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Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will have Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Terra Nova, Bonavista, Placentia - St. Mary's, Windsor Lake and Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure to speak about, once again, volunteers in the District of Terra Nova and throughout our entire beautiful province. Volunteer groups, like the Royal Canadian Legion, are the backbone of many communities. In the last 90 years, over 300,000 members have contributed countless volunteer hours and raised millions of dollars.

In my district I have three very active Royal Canadian Legions: Clarendville, Branch 27; Port Blandford, Branch 48; and Eastport, Branch 41. Legionnaires support everyone: veterans, Special Olympic groups, cadets, seniors, scholarships, people in need, community and school groups just to name a few.

As a veteran myself, I feel it is critically important for us to continue to recognize and honour the sacrifices that have been made by our comrades on Remembrance Day. Young men and women lied of their ages to serve in wars and fight for our province, country and freedom.

A very humbling picture I saw over the weekend sums it up: "When you go home, tell them of us and say, 'For your tomorrow we gave our today.'"

Please join me in recognizing the Royal Canadian Legion, all veterans, all legionnaires and their dedication to their surrounding areas.

Lest we forget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Following on the theme of volunteerism, Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to celebrate the volunteerism and dedication of Mr. Harold Duffett, Port Union, within the municipality of Trinity Bay North.

Harold, at a very young age of 84 years, has been involved in many organizations over the years. Beginning with his confirmation at 11 years of age, he remained involved with St. Peter's Anglican Church ever since. He was involved in the start-up of the Sea Cadet Corps in Catalina, the school breakfast program, the Relay For Life, as well as the Christmas Seals program.

In addition, Harold was a Member of the Red Cross, Heart and Stroke, and CNIB Newfoundland and Labrador fundraising initiatives. Today he volunteers on committees for the community playground, 50-plus seniors, Tidy Towns and the Trinity Bay North fire department fundraising auctions.

He never misses a committee meeting and is often the first to volunteer his time. The Trinity Bay North town manager, Mr. Darryl Johnson states: Harold spends more time volunteering than anyone I know. The ultimate volunteer.

I ask the Members of the 49th House of Assembly to join me in thanking Mr. Harold Duffett for being such a committed volunteer who gives so freely of his time for the benefit of others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on October 26, Mrs. Theresa Jarvis celebrated her 100th birthday. Mrs. Jarvis, one of three children, was born at Pinch Gut to Joseph and Sara Smith. Her family resettled to Fair Haven and she married John Jarvis. Together they had 10 children.

After her husband passed away in 1986, Mrs. Jarvis lived independently in the family home until she was 98 years old. She presently resides in a senior's apartment in Dildo, with the support of home care. Mrs. Jarvis lives a fairly independent life. Mrs. Jarvis's memory is impeccable. Until recently, she baked her own bread and made her own preserves. She also loves to shop.

While Mrs. Theresa Jarvis has endured many hardships throughout her 100 years, including the loss of three of her children, she continues to live her life with faith and perseverance. Mrs. Jarvis has 23 grandchildren, 34 great grandchildren and 11 great-great grandchildren. Many of her family members live outside the province but those who are here, along with friends, helped her in celebrating this milestone.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all hon. Members in this House of Assembly wish Ms. Theresa Jarvis a happy 100th birthday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to say a word of affection for the Member for Cape St. Francis, who announced his pending retirement.

The Member's reputation is built on dedicated district work. No one in caucus has to ask, where is Kevin? Because the answer is always: He's attending a funeral. And he knows the departed, as he knows the loved ones, and they know him.

There was a picture on social media some months ago. It showed the Member, shovel in hand, fixing a pothole, practicing civic duty and district politics in the most honourable of ways.

In his younger days, the Member had a reputation for toughness in hockey. Who better to put in charge of Public Accounts Committee.

The Member has honourably served in this House under six premiers. I regret he will not be with us to serve under a seventh.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Gerald Hurley was born in Inverness, Scotland, on April 6, 1942. After moving to Badger in 1947, Gerald met his wife of 53 years, Mary McKenna.

Mr. Hurley wore many hats over his lifetime and touched so many lives. His first job was a schoolteacher in Little Bay, where he influenced the future of so many. Pivoting from his teaching profession, he went on to become a welder and kept with that trade into his retirement.

Gerald Hurley was a firm believer in volunteerism and loved to give back to his community. When he wasn't coaching either school or senior hockey, he was serving as St. John Ambulance adult division leader. A member of the Badger Recreation Committee, he also served on the Badger Volunteer Fire Department. He didn't stop there, as this extraordinary man was also an active member of the Knights of Columbus and a Eucharist minister.

Mr. Hurley served several terms as mayor in Badger, including the 2003 flood that watched a community come together, like we are known for here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Gerald Hurley passed this year but will always be remembered for his service. Today we honour him, as we should, God bless you, Gerald Hurley.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today with a heavy heart.

Last week's passing of the hon. Robert Wells, Q.C., comes with great sadness for his family, my own family and for many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians

Since first getting to know former Justice Wells and his family as a child when I delivered their daily newspaper, I have been inspired by his thoughtfulness and compassion.

Mr. Speaker, as a lawyer, MHA, Cabinet minister, judge and commissioner of the Offshore Safety Helicopter Inquiry, Justice Wells served Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for decades with great pride and distinction. He set an example of what it means to serve the public and will be deeply missed by all.

His work led to important changes in improving offshore safety and his legacy will live on for years.

On behalf of Members of this Legislature and all of Newfoundland and Labrador, I spoke with former Justice Wells's son Senator David Wells on Friday to express condolences to Justice Wells's wife Lucy and his entire family.

To honour and commemorate former Justice Wells, flags have been lowered to half-mast at the Confederation Building since Friday.

They will remain lowered until sunset today and lowered again on the day of his funeral.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I join with the Premier in expressing our condolences to the family and friends of the hon. Robert Wells, Q.C., a man who I knew well both in politics and in law.

Mr. Wells served the people of Newfoundland and Labrador through a long and storied career.

From electoral politics to presiding over the inquiry that made recommendations for offshore safety, Robert Wells was a giant. Our province owes Mr. Wells our deepest gratitude.

He served in the House of Assembly from 1972 to 1979, was president of the Newfoundland Law Society from 1977 to 1981 and was the only Newfoundland and Labrador president of the Canadian Bar Association and a Supreme Court justice.

I offer my condolences to Mr. Wells's family, his wife Lucy, his son Senator David Wells and his large circle of family and friends.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the Premier for receiving an advance copy of the statement. On behalf of the Third Party caucus, I would like to take this moment to recognize the life of the hon. Robert Wells, Q.C.

Throughout his illustrious career in public service his dedication to the people of this province was unwavering. We take this opportunity to send our condolences to the family. Justice Wells will be sorely missed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Member for Justice and Public Safety.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform this hon. House that the statutory review of the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015*, is under way and there is now an opportunity for public input.

As a government, we are committed to openness and transparency. We are fortunate to have someone with the stature and experience of retired Chief Justice David B. Orsborn to conduct the review which will examine the operation of the act and, as appropriate, make recommendations to ensure the act is working as intended.

Mr. Orsborn is requesting written submissions no later than November 27. Written submissions can be made by email, fax, hand delivered or regular mail. Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage residents and stakeholders to get involved in the review by making a written submission or applying to make a presentation, either in person or virtually, at public hearings. All comments and submissions received will be made available online and all hearings will be public. Further details of the statutory review and more specific information about how people can participate is available at nlatippareview.ca.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank former Chief Justice Orsborn for taking on this important task and I look forward to the review and his final report, expected to be delivered before the end of March 2021.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge retired Chief Justice David Orsborn and to thank him for his diligent work he is currently undertaking on the statutory review of the ATIPP legislation.

I'm sure that all Members of this hon. House will agree that this is an important piece of legislation, which must remain up to date, responsive and one which ensures government and public information can remain accessible by those who request it.

As a public call for input into this review is under way, I encourage individuals to use

ATIPP to reflect upon the types of information they request and how the system could be more user-friendly. I am hopeful that the statutory review will result in more proactive disclosure and greater resident involvement in our democracy.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would also like to thank the hon. minister for receiving an advance copy of his statement.

We, the Third Party caucus, are glad to hear that this government is making a commitment to openness and transparency.

We would also like to thank Chief Justice Orsborn for leading the review of the ATIPP act. He is an excellent choice for the job and we look forward to his final report at the end of March.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to speak about the \$27.4 million from the Safe Restart Agreement and the funding allocations that each municipality in Newfoundland and Labrador will receive. The federal government portion is being matched on a 50-50 cost-shared basis with provincial government expenditures retroactive to April 1, 2020.

Mr. Speaker, the Safe Restart funding is distributed based on 2016 census data and is guided by a per capita basis allocation to all municipalities. No applications are required and payments will be processed once *Budget 2020* is fully adopted by the House of Assembly. Allocations for each municipality can be found

on the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities website.

The Government of Canada announced the Safe Restart Agreement in July, with details released in September and it supports critical needs to protect public health and safety, prepare for future waves of COVID-19 and further supports the safe reopening of the economies in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, our government supported Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador as the organization advocated for communities at the onset of COVID-19. The province also wrote a letter of support to the Canadian Federation of Municipalities in the national organization's effort to secure funding for municipalities.

We thank the federal government for partnering with us in support of municipalities. We know it has been a stressful time for municipal leaders, and they have been eagerly awaiting word on how much they will receive through this funding program. Our government appreciates the vital role that municipal governments in our province have, and we want them to remain strong and operational as we live with COVID-19.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, the members of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador have been waiting for information about this funding for some time now. I know they lobbied hard for additional support and we, the Official Opposition, are pleased to see the program details finally announced.

Mr. Speaker, many municipalities across this province have been negatively impacted by the pandemic and have budget shortfalls. While this program will provide some much-needed financial relief, there is much work to be done as municipalities try to move forward. In addition to the unplanned expense caused by the pandemic, municipalities must also address

important issues such as drinking water, fire and emergency services and waste water regulations.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the valuable work of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and all municipal leaders across the province. These individuals, many of whom are volunteers, are tireless in their commitment and we certainly appreciate everything they do to make our municipalities better and stronger for our residents.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement and I want to thank George Murphy for dropping it off.

I applaud the minister for securing this funding from the federal government for our communities. We have seen several communities suffer a dramatic loss in revenue from the closure of the recreation facilities and increased costs to municipalities from implementing COVID measures. This funding will go a long way towards helping our communities get back on their feet, but I suggest government consider increasing the funding to provide to municipalities going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, election rumors have arisen in recent days.

With more than 15,000 people thrown out of work: Does the Premier think an election before Christmas is in the best interest of the people of the province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, we've answered questions on this but the Member opposite seems to continue to want to go down this line of questioning. I've said it's not my intention to call an election before, but it's not up to me and me alone. We're in a minority government and this is democracy at work.

There are confidence motions before this House this week, and this is not my decision to make alone. It's not my intention to call an election before December certainly, but it appears that it's just the Members opposite who are interested in talking about elections. They're the only ones with their cars wrapped. They're the only ones getting materials ready. Maybe the question is best reflected internally from the Member opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Premier, I spoke to a 32-year-old electrician with a young family who worked in Argentina, and if he doesn't get work within the next six months he'll lose his house.

What does the Premier have to say to this worker and his family?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is people like that 32-year-old worker and the families who – I think I speak for all Members of the House when I say that we're all incredibly empathic towards the trying times that these families are facing, the uncertainty ahead of them and their families moving into the Christmas season and beyond. I want to express my sincere empathy and compassion to them.

With that said, we are moving forward. We are continuing discussions with operators, including having a healthy and good discussion with the CEO of Cenovus on Friday. We're continuing to discuss with the operators about how we can be prepared to continue to do work in 2021 and be ready for when the rebound in this commodity happens and we can lead the world as an industry with a valuable resource moving forward for the future of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

A jobless oil industry worker who lives in CBS says that he's been watching the Northeast Avalon dying, with businesses and restaurants closing, panhandlers increasing and the roads becoming quiet.

What does the Premier have to say to this jobless worker?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, I would express my empathy and concern for the families during these uncertain times in a global positioning of uncertainty. This isn't a crisis that's facing the Northeast Avalon or Newfoundland and Labrador or Canada; this is a crisis that is affecting the entire world, whether it's Saudi Arabia or Russia, the United States. Cities are going through the same thing: Houston, Aberdeen. Everyone is feeling the pinch of this global economic crisis with a downward pressure on the energy sector in particular.

What I will say is that we're doing everything we can and everything that's available to us in our tool box, including policy instruments and whatever fiscal capacity that we have to ensure that our oil and gas industry is well positioned for when this industry does return, and it will return.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week cast a cloud over labour relations in the province. Unifor National announced legal action against the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, claiming a breach of Charter rights. The minister insists that there is no role for him in this issue.

I ask the minister: Does he have full confidence in the decisions made by the leadership at the RNC which resulted in this legal action?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

As we were in a situation we were in last week, again, I was extremely disappointed, like everybody in this House, that the talks didn't last longer than they did and they weren't successful, because it's very important, first and foremost, for those people to get back to work.

Mr. Speaker, the Member asked me about confidence in the police force. These are independent decisions made by the police force. I do have confidence in the RNC and the RCMP and the work they do in our province.

I also am very pleased today to see that the Member across the way, my critic, has accepted the invitation to sit down and have a conversation with Chief Boland, I think, later this week. It's very important to have that opportunity to sit down and see what decisions like these and how they're made and what actual processes are followed to get to a place where you make a decision to actually see the police deployed.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, we're hearing heartbreaking stories from Dominion workers that are on strike and struggling to make ends meet. These front-line workers sacrificed so much for all of us during COVID-19 and they deserve to get back to work with fair pay.

I ask the Premier: Has he reached out to Galen Weston to encourage him to settle this matter?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We were encouraged and were very much applauded for reaching out to both the employer and their bargaining unit, the union Unifor, to get them back to the table last week. It's very unfortunate that that meeting did not result in a successful collective agreement, but still we remain hopeful. I have reached out to both the CEO of Loblaw's, again as early as this morning, along with the national president of Unifor, to continue on a discussion but, most importantly, to get the parties back to the table.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Search Minerals, Mr. Speaker, is sending rare earth minerals from Labrador to Saskatchewan for processing, creating no processing jobs in this province.

Why is the Premier allowing this to happen?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm certainly glad to get a question on the mining sector because it is certainly a bright spot in this province right now; one that I've had discussions with multiple Members on and, in fact, we've been reaching out even today on different issues.

The issue that the Member mentions is not one that's, honestly, been brought to my attention,

but what I can do – and I'll undertake to report back to this House tomorrow with an update as to what is going on and the reasoning behind it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Was the decision to send these minerals to Saskatchewan made when the Premier was on the board?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I was never on the board of Search Minerals.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This morning the minister announced that the isolation requirements for rotational workers are not going to change.

Minister, these workers and their families are very heavily impacted by this pandemic. Will this policy be reviewed again and, if so, when?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The review by Quality of Care NL showed very clearly that there was no need to make these restrictions on rotational workers any tighter than they already are.

