration camp in the former Yugoslavia under the cloud of communism in the early '60s, and were brought together by that shared experience of escaping and coming over to North America. It was quite a journey that they undertook, and I learned a lot from that process.

I've often thought about how their experiences have shaped me - stories of the strength of people who were denied their human rights, and people who always faced oppression. As bad as things are in 2025, I think most of us will agree they don't even compare to what happened in those days. Reflecting on the difficulties they overcame is a daily reminder for me to truly do my best to make a difference. We must not only value the rights we are given but understand that we have the responsibility to help others exercise their rights to the fullest.

That spirit and resilience of overcoming barriers and moving forward was passed down to me. First, it showed in my competitive nature in sports - the "I have to win at everything I do." I love playing basketball. A few of you know that here already, and yes, I still have a dream of making the NBA. (Laughter) That call will happen. There is no question the call will happen. The good news for the 42 members I work with - all of you get courtside tickets for the first game. However, I will single out one person who is first in line. The honourable member for Cole Harbour will get the first two tickets, by the way. Just so we know.

It showed throughout my career in the consumer packaged goods industry. I worked in the health industry, working with companies developing formulations for products that we sold to health food stores. I sold everything from protein to vitamin D and vitamin C. I even sold collagen products for people. One of our members here - I'm not going to tell you who that person is - is presently taking the collagen product. Not that this person needs any help, but certainly we will all see the difference soon.

Building businesses, I helped create jobs, giving others the chance to feel rewarded and provide for their families. I love the industry of health foods. I loved working with small entrepreneurial stores in marketing products both in the U.S. and Canada. I worked

a lot in volunteering in the Bedford community. It gave me the opportunity to witness first-hand what we all should be doing and what we need to do. I volunteered at the food bank and also a lot of other groups in the community.

As a minor basketball coach for 25 years, I had the privilege of working with a lot of young kids in basketball programs in every community from Dartmouth to Halifax to Bedford. When I moved here, the Metro Basketball Association wasn't a reality. There were eight teams, and we started it in Dartmouth with Cole Harbour and Woodlawn and the association. Now I think there are about 400 teams, and there are actually more kids playing basketball than hockey right now, which is just incredible. I really enjoyed that.

The decision to volunteer is grounded in the belief that we are all connected and that our actions have the power to uplift those around us. It is an honour to be part of these efforts. I am committed to continuing this work with passion and purpose, always striving to make a difference. It is this drive to create positive change and do things right that propels me into this new chapter of public service. The decision to run for office had to be made for the right reason. I didn't make the decision - because I loved what I did - for any other reason other than I have a passion for working in the community of Bedford South. I also knew at the time who the honourable member for Bedford Basin next door to me would be, and that kind of helped me push over the line. I just had to be a part of that team.

Bedford South is a community that's grown like you wouldn't believe, and it means everything to me. I've lived there for 20 years this month, and it was literally not anything 20 years ago. Now there are over 22,000 people in Bedford South, and that's just incredible: 9,431 doors to be exact, and we knocked on each and every one of them, which was great. I enjoyed every moment of that.

Beyond that, I saw a need for action. I didn't want to be just another voice in the crowd. I wanted to be the person who rolled up their sleeves and got things done as an MLA. Whether they voted for me or voted for someone else, I didn't really care. I told people at the door who said they really don't want to vote for the blue team, Great - that's okay, at least you're out voting. When I'm elected, I'll support you too.

I'm a firm believer that working as an MLA is not just about putting on a suit and wearing a tie, which I don't love. But I love it more than the honourable member for Yarmouth, who just can't stand wearing a tie. For me, this position is about connecting with the people in the community. It's about listening, taking action and doing things for them.

It is an honour to rise in this House with all the history that's been made here. But when I go home Friday nights and I'm sitting on the couch - obviously watching a basketball game if there's one on - I think about things. What I reflect on is the senior citizen who called me a couple of weeks ago and needed help. I was able to make some phone calls and guide them through it.

