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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

I'd just like to welcome everyone here again to the continuation of the First Session of the 50th annual General Assembly.

We're back to our somewhat normal seating plan. It's good to see everybody off the floor and our Table staff being able to get back at the centre of the Chamber.

We're going to be having our Pages again this year. I'd like for everyone to welcome Tanisha Wright-Brown. She's returning as a Page from last time. Tanisha is from Jamaica and now living in St. John's. She's completing her Ph.D. at Memorial University's School of Pharmacy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Our new Page is Leisha Toory. Leisha is from Mauritius and is living in St. John's. She's studying political science and French for Francophones at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Without further ado, we'll move into Members' Statements.

Today, we'll hear Members' Statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of St. George's - Humber, Mount Pearl North, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Lake Melville and Stephenville - Port au Port.

The hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber.

S. REID: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This month members of the Stephenville Rotary Club celebrated 50 years of service to the Bay St. George area. The Stephenville Rotary Club is

part of Rotary International, which has existed for 110 years.

Locally, the organization has initiated and supported a number of community events. For example, the club is involved with the Friendly Invasion Festival; sponsors the Adventures in Citizenship program, which has sent several young people to Ottawa to develop a better understanding of democracy; it hosts an annual Stephenville Rotary Music Festival; it has partnered with the Leos to plant trees; as well, the club members frequently volunteer with other groups in the community doing things such as supporting the food bank, holding senior luncheons and organizing winter carnival activities.

Over the last 50 years, the Stephenville Rotary Club has participated in group study exchange programs, which send five non-Rotarian professionals between the ages of 25 and 40 to other countries to learn about their counterparts in their chosen field.

I ask all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating and thanking the members of the Rotary Club of Stephenville on their 50 years of service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in the House of Assembly today to acknowledge another great volunteer who has passed away. Wayne Andrews passed away in August of this year, only 67 years old. He was well known in Mount Pearl because of his community involvement, especially as a volunteer.

Wayne served as chair of the Mount Pearl Frosty Festival, chair of the Mount Pearl Sport Alliance and president of Campia Gymnastics. He also volunteered with Mount Pearl Minor Hockey, Gymnastics Newfoundland and Labrador and served on many other boards.

Wayne loved to play music, cook and spend time with his family and friends in Salmon

Cove. He was a true family man. He will be missed by his wife of 45 years, Ann Marie, and their children and grandchildren and a wide circle of relatives and friends.

I ask all Members to join me in remembering a great man and a great friend, Wayne Andrews. He will be missed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Today, I would like to recognize a friend and a colleague who served his constituents for over 17 years, Scott Simms.

Born in Bishop's Falls, Mr. Simms was elected to the House of Commons for the first time in 2004, representing the citizens of Coast of Bays-Central-Notre Dame.

Known as the weatherman, Scott started his political career in the Rhinoceros Party at Mount Allison University where he earned his Bachelor of Commerce degree. In Ottawa, Scott served as a chairman for both the Fisheries and Oceans Committee and the Canadian Heritage Committee. A true constituency man, Scott was known to stand with his constituents, though it wasn't the easy thing to do most times.

This summer, Scott was asked by a mutual constituent: How do you get along with MHA Chris Tibbs so well? Without hesitation, Scott simply answered: Because we are adults and we both put our people first.

As well, I want to congratulate my new MP, Clifford Small, knowing full well he will do great things.

Finally, I want to personally thank my former MP, Scott Simms, for his hard work and dedication. God bless you and good luck to you my friend.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

Happy Valley-Goose Bay recently hosted Zara Rutherford, who is attempting to become the youngest woman to fly solo around the world. Travelling in an ultra-light aircraft, this 19-year-old from Belgium is encouraging other women to pursue careers in aviation.

Globally, just 5 per cent of pilots are women. However, women from or living in Labrador are reversing the trend: Christa Glover is a contract commercial helicopter pilot; Allison Rumbolt and Zoe Webb are the first all-female crew of a Sikorsky S-92 with Cougar Helicopters; Kayla Torarak, Brianna Ricketts, Raquel Vaillancourt and Kelli Buffett fly Twin Otters for Air Borealis; Jennifer Kennedy is their operations manager; Lisa Williams is a Dash 8 pilot with Provincial Airlines; Tracy Squires flies with government Air Services, as does Sandra Goulet who is a water bomber pilot.

At 5 Wing Goose Bay, Zara met with Captain Erin Pratt who flies the Griffon for 444 Squadron. There is more, as Marie-Soleil Penashue from Sheshatshiu recently graduated from flight school at Goose Bay and is now pursuing her commercial licence.

I would ask this Legislature to wish Zara Rutherford success on her quest and recognize the contribution of other women breaking their own records in Labrador aviation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Peter Marche started fishing when he was only 13 years old. He was still in school and got up early to go out on the water, go to school, come home and then go back out on the water. Peter fished in many treacherous situations and recalls his boat capsizing five times over the years. He had two boats sink while setting lobster gear and fell overboard twice. One year he fell through the icy waters chasing seals. He overcame all obstacles.

He fished many different species of fish, but he was a lobster fisherman first and remembers a happy day when he bought his first lobster licence for 25 cents. He paid a dollar for both a commercial ground fish and a salmon licence. He could buy a 45-gallon drum of gas for \$13.50. Lobster prices fluctuated over the years, but Peter said the best price he ever received was his last year fishing.

Peter retired July 6, 2021, after fishing full-time for 58 years. He retired on what would have been his 47th wedding anniversary. His wife passed the previous February from an incurable lung disease.

Peter's favourite saying was: "Fishing was in my bones."

I ask hon. Members to join me in congratulating Mr. Peter Marche on his long and distinguished career as a proud fisherman.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Office of Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to offer sincere congratulations to Ophelia Ravencroft, the first openly transgender councillor elected in the City of St. John's.

Ravencroft handily won her seat on September 28 with nearly 45 per cent of the vote. Her interest in local politics was sparked by a desire to help improve accessibility after calling St. John's home for more than 15 years. Ravencroft's commitment was unshaken throughout her campaign, even after facing death threats and harassment due to her gender identity.

Ravencroft is following in the footsteps of Charlotte Gauthier of Gillams. First elected in 2020, Gauthier, to our knowledge, is the first transgendered woman elected to a municipal council in the province.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that we need to do more to support diversity at decision-making tables, including more women and gender-diverse individuals. The success of both Ravencroft and Gauthier will encourage other gender-diverse individuals to run for public office and will be a source of inspiration for young people who are struggling with their gender identity – a symbol of acceptance and a sign that systemic and attitudinal behaviors and beliefs are changing.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all Members of this House to join me in acknowledging the gains made by this election cycle. Congratulations to all municipal elected candidates.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I offer my sincere congratulations to Ophelia Ravencroft on being the first openly transgendered councillor elected to the City of St. John's. I also acknowledge and extend my support to Charlotte Gauthier of Gillams who was the first transgendered individual elected to a municipal council in the province in 2020.