The situation in the rest of the country is what determines a lot of our action. We had over a thousand cases on Saturday in Ontario; a thousand cases on Saturday in Quebec. We've seen Alberta set records for the number of active cases, Mr. Speaker.

Recognizing that rotational workers work in a somewhat protected site is permissive in that it has allowed us these relaxations, but we cannot let our guard down, Mr. Speaker, beyond a certain point. This is evidence based. If the evidence changes, we will change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Many families in this province have children attending educational institutions in other parts of Canada and in other countries who want to return home for Christmas. Flight availability is decreasing while ticket prices are increasing and these families and individuals need to make plans.

Can the minister offer any insight on what the isolation requirements will be for those residents hoping to return home for Christmas?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

That is an active topic with our Public Health department. Myself and Dr. Fitzgerald have undertaken to have something out within the early part of this month.

Again, I must go back and say that the situation in other parts of the country does not look very optimistic when you look at their hospitalization, their infection rates and the curve in Ontario is like a cliff face, Mr. Speaker. We have to look after the safety of the people in this province, much as I would love to see my daughters too.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, a local child care operator in Witless Bay has spoken out about the

heavy-handed tactics of the minister's department. This home-based daycare has been ordered to reduce their rates in order to avail of \$25-a-day child care for her families.

Why is the minister forcing operators to reduce programming and even meals in order to survive?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The \$25-a-day program provides an operating grant that's been in place – the operating grant has been in place since about 2014. Back then, when government introduced the operating grant to the child care centres, many of them expressed the same concerns we're hearing today from the family centres who we've now included in the operating grant under the \$25-a-day child care program. This may not be for all family-based child care centres, but for any of the child care centres that are family-based that wish to come under the operating grant program we welcome them.

We are open to feedback, Mr. Speaker, and we're starting a consultation process to hear feedback and to view what child care looks like into the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, this child care operator was under the family-based operation, and in an online forum this morning mentions that she may be losing up to \$200 a week. She has stated that she was sick to her stomach as she wonders what to do next.

How does the minister expect to create more quality and affordable spaces if we are potentially pushing operators out of business?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly not the intent to push anybody out of business, Mr. Speaker. I know when the previous administration brought in the Operating Grant Program, some child care centres had to give a little bit. Government provided an operating grant to ensure that child care was affordable.

The current Premier promised \$25-a-day child care. More than 70 per cent of the centres are under the Operating Grant Program. Mr. Speaker, we've had other centres express an interest in joining. We've also invited the family-based centres. Again, we're hearing some of the same concerns today the previous administration did in 2014 when they started the Operating Grant Program for the centres.

Mr. Speaker, we are looking at this. We are not forcing anybody to join. If a family-based centre doesn't want to join the Operating Grant Program, we're certainly not forcing anybody to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, the previous administration the minister was a part of since 2015. Losing \$200 a week is rather significant from a home care operator who was on the program last year.

Mr. Speaker, concerns have been raised that the Casual Caregiver Pilot Program will allow untrained and unqualified individuals to work in child care centres. This is yet another band-aid solution to chronic staff shortages with early childhood educators who feel undervalued.

When is the minister going to deal with the real underlying issues affecting staff, including training and access to course work?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I hate to provide a math lesson to a former administrator in a school, but in 2014 I wasn't a part of the former administration, I was a part of this party.

Mr. Speaker, our government has provided, over the last three years, bursaries and training money for early childhood educators. There are certainly some stresses within the system. Those stresses are felt across the country. We provide wage subsidies to early childhood educators, between \$12,900 and \$16,900, to enhance their wages.

Does this answer all the questions? No. For example, the \$25-a-day daycare is a very, very solid first step, Mr. Speaker, as we continue to consult with the industry and look –

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday the minister spoke to the CEO of Cenovus for the first time.

Did the Premier participate in this call and, if not, why not?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to report that not only did we have a conversation with Cenovus and their CEO on Friday, but the Premier led the call with Cenovus on Friday.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: While it was an introductory call, the wording, I would say, that was used by the CEO of Cenovus was very positive in nature, saying he has a connection with this province and very excited to be here. While we know that we have a lot of work to do, what I can say is that the call was positive in nature and we've committed to continuing our ongoing discussions.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When asked about potential job cuts, the minister said it did not form part of the conversation.

Jobs are important to the people of this province, Minister, and why did you forget to ask for a commitment about maintaining jobs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, what I can say is twofold here. Cenovus being very new to this, it's like every other oil and gas company in this world. They're reassessing what they are doing and where we are going in this ever-changing landscape.

That being said, I also spoke to the VP of Husky on Saturday. There were no job cuts discussed in that call. In fact, the largest portion of that call was discussing the ongoing scope of work that they have put forward to us and the opportunity for investment and job creation here in the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe job cuts should have been part of the conversation, Minister; it's a big issue here in this province.

The Transocean Barents has left the province and is en route to Norway, a jurisdiction that supports and encourages the offshore oil industry. Bull Arm has become an aquatic storage facility with two other drill rigs, and the Terra Nova will be there shortly.

Premier, what is your plan to resume exploration drilling in this province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm certainly very happy to speak to this and, yes, the Transocean is going. The contract signed some time ago has concluded, as was expected a number of months ago, but I am proud to talk about the discoveries that they made while they were here. We had two announced just last week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. A. PARSONS: They did do great work while they were here, and we're very happy about that. Also, today in a phone call, actually between the Premier's Office and myself, we spoke to CNOOC and we spoke about the exploration well that they will be drilling, starting in 2021, and they talked about the exploration incentive that we had.

In fact, the Premier and I spoke today to all the members of CAPP, and one of the things that they were unanimous in was talking about our exploration incentive and the fact that they know they can count on this provincial government being behind them during this tough time.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is no more exploration for another year, so that answers that question, and the government, obviously, did nothing but cheer them on.

Six weeks ago, government announced an exploration initiative, yet details are still unavailable.

Premier, when will the details be announced?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology,

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to go back to the previous question; what I can say is, yes, there will be drilling. Hopefully, in about six months is when we're going to see that drilling happen, as committed to by CNOOC. That's what they've committed.

The other thing, we have announced an exploration incentive program, one that's about \$40 million this year, which is coming from the bid deposits. Again, there's unanimous support from all the operators. They realize that we are in a very tough environment but they appreciate the support that we've put there. This will help form part of the bid process which will, hopefully, be happening this week.

They appreciate the fact that with very limited options, financially, that the province can offer, this was a big one and will help go towards to, hopefully, continued and increased drilling potential in the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, I asked some important questions regarding an expiry date and renewal fees attached to journeypersons' certificates of qualification and I did not receive an acceptable response.

The minister has now had time to follow up with his staff.

Again, I ask the minister: Why were such policies adopted?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I will admit I was somewhat confused by the question. I've had an opportunity to process some of the question and the potential answer.

It appeared to me that there was some debate as to why the government had imposed an expiry date on journeymen's Red Seal certificates. I could point out to the hon. Member that expiry dates have been in place on journeymen's certificates since the 1990s. I was unaware how that policy could have impacted and created job losses for individuals so again I'll repeat: Expiry dates have been in place on certificates for many, many years.

If the hon. Member has any information of any individual that has been impacted negatively by something that's been in place for decades, I'd be happy to take that information.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister does talk to the expiry date; however, journeypersons have brought their complaints forward to his department on a number of occasions; they have not received an adequate response. In fact, they had to register a complaint to the Office of the Citizens' Representative. The report actually quotes the department as saying: There has never been a requirement for a journeyperson to renew their certificate of qualifications, yet there is an expiry date and renewal fees attached.

What does the minister say to the hard-working men and women who had to go through this?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member does now recollect and state the facts which are there has been an expiry date that has been in place on these certificates for many, many years; in fact, decades. There was a simple change where there was a fee that was to be collected back some five years ago of \$50 for

a five-year period. There was a decision, and I think a good decision, not to collect that fee anymore.

With regard to the complaints that the Member refers to, we've reviewed our files, our records and we find no such instances. If he would like to bring forward particular concerns from individuals, I'd be more than happy to receive them because that would be new information to us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guarantee you this complaint to the Office of the Citizens' Rep didn't just appear; it resulted in complaints that were unanswered by the department. This report also states, and I quote – this is coming from the department – in the fall of 2018, it was concluded that the historical practice of including an expiry date would cease as the individuals' qualifications does not in fact expire. Yet, under this government, August of 2016, they not only looked to solve the issue, they actually attached a \$50 fee on top of it. The minister has already alluded to correcting it.

I ask the minister: Will the minister refund these fees for a policy that should never have been put in place?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, again, we kind of come to the conundrum of the notion of harm or whether or not some individuals have been negatively impacted. I'm more than prepared and anxious to receive any information regarding that. If he would like to bring that forward I'd be happy to receive it and will act on it.

With that said, expiry dates have been part of the certificates for many, many decades. The certificates are now issued without an expiry date after a decades-long policy and 11,000 certificates were issued some months back, some years back without expiry dates attached to

them. If there's ever a certificate that's lost, we can replace that certificate without an expiry date attached to it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

His own department says it should never have occurred. The department is after charging people \$50 – 14,000 journeypersons for a fee that should never have been charged.

Mr. Speaker, the PC Opposition advocated on an expanded insulin pump coverage and government listened. The minister responsible has touted investing in health, choose wellness over illness.

I ask the minister: Will he do the same and provide full coverage for advanced continuous glucose monitoring devices for people living with diabetes?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much indeed, Mr. Speaker, for the question.

I know that there are various business groups lobbying for glucose monitoring. The issue is around the evidence to support their use, Mr. Speaker. There are flash glucose monitors and there are continuous glucose monitors. I await the decision of the medical profession to tell me which is most relevant and which should be supported. At that point, we'll be in a position to make a decision. As yet, I haven't had the answer.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise, time for a quick question and a quick answer.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given this is Diabetes Awareness Month, it's timely to look at this. Flash monitors, of course, as we know, they take at periodic times and the continuous one is ongoing.

If we are truly invested in health and choosing wellness over illness, will government provide assistance to people who desperately need this?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We made the expansion to the Insulin Pump Program on the basis of recommendations from clinicians. I refer the Member to previous comments about using evidence to inform our decisions. That evidence has not yet been presented to me and I'm not aware that it actually exists in the form the Member opposite would have me believe. Certainly, should the clinicians have that, I would happy to have my staff look at it, Mr. Speaker. At the moment, we have \$3.3 million for a universal Insulin Pump Program.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're hearing from family-operated child care centres that the information released about the \$25-a-day program will make it difficult for them to be able to operate.

I just ask the Premier: What is he doing to ensure that the province doesn't lose valuable child care spots?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly want to work with our partners in early learning and child care to ensure that we grow the number of child care

spaces in the province. We intend to do that. We have a consultation process that is starting early in the new year.

Having said that, I've welcomed and continue to welcome feedback from early learning and child care centres between now and then to get their feedback and to look at options and suggestions and concerns that they have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you.

Child care operators in Labrador West have reached out to me multiple times and, in turn, I've reached out to the minister multiple times, about concerns that their child care centres will have and the possibility of closure if the program is not improved.

I ask the Premier: Has he spoken to child care operators in Labrador to understand the vital roles that they play in the community?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are heightened concerns in some areas of Labrador, in particular the Member's district, because of the competing jobs and higher wages as a result of the resource sector. We understand that, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the Peacock learning centre in Labrador, government had invested about \$900,000 over the past two years to get that centre up and running. They are facing challenges with the recruitment of early childhood educators. We've put in place a pilot project to allow centres to hire temporary replacements in the event of an absent worker or in areas where it's harder to recruit. We continue to look for options.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When asked about a living wage last week, the minister deflected and congratulated both sides of a labour dispute for getting back to the table. He also deferred discussions about a living wage to the committee on basic income.

To clarify, basic income is a form of a social safety net to help individuals who are often not working or are partially employed; whereas, a living wage will ensure that working individuals can afford to build better lives for their families.

I ask again: Will the minister legislate a living wage?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, a living wage is a circumstance which would require a description and a definition that I would ask the hon. Member opposite, the Leader of the Third Party, to come forward with her perspectives, because I appreciate her perspectives.

Obviously, a living wage would be very different for a student than an adult, or an adult who has dependant children. So a living wage has a very different context and definition, depending on the person involved. It's difficult to legislate that. It's difficult for employers to make decisions around hiring based on a requirement to be able to make the living wage of a particular individual.

These are important questions, important issues, and I look forward to discussion at the All-Party Committee because I think, maybe, that could be a good venue for such a discussion.

MR. SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that on Friday a memo went out to schools promising that

laptops and Chromebooks would soon be in the hands of teachers and students. It's encouraging to see that my question on Thursday elicited this much action.

With this in mind, I ask the Minister of Education: Will he now table a list of schools which have received these devices, how many teachers and students have these devices in hand, and a timetable of when the remaining schools can expect to receive theirs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I just had a vision of the CEO of the English School District sitting on the edge of his seat anticipating the next question from the Member.

Mr. Speaker, I will endeavour to get a schedule of schools and the timelines involved in getting these devices out. I know that the devices have to be formatted. The laptops, my understanding is they've arrived. They're in the process of being formatted. Some schools may already have them. Certainly, the English School District is working diligently to get these laptops into the hands of teachers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Notices of motion – sorry, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice of Bill 53, An Act To Amend The Vital Statistics Act, 2009.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice of the following private Member's motion, which will be seconded by the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune:

WHEREAS Wednesday, November 11, 2020, is Remembrance Day; and

WHEREAS Remembrance Day is a day to honour and remember the people who have served, and continue to serve Canada during times of war, conflict and peace; and

WHEREAS Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have an illustrious history of service and have suffered great tragedies in the line of duty; and

WHEREAS the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic will restrict many annual commemorative ceremonies;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House supports veterans in Newfoundland and Labrador and recognizes the sacrifices made by all members of the Canadian Forces; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED the House urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to work with the Royal Canadian Legion and other partners to rehabilitate the Newfoundland National Memorial in time for the Memorial's centennial on July 1, 2024.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to Standing Order 63(3), the private Member's resolution entered by the Member for Burin - Grand Bank shall be the one debated this Wednesday.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, pursuant to an undertaking that I made in Question Period, I undertook to this House to provide information on Search Minerals, and I was a bit surprised that I didn't realize that there was processing going out of province. The reason I was surprised is because there isn't.

What I've had confirmed from Search is that, in fact, there is a few samples of concentrate of this rare earth that is going to a research facility in Saskatchewan to be processed to determine feasibility. In fact, the goal is to – again, this was a project that was worked on by the government as well as ACOA with the hopes – there is no separation facility in North America right now. The goal is to determine feasibility so that this company can continue on with their mining, which I would point out is in Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, in the hopes of discovering 200 jobs.

I would point out to anybody that was listening; there is no commercial processing of these minerals going on. I felt the House should be aware of that information.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS small businesses are the backbone of Newfoundland and Labrador's increasingly

diversified economy and their contributions and the role they play in society is anything but small; and

WHEREAS they are creating jobs and opportunities, strengthening and building communities and fortifying the provincial economy as well as creating innovative solutions; and

WHEREAS there are supports available to small businesses during the pandemic, there are small businesses that continue to struggle;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to develop a course of action to assist small businesses that are unable to avail of the current supports or are in need of other supports to ensure they survive the current pandemic and continue to contribute to the success of our economy in the long term.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think anyone in this House will deny the contribution small businesses have made to our economy and what they've done during our pandemic.