It was about the Grade 9 student who wrote one of the best letters I've ever read and asked me to help her. We had her in the office one morning last week and took her picture, posted it and the whole bit. Her letter was just incredible. We've got a future candidate for our party there in Grade 9.

Those are the things that crank me up every day. When people place their trust in me, they're entrusting me with their hopes, concerns and dreams. They're saying they voted for me for those reasons. It's easy to become distracted in politics; to get caught up in the noise, the headlines, the partisanship, and all that goes with it. But when you're faced with a tough decision, for me, it's all about doing the right thing.

When we're not here years down the road, I'd like to be able to walk in the grocery store or the mall or wherever I am and get people to look at me and say: You know what? He gave it his all. He returned my emails within 48 hours, and he was there to help me. That's what's important to me.

Thirty-one square kilometres, as I said, in Bedford and 22,000 people, and a lot of restaurants. There are restaurants with food from all over the world in the community. It's remarkable how it's grown up. It's really exciting to see that vibrant community of businesses from all spectrums. Small businesses - or most of them - are going to be part of Nova Scotia Loyal by the end of May. That's a promise I make to everybody. We're going to start visiting all the businesses and flipping them over.

I've watched West Bedford evolve into an incredible, huge community with young families. We are getting a new school there, which is much-needed. Thank you for the support there. The history, the heritage in areas like Wedgewood and Kearney Lake - it's just incredible how the neighbourhood is growing. The Maskwa Aquatic Club - I had meetings with those folks.

So as soon as we're done here - hopefully by the end of the day tomorrow - I'll be able to get back out doing what I really love to do: To get out and see many of those people. We've got a door-knocking schedule already starting in the middle of May - being able to meet folks.

As MLA, I will ensure that both our newer developments and our historic communities continue to flourish. We have much to gain by embracing the energy and the growth of Bedford South. I'd like to thank the residents of Bedford South for the opportunity to serve you. I'm humbled by your trust and excited for what lies ahead. I need to end short talk with a quote by my hero and a real legend, Michael Jordan, whom I really admire and look up to. He was right when he said, "It's better to shoot and miss than to let time run out and wonder what if." (Applause)

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Kings South.

JULIE VANEXAN: It is with immense gratitude and humility that I rise today as the member for Kings South. Representing this incredible constituency is a profound honour, and I am deeply aware of the trust that has been placed in me to be a strong voice for our community.

First, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to my family. My husband, whose belief in me is not something I can really express in words - it is something that has just always been there, no matter what adventure we are on. I have been with him more years than I haven't, and I'm so grateful for all the experiences we have shared. He has been such a big supporter and has been encouraging every step of the way.

To my children, who I always say were the two best decisions I have ever made: I couldn't be prouder of the men you're turning into. What a gift it is to be your mom. They have made perhaps more sacrifices than I during the election. They were there every step of the way. They supported me during the thinking stage, and boy, did we think a lot before I put my name forward. They supported me during the nomination and through my campaign: long nights, terrible food, and poor sleep. They were there through it all. At 14 and 11, they couldn't possibly know how their lives would change, but they said yes, and here we are. They truly are my compass and my centre for reflection.

My campaign team, an exceptional group of dedicated individuals, worked tirelessly to connect with residents, listen to their concerns, and share our vision for our community. Their commitment and belief in the work we set out to do were unwavering, and I would not be standing here today without their efforts. I was at Acadia University doing a Q & A, and somebody asked me about my team. I couldn't stress enough how amazing they are. They put their lives on hold for an entire month, pitching in to bring home a victory.

I want to take a moment to express my deepest appreciation for the extraordinary team of individuals who played such a pivotal role throughout this journey. Your dedication, hard work, and support have been nothing short of incredible, and I am truly humbled by the commitment each of you has shown.

To Mark Parent, George Lohnes, Norm Rushton, Peter Harrison, and Josh Eisses: your guidance, expertise, and willingness to offer your time and wisdom were invaluable. I'm so grateful for your insight and strategic advice, which were instrumental to our efforts.