Both of these individuals are important leaders and visible role models for many in our communities and societies. Growing up as an open member of the two-spirited LGBT++ community, I know how hard it is to be without visible role models out there to identify with.

If anyone is out there asking why are these two individuals so important to our province, Mr. Speaker, I'll gladly answer that. As I have said previously in the House of Assembly, presence gains acceptance. Charlotte and Ophelia, you have the courage to be present and you have the courage to be seen. We are so very proud of you.

I wish you both every success in your roles as municipal councillors and I offer my support to you both. My phone number and email are

always open to you if you ever wish to discuss policy decisions or challenges of elected public life.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the minister when she said we need more diversity at decision-making tables. We need more women and gender-diverse individuals in this House of Assembly, in our national government, in our Indigenous governments and in our local government.

Congratulations once again to Ophelia Ravencroft and to Charlotte Gauthier.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advanced copy of her statement and on behalf of our caucus, I would like to extend our heartfelt congratulations to Ms. Ophelia Ravencroft on her election to St. John's City Council. Despite facing threats of violence against her and her volunteers, Ms. Ravencroft continued with remarkable courage, poise and determination. As a result of her knowledge and leadership, the residents of Ward 2 overwhelmingly decided to choose her to be their voice on September 28.

We can also do more to encourage gender-diverse people to come forth and to run for public office. I call on all of us here today to redouble our efforts to make our own parties more welcoming spaces for diversity. Having voices like Ms. Ravencroft's at the table will create more effective and impactful policies.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Does the Premier continue to have confidence in his Minister of Health and Community Services?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

An easy one to start off: yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, the Premier is a member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, the same association which has lost confidence and expressed frustration with the Minister of Health and Community Services after six years of inaction.

I ask the Premier: Do you support your association or do you support the Minister of Health and Community Services?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite would know, I'm not involved in any discussions with respect to the NLMA. It's an obvious conflict that I have recused myself from multiple times.

With respect to the tone of the question and the theme of the question: Look, we all know that health care is under significant strain in this province right now. It's not unique to this province; it's a national and an international issue if nothing else.

The minister himself and I created the Health Accord NL last year ahead of the curve from the other provinces in this country, recognizing that it was a problem; it is a problem. We are trying

to fix the problem. It will involve short-, medium- and long-term strategies, some of which were announced today, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The people of this province acknowledge the Minister of Health and Community Services and you, as Premier, have the responsibility to improve our health care, things that we haven't seen in the last number of years.

The Minister of Health and Community Services keeps telling everyone we don't have a crisis. However, the Premier's two hand-picked experts who are leading the Health Accord said at a recent economic conference at Memorial University that health care is in a crisis in this province.

Premier, who should the people of the province believe: the minister or the leaders of the Health Accord?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As you've heard me say many times, the system is definitely broken. It's one of the reasons why I left the system to enter this system to try to fix it, Mr. Speaker.

There is no question: for a person who doesn't have a GP who is suffering, that is a crisis. There is no question: for a person who can't find an ambulance, that is a crisis. There is no question: for a hard-working nurse who's pulling her hair or his hair out in frustration because of the system, it is a crisis. It is a national crisis because of the pandemic; it is an international crisis because of the pandemic. We recognize all of these things. But it is not a crisis of confidence in the hard-working women and men who work in that system, Mr. Speaker.

We're working hard to try to change the system so that it'll be better, not for the people who are

working in it and being served by it now but indeed for future generations to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is not about the professionals that we have in the health care system. We know how diligently they work for the people of this province. That's why we're still as healthy as we are.

The issues around the last six years of inaction, the issues of not being proactive and now not even being reactive, Mr. Speaker, that's the issue here.

Why would the Premier ask the Health Accord to reimagine health care – not tweak health care, but reimagine health care – in this province if he didn't think it was a crisis across the board?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said, the system is broken. Status quo is currently the dysfunction that's preventing us from reimagining and reinventing it for the future. We've seen during this time of disruption in the health care system because of the pandemic that we can do better, we will do better. But it will take time; it will take gathering of evidence. That's why we created the Health Accord.

I'm glad the Members opposite finally saw fit to put a member on that accord, Mr. Speaker, because we welcome all opinions. We want to make sure that we get this system right. We're in the middle of a paradigm shift of how we deliver health care that hasn't been seen since the 1960s.

So it's incumbent upon all of us in this House, Mr. Speaker, to be the agents of change to ensure that we get the right system for the future of this province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to clarify for the people of this province that our caucus has met with the Health Accord on four occasions. Our Health critic has met with the Health Accord members on numerous occasions, and we've had direct input because we want to improve health care for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Premier, you can't address an issue if you don't acknowledge that there is an issue. Yes or no, simply: Is health care in this province in a crisis?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I've already addressed this multiple times, the same answer applies. It's a crisis for those experiencing the system when it doesn't work for them. It's a crisis because of the pandemic. In fact, it's amplified by the pandemic. The system is broken. I've lived it. I worked it. I still work in it occasionally. This is a problem that we need to fix. I've seen it first hand. We're listening to the people of this province about how to better fix it.

Although you've had input, the Members opposite have had input, they refuse to put someone on that very forum that we created to have all the voices at the table to ensure that we're getting the best input. This isn't about a Liberal issue or an NDP issue or Progressive Conservative issue, Mr. Speaker; this is about the health of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for the future. We're in a changing time, a paradigm shift and we need to make sure we capture that and have the courage to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: We have an admission that there is a crisis, finally. Now if we can get the Minister of Health to acknowledge the same.

So I ask the Premier: Will you take a leadership role in improving the health care of the people of this province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I believe we already did that. We recognized before other provinces have that it is a problem. It's the reason I left my old job to come in here to try to tackle it, Mr. Speaker. We started before any other province across the country, and I've met with all the other premiers to have a Health Accord because we knew it was a problem.

This isn't a short-term problem about putting a band-aid on; this is about redefining and reimagining the system for the future. That is a long-term solution that is required for the people of this province. We need to do it and we need to do it right because we won't have this paradigm-shift moment in front of us for long, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Premier for his comments but it does little to satisfy or help anyone that can't get access to a family physician at the present time or can't get a prescription filled without having to go to emergency.