There are approximately, somewhere in the ballpark of 15,000 to 17,000 small- and medium-sized enterprises in Newfoundland and Labrador. They cover a range of services and products, and they are there when we need them. Some of these became essential workers during the pandemic. Some of the funding programs that are available, some have not been able to avail of those.

Unfortunately, we've seen some of these businesses close shop. We've seen others try to adjust and are operating at a lesser volume, but they continue to survive. With Christmas season coming along, it's going to be hard on many people who are concerned about employment and people concerned about where they're going to buy their groceries or their essentials.

I would ask that all of us in this House of Assembly make an effort to get out and support our small- and medium-sized enterprises. These people need it for us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. P. DINN: In the past, you'd normally call them mom-and-pop shop; some of them are family run. There is absolutely no reason why we cannot get out and support them as the Christmas season approaches and with that support, buy local, buy Newfoundland and Labrador. If we take that approach then we're going to come out of this on the other end looking a lot better.

I thank you for your time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows: An extension was approved to Robert E. Howlett highway on March 25, 2014. An environmental assessment, design and engineering of this project was completed and continued residential and commercial growth has increased traffic flows to the Southern Avalon.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To reinstate the approved extension of Robert E. Howlett highway to improve and ensure the safety of the travelling public to the Southern Avalon.

The reason I speak on this is, in 2014, this was already done, approved and the government, in its wisdom, has decided to cancel this project or move it back. It's detrimental to the safety of all the residents in the Ferryland District. I look at some of the bypass roads or extensions that were done, one in Torbay, one going to Carbonear and they're vital for the safety of the people in the community.

If you can remember going down through Bay Roberts and all those areas, you're not going through the centre of the communities in regards to that. Some people are driving on the highways and it's a little safer for the communities themselves. The speed limits in these communities, as you drive through, the reduced speed is 50 kilometres.

With this extension, it brings people to our area, to our tourism, to our marine bases that are there: one in Bay Bulls and another proposed one in Fermeuse. It's vital that we get back to looking at this.

Not a part of this, but we also had the Team Gushue Highway, which was stopped, and there was an extension done to that to join the Robert E. Howlett, that has also been stopped. We don't hear anything on that and we'd like to know where it is in our area because people travel that highway. I would say there are a good many residents that use the Team Gushue to get to Robert E. Howlett right now as it is. We'd like to see that reinstated, if we could.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, the background of this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS residents of the area troubled with the unsafe conditions of the road; and

WHEREAS residents of the area concerned with the lack of maintenance repairs to the road; and

WHEREAS the road is owned and maintained by Transportation and Infrastructure Department, Government of Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS the road is the only access to and from the Town of Terra Nova; and

WHEREAS the road is travelled by schoolchildren that travel to Glovertown school;

THEREFORE we, the residents of the geographical area surrounding Terra Nova, petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that the roads be repaired and maintained to a standard that is safe for travel by all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, since May of 2019, I have been asking questions about the road in Terra Nova and there have been a multitude of excuses. First, I asked what the standards were for repair of road and I was told it was a measurement taken from centre line. Well, I'll tell the Speaker that the only thing remaining on the road going into Terra Nova is the centre line.

I went out and I took multiple pictures, 30, 40 pictures, on several occasions and sent in. There are spots where they put some asphalt in one pothole, skipped over one, went to the next. It was every second or third pothole being done. There are also large sections of as much as eight feet where there's probably one foot of asphalt replaced and the remaining seven untouched.

This year, we went looking for a plan, after consultations with the town, trying to find a solution. We figured a solution would be to do small patches of full pieces of road. I personally went out myself, took all the coordinates and sent in. The response I got from the minister's department was they could tear up the existing – chip seal is what it is – and treat it as a gravel road. We've heard all the excuses.

I went back to the department and I asked the department about the chip seal, which was supposed to be a pilot project. I asked them what the results of the pilot project were. No one could answer me. There was supposed to be work done the year after the chip seal was applied. No one answered me.

I know there could be an excuse coming that says it was a previous administration or it was your government or something like that, but the reality of this is it's not about who's in power; it's about what's happening right now and the safety of children that travel to school on a daily basis and the safety of the residents that live in Terra Nova.

The road is in unacceptable circumstances. If our solution for people who live in rural Newfoundland is to tear up the existing asphalt and replace it with gravel roads, we're heading down a pretty scary path.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, we're looking for this road to be maintained and fixed up.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations, Bill 52, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. minister shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations, Bill 52, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations," carried. (Bill 52)

ACTING TABLE OFFICER (Hammond): A bill, An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations. (Bill 52)

MR. SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 52 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-operatives Act And The Corporations Act, Bill 51, and I further move that the bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. minister shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-operatives Act And The Corporations Act, Bill 51, and that this bill now be read a first time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-operatives Act And The Corporations Act," carried. (Bill 51)

ACTING TABLE OFFICER: A bill, An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-operatives Act And The Corporations Act. (Bill 51)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 51 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 11.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that under Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 2, 2020.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that the House not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Monday, November 2, 2020.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, number 5, second reading of Bill 46.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 46, entitled An Act to Amend the Credit Union Act –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Okay. Sorry, I didn't realize this is a continuation of a debate that we had already started.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I would like to thank the Member to the left of me there for Cape St. Francis who filled in last week when we introduced the bill. He took over and did that part while I was off, and I certainly thank him for that.

I'd also like to thank the department. When we did our briefing, they were very informative on giving us all the details on this. It's a pretty comprehensive bill. There are 86 proposed amendments to this, so it's a lot of detail. We, on this side, certainly support the changes to the bill. I'll read through some of the stuff we did at our briefing, and I'm sure he probably touched on it the other day but I just want to touch on some of the parts of the bill that we'll be looking at.

First of all, like I said, Bill 46 includes 86 proposed amendments to the Credit Union Act. Some of the stuff is the disclosure of potential conflict of interest by directors and officers; establishing by-laws for engaging external third parties; separating the roles and duties of the superintendent and the CEO; updating the responsibilities and structure of the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation – the acronym is CUDGC, it's pretty hard to say all that out every time, so we'll use that if we can; facilitating the establishment of a federal credit union; some record keeping; definitions; modernizing language; penalties and offences; enhanced membership; timelines; increase regulation making authority, and other minor amendments in that as well.

Some of the background on this; the current act has been in effect since 2009. Associated regulations were amended as recently as April of last year. According to the department officials, there are nine credit unions in the province serving over – we had a letter from the credit union also supporting that, and to update on the number it was serving. We had 62,000. There are currently 63,800 members and they're also in support of that. They sent out a letter supporting this bill as well and in favour of it. So we certainly appreciate that.

Credit unions cover over 36 locations throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and currently employ 317 people. They also offer a wide range of financial services similar to banks,

including chequing, savings accounts, loans, mortgages and credit investment services.

Going on to some other information as well. Credit unions are independently owned by members. The credit union – which, again, is CUDGC – is a provincial Crown corporation and responsible for administering and ensuring compliance with the *Credit Union Act* and regulations.

The current act identifies a superintendent of credit unions to also serve as the CEO of the credit union. That's some of the proposed regulations they're changing. I'll just go down and touch on some of those. We're not going to be able to do them all, obviously, but I'll go down and touch on some of those.

When we were doing our briefing, the officials noted that some of the key arrangements are: requiring directors and official officers of a credit union and of the CUDGC to disclose potential conflict of interest. This isn't spelled out in our current legislation. So the proposed amendments will identify what constitutes a conflict, require disclosure and provide a process for disclosure as well. I think it's important to get away from one CEO – so to separate that. I think that's important.

Requiring credit unions to establish bylaws for engaging external third parties to perform services on behalf of the credit union. An example is an IT service provider. This is addressed in section 47.1 and added to the act. Officials noted this addition would help minimize potential risk to members from third party arrangements.

Also separating the roles of the duties of the superintendent and the CEO, which I just touched on. Also we're going to be updating the current structure of the board. This will align with the international guidelines and the structure within other jurisdictions.

Also, we'll be updating – we'll all be updating, I guess – duties, powers and responsibilities of the CUDGC and the superintendent. Officials had said that this aligns with best practices, and other jurisdictions will require to report significant issues to the superintendent.

Again, to highlight how many amendments are there: There are 13 amendments related to record keeping; there are 10 amendments that are related to new and revised definitions in the act. An example would be several definitions are added related to federal continuance, which is a new section added to the act, and another example of that is the definition of material contact. It's also added to the act as well.

There are nine amendments that are related to modernizing and updating the language. Section 36 on trust funds is updated to include electronic transactions. There are also instances where wording is changed for clarity. Such as under section 180, to clarify when notice is sent by mail or electronic means.

There are seven amendments related to facilitating the establishment of credit unions. A new section is added to the act to address this. Officials explained that this is a long way off, but it would permit provincial credit unions to operate as a federal credit union upon approval from provincial government and subject to federal regulations. Some pretty in-depth regulations that are here.

There are also five amendments to increase offences and penalties. Under section 169 and 170, the upper limit of fines for individuals is increased to \$25,000, and the fines for corporations between \$10,000 and \$50,000.

There are also five amendments that are aimed at enhancing membership in credit unions, allowing members for more input into dividend decisions.

There are also four amendments dealing with timelines under the act. So the references, notification periods for meetings and allow electronic meetings, which officials noted as a modern way to do business, particularly in the current health emergency. During COVID, some of these banks and credit unions or whatever the case may be, I guess they found it difficult at the time to be able to have meetings in general and try to do them virtually and some new regulations that are going to be added.

Also, there are four amendments that are dealing with timelines under the act, so references,

notification periods for meetings – no, I already said that. Sorry.

There are also several other amendments including expanded regulation-making authorities.

That's touching on some of the 86 amendments on that. When we get into Committee, we have some questions there for sure that we will ask and be able to get some answers to. Hopefully, when we get there, that there are other people that have some questions, we will certainly try to get them answered.

Thank you.

MADAM SPEAKER (P. Parsons): The Member for Mount Scio.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I just want to thank the Members for speaking about this bill. It seems like there is general support, so I'm very thankful for everyone for that.

I'd like to thank the MHA for Labrador West. His points about digital banking and how consumers' interests are changing is very relevant. So thank you very much.

I'd like to thank the MHA for Cape St. Francis for his very relevant remarks last week about this bill as well; a lot about protecting members. So thank you very much.

The MHA for Ferryland, thank you very much for your feedback today as well.

I look forward to discussing this in Committee and answering any questions that Members have.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, that the House

resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 46, An Act To Amend The Credit Union Act, 2009.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

One second, before we do that, we did that procedure a little bit wrong there. We didn't do the vote on second reading before going into Committee. I'm going to revert to – the minister spoke and we didn't take the vote on second reading. So just to make sure we have everything right.

Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 46 be now read a second time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

ACTING TABLE OFFICER: A bill, An Act To Amend The Credit Union Act, 2009. (Bill 46)

MR. SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a second time.

When shall the said bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole?

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill "An Act To Amend The Credit Union Act, 2009," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 46)

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried,

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 46, An Act To Amend The Credit Union Act, 2009.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Credit Union Act, 2009." (Bill 46)

ACTING TABLE OFFICER: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye,

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

ACTING TABLE OFFICER: Clauses 2 through 86 inclusive.

CHAIR: Clauses 2 through 86 inclusive.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I had them broken down in different clauses, I didn't know if you were going to go through five or 10 at a time, but in clauses 5 and 6, sections 11 and 12 of the act references names and prohibited names. There was a reference in the Explanatory Notes of the bill to removing the authority for credit union's to use the title: Co-operative Credit Society.

Are there any instances –?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I'm having trouble hearing the speaker.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Are there any instances of that being used now? I'm not sure if you could hear the question or not.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: I'm just wondering if you could just clarify one more time the exact question.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: There's a reference in the Explanatory Notes of the bill to removing the authority for credit unions to use the title: Co-operative Credit Society. Are there any instances of that being used now?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: No, there are not.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Section 35 references a member's right to withdraw deposits. With these amendments, the authority for a credit union to require 90 days written notice from a member to withdraw money is to be removed.

What replaces that now? Will notice be required?

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Sorry, can the Member repeat the question.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Section 35 references a member's right to withdraw deposits. With these amendments, the authority for a credit union to require 90 days written notice from a member to withdraw money will be removed.

What replaces that now? Will notice be required?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Nothing has replaced it. The requirement is simply removed. There will not be any notice required.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Under sections 37 and 38, the requirements in the act regarding payouts of money upon death will be replaced with a requirement that credit unions establish policies regarding deceased members.

Can you offer further details on this?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: I think, obviously, if members have a loved one who's deceased, it's important that each credit union, or a group of credit unions, have policies and procedures in place to ensure that loved ones or family members or partners or spouses or descendants

or beneficiaries receive money that they're entitled to legally that might be remaining in their account. I believe this change will just ensure that each credit union – will make it lawful that each credit union has to have those policies and procedures in place.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Section 117 references amalgamation of credit unions. The requirement that at least 60 per cent of the creditors of an amalgamating credit union must consent to amalgamation is being removed.

Why is that? Can you offer further details on that?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Sorry, what number was that?

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Section 117.

MS. STOODLEY: Sorry, can the Member repeat the question.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: The requirement that at least 60 per cent of the creditors of an amalgamating credit union must consent to amalgamation is being removed.

Why is that? Can you offer further details?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

When the changes for this Credit Union Act were put in place, one of the things we're doing is aligning them with credit union legislation in other provinces. That's one reason why we're making this change.

I'm just waiting for additional information at the moment. Can we potentially come back to this so I can add more clarity in a minute, please?

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Yes, no problem. If you don't have the answer there, then just let us know that and we will move on to the next one.

Section 131.1 is a new section that's added to the act referencing federal continuance. In our briefing, we were told that this will allow credit unions in our province to apply for federal continuance and to facilitate establishing a federal credit union. We were also told that this is a long ways off but it was decided to put it in the act in order to avoid the options available.

I am wondering why that is being put in there now rather than being dealt with in the future amendments.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As these acts don't get modified very often and we are doing a very comprehensive review, we felt like it was important to add that in case a credit union was, say, big enough to meet the federal criteria to become a federal credit union. My understanding is none of our current credit unions meet that criteria at the moment. I think we were just trying to be comprehensive so that if, in the future, a credit union did meet the criteria, we wouldn't have to come back and change the legislation.