To our incredible office team - Lindsey, Jessica, Sheron, and Cristina - thank you for keeping everything running smoothly and for your relentless attention to detail. You were the backbone and face of our campaign office, ensuring that communication, organization, and logistics were always top notch.

A special thanks to Paul, Barry, Pat, Steve, Justin, and Nasser for your tireless work with signs. It's hard work that's often taken for granted, but your dedication to making sure our visibility was strong across the constituency made a tremendous difference.

To our fundraising team - Craig, Paul, and David - thank you for your efforts in securing the resources needed to power our campaign. Your commitment to our vision and your determination to see it come to life were deeply appreciated.

[6:15 p.m.]

I'm also grateful to Doug, Valerie, Connie, George and Pat, Kathryne and her girls Jenn and Sarah, Justin and Cameron, and everyone involved in voter ID and get-out-to-vote efforts. Your meticulous planning, perseverance, and dedication to connecting to our community were truly inspiring.

I also want to acknowledge those who worked tirelessly on canvassing and outreach - Josh, Darwin, Dyson, Mackenzie, Bruce, Charlie, Jeff, Joel, Steven, Samuel, and Giselle - and all the others who contributed their time and energy to knock on doors and connect with voters.

A heartfelt thank you to Pam, who is the Number 1 caller on our team, and Danielle for reaching out to our community through calls and follow-ups. Your commitment to making sure our message was heard did not go unnoticed.

To Albert Tracy for his wisdom and candour. It is always a pleasure to get on the phone with you, and I'm so glad we could turn this constituency blue with you after all these years. Thank you for your support, and happy 91st birthday.

Every single person on this team brought something special to our efforts. From strategic guidance to administrative excellence, from grassroots canvassing to creative problem solving, you all played a vital role in this journey. I am profoundly grateful for your efforts, and I look forward to continuing to work together to make a positive impact for our community. Thank you all from the bottom of my heart.

I would also like to acknowledge and welcome our new constituency assistant, Beth Brown, who plays a key role in ensuring that the residents of Kings South receive the support, advocacy, and assistance they deserve. Our office is here to listen, to help, and to ensure that every person in our constituency knows that they have a place to turn to.

Kings South is a constituency rich in history, agriculture, education, and entrepreneurial spirit. We are home to thriving farms that help feed Nova Scotia and beyond, institutions like Acadia University that cultivate knowledge and innovation, and small businesses that drive our local economy. Our landscapes - from the rolling vineyards

of the Annapolis Valley to the stunning trails and parks - make Kings South a remarkable place to live, work, and visit.

But the true strength of our constituency is its people. I've had the privilege of meeting so many of the hard-working families, students, business owners, and community leaders who are dedicated to making Kings South a place to thrive. We have seen first-hand the power of community when we come together to support one another, whether through volunteer work, local initiatives, or simply lending a helping hand to a neighbour in need. There is something extra special about the Valley, and I can say this with confidence, having had the opportunity to live in many places across this beautiful country. It was welcoming and warm, and many folks are very down to earth.

My nan, who was a proud Newfoundlander, was so keen to hear my stories of all the wonderful people we met, and in true East Coast fashion, she asked the last name and location of everyone we encountered. She would have loved to see Newfoundland one more time before she passed, so we relived her memories of home almost daily. I find myself feeling the same way about Nova Scotia as she felt for Newfoundland and Labrador. She was strong, wise, and raised us with a solid work ethic that I am forever grateful for. I certainly didn't understand the lessons she taught when I was a teenager, but I understand them now as a parent. She loved us fiercely, and although she is no longer here, she is always beside me. It was her devotion to her faith and her community that instilled my desire to give back, and looking back, it is what got me here today - standing in the Nova Scotia Legislature, sharing my community's concerns and vision for our future. That need to serve is one I hope my children carry with them into adulthood as well.