Today, Mr. Speaker, after four years without a contract, 10 months of negotiations, the only action the Minister of Finance took was to threaten the NLMA with legislation that would remove the requirement for doctors to join the association; a tactic to try to weaken the NLMA right in the middle of negotiations.

I ask the minister: How is this labour deadlock helping the 100,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who do not have a family doctor?

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

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

The issue of mandatory membership of lobby organizations has been on the cards for seven years. I personally warned or advised the CEO and the current president of the NLMA in 2019 that the issue with the pharmacists and the Pharmacy Act would implicate them and have knock-on effects.

I firmly believe that the issue of freedom of association is such that it can only be debated and discussed properly in a fulsome debate in one place, and that is the floor of the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker, nowhere else. That is our intent to do that and resolve that. The Members here will have a chance to have input into that. But freedom of association is a charter issue, not for any one individual to decide. It's this House's job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the hon. minister had the same opinion when he was the president of the NLMA.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Finance – you said in your scrum that discussion is ongoing about mandatory membership in associations and not just for medical associations. So again, I ask the Minister of Finance: Are you considering removing the mandatory membership requirements for the RNC to be members of the RNCA?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I said in my scrum that it was not a Treasury Board issue; that this matter of mandatory membership was something that was being discussed with members of associations, not within the Treasury Board or the collective agreement negotiations whatsoever. I referred them to the Department of Health. And you've just heard the response by the Department of

Health, by the Minister of Health, regarding same.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the Green report made a reference and a recommendation that principals and administrators of schools should be removed from the NLTA.

So I ask the minister: Are you considering removing the mandatory membership requirement for teachers not to be members of the NLTA?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Mr. Speaker, I can appreciate the Member opposite is trying to inflame and conflate an issue. As I said in the press conference last week, it had nothing to do with the discussions that we were having with NLMA regarding their memorandum of agreement. I said that very quite clearly.

I referenced the members of the media to speak to the Department of Health regarding mandatory membership in associations that are referred to. The Minister of Health has already responded to that. So the continuing line of questions is not related to anything to do with collective agreements.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Tell that to the NLMA, Mr. Speaker.

Removing mandatory membership, like what this government is doing with the NLMA, is nothing more than union-busting, an affront to all groups that negotiate and advocate on behalf of their members.

So will the minister tell the House which other associations are they actually targeting to

remove the mandatory membership requirements?

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

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

This has nothing at all to do in negotiations and stems from a legal action against the Pharmacists' Association and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that started seven years ago. This affects a total of 10 organizations who, in legislation, require mandatory membership of a lobby group to continue to practise their profession.

I have met with the NLMA, I've met with the Pharmacists' Association, I've met with the dentists' association and I believe the next one on the list is the registered massage therapists. We have in total 10. I can't, from memory, provide a complete list, but would be happy to do so to the Member opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, after years of pressure from the Medical Association, nurses, NAPE and from countless media stories and residents in our province crying out for help, the minister announced some changes to health care in the province.

I ask the minister: What was announced today that wasn't possible in the years previous?

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

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

My first mandate was a pressing problem with mental health and addictions, and through a process that involved various Members on both sides of the House, we put in place a 54-point plan, which is well advanced, and well on the way to remedying the problem. It is not done.

My mandate in 2019 was to do exactly the same for acute and community care. Unfortunately, one or two things got in the way, one of which was COVID. The people who have kept everybody in here safe and the people in the province out there have also been the ones who would derive the policies. These started a long time ago. The reason it has taken so long, quite frankly, is we have limited resources within the department to generate these and these people have been working around the clock for 18 months keeping everyone safe. That's why it was today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

COVID came along 2019; this minister has been in his role since 2016.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: The minister has made announcements in the health care field after repeated warnings from doctors, nurses, paramedics and many others about the health crisis in this province. Only now has he decided to take action.

Why have you waited until now, when it appeared you were going to lose your job, to take action?

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

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

Again, I rather answered this question, I think, with my previous answer. I think it is only right and proper to point out that good policy takes time to get it right. We have stalled because of COVID. Each time a wave passed and we started again, another one came along. We have targeted mental health and addictions because that was triaged as the main priority for the first mandate.

The second mandate, as I say, we have had challenges with COVID. We have mounted those challenges and succeeded, where few other jurisdictions in the world have done it. And it is the same people who are going to write the right policies to get health care fixed in this province, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe if the minister had read our health plan back in 2015 he'd be way ahead of the game now, if he did that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: The Minister of Health is a former head of the NLMA, who led the doctors' strike in 2002. At that time, the minister said to the doctors in our province – said they were the lowest paid in the country – and I quote: They often leave to seek better opportunities elsewhere, which leads to a critical shortage. That's back in 2002.

I ask the minister: Do you still stand by this statement?

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

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

Much to the (inaudible) of the current premier of the day, we kind of fixed that problem. Our compensation packages are competitive with Atlantic Canada and we have announced a series of packages today, including \$100,000 for a new family graduate or one who wishes to start a practice or move and join an existing practice with a return in service for five years.

Our bursary program and the return-in-service work that we've done has a very low default rate and will be, once again, successful in keeping candidates, keeping residents in this province.

We have a 4.4 per cent default rate; that is minimal.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

P. DINN: I think some will beg to differ on whether our compensation package is competitive with Atlantic Canada. The minister said when he was president of the NLMA, that parity with physicians in other Atlantic provinces must be achieved in Newfoundland and Labrador to stem the flow of doctors leaving.

I ask the minister: Does he still believe our province's doctors should be paid on par with the rest of the Atlantic provinces, yes or no?

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

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

We, through government, spend \$504 million a year between 1,200 and 1,300 individuals. I phrase it that way because the number varies depending on whether you believe the College of Physicians and Surgeons or the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association.

We believe the quantum, the size of that pot is competitive with other jurisdictions in Canada. The issue is how the NLMA choose to divide it amongst their members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One quick question here – and I know the minister likes numbers and that: Can he confirm that the doctors and physicians in our province are the lowest paid in Canada?

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

J. HAGGIE: The answer to that question, Mr. Speaker, is no, that is not the case.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During the most recent outbreak of COVID-19 in the Exploits District, I was told on three occasions by Central Health that there were no staff to provide testing sites in Exploits.

I ask the minister: How could he let this happen?

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

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

The location of testing sites during COVID was an operational decision for the RHAs based on advice from CMOH or regional MOH.

Had the issue of resources been one that was raised at the department it would have been remedied. I cannot speak to the specifics of that but we're happy to look into it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: The reason was resources of staff, I was told three times on occasions.

You could find staff for Lewisporte - Twillingate during the outbreak, staff for Baie Verte – Springdale and staff for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, why couldn't you find staff for the Exploits District?