I did, Madam Chair, have a response for the previous question, if that's okay. I just wanted to add also that in terms of putting regulations in for a deceased member, in terms of the credit union putting members in place, we did that change because it just kind of aligns with general credit union principles. It was important that when someone has an heir, there are policies and procedures in place to direct appropriately how that money flows.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Sections 169 and 170 deal with offences. The fines have increased for individuals, but not for corporations. Is there a reason for this and are the offences and penalties in line with other jurisdictions?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We did review the fines for other provinces for individuals and for corporations. They're in alignment, but also proportional to the size of our credit unions, the size of our credit union holdings. Obviously, a very large credit union in Ontario with many, many more members than we have would have larger fines in that instance. Based on the size of our credit unions, the amount of holdings, the amount of members, we did review across the country and we felt that these were proportionate and appropriate for our credit unions in the province.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Regulation making authority is expanded with these amendments. When will the associated regulations be available?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: The team will be drafting regulations, I believe that's already started, and that goes through the process of getting Cabinet approval. I would anticipate within the year. I think that's standard once a piece of legislation comes to the House, there's a year before regulations are in place. So I would expect that would be the case.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: How were the credit union members engaged in this review process, if they were?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

There was an extensive consultation process with credit unions and credit union members. We also have the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation, which is a Crown corporation, as well as a board and we have the superintendent of credit unions as well within our department. We are confident that we have listened to and incorporated credit union member feedback in the proposed changes to the legislation.

CHAIR: The Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Do all of these proposed amendments stem from the review of the credit union legislation completed by the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm not familiar with exactly where each amendment has come from, specifically, where it originated. It is a result of the thorough review of each provincial legislation, our current legislation, a review by the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation, the board and a thorough stakeholder engagement ensuring that we have a safe legislative environment.

The foremost thing, Madam Chair, is protecting the interests of the members of credit unions in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's our primary goal, having a dependable, trustworthy, reliable financial system that residents of the province can have faith in and trust and protect the members, protect their hard-earned money that may be held in these credit unions.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Do these amendments include and address all recommendations made by the CUDGC?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Sorry, I didn't quite understand the question.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Do these amendments include and address all recommendations made?

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My understanding is the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation is in alignment with most of the recommendations here. I would say that, as the provincial government, we have a unique perspective as the regulator and we are trying to protect the interest of members. Not all stakeholder groups are happy with all elements of the legislation, but this is our kind of proposed that aligns with the other provinces and also protects members and maintains a trustworthy, reliable financial system.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Officials indicated that credit union legislation in other jurisdictions was also reviewed. Are these amendments in line with other jurisdictions? Is there anything that is an outlier or different from best practices in other jurisdictions?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

This review is a result of provincial and territorial review of credit union legislative changes that we have done. My understanding is that while we do have kind of a unique situation here with the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation, as being a Crown corporation, there are some nuances that make it different from the credit unions and how they are governed in the other provinces. But, specifically, there are no legislative outliers here

that make this system substantially different than any other system.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Are all stakeholders supportive of these amendments?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: I am aware of a few changes that a few stakeholders would like us to make that aren't reflected here, but we are confident that this reflects the best legislative package we could put forward to protect the people and protect the members. But my understanding is, generally, everyone is very supportive of this bill and these proposed changes.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: When will these changes take effect? You might have said that but I'm not sure if I caught that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The regulations that accompany this bill would – I just received information. We're hoping to have those in summer 2021 so that's when this bill would take effect.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: What is your plan to communicate these changes to the stakeholders?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Once we have the regulations developed and they pass through the appropriate Cabinet processes, they would be communicated through

the Credit Union Deposit Guarantee Corporation to all the credit unions. We have a communications plan in place to make sure that all credit unions are aware of the changes. This act also has, as we know, changes that they'll have to make in terms of how credit unions operate, how their boards operate and how they communicate with their members.

I would also anticipate members seeing, perhaps next fall, the result of these changes where information that they receive from their credit unions is updated and is more appropriate and aligned with this legislation.

I can't remember what the question was, sorry.

Thank you.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: No, that was good. I had asked: What was your plan to communicate these changes to the stakeholders?

All good, that's it for me on questions.

CHAIR: Any further speakers?

Shall clauses 2 to 86 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 86 carried.

ACTING TABLE OFFICER: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

ACTING TABLE OFFICER: A bill, An Act To Amend The Credit Union Act, 2009.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 46.

CHAIR: Is it the pleasure of the House that the Committee rise and report Bill 46?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 46, An Act To Amend The Credit Union Act, 2009, without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 46 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call Order 7, second reading of Bill 50.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that Bill 50, An Act To Amend The Auditor General Act, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 50, An Act To Amend The Auditor General Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Auditor General Act." (Bill 50)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased this afternoon to take some time to give some information and a little bit of background around Bill 50 which deals with an amendment to the Auditor General Act.

This bill will amend the act to replace the reference to a sitting of the House of Assembly in subsection 7(2) with a reference to a session of the House of Assembly.

Just some context: on March 11, 2020, the former Auditor General resigned. In July 2020, the Deputy Auditor General was appointed in an acting capacity. The Deputy Auditor General can perform the duties of the Auditor General; however, it's important that we make this change here today to the act, because the act currently states: "Where the office of the auditor general becomes vacant and an acting auditor general is appointed under paragraph 1(b) or (c), the term of the acting auditor general shall not extend beyond the end of the next sitting of the House of Assembly."

Today we want to change sitting to session. There are a number of reasons for this. It's due in lots of parts to the reference to how long a sitting can actually be. Technically, a sitting can be as short as a day. We've had many extraordinary sittings since COVID-19 here in this Chamber and this would fall back in line. With the changes around the Auditor General being selected by the Independent Appointments Commission, it does take more time. Again, the proposal today is we change that.

The amendment outlined in Bill 50 would address this timing issue by removing the word "sitting" and replacing it with "session." This would have the effect of changing the acting appointment from "... shall not extend beyond the end of the next sitting of the House of Assembly" to "... shall not extend beyond the end of the next session of the House of Assembly." The term "session" is the period of

time between Speeches of the Throne and prorogation.

Prior to 2016, the tender for enacting an Auditor General was not an issue as the appointment could be filled at any point during the vacancy. Using the new Independent Appointments Commission, their recruitment process does take some more time.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to belabour the change any further, but I'll certainly look forward to other Members, if they have some input or want to make some comments about this change.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll just have a few comments to make. Obviously, we support this change.

As someone who started his career in public service with the Department of the Auditor General, I can attribute to the important work that the Auditor General department does.

In my time there, of course, we were way back. At that time, we were actually doing municipal audits as well as Crown audits. I had the pleasure of going around several areas of this province and I used to say we'd put on our accounting hat and do the accounting work first to get the financial statements in order and then we'd audit our own work. It's come a long ways, I'm glad to say, from municipalities and government. The Auditor General is a very important office, as we all recognize, and the work they do allows us to be able to have informed decisions a lot of times in our House of Assembly here.

Again, the minister has alluded to the appointment of the Auditor General as being for a 10-year term through the Independent Appointments Commission and a recommendation of the House of Assembly. We've seen where the previous Auditor General had stepped down prior to that period being up and we find ourselves in a situation where we

have an Acting Auditor General. The idea is that the work continues, and even though the word acting is in front of the Auditor General currently, that work does continue and the Auditor General and the Auditor General's department continue to do valuable work on behalf of the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Again, this change in wording will allow us to move, as the minister referred to, from a sitting to a session and give more flexibility. We support the change and I'll conclude my remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further comments?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Here in the NDP caucus or the Third Party caucus, we do support this change to move from sitting to session. We think it's important to give the comprehensive review that gives them ample time to select an Auditor General. We respect the work that is done in that division. We support that motion.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers, I'm going to ask the hon. Government House Leader to close the debate.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure if that was a record or not, but this just goes to show that this is pretty much a housekeeping piece of legislation. I thank the Members opposite, the Member for Lab. West and the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port for their input.

I note one of the things that the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port noted was in this circumstance, the past Auditor General left mid-term or part way through her term. This did leave a situation where there was little time for planning. Again, that's why we find ourselves here.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you and we'll move to Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 50 be now read a second time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Auditor General Act. (Bill 50)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a second time.

When shall the said bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole House?

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Auditor General Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 50)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 50.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 50, An Act To Amend The Auditor General Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Auditor General Act." (Bill 50)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant-Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm curious to know: What will happen to this bill or the Auditor General's position if an

election is called before we get a chance to appoint a new Auditor General?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

In that circumstance, the Acting Auditor General would continue. The reality here, this is an officer of the House of Assembly; it's not an officer of the government. I'm actually speaking today, I guess, on behalf of the House of Assembly, but this is independent from government itself. This is an office of the House of Assembly.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. COFFIN: So we're not going to get one if there's an election called before one is appointed? I'm sorry, I wasn't quite clear on what ...

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much.

Normally, you would be sitting here in Committee and you would be looking at getting words back from the department. In this case, I'm getting some of the answers from the House itself, being a House position. So the Acting Auditor General would continue in that situation.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. COFFIN: Will this have any affect on the timing of the Auditor General's report for this year?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: I think, as the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port actually said, the function of the Auditor General continues on. The Auditor General is an officer of the House,

so his or her work would continue on regardless of an election.

Any time we have an election, every four years or whatever it may be, the work of the Auditor General continues on. The Auditor General is a 10-year appointment. I think that's one of the reasons why the Auditor General is appointed in a 10-year term so that the Auditor General is not tied to a specific Parliament or an Assembly.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

MS. COFFIN: I think that's all of my questions for now. I just wanted to have those on the record for the House.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm not quite sure if the minister can answer this.

Knowing that it is an officer of the House, is there a time frame that we're working towards to have the new AG appointed?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's my understanding that the process through the IAC is moving along and has actually progressed substantially along the way, so I would expect to see that in the not too distant future.

CHAIR: Any further speakers?

Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Auditor General Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 50.

CHAIR: Is it the pleasure of the House to rise the Committee and report the bill?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 50, An Act To Amend The Auditor General Act, without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directs her to report Bill 50 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: When will the said bill be read a third time?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2, Bill 48, a resolution respecting the imposition of taxes on vapour products.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider certain resolutions and a bill respecting the imposition of taxes on vapour products, Bill 48.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole, the Speaker left the Chair.

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now debating the related resolution on Bill 48.

Resolution

"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

"That is it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on vapor products."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I appreciate having the opportunity to speak for a few moments on this particular resolution.

For the members of Newfoundland and Labrador who are listening today, e-cigarettes are battery-operated devices that mimic the smoking experience, using an inhalation and heating process that vaporizes liquid within the device. The liquid solution varies in composition but it's usually a glycol-based or propylene-based and can be combined with other ingredients and flavours. Nicotine can also be present or not.

While early studies demonstrated some potential benefits to e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation device, current research remains inconclusive and the body of evidence is rapidly growing and shifting in terms of concern for various health impacts.

In *Budget 2020*, the government outlined concerns about some harm caused by vaping and tobacco, particularly, Madam Chair, among youth. Smoking and vaping are a significant public health concern with long-term impacts to our health care system.

In *Budget 2020*, we introduced a 20 per cent tax on vaping products, as well as increases that we've already debated here in the House on tobacco. The budget also had about \$1.7 million to prevent and reduce tobacco and vaping use, which I think is very, very important. We're only the third province in the country to implement a tax. British Columbia, as well as Nova Scotia, have already put their taxes on these products, Madam Chair.

I will also say that I've been in touch with some members of industry who are supportive of an excise tax to ensure that we deter people, especially young people, from consuming these products. I have read an interesting study, Madam Chair, from the World Bank Group. There are several studies they talk about, but they've estimated the price elasticity of e-cigarettes and they talk about that it's been "revealed that higher prices for e-cigarette disposable appear to be associated with reduced e-cigarette use among adolescents" I think that's critical, that we continue to deter people from utilizing these devices.

I also think it's very important, Madam Chair, that we put the supports in place to help people, to dissuade them from using either tobacco or vaping. I can tell you that according to Health Canada, vape use is far more prevalent among younger Canadians, age 15 to 24. That's Health Canada 2019 Canadian Tobacco and Nicotine Survey.

You're starting to see the use of vape amongst the youngest of our society and we really do need to start deterring these people. It would make, I'm sure, this government and, indeed, every Member of this House of Assembly

pleased if we were to collect no tax that we're putting in place today, because what it would mean is that people weren't utilizing these devices.

We really want to have a healthier population. Some people say maybe we should just ban vaping and tobacco, but we've seen that prohibition doesn't work. We've seen that time and time again. What we want to do is really try and dissuade people from smoking and from vaping. As I said, the World Health Organization says that increasing taxes on "tobacco products is the single most consistently effective tool for reducing tobacco use," with greater impact on young people and low-income individuals.

What we want to do here today – and I think I have the support of the House based on our debates of a week or so ago that we had a private Member's resolution come forward and there was some great discussion and debate in the House of Assembly to really reduce the prevalence of vaping. I heard from all of our colleagues in the House of Assembly in support of trying to help people curb their addiction to vaping and to tobacco.

I was really interested to learn that e-cigarettes were first introduced only a short time ago in the Canadian market. I think it was 2004, according to the Heart and Stroke Foundation. It's only been in recent times that we're starting to see some of the health concerns.

I will say, Madam Chair, I think this is the right thing for the House of Assembly and for government to do at this point in time. I encourage people who need supports and assistance to reach out. We do help to fund the Smokers' Helpline and we do fund other programs to help to deter people from this addiction.

On that, Madam Chair, I'll listen to my colleagues and their thoughts on this particular bill. I do believe I have the support and encouragement of the House of Assembly in order to do this. I think it's very important that we address the concerns around vaping.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, it's an honour to speak in this House, as it always is for every Member of the House of Assembly, particularly when we're taking about the revenues for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the expenditures.

Now, myself and the Minister of Finance may very seldom agree on a tax increase in any way, shape or form but I will start my discussion with saying in this case, I personally, wholeheartedly agree with the fact this is a necessary evil. If taxes are considered evil, this is a necessary evil.

I'm one, and I think some other Members of this House, a number of years ago when we had all night sessions, spent a fair bit of time debating a piece of legislation around vaping. At the time, as I still do realize and accept, it's a necessity as a cessation program for certain people. The process here always has been and continues to always be particularly people in the health profession. I've talked to those leaders from the Heart and Stroke Foundation and from the Lung Association and the perspective here is, how do we find the best ways through education, through supports to encourage people to wean themselves away from their dependency on any forms of tobacco as such?

In some cases, as the minister had outlined, sometimes it has to be people do it for various reasons, but the biggest deterrent sometimes is the financial cost. Sometimes you have to make decisions that may not necessarily be relevant to the same way you would increase taxes for revenue generating necessities but while at the same time it may generate some additional revenues, that's secondary to the fact that maybe it will do what it's hopefully meant to do, deter people from using that particular issue that are causing more severe health issues. Outlining the fact that it becomes a bigger financial burden on all taxpayers, not counting the most important thing, the health of those individuals or the individuals around them.

At the time I felt, and I still feel, there's a need for the vaping materials and the vaping products; but, at the time, I was hoping that the pendulum was going dramatically down from the number of smokers to those who were vaping to those who would eventually even wean themselves off vaping as part of the cessation program. I felt that government had a role in support that, as we did on a number of other cessation programs over the years that were proven to help people get themselves away from dependency on tobacco itself.

Unfortunately, what I did discover, while that worked for some people, the alarming issues were – we all know, and we all grew up, particularly if you went to high school in the '70s or even in the '80s and probably beyond, you knew when you went around the corner there were 15 stood up having a cigarette during recess or lunchtime or as soon as they got out before they got on the bus. That itself was alarming. Those were days when we weren't as educated about the impacts of tobacco, the health conditions, the situation, the impact it would have long-term on people. We didn't see it as something people needed as a stress reliever or a coping mechanism.