I love that the Valley is made up of serial volunteers who run so many of our cherished organizations. Coldbrook Community Association, the Wolfville Lions, the Coldbrook Lions, Rotary Club of New Minas, Rotary Club of Wolfville-Mud Creek, Wolfville Legion - they really do make our community shine. I can't forget Black River Community Hall and their amazing soup fundraisers or eating chicken à la king at the White Rock Community Center. I'm not sure how I scored the recipe for that turkey à la king, but I did, and I can't wait to make it.

Our wonderful volunteer firefighters who give so much to our residents - they are always there when needed, and we thank them for their service. Their dedication is an inspiration, and I'm committed to working alongside them to amplify their efforts and provide the support they need to continue their important work. There are many more community groups that are made up of volunteers that take care of their slice of the Valley, and we truly are blessed to have such great stewards of our region.

Earlier this year, I had the absolute pleasure to see *Les Misérables*, a high school edition that was put on by Horton High School in collaboration with Avon View High School, Acadia University, and Quick As A Wink theatre society. The talent during those performances was so profound that it had our whole area in a buzz, and they do this year

after year after year. We have a lot of great talent, and you can catch plays put on by the Valley Drama School or *The Nutcracker* performed by the crew from Cadance Academy, and that really is just a few of the amazing groups I can mention.

I need to give a shoutout to the 1st Wolfville Scout Group. They have created an environment where the kids are thriving - teaching them life skills, survival skills, and preparing them to be the leaders they were destined to be.

Last year, after a year and a half of planning and fundraising, the Scouters took a group of the kids to England for the Essex International Jamboree. The trip was unforgettable and has inspired the kids to start working toward the next jamboree. Where they go is still a toss-up, but they are in fundraising mode right now. I'd like to thank them all. If I've missed somebody, I'm sorry, but: Kate Barr, Evelyn Mosher-Sabine, Ryan Matthews, Ben Foote, Ian MacDonald, Craig Vanexan, Mark Pound, Alexander Scott, and behind the scenes and not to be forgotten are Gwen Mosher, Howard Eaton, Ted Cross, Cecil Brown, Krissy Keech and the fundraising team, community sponsors, parents who did the baking and organizing. Thank you. Your dedication has enriched this generation of Scouters, and we are grateful for your commitment to Scouts.

I can go on forever and maybe get through half of the people who should be thanked for their service, and it still wouldn't capture my gratitude. Looking forward, there is much to build upon and much work to be done. My focus will be on advocating for investments in education and skills training to ensure that our young people have the skills and opportunity they need to succeed right here at home.

We will work to strengthen our local economy by supporting our farmers, businesses and entrepreneurs. We will prioritize infrastructure improvements that make our communities more accessible and sustainable.

We also recognize the great work already being done by our municipal leaders, our volunteers, and local organizations. I am committed to working collaboratively with all levels of government to build on these efforts, ensuring that the policies we champion here in this Legislature translate into meaningful improvements for the people of Kings South.

I am grateful to be in this moment and to be part of a team that has prioritized health care options and is continuing to develop long-term solutions. Training more nurses and doctors in our province will help with retention. I am excited that part of that expansion is in our back yard at Acadia University.

As our community grows, we must ensure that we have affordable and accessible options in housing, from young families just starting out to seniors looking to downsize. I will work with stakeholders and policy-makers to explore solutions that will provide sustainable and affordable housing developments while preserving the character and charm of our communities.

I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge the strength and resilience of our small businesses. Over the last few years, businesses have faced unprecedented challenges, yet their dedication and innovation have helped our local economy. I will advocate for policies that provide meaningful support to small businesses, encourage investment in our local economy, and ensure that entrepreneurs have the resources they need to thrive.

Another key priority for me is infrastructure. Our roads and public transit and connectivity play a vital role in ensuring the mobility and safety of our residents. I will advocate for infrastructure improvements that enhance accessibility and efficiency, making it easier for people to get to work, school, and access essential services.

Education remains the heart of our communities' future. Acadia University is a pillar of our constituency, bringing the students and faculty who enrich our economy and culture. Strengthening our education system from primary learning to post-secondary institution is critical.