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

J. HAGGIE: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I was not made aware by the Member opposite that there was an issue with testing in his district. Several of his colleagues were quite happy to contact my department. So I can only speak

from what I know. I can certainly go back and check the veracity of that with Central Health. But if there is a need and Public Health identify it, we will meet it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: I did use protocol, Mr. Speaker. I went to the CEO of Central Health and I was told on three different occasions that there were no staff for the Exploits District.

Again, how could the minister let this happen?

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

J. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, Botwood is 20 minutes from Grand Falls-Windsor. That was where the testing site was.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today students rallied outside the building protesting government cuts to Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador that will see massive increases to tuition that many fear will force students to take on crippling debt loads while living in poverty during their studies.

Why is government turning their back on students and allowing tuition to more than double?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Memorial University came to the province back in April of last year looking to double tuition in the province. At that particular point, we looked at the funding that we provided to freeze tuitions and felt it would be better to direct that directly to students, Mr. Speaker.

We put in place a new grant program, expanded the loan forgiveness program to help the families and the students of middle- and lower-income families in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador stated they had no choice but to drastically raise tuition due to a projected \$70-million further cut from government in the next five years. Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador also states they expect a 20 per cent drop in enrolment when these massive increases take effect.

I ask the minister: How does throwing away the competitive advantage and tanking the university's enrolment help students of Newfoundland and Labrador?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I can only speak the truth and the truth is that we were approached by Memorial University a number of months ago – March, I believe it was, or April of last year – with a proposal to double tuition while the tuition freeze was still in place, Mr. Speaker. We looked at that, as I said, and felt that if the Board of Regents and the university wished to increase tuition at the university, that the tuition freeze funding was exactly for that purpose, Mr. Speaker, to freeze tuitions. If tuitions were not going to be frozen, the money could be better utilized in the form of grants to ensure that middle- and lower-income families were not adversely affected.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So the minister is basically passing the buck back at MUN. MUN would reason that the tuition freeze is lifted, nothing to do with government's actions. I beg to differ. I think without government's actions, tuition freeze may be in place and we'd have a much better process than tuition fees tripling.

We learned through an access to information request that the new president of MUN spent some \$55,000 renovating her office before moving in. Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador is also now embarking on a new master plan, which includes a skating loop for the St. John's campus – a skating loop, yeah.

Mr. Speaker, when asked in the last session, the minister said he didn't know about the lucrative \$450,000 contract plus benefits, which include personal fitness and tax preparation.

Does the minister agree with the office renovation and skating loop while tuition is set to more than double?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: No, Mr. Speaker, in fact, I don't. That's precisely the reason government is looking at modifications to the *Memorial University Act*. We did say that we would provide additional autonomy to the university but that comes hand-in-hand with additional accountability, Mr. Speaker.

We're looking at giving greater access to the Auditor General, which is not currently the case under section 38 of the *Auditor General Act*. We're looking at having Memorial appear before the Estimates Committee of the House of Assembly. Currently, it doesn't happen, Mr. Speaker. We're looking at other measures to ensure accountability for the taxpayers' money that goes into Memorial University.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess that goes back to my original question several months back to: Why didn't we change the act then? Why are we pushing that down the road again as we do with everything else? That act should have been changed back then; this should not be happening now. Here we go pushing it off again because we don't have the act in place.

I'm on record as asking for the act to be reviewed back when and we're all in favour of supporting it. The minister is still – we're not getting any timelines. We're kicking the can down the road. Now, we have an estimated \$500-million infrastructure deferred maintenance deficit and our caucus has received numerous reports of leaking roofs, asbestos concerns and lab safety issues.

Why does the minister believe these office renovations and skating loops are a higher priority? Why wasn't this act reviewed quicker than what has been done?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I must put my finger in the air and see which way the wind is blowing. The last session of the House, Mr. Speaker, it's the very Member who just asked why the act is not amended yet, who said: Why rush the act, put the Auditor General in there first.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on Friday VOCM interviewed an international student who has been struggling to get a family doctor. She described how easy it was to see a doctor in her home country of Iran while she had to wait 10 hours in an emergency room at the Health Sciences Centre to be seen by a doctor, only to have left for class.

I ask the minister: Would you want to settle in a province where one-fifth of the population does not have family doctor?

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

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

We've heard stories and some of them are difficult about people who have access to primary care as well as health care services in general. The specifics around that case, I obviously can't speak to.

What I can do is reference the announcement we made not long ago, perhaps just about two hours ago, which essentially puts around \$30 million – almost immediately, some of it – into access to primary care with very successful community treatment care clinics in town, and the expansion of those across the province.

We're aware of the problem. We're acknowledged the problem and we're fixing the problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Newfoundland and Labrador is open for business, just don't get sick when you get here.

Mr. Speaker, this example is not the only example of newcomers to our province struggling to find a family doctor. We're well over the almost 100,000 citizens of our province without a family doctor, but I ask the minister: How many newcomers to our province are without a family doctor?

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

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

There's always a debate about the numbers. The issue is we know and acknowledge there is a challenge with access to primary care. What our

mantra is and what these changes that were announced today will do is enable people more readily to access the right care at the right time from the right provider.

There are a range of maneuvers that we have taken over the last six years to broaden the scope of practice for nurse practitioners, for optometrists and we're working with pharmacists. These things didn't arrive overnight; they will not be fixed overnight, but we started on those fixes, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We commend the legislative staff for working overtime this weekend so legislation provided to them at the 11th hour was provided to us overnight.

I ask the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL: Why did the amendments to the *Securities Act* come to us so late? It makes me question if it's being rushed.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I met with the Opposition House leaders last week to talk about legislation, Mr. Speaker. This legislation has been talked about for quite some time. It's not unusual for legislation to be briefed one day and brought in that same day.

We have quite the legislative agenda this session, and we look forward to the co-operation of the Members opposite because there's a lot of this legislation that's going to take a lot of good debate here in this House. We're open to ideas from the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, he has my number. If he needs to reach out on legislation and ask for more time with a specific piece of legislation, feel free to do so. Members opposite have already done that and we will work with the Opposition when it comes to legislation this fall.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Staff were given direction by the minister in June. Our role here is to be the voice of our constituents in these debates and to make decisions that will impact the future.