We've evolved since then and we realized that some need it. For some, it's an addiction, we understand and accept that. So we need to deal with an addiction with giving supports that doesn't add more to the addiction in other ways or make them just as much dependant on a particular necessity. In this case, it's the vaping from the tobacco parts or the vaping products that are part and parcel of it. As a result, that doesn't really achieve the effect that we had hoped to.

Only a few months ago, I was at a school just before COVID, a high school, and when I came out I saw the cloud of smoke come around the corner. I saw at least six or seven vaping. The alarming thing, it wasn't what I would've thought now with Grade 12 that these were 17- or 18-year-olds. These were 12- and 13- and 14-year-olds. That really was alarming to me for two reasons. One, how they accessed it. I understand we're creative in this province at any age to be able to get products that we probably shouldn't be having access to. What was really alarming was, at the end of the day, I could see

the appeal. This was a trendy appeal thing. It was different than a cigarette. It was different than the whole concept of doing what your parents are doing and these types of things. It became a trendy thing.

Personally, I think we all have to take a bit of blame for that because when we brought it in, we probably weren't aware a few years ago of how we also had to add other support mechanisms from education to access to minimize how younger people could be taken in, that this is a trendy thing. It's the hip thing to do. It engages you with the socially acceptable groups. I think we missed that. The more I read up on it and the more I looked at it, the industry took us off a little bit. Industry found ways to entice a new market.

When I heard about flavour vaping and these types of things, and the cool-looking vaping machines, I said do you know what? At the end of the day, industry came in with the right intention. I'm hoping they did. I know the medical profession, when they were talking about what role vaping could play in cessation programs and getting people off their dependency, the industry was going to be co-operative. Unfortunately, I'm not 100 per cent convinced that the industry didn't see an opportunity to change their market flow and still be very successful from a profit margin point of view, and by expanding the number of clients and customers that they would have.

I go back in my days, back in the '80s as a civil servant; I was responsible for most, if not all, of the research around youth issues. That included everything from alcohol and drug dependency to tobacco use, to sexually transmitted diseases to teen pregnancy: all the things that were relevant to it. I was fairly aware of where the trends were going and had seen a positive that trends were coming down.

I gave credit to government programs and health professionals, but organizations like the Lung Association and Heart and Stroke and their education programs, the education system itself and leaders within the community, and thought we were going in the right direction. Again, thought that this whole process around vaping might be something that would be better fit to get those teenagers who took up smoking, give

them an opportunity to get themselves off that dependency and the adult population as such.

To my surprise and horror, I noticed that the trend has gone upward when it comes to young people. That's alarming because there are three major issues here. One, there's still discussion around that vaping may be actually more dangerous from a health point of view; two, it becomes much more expensive as part of it; and three, it becomes much more attractive to a younger population around the attraction of how it was being sold.

Like I said, when I started hearing things and seeing products that are bubble gum flavour, then I'm trying to think what audience or what customer base are you really going after. That makes me alarmed; it makes me a little angry that industries would go that route, but I understand they're profit driven. Maybe their intentions in the beginning were honourable, but some have gone a different direction, which is a little bit alarming and personally insulting that at least they didn't stick to what the intent of it was and still keep their market value going.

Adding a tax, there's a value of trying to say to those – at least if we get 3 per cent who say here's my threshold. I remember my mother always saying – who was a smoker – if cigarettes get to \$1, I'm done. I remember they went from 95 cents to \$1 – and it might have been 1980 or '78 or '79 – she stopped cold turkey. People need some motivations. Sometimes it's about, physically, I'm going to do something else; sometimes they get a medical scare; sometimes they see somebody else who's gone through traumatic events because of their lifestyle and that changed it. Some it's financial. A lot of us know what it means if something costs more.

While we talk about tax increases, which is never the flavour in the House of Assembly and it's very seldom that we're going to agree to anything. In this case, I personally see the value of sending the message out there. This is not an attack on those who provide those products in their retail outlets. This is not what this is about. This is not to stifle their business. What it is, from my understanding, is to centre the business around those who were initially, when these products came onboard and they were

legislatively put out there with safeguards, that indeed the industry would cater to those who would need the vaping products as their mechanism for their dealing with their tobacco needs either weaning themselves off, or this would be the approach that they would take as their social reliever, for want of a better phrase.

To get to a point now when we're seeing dramatically where it's going, and we know the whole evidence is not there yet because, don't forget; this is new. As the minister said, we're talking only the last 15 years or so. This is relatively new when you do research. People have been smoking, I guess, since the dawn of time, but we've been doing research in the last 100 years or more and now realize that even changed dramatically; how more and negative it is on our health.

As we go forward, I'm suspecting we're not going to find that vaping has been overrated in the sense that it's not as dangerous or have such a negative impact on people's health. I'm fearful that we're going to find the opposite. I'm particularly fearful that if young people are, at this point, finding it as a socially acceptable vice to be part of in society, then that worries me because, again, once they start getting addicted, an addiction is an addiction. Does it lead to other things? Possibly, it does, but the fact is that they're still addicted to that. I don't know what the mechanism is to wean them off something that we thought would be used as a mechanism to get people off the tobacco use itself.

We've got some challenging times here. This is a small step forward to at least sending the message that we're serious about what needs to be done to keep people safe and healthy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I hope the industry understands this is not an attack on them from that perspective. It's about maybe there are other ways that we can help them provide products to people who in turn are finding ways to either cope with whatever their needs are or, at the same time, get them to move away from their dependency on, particularly, tobacco.

Madam Chair, I, as the Health critic for the PC Party and the Official Opposition, will be supporting this. It's not very often, if at all,

you're ever going to hear me say that again, I suspect in the House, that we're supporting a tax increase. But in this case we see the value of it and we hope it gets the end result that less people, particular those who are more vulnerable, do not find themselves addicted to this forever and a day.

Madam Chair, I'll end on that and hope that, at the end of the day, the desired effect comes out of this that we hope it does.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm very pleased to speak on this. It's certainly not a coincidence that a couple of weeks ago I was very pleased to, in this House, introduce this private Member's resolution about keeping vaping products out of the hands of our youth of our province. In combination with the tax that the minister is escorting today and the concerns that the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island just outlined, we are very serious in this House of Assembly about tackling this problem in society and, in particular, keeping it out of the youth of this province.

I just wanted to remind everyone, because it was a very successful PMR just two weeks ago, there are a couple of key elements that went in there and I just want to remind everyone who is watching and here on the floor what we are trying to do. I don't want to read it completely word for word, the PMR, but I do want to highlight a couple of items. For example: "WHEREAS, a 2019 British Medical Journal survey of youth in Canada, England and the United States found that from 2017 to 2018, the prevalence of vaping for teens aged 16 to 19 jumped from 8.4 per cent to 14.6 per cent, representing a 74 per cent increase year-over-year;"

Therefore, our resolution, what we wanted to do in this Legislature was take the very many good ideas, suggestions and recommendations that we heard on that day – I still got my notes and the people that are around me, my researchers and so on up on the fifth floor – once we take a little break from the House we are going to be compiling those ideas and we'll be taking it forward to the Social Services sector, of which I'm the Chair. We're going to have a very serious look and see from those ideas, from those suggestions what we might be able to do in terms of legislation to actually address that. I want to assure everybody that activity is ongoing and we are going to keep our promise of coming back and reporting back to this House by March 31, 2021.

A couple of other things I wanted to put out there. Just to go back again a couple of weeks, but two weeks is a long time in politics and I wanted to remind people, with everything else going on, some of the other players that are involved in this action and would support the Minister of Finance's tax that we're discussing here today. From the Newfoundland and Labrador Alliance for the Control of Tobacco, that team is already involved in a series of commercials, and they've just started those in the last few weeks. I note that I get to see them often on the newscasts.

Much of the impetus for myself wanting to lead this PMR was through a science fair that I attended as a judge at St. Bonaventure's high school. I met a young student there, Julia McCarthy. She's only 13 years of age, and there she was very concerned about her own peers and concerned about vaping, smoking and what it was doing to the health of her friends around her.

Two Wednesdays ago, Julia gathered – we had excellent discussions with the NL Alliance, and there we go to the floor. Again, we had excellent discussion here on the floor. People really dug deep, came up with a lot of ideas and I'm very pleased to see it.

It's interesting, I was listening to what the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island just said about a tax. A tax is – you might as well make it a four-letter word for all that it conjures up, but often the strategy around a tax

is to incent society, to incent people to go in a different direction.

When it comes to the concept of vaping – I can also remember back, and it was really about six years ago that vaping products first burst onto the scene as a means of smoking cessation. For folks who were struggling with trying to be able to quit smoking, vaping was offered as an excellent alternative. I even recall my colleague, the Minister of Health and Community Services, the Member for Gander, saying that perhaps it does have some merit in that regard, but after that he didn't see it. Frankly, in the work that I've been doing since, I haven't seen it either.

Also, I wanted to refer to my colleague from Conception Bay East - Bell Island's thoughts around industry and what were industry's motives and what are industry's motives around the use of this product. Again, I still remain struck by the fact that I believe we had a press release at about 5 o'clock or so on that particular Monday, and within two hours I was receiving messages.

My phone is just ringing now, so I'll take a look later and see what's happening there. Industry and lobbyists were coming at us already and defending their position, sending us a great deal of information. Defending what they felt was a legitimate strategy; however, health and science, and certainly our concerns, are proving otherwise.

I think I'm going to end with a saying. I'm going to quote again my colleague, my buddy from Gander, because he had identified four important strategies when dealing with curbing anything that perhaps might be affecting the health of the citizens of this province. He listed them as education, treatment, legislation and enforcement. As I look at those boxes, I want to put check boxes in them.

I'm very pleased to say that on the education front that has already started off in earnest through NL Alliance, the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco, and I thank them very much. That's a partnership with this government. We've invested substantial dollars, as the Minister of Finance alluded to, and we're off to the races there. I think the commercials,

the messages are very effective, and I'm hoping they're going to gain traction.

In terms of legislation, that's exactly why we're here today, to see what we can do as legislators to tighten it up, to make it tougher and to keep it out of the hands of the youth of this province.

Enforcement; well, that will also come perhaps with aspects of what we're going to be doing as a result of the PMR. I believe in terms of keeping sales of these products away from minors, also seeing what we can do to perhaps control, eliminate the idea of flavours. In terms of strategies, I'm sure we're going to be looking that way.

In terms of treatment, I have not gone in great detail in that regard but I am afraid for what I'm seeing already in some of the people who've reached out in the last couple of weeks. Folks that I've spoken to previously, talked to me about the addictive nature they already are going through, the light amounts of nicotine.

I believe the Minister of Health and Community Services identified that some 11 cigarettes are sufficient to start an addiction around cigarette smoking. With the most sinister amounts of nicotine and perhaps other – there's a real hodgepodge of chemicals and I would suggest contaminants included in this vapour. I'm very concerned in that regard, and I'm afraid that if we don't act now as a jurisdiction, we are going to be struggling with all matter of treatment that's going to be needed to address serious health concerns.

With that, it renews one's faith in the democratic system when you see everyone coming together to tackle a serious issue. Even if it means a tax, often, as I say, it's a four-letter word, but today it's a strategy that we're going to use to protect our province.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I really appreciate the chance to speak here today. It's about something that's very, very important and it should be very important to all of us parents that own kids; everybody in society, when it comes to any health threats or anything that can be detrimental to our health and a tax that we can put on it.

No doubt COVID-19 has definitely fuelled addictions within our society. I truly believe that; people at home longer, more time on their hands, mental health and trying to find out ways to deal with their mental health. Turning to substance abuse is one way that people have dealt with it in the past and they'll continue to do it in the future.

Of course, it's not the right path to take but it happens. It's something that we have to deal with throughout our society. You can see it; it's more on the rise today. I can definitely see it day in and day out.

The tax itself, of course, nobody likes to see additional tax on anything. I know I don't, but if you're going to place a tax on something to be a deterrent, this is definitely it. There's one thing that we have to keep in mind and that is the fact that for some people, they're going to have their addiction. They're going to get it no matter what. It doesn't matter how much tax you put on it, they're going to have it.

One thing we have to be cognizant of is those people, where are they going to pull that money from to fuel that addiction. In some cases, you have to look at a possibility of if groceries are tight for the week – it happens – or if children need something, that money has to come from somewhere to fuel an addiction. It'll be pulled from there because certain people will have it, no matter what.

When we put a tax on something, yes, it's great to say it's a deterrent, it's going to deter people, but for some people it won't. For some people – parents of children – they might pull that from a different area, like I say, groceries or recreation for children. It's not a big tax but in this day and age where every dollar counts, you might see some children do without because of another tax it's on. It's just something to be cognizant of in the future, that's all, for taxes.

Where this tax money goes, of course, I hope it goes to treatment of addiction or deterrent in the future so you won't get addicted. That's something that we'll be looking towards as well. How to deal with the addiction itself. The best way to deal with an addiction, of course, is not to have it. We all know that. So any information out there to anybody, parents, children, that's the first line of defence, in my opinion, to make sure that people don't get addicted in the future. The more information that's out there the better it is.

Also, to all those parents at home, the Member for Bell Island just mentioned it. Back in the day, it was the 16- or 17-year-old smoking out around the parking lot or behind the school. They are in Grades 6, 7 and 8 vaping now. Imagine, 12-, 13- and 14-year-olds. It's an absolute sin. When you're that young and you're trying to figure your way through life, the only thing that should be going into your lungs is oxygen. That's it. As parents, we try to do our best and talk to the kids, but I encourage all parents out there to keep the dialogue open. Ask your kids if they're vaping. Sit down and chat with them and let them know how bad it is for them. It can be a very frank dialogue, but don't beat around the bush about it, don't dance around about it, just ask them, sort of thing.

I remember when my sons were very, very young, Declan and Xander, I made a deal with them that if they didn't lie to me, they couldn't get in trouble. I wouldn't get upset; I wouldn't get mad. There could be a punishment, but I would not get mad. We've held that deal right now until they're 15 and 13. It worked out to be a great deal. But I talk to them all the time: Have you been vaping? The oldest boy: Have you had a beer?

I just encourage all parents out there to keep that dialogue open and don't have the dialogue once and six months later have it again. Make sure you chat with your kids on a daily basis, on a regular basis. It doesn't have to be overpowering. Just invite them for some inclusion and see what their stance is, because the information out there that we're getting, it's bad for them, but it needs to be passed on to the kids.

The old way of when I was younger mother would give you a smack or whatever, those days

are gone. We need preventative measures now and talk to the children and see where they sit with it.

I think the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay had a couple of smacks maybe when he was younger as well.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. TIBBS: Yeah, you have that right.

Do you know what? It made me a better man today, I can say that. But we're in a different era and we need to make sure – because being young nowadays, it's not easy. Back when we were all young, you'd leave the school and if you got to the sanctity of your home after a school day, that was it, it was done. Nowadays, it's different because of these devices that we have and social media, you're 24 hours a day, seven days a week connected. That's both good and bad. So the kids out there, the young people, they don't have it easy. We need to be cognizant of that as well.