While exploring the idea of putting my name forward and while seeking the nomination, I spoke with organizations, businesses and residents. A common thread for all of them was the desire for economic growth.

Folks want growth. They want good jobs, and they want their kids to be able to have that option to raise their families here in the Valley. This can happen and it should happen. We held round tables to hear from the public on issues and listen to them as they offered solutions with one another. My intention would be to continue this form of engagement while keeping the residents at the centre of the discussion.

I stand before you today ready to serve, to listen and to work with my colleagues to make life better for Nova Scotians. My commitment is to remain accessible and accountable and to work with integrity and dedication each and every day.

I want to thank the people of Kings South for this incredible opportunity. I hope I can instill some pride into you.

THE SPEAKER: The honourable member for Annapolis.

DAVID BOWLBY: Speaker, I rise today in reply to the Speech from the Throne.

Endings are a little sad, and beginnings are a little frightening, but it's what's in between that really matters.

My first day as a farmer, I was five years old in the Lawrencetown cattle sale. I squeezed out from behind my dad's great big shoulders, and I threw my hand in the air, and I bid two dollars for a pitiful little calf that had to be carried into the ring. The

auctioneer hit the gavel before Dad could protest or the calf could die, and that sealed my fate for the next 50 years.

If I found that auctioneer today, I'm not sure if I'd shake his hand or rattle his teeth.

That calf lived. It sat in my lap all the way home and spent its first week of life in the wood box near the stove. I probably would have taken it up to my room, but back in those days, mothers were equipped with wooden spoons and the word "no."

This small calf was a stepping stone. I attended the Nova Scotia Agricultural College and became a proud Aggie from 1985 to 1987. I bought my first farm in 1990, followed by three more farms, which resulted in one of my proudest achievements.

I actually made money farming. Not right away. It took time, but eventually I did.

My wife and I owned a thriving agri-tourism destination called Dempsey Corner Orchards. The secret of our success was that we didn't try to sell food. We sold something to do and somewhere to go. We taught people about what food is supposed to taste like, about where it really comes from, and about animals and nature, and gave them a safe place to play and learn in the sunshine. We had a full-spectrum U-Pick that started with strawberries and cherries and went right through to apples and pumpkins. We had the cleanest, friendliest, best petting zoo ever, a bakery, and a restaurant. We did school tours and festivals and brought busloads of people and more cars than the Halifax terminal on "unload the cars day." We welcomed all kinds of new Canadians and Nova Scotians.

If you lived in Russia, the Middle East, or South Africa, and you went on Trip Advisor and asked for the best things to do in Nova Scotia, we were always in the top five suggested places to visit. Saudi Arabia is not famous for its potato production, but the look of shock and amazement on their faces when you help them pull up a plant that is festooned with potatoes on its roots never gets old.

When you find a little calf sleeping in the sun, and it will let you curl up behind it and spoon for a few minutes while you rub its neck, and it softly moos a thank you, it doesn't matter where they were from - at least half of them cried a little.

I remember one gentleman who was about this big. He came running with a lamb in his arms. He came running in, he's looking for his wife, and he says, "Honey, start the car."

We had a world-famous three-legged dog. He was on TV. He was in magazine articles. People drove to our farm just to see the dang dog. It became apparent that some of those people came because they felt they had a disability - mental or physical. Whatever they had, they felt they could relate to our dog.

There was a gentleman who had heard about our dog. He drove to the farm, got out of his truck, came over to us, knocked on his prosthetic leg, and said, "I drove a long way to see him," pointing at the dog. "You name your price." "Sorry, sir. That dog's not for sale."

[6:30 p.m.]

I'm pretty sure that my wife had no idea how much money we were going to make off her accidentally hitting the dog in the driveway with our three-quarter-ton truck, but wow, it was the start of something really big. (Laughter) I've been teased by my cousin who said, "Dave, how many three-legged dogs do you have over a 30-year span?" Really, it's just the one.