I ask the Government House Leader: Will he commit to being more respectful of our role, to present legislation in a timely manner and to arrange technical briefings so that this Legislature does not become a rubber-stamp committee for legislation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

The briefing on the *Securities Act* was actually on Thursday. So that was fully briefed Thursday of last week. We had more briefings this morning and I think there are briefings again tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, I offer up myself in our meeting – in my time here we met, I think it was, early last week to discuss this upcoming session at which time I said to the Opposition House leaders – I had a follow-up meeting with the unaffiliated Members in this House to talk about the legislation this fall. There is a lot of very important, very detailed legislation this fall. So much so that I think you sent out an email this morning refreshing our memories on what relevance is, Mr. Speaker.

I look forward to a very busy session this fall, and I would ask the Member and remind the Member that we are going to be very busy this fall. So we're going to work a lot of long hours.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Labrador West continues to struggle with finding family doctors, but we do have an excess of nurse practitioners that we can fill some of the roles. But the health authority's hands are tied when it comes to transferring of the billing and funding.

I ask the minister: Will his department make the changes so NPs and other health professionals can work at their full scope until we see the Health Accord? We are in desperate need in Labrador West.

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

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

I take this opportunity to acknowledge we have a challenge with access to primary care. But equally, I would also point out that within the last two years I stood in this House and introduced amendments to the nurses act that allowed nurse practitioners to do just what the Member opposite is asking. They can work to a scope of practice, which is solely limited by the College of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have a great – and we are looking to increase the number of nurse practitioners that we grow. Indeed, as part of that, we're moving a remote bachelor of nursing program into Labrador itself in September of next year.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West for a quick question. No preamble, please.

J. BROWN: Mr. Speaker, health care in Labrador is now a two-tiered system. If you want to make multiple trips to the Island for any chronic condition, you're on the hook for thousands of dollars in cost just to access the service.

Is it this Liberal government's plan to rely on a two-tiered health system for Labrador and what will you do to solve the crisis for chronic conditions having the need to travel?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HAGGIE: I'm glad the Member opposite asked that question, Mr. Speaker.

Listening to the MHAs from Labrador – past and present – we made some significant changes in April of this year to the medical transportation program to reflect the challenges of travel from Labrador.

There were changes to the air program. There were mileage claim changes. You can claim a private vehicle, you can claim private accommodation with relatives and you have a per diem. We're working with an offer from the CEO of PAL to actually look at streamlining and making it a one-stop shop for airfare, and I hope to be able to announce more on that in the not-too-distant future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You were moving so quickly I almost missed it.

Pursuant to Section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling two orders-in-

council relating to funding pre-commitment for fiscal years '22-'23 to '25-'26.

SPEAKER: Any other tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Off-Road Vehicles, Bill 22.

SPEAKER: Further notices?

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

S. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Automobile Insurance Act, Bill 23.

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

S. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Corporations Act, Bill 24.

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

S. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Management Of Information Act, Bill 25.

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

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

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2005, Bill 26.

I further give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Pharmacy Act, 2012, Bill 27.

I further give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend Various Acts Of The Province Respecting The Publication Of A Summary Of A Decision Or Order Of An Adjudication Tribunal, Bill 28.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution respecting the imposition of taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages, Bill 29.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Requirement For A Balanced Budget, Bill 30.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting A Future Fund For The Province, Bill 31.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Liquor Corporation Act, Bill 32.

And, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Services Charges Act, Bill 33.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Schools Act, 1997, Bill 34.

Further, Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Memorial University Act, Bill 35.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Office Of The Auditor General And The Auditing Of The Public Accounts Of The Province, Bill 36.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

K. HOWELL: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Conduct Of Municipal Officials, Bill 37.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

J. ABBOTT: Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Accessibility In The Province, Bill 38.

I will also give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Adoption Act, 2013, Bill 39.

I will also give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Protection Of Adults, Bill 40.

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies, Bill 41.

Mr. Speaker, I give further notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Law Society Act, Bill 42.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will move the following motion:

WHEREAS section 7 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* prescribes that, upon nomination by the House of Assembly, the Sergeant-at-Arms shall be appointed by Lieutenant-Governor in Council by Commission under the Great Seal;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Mr. Robert Escott be appointed as Sergeant-at-Arms.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice of the following resolution:

WHEREAS COVID-19 has been identified as a communicable disease which presents a significant risk to public health;

WHEREAS the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Chief Public Health Officer of Canada, the Centre for Disease Control and the World Health Organization have strongly recommended that all eligible persons be fully vaccinated against COVID-19;

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will require mandatory vaccinations for public service employees in core provincial government departments, as well as agencies, boards and commissions in an effort to ensure continued safety in the workplace, as well as to ensure additional health protections for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House requires all Members to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 as of December 17, 2021, unless the Member obtains an exemption;

AND THAT a Member is fully vaccinated where (a) that person has received two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. CROCKER: – as approved by Health Canada, or one dose where the vaccine is a one-dose vaccine approved by Health Canada; and

(b) two weeks has passed since the person's second dose of COVID-19 vaccine or where the person has received a one-dose vaccine, two weeks have passed since that dose;

AND THAT where a Member requests a exemption to this requirement, the exemption must be for medically supported reasons, and that Member shall provide medical documentation to the Speaker outlining the medical reasons for not being fully vaccinated against COVID-19 provided by an appropriate health care provider, in line with guidance from the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador;

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the details of operationalizing this order shall rest with the Speaker of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motion?

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice of the following private Member's resolution to be debated on October 20. It's seconded by the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

WHEREAS the Parfrey-Davis Health Accord has described the health care situation in Newfoundland and Labrador today as a health crisis, and their assessment is justified when some 99,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do not have a family doctor; when emergency response personnel cannot respond to people in urgent need because of inadequate resources; when front-line health care professionals are overworked to the point of burnout; when health care professionals are leaving this province because the government does not address their concerns; and when the

government has refused to enter into meaningful negotiations with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association whose contract expired more than four years ago, but is threatening to split the association instead of addressing the doctors' core concerns, which are fundamental to physician recruitment and retention;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the government to recognize that there is a health care crisis in Newfoundland and Labrador and to immediately address this crisis with the urgency the circumstances warrant.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: I do, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 19, 2021.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The motion read in by the Member for Topsail - Paradise will be our private Member's resolution debated this coming Wednesday.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Health care on the Bonavista Peninsula is currently, and has been for a significant period of time, not resourced adequately to provide quality health care for the residents in the

District of Bonavista, particularly the Bonavista area. A large portion of the district is without a family physician and an acute care hospital, Bonavista hospital, which is funded for five physicians, currently has two. Without adequate resourcing, the District of Bonavista is grossly substandard in providing appropriate care.

We, the undersigned, called upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately address the human resourcing of physicians in the District of Bonavista.