When I had my oldest son Declan, my mother, for instance, she saw Declan; she was a smoker all of her life. That was 15 years ago we had Declan, as soon as she saw him she said: I'm going to quit smoking. She smoked for over 30 years. I'll never forget it. We were like, yeah, mom, come on, no chance. She never picked up a cigarette since.

It was very encouraging because she saw Declan and she said: No way, I want to see my grandson get older and whatnot. It was very inspiring because about three years after that she got lung cancer and she had to have most of her right lung removed because of it. The doctor said if you had kept smoking for that three years, it would have gone very, very quickly and she probably wouldn't be with us today. Kudos to her for that.

If I could just take a quick moment here, it's a great tax, if there is going to be a tax on something; I will support that. I just want to take a quick moment and talk about something else in my district here, which are the Dominion workers. The Dominion workers across Newfoundland and Labrador, we all know are having a very hard time now. They are definitely

getting the short end of the stick when you look at different places in Canada where Loblaws is as well.

I went to a rally last night with the Dominion workers in Grand Falls-Windsor. I had to go because I had to see the looks on their faces. That's how I work, like I say, I work purely on passion and intent. I had to see the looks on some of these people's faces as they struggle to bring it home. I don't get my information from a lot of books or a lot of reading, I'm boots on the ground and I always will be. That's why I was there last night.

We learned last night that a lady working there 22 years was making \$14.10 an hour. Another lady working three years, four years was making the exact same wage. It's just not fair. For all of these people who go back from full-time to part-time, it's absolutely disgraceful.

I just want Dominion workers to know we are with you. We will do everything we can on our end to help you reach some sort of a deal. We will support you. That's 1,500 families we're going to have now out again in the cold. It's a strain and, hopefully, it's not the direction that the province is going because we don't want that and these people work very, very hard.

Like I say, they're our family, they're our friends; they're our neighbours. We wish the Dominion workers the best of luck on their picket lines in this cold, cold weather. I'm sure most Members here have been down to their local Dominion. I know you have, Madam Chair, as well, and I'm sure they appreciate that. Anybody who hasn't, get your butt out there and talk to these people because they're on the line now and it's getting pretty cold. Stand with them. We will support them and we will unite them.

The only other thing about that is the food supply and price gouging. By God, a year ago we were talking to people who were on fixed incomes, seniors and whatnot and these people had their budget down to the dollar. So when we get groceries, because of our food supplies and one place shuts down and another place might try to take advantage of it or whatnot, it's pretty scary out there when you look at the food prices going up. These people have to find extra money

to get it and they don't have it. It's a real sin to not be able to buy food.

The Dominion workers, a lot of them, would fill up carts for people, help people, smile at them all day long as they watch people go with their carts with their family groceries for the week; at the end of the day, they would hit the food bank themselves. That's sad. That's unfortunate. We're all thankful for the food banks that are there, but to see that every day and then have to go to a food bank yourself, it's pretty demoralizing. There's nothing to be ashamed of, guys. We're with you. I just want you all to know that, Dominion workers on the picket line there, we'll always stay with you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: Anyway, Madam Chair, I see my time is up. I really appreciate the chance to speak on this and, of course, I will be supporting this tax.

Parents: Have the chat with your kids, keep an open dialogue and I wish you the best.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

It's a pleasure to be able to speak to this. The Member for Lake Melville has stolen my usual stump speech on addictions with the four pillars that he references. I will come back to that in a little bit.

I also would like to just draw the House's attention to the fact that wellness has, as part of the changing portfolios from August 19, now kind of been repatriated into the Department of Health after the great divorce of 2014 where it was hived off. That will allow opportunities and synergies because we do have, through the

regional health authorities, a parallel wellness stream and I think we were diluting our effort by a lack of common focus. This is really part of the first test of that bringing home of wellness, and as I was quoted earlier on in Question Period, I really would like to see one of the real sea change for my department to become the department of wellness and not illness.

Health is important, it's crucial and health care delivery is one of the pillars of society in Canada, but the facts of the case are it still spends disproportionate amounts of its time dealing with things that have gone before and things that have happened, which brings me to nicotine.

We have seen a huge rise in the prevalence of vaping of nicotine products in youth. They are lured in by flavours: bubble gum, cotton candy, all these kinds of things. When you look at that combination, Madam Chair, there's only one reason to do that: It's to get them young and keep them paying. Once people are exposed to nicotine, it is the latch upon which all our smoking-related illnesses have been based.

People smoke cigarettes because they become addicted to the nicotine component of cigarettes. That has really stressed Western, Northern Hemisphere health care in ways that no one really ever imagined. Even though the information was out there around smoking of cigarettes as early as 1964, with Richard Doll and his landmark study from the UK on smoking-related illnesses, we've seen the illnesses that are associated with cigarette use expand in scope. It's no longer just lung cancer, as it were, but it's heart disease; it's peripheral vascular disease. It exacerbates diabetes. It produces all sorts of challenges.

That brings me back to the whole idea of vaping. Nicotine as tobacco is a shrinking market because of the successes around the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco, because of society's slow but steady realization that it isn't the cool thing to be doing. It isn't something you now see doctors advertising as a cure-all, as once they did at the turn of the previous century. So the tobacco manufacturers have to do something with all this leaf, and nicotine salts work very nicely in vape machines. Once you get people

into vaping, then you have an addict on your hand; you have someone who is hooked.

The facts of the case are if you look at the nicotine products that are available, the flavoured ones, while some of them ostensibly have low nicotine concentrations, there are vials there that will contain the equivalent of three to five packets of cigarettes. That's three to five packets of 20, so that's 60-plus milligrams of nicotine in one vial.

Now, no newly initiated vaper will physically be able to smoke that without making themselves acutely ill with nicotine poisoning. The facts of the case are that is there as a gateway. People, when they become addicted, they've got you one way or another. If it isn't the cigarettes and the tobacco, they've got you with the derivatives of tobacco in nicotine.

There is evidence out there that suggests people who smoke large quantities of conventional cigarettes over the course of a day will actually have some medical benefits by simply taking in nicotine through vaping. They don't get the tars; they don't get the carbon monoxide. They don't get all the other things that produce significant problems from a medical point of view.

Vaping with candy-flavoured products is not designed for people who have been smoking for 40 years. It's designed for the 12-year-old who wants a cool little gadget, wants to sit there in recess or hang out with their buddies and look as though they are 18 or 20. These machines are designed to appeal to young girls and to young fellows with the big chunky things, a lot like a bit that fell off a Hummer. That's what they're doing; they are snaring our youth and getting them addicted.

Since the budget announced an increase in tax on tobacco, there is a deterrent effect. We have had people calling asking about smoking cessation programs. So price is a deterrent, even for people with established addictions. It is even more of a deterrent, I would argue, for youth who have modest discretionary income and will have challenges getting it.

It's not the be-all and end-all. The education piece, as the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans alluded to, of parents sitting down and

doing some active parenting with their youth is a key thing. It's a piece because, at the end of the day, youth are influenced more by their peers than they are by their parents.

That's why we gave a significant amount of money to the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco for targeted campaigns to youth themselves and to mentors outside the home who would deal with youth in a way that they would listen to: the basketball coaches, the volleyball coaches, the swim meet coaches, the Guides and Scouts counsellors, these kind of people who would actually have a role here.

Price is just a part of it. The bulk of this document here is actually to define what is a new area for taxation in terms of the devices, in terms of the product, in terms of who sells them and where the tax might actually be financially collected. I would much prefer that we don't even have to go down this road and impose a tax, which is actually a five-letter word, not a four-letter word in the context of the plural.

The fact is that we need to use a multi-pronged approach, and you've heard me talk about that in relation to a lot of public health issues, and this is one of the prongs – the talking to your kids, the talking to youth, the financial piece and the enforcement piece around people who choose to flout these regulations.

Then, at the back end, we have treatment. The latest treatment, even on the vaping scene as far as getting people off tobacco is concerned, is that vaping nicotine for heavy smokers is no more or less, to be fair, effective than conventional nicotine substitute-based treatments. So it's a treatment that, yeah, it's an option for some, but we have treatments that are just as effective already. We have vaping, it's here and we have to deal with it.

So with that, Madam Chair, I would urge the rest of the House who feel they would like to contribute to this, to continue what I hear is pretty well unanimous support thus far for a bill which will help protect our youth from the evils, literally, of nicotine.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's interesting to sit here and listen to everybody's take on the vaping and I certainly support it. You just have to keep in mind, for the people that do have the addictions, they're the ones that have to take from their own pocket. Everybody has said that as well, but I just think about them sometimes. They do have an addiction and they have to try to feed that addiction. Again, no matter what price you put it to, they're going to get it. Certainly, keep that in mind.

I just spoke to a teacher here in front of me. I just asked him a question, because when we went to school, smoking – I think the regulations now is 19 years old to buy cigarettes, as I just asked one of my colleagues here. No matter how old they were or how old you had to be, you could get cigarettes or somebody got them for you. When you went to school, you always knew that spot at your school where there was a smoking ground. It's not allowed to be at the school grounds, but there was a smoking ground. There were always groups of kids that went there.

It's amazing how many people, you would look out there and they would walk half a mile to have a cigarette as a kid and we never did get that changed. We never changed it. You always look on society that people – that's going to happen, no matter what. When you look at it in school – and the teacher's hands are tied. They can't enforce it.

I was going to do a petition last year on vaping, not that I wouldn't do it now, but I was going to do a petition on vaping. I'm getting it from concerned parents; kids are 14, 15 years old doing vaping. They're doing it in school. They're doing it in the washrooms or doing it in the hallway. The problem is, there's no lit cigarette. It's just smoke in the air. How do you know who done it? They take the vape and put it in their pocket. How are you going to chase them around school and try to figure out who done that or who's got them?

They went through certain age groups; it was the in thing to do. They had groups of 15 or 16, they all had different kinds of vapes; as was said, different flavours as well. Who's going to control it? Again, it doesn't matter what age you put it to. I would like to see it increased to maybe 21, but it doesn't matter what age you put it to, they're still going to avail or they're still going to get it and there's not much you can do to stop it. We can put all the policies in or all the legislation but it's really hard to curtail.

Now, we did hear the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor say as well, that it's great for the parents to be able to speak to that. I can only speak on my behalf that my kids never smoked. I never smoked. My wife did before we got married, but they never smoked. They look down on it. Maybe that's from listening to their parents talk about smoking, but they really look down on smoking and it's something they never took part in.

I have two daughters, and my oldest daughter never drank until she was 19 – one of my oldest daughters. Now, that's unheard of in today's society I can tell you. I never drank until I was 32, so it wasn't me. My first drink was when I was 32. It was just something that I didn't do, and I didn't smoke. I played sports and I stayed clear of that stuff, but I never drank until I was 32 and she never drank until she was 19.

I remember the first night she went out and had a drink with her friends, went downtown, sent a picture, put it on Facebook. The first night downtown showing a picture laying there on the floor, and I instantly called her, get that picture down. It was only a joke. She had her first drink, so she was making a joke, but it was no joke to me. I said it might be a joke to you, it's no joke to me, get that picture down and get it off Facebook. That was down pretty quick.

I think parents have a major role to play in it, keeping an eye on their kids. I'm not saying be forceful, but you have to preach to them that it's not something that's accepted. If they're still going to do it, then you have to deal with it in a different way.

Again, as the Member for Grand Falls said, you can't go out and punish them or smack them or anything like that. That day in society is gone.

We were never brought up like that ourselves, but the way society is today, everything with phones, everything happens. It's just so hard to control.

We sit here and I try to listen to everybody that's speaking, but we really as parents – and we can put all the legislation in we like, and hopefully people are listening to some of this stuff – that as parents, you have to keep your eyes open, your ears listening to the stuff that's going on around you that you can follow this stuff and, hopefully, bring the level of it down. It's never going to happen, that everybody's not going to smoke or not going to drink or do whatever, but we really have to keep an eye on it in the schools. Again, the parents, or I'm going to say the teachers that are in school trying to put it onto the parents – and the parents are always picking up for their kids, always.

One day when we were young, if you went out and jumped over a fence and broke a guy's fence, he came over and gave you a swift boot to you know where, right in the butt. Then when you went home you had to deal with it because you broke their fence. They didn't pick up for you and call that other parent. They punished you as well for doing the same thing, that you're destroying or breaking somebody else's property. So you had to deal with it twice: first with the person you dealt with; then when you got home with your parents. Today's society is now they go back at somebody or try to blame someone else. It's the way it is. It's unfortunate, but that's the way it is.

Anyway, I'd just like to touch on a couple of other things in my district. I know we can speak of different things. I had the privilege of going to a meeting at the Colony of Avalon probably about a month ago, maybe a little more. They were unfortunate enough that they didn't open this summer because of COVID. Ninety-five per cent or more are tourists that come into the area. I'll tie two together, that when I'm talking about tourists coming into the area, I'm talking about, obviously, the advertising they're going to try to do now to bring tourism from Atlantic Canada, I'm going to say, in here for next year, and also tie it to roads and the conditions of roads. I'm going to speak in my district, I guess, as much as I can.

The other thing I'll touch on is that sometimes you get here and you're trying to speak on your district and you have so much stuff going on, the districts are so vast, that I will apologize if I don't touch on every community in my area that is so hard to speak on and brag about. You try to touch on the major ones I guess, or as time permits you to do so.

Just getting back to the roads. We were here talking last week about tourism, and some of our colleagues brought up the top three visited places in Newfoundland. One was Gros Morne, the other was St. John's and the third one leaves me – Bonavista, sorry, is the other one.

Now, I know that St. John's is number one, you got Gros Morne number two and Bonavista number three, but I bet you dollars to doughnuts that in the district of Petty Harbour, because it's counted in St. John's, it's probably one of the most widely visited areas in tourism in this province. If you drive down there yourself, you look down, it's inspiring to drive through it. They had to put parking meters in their community of Petty Harbour for the people that are visiting the area.

I don't want to start naming different businesses because if I miss one, I'm going to be in trouble.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah.

I look at there's a zip line in Corner Brook and there's a zip line in Petty Harbour. I did it myself, probably not last year but the year before, before I ever started at this. But it's a great tourist attraction, if you haven't done zip lining. I got up on the first try and I said: What am I at up on this hill, I wonder? What am I doing up here? I'm not a big fan of heights but when you get on the first one there's no return, you have to keep going to get back home, but I tell you it's unbelievable how nice it is. It's unbelievable.

To go down in those communities and look at the condition of the roads for the tourists, it's unbelievable. They keep calling me; we go down to patch up a road. It's a vital industry in that area, and that's right next to St. John's. We're always talking about rural, it's right next

to St. John's, and the road conditions are unbelievable going into the community. I drove down there a good many times, to get around some of these holes, it's unbelievable that a tourist attraction – it's probably the most visited. I think it's number one. It's just because it's grouped in with St. John's that it's not number one. That's my opinion, I might be wrong on that and there's no way to tell, but it's unbelievable.

Also looking at the tourist industry down there, they have an aquarium down there that you can go visit. It's a great fishing community. You can go down there and look at – it's probably as dated as it is now when you go down and look at it. Just look at all the fishing that goes on in that community. There are so many tourists who go down just to drive by and look at the area, it's so beautiful. It's a great tourist attraction.