I have been blessed with two amazing humans I get to call my sons: Connor and Devon Bowlby. They never went to a cattle sale, so they didn't catch the farming bug. They decided they wanted to get paid even if there was a hailstorm, a flood, a drought, oversupply, tariffs, infestation, plague, some other random act, but my wife and I waited until they were old enough to make that decision. When it was obvious that it wasn't a matter of if we would sell the farm but when, we tipped our hat and got off the stage. I'm really pleased to report that the new owners of Dempsey Corner Orchard are doing just fine.

I still had a few years of farming because for most of that time, I was also the farm manager at the Kentville Agricultural Research Station. My last day of farming didn't really happen until three months ago on my birthday, when I became the newest MLA in Nova Scotia. That day, I changed my name from Farmer Dave to, as the Premier referred to me, Blow-out Bowlby. (Laughter) Apparently, 8 is closer than 21.

My first day I met my wife was in Grade 9, when she stamped my pants and stole my heart. I told her then that I wanted to be a politician when I grew up. We talked about it off and on for about 41 years. I never really believed it would come to fruition; it was just a dream. Then, last November, she looked me in the eyes and said, "It's time, Dave. Let's do this." She knocked on doors. She went to meetings. She shook hands, and she wore lipstick too. It was pretty amazing. She wouldn't really wear lipstick, but she was amazing, and I would not have won without her.

My mom passed away this past year, in September. She spent her last best day with me fishing off the dock in front of our house. She caught the biggest fish I've ever seen come out of our lake. It was an ugly old bass, so we put it back, but the minister - we won't talk about that. (Laughter)

My last best day with my dad, who's still with us - he's at the Grand View Manor in Berwick; he has dementia - my last best day with my dad was the day that the Premier's bus came out during the election into Annapolis County to help me campaign. It was on

November 12th. The Premier got off the bus and came over to speak with my dad. He was patient, and he waited for dad to navigate his way out of the truck to stand with his walker and shake his hand. That moment was captured in a photograph that I cherish.

Speaking of photographs, this fellow here who sits above my left shoulder in this Chamber. This guy, he's my ancestor on my mother's side. Statistically speaking, when this campaign started, my campaign manager said I had a 40 per cent chance of winning. Not very good. We have had 23 Prime Ministers, and there are 55 possible chairs that I could have been assigned to in this room, so the likelihood of me walking into this room on my birthday, having a recount come out in my favour, and being put in this chair in front of my ancestor is you take a zero, then you put a dot, and then there are six more zeros and a two. That's, like, two one-thousandths of a chance of me actually being there.

I know it's not by chance. My mother's up there with a long wooden spoon, and she's told Charles to get over there by his eight times great-grandnephew and to keep him in line. I know he's watching me every time I sit in this chair, and I know that she's watching me too.

Now to the thank you portion.

First, I want to say thank you to my wonderful wife, who has been - and continues to be - my leaning post. Thank you, Kitty Kat. Yes, we have pet names.

Next is to the Premier, who has welcomed me into this motley crew and tasked me with a role that is an absolute dream job. Thank you.

Thank you to each and every one of the members of this Legislature on Team Blue or Team Otherwise. You are absolutely fantastic. You keep giving and offering and are helpful and concerned, and you want the best for Nova Scotians. Thank you. It's a pleasure to be here.

Thank you to my EDAs, past and present; my sign man, Hal Elliot - we finally got a win; my campaign manager, Brent - we actually did this; Kevin and Brenda Goodlad for all you have done to support me and my wife in this adventure; and my family and friends who have always been behind me.

I want to also say thank you to all the folks of Annapolis who supported me. I am going to do my damndest to support you. I wanted to also say to Paula H. - we know what the H is - and Julie C. for answering all my stupid rookie questions always with grace and a smile. Last, I want to thank my two brothers in the House who keep me on the level.

THE SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question? (Interruptions)

The honourable member for Annapolis.

DAVID BOWLBY: Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on Address in Reply.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is to adjourn debate.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The honourable Deputy House Leader.