The minister did speak at 12 o'clock today, and the first thing he started with was applauding and celebrating those physicians and staff, nurses, LPNs and PCAs in the system for doing a great job – and they are.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I would like to applaud those in particular at the Bonavista hospital. Physicians working at 40 per cent capacity, nursing shortages and trying to maintain a level of health care for those residents in the District of Bonavista in excess of 8,000 of them.

We've had a shortfall for some period of time, Mr. Speaker. There's nothing new with this shortfall because in 2019 when I came in that was the theme pre-COVID, that we had a shortfall of staffing within the Bonavista area. Right now, we're in 2021, and I know post-pandemic and I know that has even compounded the situation in Bonavista.

It is a crisis. If you have difficulty, you're in trouble and there's a high degree of danger, you know that you are in a crisis. The Premier stated it correctly. That is where we are in the District of Bonavista.

The minister had stated, Mr. Speaker, that we have short-term measures. I would like to hear those short-term measures because we can't wait for long-term interventions and measures in the District of Bonavista. People are ill, Mr. Speaker, and I fear that, even worse, we may have some casualties in the Bonavista District if we do not get support. That might sound rather grim, but it is what it is.

So on behalf of the people in the District of Bonavista, I would like to ask the minister as to what short-term interventions can we look forward to in the District of Bonavista that's in order going to relieve and bridge us to these longer term measures and medium-term that he talks of.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I read the petition:

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on the way front-line government services are provided to the residents of our province; and

WHEREAS the motor vehicle registration offices are open by appointment only, with the residents having to wait for five or six weeks to be serviced; and

WHEREAS when the offices are open on Wednesday morning for seniors and walk-ins, if there are cancellations or they may get accommodated, there are long lineups;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, call upon the hon. House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately review the operations of motor vehicle registration offices across the province and reopen these offices to regular hours, adhering to all safety protocols required.

Mr. Speaker, this is causing a lot of stress and a lot of strain on a lot of people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Motor Registration. I know the minister made a comment publicly saying, well, it worked out well during COVID. COVID was blamed for everything else in this province, but now we're saying because something worked because of COVID that we're going to continue.

The day that they had the seniors' day in Corner Brook, Mr. Speaker, the day I had to bring down chairs for seniors up to 80 years old, out waiting three to four hours, it was shameful. It was

actually shameful. Now when you go down on Wednesday morning and have a look, there's a lineup for seniors until 12. There's a lineup for people who have appointments, and then there's a group of individuals who are waiting, hopefully, today they might get the call.

It's shameful – it's actually shameful the way we're treating the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. I don't know how it's working. I heard the minister say in Mount Pearl it's going great. But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, I have an email right here where a person tried to get online. The answer they got was if you have any other accommodations required, communications support for alternate formats, please let us know. He couldn't get through on the computer. They sent an automated note to him telling him that he has to start calling; they're not open.

It's shameful. It is actually shameful. And I have to explain this. A few people don't realize it. The Service NL office takes from your birth certificate to your death certificate. It's just not the Motor Registration; it's just not registering your vehicle. But when you have seniors hoping to be able to get in on a Wednesday morning, and if they come a little while after, they can't get in. Mr. Speaker, I ask the minister, what happens in the middle of winter if there's a storm, people who had appointments, they got to wait another seven or eight weeks – it's shameful. It's actually shameful the way we're treating our – and I urge the government to put it back like the staff wants it so they can do their job properly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member for raising these important concerns around the Motor Registration division. So we have obviously received a great number of inquiries from residents. We are working on tweaking our systems. There is no perfect solution at the moment, Mr. Speaker.

We see different patterns across the province. So, for example, in the Member's district in

Corner Brook, we have a 34 per cent no-shows for their appointments. We also, though, are allowing walk-ins. So we do have Wednesday mornings dedicated for seniors and those who have urgent needs to walk in. But we have 33 per cent walking in during the week anyway.

We do encourage people, if they have an urgent need, they can show up. We will accommodate you and that fits in the 34 per cent in Corner Brook who aren't showing up for their appointments.

So there isn't a perfect solution. We're still working on tweaking. I would like to thank the staff for being so flexible with us as we try and find the best option, the best solution for each of our branches across the province because we do see a very different reaction from the public in terms of walk-ins and no-shows throughout the province.

I would like to say that in more than half of our locations you are able to get an appointment within the same week, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to announce that we announced a new functionality online about two weeks ago for transferring your vehicle. So anyone in the province can now transfer their vehicle online, which saves a 40-minute appointment and you don't have to come into our office.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I say to the minister the solution is open the doors.

Mr. Speaker, these are the reasons for this petition or the background of this petition as follows: In the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, there are over 75 patients who live with cystic fibrosis. CF is a genetic disease that causes severe damage to the lungs, digestive system and other organs in the body.

Unfortunately, as of now, only the symptoms of CF are being treated.

In June 2021, Health Canada approved Trikafta, a triple combination precision medication that targets the basic gene defect that causes CF. Trikafta has been proven to result in life-changing health improvements. For example, Stanojevic 2020 demonstrated that accessing Trikafta in 2021 would result in significant improvements for those living with CF by 2030, including: 60 per cent fewer people living with severe lung disease; 15 per cent fewer deaths; 19 per cent fewer hospitalizations or home intravenous courses; increase of an estimated 9.2 years for the median age of survival for a child born with CF; reduction in the number of double-lung transplants.

Each of these benefits translates directly to the CF patients themselves and reduces the overall impact on the health care system in Canada. Consider that cumulatively, in 2019, CF patients in Canada spent 25,264 days in hospital and over 15,500 days on home IVs, not to mention the 46 patients who received double-lung transplants.

Unfortunately, many CF patients cannot access Trikafta through their private insurance or do not have access to private insurance at all.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately list Trikafta as a benefit of Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions here signed from people all throughout the province. Obviously most of them are CF patients, family members, friends and so on of CF patients. I think we all know somebody or some family that's been impacted by this disease. It's my understanding that as of Friday, I think I was told, that now every province in the country are already covering this, because it has been approved by Health Canada, or they have committed to covering it. I think Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI all committed publicly last week that they would be covering this. That would make Newfoundland and Labrador the only province in the entire country that's not covering this life-saving drug.

I certainly urge the Minister of Health and Community Services and the government to

please consider this for the benefit of all of the patients, particularly young people who have so much potential ahead of them and their lives are cut so short by this dreadful disease.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any further petitions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Orders of the Day, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call – sorry getting back into the routine – Order 3, second reading of Bill 16, Mr. Speaker.

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

S. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that Bill 16, An Act To Amend The Securities Act, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 16, An Act To Amend The Securities Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Securities Act.” (Bill 16)

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 16, An Act To Amend The Securities Act.