I really think we have to – and we're going to figure out how to get it done. I'm going to certainly propose and go over to the ministers to work on the road conditions in that area, because it's a spectacular area. Hopefully, we can upgrade it and take care of those tourists that are coming here. You don't want to deter them from going down there because the road conditions are so bad. Are they that bad? No, but it really does need to be looked at as a tourist attraction area and the condition of the roads for sure.

My time is up.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Education.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It's only by habit that you –

AN HON. MEMBER: Madam Chair.

MR. OSBORNE: Madam Chair.

I think it's pretty unanimous, from what I've heard, and it's not often you introduce a tax bill in the Legislature and get support from all Members of the Legislature to a tax bill, but this is different, Madam Chair. All you need to do is drive by a school half an hour before they open

and you see students walking to school, puffing on their vapes. The fact that the tobacco industry or the vape industry – sometimes they're one and the same – actually flavour their products with cotton candy or bubble gum or other flavours to attract young people says a lot about vaping and a lot about the industry and the intent to attract young people to vaping.

I would say anybody in this Legislature who looks at an old picture of a movie star or even a politician – there's a picture of Joey hanging in the building with a cigarette. It was the thing to do years ago. When you had your photograph taken, especially somebody of stature, they had a cigarette in their hand. You look back at it now and it just seems so out of place, but in the '50s and '60s and '70s it enhanced the photograph. That's the way young people look at it today, almost, with the vape: They buy the vape products and they vape and the peer pressure involved with vaping.

I saw a survey not long ago where they talked about more than 50 per cent of children, I think it was in Grades 7 to 12, had tried vaping. That's shocking. When you think about it, it's shocking, shocking numbers. It is absolutely the intent and focus of the vape industry to attract young people, to get them hooked.

Just like smoking, where the pictures in the '50s and '60s and '70s, you saw people of – premiers and movie stars and so on had to have their photograph with a cigarette or their portrait with a cigarette, at that time had no idea the health implications of smoking. Now, we started to hear later in the '60s, certainly into the '70s you got some understanding. Then certainly in later years you got a greater understanding of the health implications of cigarette smoking.

I would say when we look back 30 years from now or 40 years from now – we already know of popcorn lung and some of the other health implications involved with vaping, but I would say when we look back 30 or 40 years from now when we get a true understanding, and instead of a year or two of somebody vaping, you get 20 or 30 years and look at the health implications and the cost to society, the cost to those families and their children – because by 30 or 40 years from now the kids going to high school today that are

vaping will look back and more than likely regret the fact that they vaped.

Now, we don't yet know what the full health implications over the course of a number of decades will be. My guess is they'll look back with a great deal of regret for the fact that they vaped. Just as people who smoked for decades looked back with a sense of regret. If it's not for the health implications, certainly the cost involved.

Somebody who smoked a package of cigarettes a day – and you've heard of a lot of people who were lifetime smokers who would tell you that they spent as much on cigarettes over their lifetime as they would've on a new car, a lot of people. If not for the health implications, certainly for the cost involved in vaping or in cigarette smoking.

My guess and my hope is that with this tax it will be a disincentive. That's the design of it, to be a disincentive for people to start vaping. My hope is it will be such a disincentive that the province doesn't realize any revenue from this tax because people will stop vaping. That's the hope with this. Because this is not about the revenue, it is really to try and persuade people or a disincentive for people to vape in the first place. My guess, if you look at it and if you talk to people, the amount of tax on cigarettes, to some people, is a disincentive. No matter where you go, no matter what province you go to in this country, if you eliminated all of the taxes on cigarettes, I would say you'd see a significant increase in the number of people smoking. Even knowing the health implications today, you'd see a significant increase in the number of people smoking.

It is a disincentive on cigarettes. It's intended with vaping to be a disincentive on vaping and I hope it is. I hope it is. I know some people will say it's up to the parents to set the example and I agree with that, I'm not disagreeing with that. I can't remember, one of the previous speakers said that. My children who are in Grade 10 and in Grade 9, I speak to them regularly about vaping – speak to them regularly.

I hope they don't, I hope they won't, but peer pressure plays a bit of a role in this as well. If you've got one or two friends in a group of six

or eight friends that are vaping, you can almost be assured that the others are going to try it, just to see what it tastes like or to see what it's like. That's where it starts, just trying it and if you like the flavour of the cotton candy or the bubble gum flavoured vape you might do it again and you might do it again. That's the concern.

I can assure you, whether it's talking about drugs or other products, as much as it is about vaping, the numbers of times I've had the conversation with my children about vaping. You can do that, but peer pressure plays a role and you can't always guarantee, is the point that I'm making; no matter how hard a parent would try to have their children not try products that they shouldn't try.

Madam Chair, I will be supporting this bill for all of the reasons that I've just outlined and it's a pleasure to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, some 30 years ago, when I joined the military, the common saying was: Smoke 'em if you got 'em. It was kind of a funny thing because pretty much everyone in the Canadian Armed Forces at that point smoked. The reason being was that when you got a break, if you didn't smoke, you stayed inside and you did a tedious task or whatever was associated with what was happening at that moment. If you had cigarettes and the sergeant major or the warrant officer or whoever said: Smoke 'em if you got 'em; you would see a mass exodus and everyone would have their cigarette. I guess by a fact that's a bit of peer pressure.

So some 21 years ago, I guess, I quit smoking, and I'm proud to say that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PARROTT: Then we'll fast forward to probably four or five years ago when I was

driving down Manitoba Drive in Clarendville. I came to a stop light and directly across from me was a young girl, probably 16 or 17 years old. Certainly, she had just got her licence, novice driver in the window. She was sat there singing, hand out the sunroof and the next thing her head disappeared. I said, oh my God, what was that. It was a vaping machine. I had never, ever seen it before. The cloud of vapour that came out of it shocked me. Anyhow, certainly you question it and, at that point, the first thing I said was: There is no way that this could be healthy.

Here we are now having this discussion, and I agree with what the previous speaker just said, the Minister of Education, we don't even know where this is going. If you look at 10, 20, 30 years down the road when the real data is out there, we don't know how it's going to affect our children.

In Clarendville last year, as an example – well, throughout my whole district, actually, in Glovertown the same situation – kids in elementary school, so Grade 6 and under, there were notices that went out to the parents that there were kids in elementary school vaping in both areas. To me that was shocking. I have a little boy who is 12 now, in Grade 7 this year, and my little girl is 14, but last year he was in elementary school. So he came home and, of course, it was the first question we asked: Gavin, is this something – no, Dad.

Like the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor said, and certainly the Minister of Education said, we have the conversations with our children all the time. My 12-year-old, my 14-year-old, it's a constant thing for us. We need them to understand that the supports are there for mom and dad. But we also understand the effects of peer pressure.

Peer pressure is probably one of the greatest things that our kids face today, and technology, I believe, has made that a lot worse. Between Snapchat and Facebook and everything, kids are pressured into things now without even realizing they are; simple photos or barbs from other kids. Vaping, I believe, has become a very, very serious issue.

If you go to the high school in my district there are three trails. Notably, my kids say it all the

time, I said, so what are the three trails. One is for the smokers, one is for the vapers and the other is for another issue that's coming up and I believe vaping has a direct effect on it. The kids that go and smoke weed. These are middle school and high school kids that go to separate trails, depending on what their poison is.

It's off school grounds, obviously, but there are three separate trail, so I said to my kids: Where's the fourth trail for the kids that don't do it? The answer is: Well, we just don't leave the school during recess or dinner or whatever. It certainly has become a very, very big problem, I would suggest throughout the whole province and throughout the whole country.

What's the solution? Again, I'll echo the previous speakers; I believe that increasing the tax will have an effect on access. I think it will have an effect on whether or not people decide to pursue and use these products. I will absolutely be supporting this bill and I have no issues doing it. The health of our children should be very important and not just our children, but our adults.

That brings me to the next point. If you look at us as adults, we certainly have a big effect on kids. Kids tend to do what they see their parents do also. That's the next thing, as parents we have a responsibility, not just to talk but to set the examples. I grew up in a mining town up in Labrador and I can tell you back from 1972, when I was born, up until I left in 1990, I would argue that the bulk of the population up there smoked. It was a normal thing to do.

If you went into a bar or you got on an airplane or you went anywhere, that's what people did. I would say now it's the opposite of that, which is good. That has happened through increase in taxes, knowledge and health care initiatives. I applaud this tax. It's tough to say because we don't normally like to support taxes, but I applaud it and I think it goes in the right direction, so I will be supporting the bill.

Madam Chair, I'd like to say a little bit about my district. The District of Terra Nova is comprised of 10 local service districts, 11 town councils and over 30 communities. We have a population of just about 15,000 people. There are 13 volunteer fire departments. There are eight

schools and approximately 1,800 students throughout the entire district. We have a hospital, multiple long-term care facilities, seniors' homes and clinics. The district is approximately 6,200 square kilometres.

We have lots to offer from a tourism standpoint; we have lots to offer from a health care standpoint and employment standpoint. Obviously, the last seven months has changed a lot of that. The District of Terra Nova has certainly suffered a very similar fate to most every other district in Newfoundland.

Contrary to what the Minister of Health would have us believe, we have issues with doctors. We don't have enough family medicine doctors in the district. All the studies in the world aren't going to convince me that we do. People can't get appointments. We have specialists leaving on a regular basis with no replacement. We've constantly heard from the health care facilities questioning the recruiting regime and how they can change things. We lose doctors to other portions of the province and other provinces so it certainly is a big issue.

We have a large lack of availability in beds for long-term care and it's a serious concern in our area. Hospital wait times, no different. Again, I would argue this is a very common theme throughout most of the province but, in particular, in my district it hits close to home.

Internet is a huge issue throughout my entire district. Right now, we have no reliable Internet in Southwest Arm, Hatchet Cove, St. Jones Within and Random Island. Communities such as Petley and Hickman's Harbour have Internet providers go right by them. Unfortunately, they pass by these communities and they aren't hooked up.

Then we have St. Brendan's and Traytown, the same issues, no reliable Internet. St. Brendan's doesn't have any community Wi-Fi, which really bothers me and puzzles me because we have a school out there that's underutilized for sure. It's a large facility where there could be a community Wi-Fi station set up, and Traytown has little or no cell coverage. Certainly, a lot of areas in my district have little or no cell coverage; all things that are fixable. When you look at going down Southwest Arm and Random

Island, specifically, the Internet service provider physically goes past some of these communities. There's a solution right there. It's literally right there, but nothing is happening.

In these COVID times when you look at the situation with these schools, if we were to go to a scenario where kids are sent home to do their schooling, they would have their new Chromebooks, hopefully, within the next few weeks. They don't have them yet but hopefully in the next few weeks, and they would not be able to utilize them which is a scary thought. When you look at these communities and you understand that in between two communities there's no Internet where the two outlying communities have Internet, it makes no sense whatsoever.

The other big issue we're hearing in our district for sure is a lot of people are complaining about government offices not being open. Now, the government offices not being open are a situation because of the lack of Internet availability. People who need to access Motor Vehicle Registration or other departments in government don't have access to it because there is no Internet availability in some of these communities.

While I applaud the initiative to get government services out from a technological standpoint, it really doesn't help everyone. Contrary to what people would have you believe, the 1,400 per cent increase is out of necessity, not out of availability. When you look at areas – again, Random Island, Traytown, St. Brendan's, Southwest Arm – these communities can't access the services that we, as a government, have said we're going to provide. It's not a real fair scenario.

One of the other big issues we see throughout our entire district is Eastern Waste and garbage collection. Eastern Waste and garbage collection have failed the residents of Terra Nova miserably. This is another board which – I believe there are maybe seven or eight of Eastern Waste boards, all paid positions. You look at the RHAs and they're not paid positions, it bewilders me.

Eastern Waste needs to be looked into in a big way. The residents of Southwest Arm and

Random Island are really struggling with their garbage collection, bulk garbage collection. It just isn't working.

On that note, Madam Chair, I'll leave it for now and I appreciate the time to talk.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the excited Member for Corner Brook.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It goes without saying that taxation and public enthusiasm are rarely synonymous. This is one case where I find that there is large-scale public support.

What we're talking about here is less about taxation; what we're talking about here is less about government revenues. It's really about public health and, in particular, the health of our children. It's the health of those who find themselves in a situation of addiction which they did not necessarily understand could be a possibility made so by advertising which was false or misleading or glamourized. This is the history of the tobacco industry, Madam Chair, where we find ourselves in a situation where retroactively we're trying to correct something which we didn't necessarily understand the full consequence of before.

Well, when it comes to vaping, no one – not one Member of this Chamber, not one member of the health community, of the general public – can say that they are not fully informed or able to be fully informed about the potential negative health consequences. I'll retract one word: potential. Nobody can be ill-informed about the negative health consequences from vaping. That information is well understood and the knowledge base is improving and expanding all the time, but we know this is not an activity that we necessarily want to support or condone.

With that said, Madam Chair, the Minister of Finance and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I believe with the full support and endorsement of all parties of this House, will be enacting a special taxation measure to

curb enthusiasm or to curb intake of vaping and vaping products. Why? Well, no explanation can be better put than that offered by the Minister of Health and Community Services who has really best outlined what the potential consequences are to your health, to your physical health, to your mental health. The consequences of addiction are very, very serious.

With that said, while we balance two competing rights or two competing concerns – one is the right for consumers to choose their own behaviours – we have to also balance the public good and the public nature that this is an addiction, this is an addictive substance which can cause harm. We need to try to create measures to reduce that harm and to reduce the behaviours that cause the harm.

One way to tackle that is to tackle the industry directly. I understand there are various elements at the national level and by special interest groups to look at vaping for what it truly is. It will allow that process to continue, but we here in Newfoundland and Labrador, we here in this Chamber, we here in the government, in particular, know that we need to do this and act quickly.

There will always be those who suggest that this is overstated, that the health consequences are overstated, the mental health consequences are overstated, that the addiction consequences are overstated. We know this to be false. I believe it's fair to say that the tobacco industry tried to counter very similar complaints and similar concerns with almost identical language and rhetoric. It did not work. With that said, Madam Chair, we do have choices that we can make as legislators, as public policy-makers and I think this is a good one.

I want to really pay a certain special attention to one of the comments that was made earlier, that if we are to be successful, this will not increase the taxation coffers of the government; in fact, it will reduce it. While we increase the tax, which would imply or assume that we will increase revenue to government, really what's happening here is that we want to eliminate vaping and eliminate the revenues from it. That is an important element to this debate.

I'm hearing the cries from some circles that would like to advocate a particular position that this is really just about a money grab. It's a money grab by government that just simply wants to exploit one particular sector, one particular group of society, one particular industry to be able to create a money grab. Madam Chair, the opposite is true. What this is, is an initiative to eliminate this as a revenue stream. That's a really important point that I don't think needs any further argument or consideration.

With that said, I want to say a special thank you to all those community leaders that have helped bring us to this point in time where we are, not only publicly acknowledging the serious consequences and risks of vaping but acting upon it. Our community health leadership, our community health leaders, those who work directly with our children, our younger adults, have really been some of the strongest advocates and leaders in this effort to curb, if not eliminate, vaping. It's the next tobacco.