MELISSA SHEEHY-RICHARD: Speaker, this concludes Government Business for today. I move that the House do now rise to meet again on Wednesday, March 26th, between the hours of 1:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. Following Daily Routine and Question Period will be Opposition Business, and after Opposition Business, Government Business will include Third Reading of Bill No. 24.

THE SPEAKER: The motion is that the House rise to meet again on Wednesday, March 26th, from the hours of 1:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

All those in favour? Contrary minded? Thank you.

The motion is carried.

The House stands adjourned until Wednesday, March 26th, at 1:00 p.m.

[The House rose at 6:39 p.m.]

NOTICES OF MOTION UNDER RULE 32(3)**RESOLUTION NO. 153**

By: Hon. John Lohr (Kings North)

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

Whereas all public service requires self-sacrifice and the willingness to make difficult decisions; and

Whereas Bruce Morrison has served as the Warden of the Municipality of Victoria County for 16 years and councillor for 11 years; and

Whereas this service has been faithfully executed and with the best interests of the residents at heart;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly thank Bruce Morrison for his years of service to the people of the Municipality of Victoria County.

RESOLUTION NO. 154

By: Hon. Iain Rankin (Timberlea Prospect)

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

Whereas Friends of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove was established in 2018 to expedite the process of the formation of one of Canada's largest urban wilderness parks; and

Whereas the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes area is an amazing wilderness area on the edge of the largest city in the Maritimes and is home to native Acadian forests, wetlands, and an interconnected system of headwater lakes and has been accurately described as a mini-Kejimikujik National Park; and

Whereas the Friends of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove support and promote the creation and development of the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes National Urban Park and encourage the stewardship and appropriate use of the area;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly recognize the Friends of Blue Mountain-Birch Cove and express heartfelt gratitude to the dedicated board

members for the unwavering commitment and invaluable contributions of Mary Ann McGrath, Eleanor Humphries, Diana Whalen, Carol Ann Roberts, Dale Smith, Mary Ellen Donovan, Todd Beal, Wendy McDonald, James Boyer, Ray Plourde, and Pam Lovelace for their dedication and hard work to protect and enhance this precious wilderness area for future generations and acknowledge and celebrate their leadership, vision, and tireless efforts.

RESOLUTION NO. 155

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Avery Terris as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 156

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Billy McNutt as a dedicated coach of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 157

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Bowen McNutt as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 158

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brad O'Neil as a dedicated coach of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 159

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brandon Warwick as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 160

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Brennan Reid as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 161

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Bryson O'Neil as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 162

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cam Harrison as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 163

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing

Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Camden Leopold as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 164

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Camden Remington as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 165

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cameron MacDonald as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 166

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Cogan McCulley as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 167

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Corey Skinner as a dedicated coach of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 168

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Darrell Cole as a dedicated coach of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 169

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Emerson Burbine as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 170

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing

Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Gage Martin as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 171

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Hales Rochon as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 172

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Jeff Aucoin as a dedicated coach of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 173

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Oliver Gould as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 174

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Owen Smith as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 175

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Parker Aucoin as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 176

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Reed Gagnon as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.

RESOLUTION NO. 177

By: Hon. Tory Rushton (Cumberland South)

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

Whereas the Cumberland U15 AA Ramblers hockey team demonstrated hard work, skill development, and determination throughout the 2024-25 hockey season; and

Whereas the U15 AA Ramblers hosted their division championships from March 20th to 22nd in Springhill, Nova Scotia, demonstrating team play and representing

Cumberland County with honour and captured the banner in the championship game against the Brookfield Elks and punched their ticket to the Provincial Championships; and

Whereas the following day, on March 23rd, the U15 AA Ramblers traveled to Antigonish and defeated Glace Bay 4-2 to win the League Championship, two banners in two days;

Therefore be it resolved that all members of this House of Assembly congratulate Shane Allen as a dedicated player of the U15 AA Ramblers and wish them all luck in the Provincial Championship to be held in Yarmouth from April 3rd to 6th as they finish a fantastic season.