Throughout the country, Mr. Speaker, provinces and territories are responsible for securities regulations around such matters as policy

development, investor education, investigation and enforcement. In Newfoundland and Labrador, the *Securities Act* governs all those who are involved in the securities market. The act identifies many types of securities that are investments or are interests that may lead to an investment income. Some examples of these include corporate shares, bonds, annuities, stocks or mutual funds. Anyone who wants to deal in securities, provide advice or manage investment portfolios has to be registered under this act. This includes investment advisors, stockbrokers and mutual fund advisors, Mr. Speaker.

Securities regulators from each jurisdiction are members of the Canada Securities Administrators, or CSA, which is an administrative secretariat responsible for developing a harmonized approach to securities regulation across the country. CSA member jurisdictions help to deter wrongdoings, protect investors and foster fair and efficient capital markets in which investors can have confidence.

Newfoundland and Labrador is a reliant jurisdiction, meaning that collaboration with other provinces is critical to affect a regulatory oversight. We don't have a team of experts here and lead legislation across Canada; we're a reliant jurisdiction so we take a lot of our learnings from other provinces.

CSA members work in conjunction with police forces, court systems, security exchanges and various self-regulatory organizations. The act provides the authority for the Superintendent of Securities to register and take action against those who are in contravention of the act and also provides the authority to recognize self-regulatory organizations.

Currently, the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada, or IIROC as it is known, is the only self-regulatory organization recognized in Newfoundland and Labrador and is one of the main self-regulatory organizations recognized across Canada.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, IIROC licenses 95 firms, including 4,800 individuals who work in securities. Those would be, for example, people who work at banks or other financial institutions or financial advisors.

Anyone or any organization not under IIROC would fall under our Superintendent of Securities, so everyone would be covered.

The provincial government works in tandem with IIROC to help ensure legitimate, ethical practices are being followed by members of the province's investment industry. Our government has a memorandum of understanding with IIROC that provides oversight for those members who offer advice and sell securities including stocks and bonds, for example.

This provides good regulatory oversight. The changes we're introducing today strengthen this. They help streamline and harmonize regulatory processes pertaining to securities. We're also always looking for opportunities to enhance consumer protection, which this also delivers, Mr. Speaker.

In this spirit, we're introducing the necessary amendments to the act to allow IIROC to expand its regulatory powers, enhance investor protection in our province and align regulation with that of other jurisdictions.

Bill 16 will allow self-regulatory organizations to compel evidence in investigations and hearings, will allow self-regulatory organizations to file decisions with the Supreme Court and provide immunity for self-regulatory organizations and their employees that are acting in good faith in carrying out their regulatory obligations, Mr. Speaker.

The bill will also allow decisions of self-regulatory organizations to be reviewed by the Superintendent of Securities, so the authority to review, modify or revoke a decision made by a self-regulatory organization.

These changes enhance IIROC's powers to effectively and efficiently investigate and resolve rule breaches and help ensure protection for consumers against securities fraud or misconduct of investment dealers. It would also help streamline and harmonize the regulatory processes pertaining to securities throughout our country, as most other jurisdictions have already provided these authorities to IIROC and other self-regulatory organizations.

Bill 16 also establishes reciprocal order provisions, which allow for the automatic enforcement of an order or agreements by other security regulators in Canada. This expedites the recognition of orders and minimizes delays between the Canadian security administrators, between them notifying an order and consumer awareness of that order.

Reciprocal orders are utilized by CSA members and are an effective way to impose sanctions, conditions, restrictions, requirements or orders on a person or company in one jurisdiction and have them immediately apply in other jurisdictions. Reciprocal orders are based on a finding or admission of a contravention of security legislation or conduct contrary to the public interest.

Mr. Speaker, if there was a finding of contravention of security legislation in another province, a reciprocal order would allow that to immediately take effect here, further protecting consumers in a more timely fashion.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, these amendments to the *Securities Act* would strengthen oversight for those who offer advice and sell securities in our province. These changes represent another step in our collective efforts to further enhance consumer protection in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I look forward to discussing further with my colleagues and answering any questions in Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

First of all, I'd like to thank the minister and the staff for the briefing we had last Thursday. Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: This bill will give self-regulatory organizations great powers and thus

will provide a great oversight to the financial service industry in our province.

In this province, IIROC, which is the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada, is the only self-regulatory organization. It also comes as one of the main recognized organizations across Canada, and all provinces and territories have signed an MOU with IIROC. I'll use IIROC as we go forward in speaking of it.

Currently, IIROC does not have the power to enforce its fines through the courts in Newfoundland, does not have the power to compel evidence nor does it give it statutory immunity. This bill will provide the authority to IIROC for each of these tasks so that IIROC can enforce its findings and thus have greater oversight of financial services within the province.

Currently, the Superintendent of Securities is the only official who can enforce the rules. This legislation will allow IIROC to help enforce those rules. IIROC's rulings and judgments will be able to be appealed to the superintendent. This bill will also bring in automatic enforcement of an order made by securities regulator in Canada. If there's a ruling in Ontario, then the effect will flow down through so, hopefully, that will help right across the country and will keep everybody in line.

Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province that does not give IIROC the ability to enforce these rules thus a financial service provider could leave this industry without paying the reparations for not following the rules. Also, IIROC has been looking for these legislative amendments since 2019. As the Opposition, we have called for this legislation of amendments in the House and also in the media.

Some of the legislative changes come in sections: one, two, four, six, eight, nine and 10 of the bill – change some wording. Trial Division is now changed to Supreme Court throughout the *Securities Act*. This change, which we've seen in many pieces of legislation over the last couple of years, will result in the change to the court's name.

Under section 25.01, this section of the act will allow IIROC or another SRO to be appointed as an investigator. The investigator will be able to summon a witness and compel evidence. This investigator will have to be registered with the Supreme Court and if it does not appropriately comply with the investigation, their non-compliance will be considered a breach of an order or a judgment of the court. A person who has to give evidence in an investigation may obtain legal counsel and may claim privilege as well.

Under section 25.02, this section of the act will allow IIROC or another – to conduct a hearing with IIROC, having the same power as the Supreme Court. They can summon witnesses and compel evidence. The judgments will be registered with the court and, thus, are enforceable. As in a previous section, a person can obtain legal counsel and may claim privilege as well.

On section 25.03, this section of the act gives the Superintendent of Securities the ability to review a decision of the self-regulatory organization. The superintendent can decide, on their own initiative, that they want to review a ruling of a person or a company who is impacted by the decision, and can ask the superintendent to review the decision and a review must be initiated within 30 days of that decision.