I know that in my own son's reality, my own son's world experience, vaping is very common. I take some comfort, given the relationship that I have with my son, we have a very, very open honest dialogue with each other about anything and everything. He tells me that this is pervasive throughout young people, that it's dangerous because excuses are constantly being made amongst young people trying to convince other young people that this is innocuous; there's no danger here. Ironically, what he said to me is that they were never the words of the young people that I heard. It was almost a verbatim repetition of the marketing campaigns that came from the vaping companies and those that extracted commercial, financial benefit from vaping.

This is the insight that my own son offered, is that at no point in time was there an independent sort of reason: this is what this group of kids thought or what that group of kids thought. He always said to me: Every time I heard someone extol the benefits or the innocuousness of vaping, it was almost always a verbatim repetition of the marketing campaign.

When you see about the different flavours that are used to – I've never heard tell of many

campaigns directed at mature, older adults like myself, probably over-mature or under-mature adults like myself, I've never heard marketing campaigns which talked about tutti frutti or passion peppermint or other kinds of flavours, that's usually – I remember back in my day when we had Certs and we had Sweet Tarts. That was kind of the flavours that attracted me to that sugary dish called Sweet Tarts or Love Hearts, I think they were called at the time. I'm starting to digress now, I'm going to get back on target because this is too important a subject.

I've never ever heard tell of marketing campaigns which were so directly, knowingly exploitive of the vulnerabilities of young people as the original tobacco campaigns played and now the vaping campaigns play. Anyone with any world experience can see it for what it is. Sometimes a young and impressionable 13-year-old or 14-year-old or even, in some cases, younger, in some cases older, but an impressionable pre-teen or teenager, there's a reason why those companies know that they're vulnerable, because it is positioned in such a way that it seems to bear no harm. How can something called peppermint passion fruit or whatever it is you want to call it, whatever the flavour of the day is, how can that possibly be bad for you?

Well, Madam Chair, it is. It's deliberately disguised that way so that young people are duped and they follow a path, which they would never or should never be expected to be suspicious of. That's why we, as adults, big people in a big room, need to act in the best interest of our young people and all those who face addictions or potential addictions through access to vaping products.

With that said, Madam Chair, I hear and see my time has concluded.

CHAIR: Your time has expired.

Thank you, to the hon. Member.

The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Before I get started on the particular bill that we're debating here, I want to make reference to my colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans who talked briefly about the Dominion workers in his district. I want to talk about the Dominion workers in my district. Those of us that have shopped at Dominion always know that when you walk into that store these workers are there to greet you with a smile. They're there to help you when you can't find something and if you go to the meat department and you need a special cut or need a special product, they're there to assist in every way.

It was only a few months ago now that we were shutting down schools, we were shutting down the University; we were closing government offices and people were told to stay home, don't go out unless you really had to. Yet these same workers, these same Dominion workers were putting on their uniforms and heading off to work every single day to make sure that we had a place to go when we needed food and we needed supplies.

So I'm glad to hear today that a mediator has been appointed. I look forward to a resolution to this strike. It's gone on way too long. It needs to be settled and I would hope that it will happen sooner than later. These workers, they want to work full-time. They want to go to work. Yet, for some reason their company just doesn't seem to want to make that happen. So, hopefully, with a mediator in place we'll get that done.

I want to share a little story, as I talk about this bill, when I was a CEO in Labrador-Grenfell Health. I once met with a Pentecostal minister and alluded to him that in some ways we were in the same business. When he looked at me it was kind of strange. I told him you're in the business of trying to get them in; I'm in the business of trying to keep them out. It alluded to that when I heard the minister talk about health because health, as I said, we should be in the health care business and not in the sick care business. Again, this is another attack on health care.

I spent a lot of time in sports, too, and I know the value of exercise and physical fitness. We get one body, it's ours, and what we do with it is up to us. It's very, very important that we try to help people. People may refer to it as a tax, but it's not a tax, it's simply trying to get an

awareness to people that there are more and more issues out there that we should all be concerned with.

The Canadian Cancer Society has described youth vaping as a public health crisis. That's what it is, so we need to take action on it. The big smoking companies have been around for hundreds of years, we know that. Their original target, of course, was men. The Marlboro Man, we all remember those ads and everything else. When they figured they had the male market saturated, they went after the female market.

In the '50s, you could see ads in the papers of doctors' offices encouraging women to smoke to relieve stress. They were encouraged to smoke to lose weight. As a matter of fact, actresses were often paid to smoke in movies just to encourage more people to smoke. Now, what we're seeing is they're now attacking our youth and they're focusing on our youth. They're focusing on them, not through a cigarette but through a vaping product. At the end of the day, they have been very, very successful.

What can we do? I think the Minister of Health alluded to it earlier on, as well: education. I mean, those are the kinds of things that we have to do as a government, as a people. We sit down as parents, and those with young kids can talk to them about the effects of smoking. We have to keep all of that up, but taxation is one piece of that.

I've heard a couple of colleagues say that taxation is not about generating revenue. It's not, but whatever revenue we generate from this, maybe it needs to go back into sport and recreation or maybe it needs to go into education or maybe it needs to be directed into whatever we can do to promote wellness and to promote ourselves so that we encourage people. Let's turn a negative into a positive and use this to help people and to try and keep people active in our communities. If we do that, we have a shot. It's not too late.

I think this particular measure is just one small step. We're not out to tax people just for the sake of taxing people. That's not what this is all about. This is about recognizing that we have a problem, that it exists and this is one measure we can take to help address it.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Alliance for the Control of Tobacco is doing other things from an education point of view, but, again, I think it sends a message. That's literally what we're trying to do. We're trying to send a message to people: This is not good for you. Maybe if the parents are out there and are the ones providing the money for some of this that the kids spend, maybe this will have a way and kids will have a choice.

Again, though, whatever revenue we generate, let's turn around and find a way to use that revenue to promote so that it becomes a positive. Let's turn this negative into a positive. If we do that, I think we'll have a shot at it. Obviously, there are lots of other things that have been done. There's been the restriction on flavours and there have been other things tried and stuff.

We all support this legislation, I think, in the House. Again, it's not about the individual, it's about the idea that we need to help make changes; how do we keep our people healthy and how do we improve our health outcomes. At the end of the day, it will pay off down the road.

I don't need to speak for 10 minutes. I just wanted to get that message out there, and I thank you for your attention.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

AN HON. MEMBER: No, no, more speakers.

CHAIR: More speakers? Okay.

The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: I'm okay (inaudible).

CHAIR: The Chair now recognizes the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. DWYER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MR. DWYER: Sorry, thank you.

Just listening to everybody speaking about vaping and the new tax that is being introduced, I think one of the underlying themes here from all speakers has been communication with children. Obviously, adults will make those decisions for themselves, it's their responsibility to understand what's going to be helping them with their health; but, for anybody under the age of 18, obviously we need to communicate with them and let them know what the consequences of any actions are, let alone just vaping. I'm a firm believer in keeping the lines of communication open with all your children and making sure they are getting the guidance that is so needed.

One of the things that kind of really threw me for a loop – I'm a smoker. I never ever tried vaping. It kind of sounds hypocritical to say that you choose one over the other or anything, but from my perspective, I don't understand how it got even approved to this point by Health Canada. We already know the underlying effects of cigarette smoke. With this being something along those lines, and like people have even said, the cloud of smoke that comes out of them, if even half of it gets in your lungs, I think it's more than any one cigarette.

I think more needs to be known about what the long-term effects are before we have it introduced to society or anything like that, because it's incumbent on us to know the consequences of our actions. At this point, there are no proven consequences to the actions of vaping. I do agree with the increased tax but, again, if it's somebody that's addicted, it doesn't matter what price is on it they'll find the resources to get it. We just hope it doesn't be pulled from something a little bit more important in a family's budget.

The taxes that are being introduced are there to cover the added health responsibilities that are put on the system. We look at MCP – and I talk to a lot of people. I talked to one gentleman one day and I said something about his care. He said: I'm not worried about that, MCP is free. I said:

Nothing could be further from the truth my friend, because we actually pay for that out of taxpayers' dollars.

We have a system in place that we want to make sure that everybody's health is paramount to living in Newfoundland and Labrador. It might be something we can do to – it's not that we're sending invoices, but we could send a report on what it cost to have a visit or anything like that. I think there's a responsibility on the patients as well. If they have to cancel a meeting or just don't show up to a doctor's appointment or anything like that, when we know that we're more than burdened in our doctor's offices.

There needs to be a little bit more responsibility when it comes to our health care. It's an opportunity for us to get away from the waste that is still costing us money, but people don't see it because it's obviously not charged directly as opposed to being taken out of the taxpayers' dollars. Everybody is still paying for it, it's just the fact that we don't see it directly.

I will be supporting a tax on vaping, as I supported a tax on tobacco, for the simple fact that these decisions are adding to the health care responsibilities and we want to make sure that the system we have in place stays viable and universal to all.

Just to switch gears a little bit and talk a little bit about my district. I'm very proud to be the MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue and I appreciate the fact that the people of Placentia West - Bellevue have put their trust in me to come represent them in this House. It's like I always say, there's no grass going to grow under these feet. Like I said, there are no days off or anything like that. It's certainly go, go, go all the time and that's what I signed up for and that's what I promised to the people, that I would communicate with them and work hard on their behalf.

I have 45 communities in my district and they all have very similar needs. That covers 5,503 square kilometres of this beautiful province. For the most part, I go basically from about seven kilometres outside of Whitbourne, you take the turn in Goobies and you go right to Marystown. It's a very large district but, like I said, that's what I signed up for. I knew it would be

something that I was engaged in and that I would want to do, because what I promised, and I have always promised from day one, is to work hard and communicate with my constituents. It's paramount, and I represent all constituents. Once the votes are counted, there's no favouritism or anything like that. Each and every person has access to their MHA in the District of Placentia West - Bellevue.

Some of the better things, the more positive things that are happening here right now, currently, in my district is that while sometimes it is a little bit frustrating when there's roadwork on the go and stuff like that, it's certainly a necessary evil. It's nice to see some of the stuff that's getting done here before winter to improve the travel for many of my residents on Route 210 on the Burin Peninsula.

The one from Red Harbour to Marystown is a very big job that we have back on the books for the five-year road plan to cover about 25 kilometres. It's a really big job for the area. It really needed to be done and it really needed to be done badly. Like I said, when I drove through just recently a lot of the brush cutting and ditching was already done. I must say, a very good job and hats off to the contractors and our own people.

In the Grand Le Pierre area, we're currently doing about 18 kilometres of brush cutting and ditching. Like I said, I actually requested from Route 210, from the branch right down to Terrenceville, English Harbour and Grand Le Pierre. The department saw the largest problem area at this time to be around the Grand Le Pierre area. Like I said, that's something that certainly needed to be done and it would be incumbent on me to make sure that other needs are taken care of in the next construction season.

We also have some roadwork and brush cutting to be done on the Fairhaven road, which is long overdue as well. It's nice to see these improvements being done, because it's the commuting public who have invested in their vehicles and stuff like that. We want to make sure that they do have the good roads to drive on.

It's a busy life being a politician, there's no doubt about that, and it's something that I've

very much enjoyed. It's something that I've pretty much wanted to do my whole life. It's like I told the people in my district when I ran the first time, I didn't necessarily come looking for a job, because I had a good job at the time, and getting a pension and all that kind of stuff, but I went back to my hometown to pick up my true calling and represent the people who got me to this in my life.

One thing that I'll always do is bring respect and integrity to the table because I find that they're a reflection of ourselves and they should always be available and at the ready for everyone.

I see my time is coming short, I would just like to say thank you again to all of the constituents of Placentia West - Bellevue for giving me the opportunity to represent them in this hallowed hall.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm going to take a few minutes starting off this afternoon to recognize a gentleman in my district, Mr. John Pinhorn, who turned 99 years young today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Pinhorn's story is even a little more impressive and respectful. Mr. Pinhorn, over 70 years ago, served in the 166th (Newfoundland) Field Artillery. He trained in England, went on to North Africa and went on to an invasion in Italy. He fought in the Battle of Monte Cassino and returned back to Newfoundland and Labrador where he spent his life in the community of Winterton.

Today, Mr. Pinhorn resides at the Josiah Squibb Memorial Pavilion in Carbonear where he's celebrating this afternoon with his family.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROCKER: When we think about next Wednesday, just slightly over a week, being Remembrance Day, and our number of World War II veterans are certainly getting fewer all the time. It's important that we recognize people like Mr. Pinhorn who is again celebrating his 99th birthday today.

Happy birthday, Mr. Pinhorn.

Madam Chair, I'm going to pivot back to today's bill right now and talk about, as a parent, the value in what we do around taxation sometimes as a deterrent because, as a lot of people have said here this afternoon, taxation, in this case, is not about revenue; taxation, in this case, is about a deterrent. The best thing that could ever happen from a piece of taxation like this is that we don't collect anymore money.

There are points, and there was a point made earlier this afternoon, about cessation and how vaping has actually helped in removing some people from smoking. That's also a very important part to remember in this. After listening to the debate this afternoon and having, I guess, 19-year-old and 21-year-old sons, some of the comments I've heard here today about where vaping is taking place and how cool it seems to be, that is certainly what I'm hearing as a parent as well.

We need to work with groups like the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco and others to make sure that we curb this to the best of our ability and educate so that, I think, what would be some disastrous things from tobacco vaping that we would see down the road are averted.

We've seen it. We've heard it here referenced this afternoon regularly. If you think about tobacco, 25 or 30 or 40 years ago it was sold as the, I guess, cool or sexy thing to do. We certainly learned that it wasn't. If you think about tobacco ads and how they were portrayed back in the '70s and the '80s, they were portrayed in a way that was meant to be attractive to people; no different than the way vaping is today.

Some of the mediums, the way companies with vape are doing it from my understanding, are through modern avenues, like TikTok and Snapchat and all of those things. I know very

little about them; only I know they're apps. This is a very important piece of legislation, in that way, that we're dealing with today and, certainly, I'll be supporting it.

Coming into Remembrance Day – I'm going to pivot again just for a minute and talk about a couple of things in my district. One would be the Poppy Campaign and Branch 23 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Carbonear. It's actually the only Legion that I have left in my district. If you think about it, this branch actually encompasses the vast majority of the district in the region that they serve. They serve all of the communities or most of the communities in the district and they do a great job in doing that, so here's to them.

I know they're going to be around the district in the coming week, I guess, selling poppies. They kicked off the Poppy Campaign at the Legion in Carbonear on Thursday. Again, if you can and if you see an opportunity to support the Legion through the Poppy Campaign, please do so.

This has been a tough year on organizations like the Legion and many others when it comes to fundraising. This is a very important part – the Poppy Campaign – of what they do each and every year when it comes for their membership. That's a very important campaign that we're into right now.

Madam Chair, I'm going to actually finish my remarks right now. I think I'm going to move that we recess for supper until 6:30 p.m.

CHAIR: Is it the pleasure of the House of adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

This House stands in recess until 6:30 p.m.