In section 25.04, this section of the act indicates that after the timeline for review by the superintendent has passed, the decision can be filed with the Supreme Court. An order made by the superintendent can also be filed with the Supreme Court. These decisions have the same force and effect as if for a judgment of the Supreme Court.

That will be it for now. We will go over some other questions when we get into the debate on this as well.

Thank you so much.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like you said, once again, we're following the jurisdictions of the rest of the country and trying to be on par with all our colleagues across the federation.

It's important that we do give these powers to these things. Securities seem to be a very important part of our society now. Also, we know securities fraud and stuff like that has been creeping up in prevalence, especially across the country and the world. We have to be able to be on our toes, we have to be able to penalize those who decide to break the rules and also try to evade the rules of the corporate and financial world. Like we see here time and time again, you know, people swindled out of their life savings, people that are committing fraud and stealing from corporations and companies, but most of all, individuals and people who are taking their money and investing it in these different ways and stuff like that.

We have to be on top of everything and following along with what our cousins are doing across the country, but also looking at ways to improve and move forward going ahead of this. Are there things that we can also look at that may be a bit different than what other federations are doing and stuff like that, that we can also look at, you know, the ability to be at the cutting edge of it? Because as the world changes, technology changes and things like that change, we have to be flexible in ability to catch it before someone loses their life savings, or a fraud or a securities breach has happened.

With that, I look forward to more discussion with that Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm supportive of this particular bill. This will further enhance authorities provided to securities self-regulatory organizations in the province. I know that the minister and the department have looked at other jurisdictions across the country. It brings us more in line with what other jurisdictions are doing. It also strengthens the authorities for filings, decisions, compelling

evidence and providing opportunities for appeals, greater than what currently exist.

Mr. Speaker, the act will also strengthen oversight for those who offer advice and sell securities, which is greater than what currently exists, whether it's mutual funds, stocks or bonds. It will provide greater oversight for the individuals involved in the industry, as well as increasing capacity of self-regulatory organizations to allow them to effectively and efficiently investigate and resolve breaches of their own rules.

Mr. Speaker, this is about providing greater consumer protection. This bill will enhance consumer protection, which is something, I think, that all Members of the Legislature could celebrate. In looking at what other provinces are doing in terms of consumer protection, we look at best practices any time we introduce a bill in this Legislature to ensure that we are looking and measuring against the best practices of other jurisdictions. And that's what this bill aims to do.

The amendments in this bill will help establish reciprocal orders so that it can also protect consumers in this province. It enhances the protection that consumers in this province have, expediting recognition of an order or sanction along with consumer awareness of that order and that sanction.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a good piece of legislation. I think it's timely, and I commend the department and the minister for bringing it forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As my colleague, the Member for Ferryland said, we'll be supporting this legislation. I'm glad to see the legislation is finally being implemented.

I will say that there is some question as to whether or not it goes far enough. I say that because IIROC is not the only governing board

out there. If we look to recent court cases without getting into any names, as an example, at the end of a court case the individual may no longer be licensed by IIROC, but he or she could possibly become an insurance advisor, represent a group insurance plan or group retirement plans. They all have investment funds, segregated funds, RSSPs, TFSA, RESPs for children. Because all of this is outside the scope of IIROC and it is a much larger part of the financial services group throughout the province, we could end up having someone who IIROC doesn't legislate looking after a pension plan, as an example, for MHAs.

I certainly wouldn't want someone like that looking after an RESP for my child, and I'm sure no one in here would. The potential is still there. So while this is a great first step, I believe that government has to look deeper into what this means. I know back in November of 2019 our colleague here, Mr. Wakeham, asked about title protection act with regard to this exact same thing. So I think it's things that we need to consider.

There are three different types of provincial registration for individuals who sell or give advice about securities. If someone is wondering about an individual's registration with the department, they can call on the department and ask about it, but there's no publicly available registry to see that the financial services professional is registered with a government department or if their registration is even valid. That raises big questions in itself.

There's another area where action can be taken. I believe having a tool where members of the public can see areas of registration and how their financial services professional is registered would allow them to make a more informed decision about who they hire and how to invest their money. We currently don't have that.

This would also help individuals know what type of service to expect from a broker. As the department's website notes, there are different types of brokerage firms and each type may offer a different type of service. For instance, a discount brokerage does not offer in-house research or advice, which are their specialities, in full-service terms.

There's an old saying in the financial market that every FA, financial advisor, is not an FP, financial planner; but every financial planner is a financial advisor. As I said, while I believe this is a great first step, I believe government has a responsibility to look at other things we can do to protect people's investments over the long term.

Other than that, we'll be supporting this bill and I thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take long. I'm going to support Bill 16 as well. Anything certainly that we can do in this House of Assembly that's going to protect consumers, I think that's obviously an important role that we have. It's something that we should all support and I'm sure this bill will be passed unanimously.

I'm not going to get into all the details, that's already been sort of discussed by other Members. If there are further things, I guess, in terms of what my colleague from Terra Nova just said, if there are other things that are missed here or other things that can be done, I would certainly encourage the government to look at everything that we can do to protect consumers, protect consumers' investments.

You have to remember that when we talk about stocks and bonds and mutual funds and all that stuff, quite often that is people who are planning for their retirement. That's why a lot of people have that. You work your whole life, you invest in these things with the plan that, at some point in time, when you retire you're not going to be solely dependant upon what you may receive from the federal government, because we know that's not a very – in terms of maintaining a good quality of life, that's not necessarily enough money to do so. So many people, if they don't have pension plans and so on at their workplace, they invest in these things so that they have that nest egg when they get to their so-called golden years. It is really important that we protect that for those people, for consumers.

I do note though – and I'm sure there will be questions that will come up in Committee, Mr. Speaker, but, again, listening to my colleague from Terra Nova when he referenced that this is sort of focusing on IIROC, and that was certainly the main organization – self-governing body that is utilized in Newfoundland and Labrador. But it is my understanding that in this particular bill it could apply to any of those self-regulatory bodies, it's not just IIROC. IIROC is the one that happens to be in Newfoundland, but, based on the way this is written, it's my understanding, at least, that if there was a different self-regulatory agency, which may be in other provinces, that they would also fall under this, and if someone was not a member of a self-governing body then it would fall under the Superintendent of Securities.

I wouldn't want to think that if someone is not a member of IIROC that means that consumers are sort of automatically going to be at risk, if those people that are providing those services are not members of IIROC. Because that is clearly not my understanding, at least. Perhaps the minister will clarify that there are protections for consumers as it relates to providers who are not necessarily members of IIROC. So that would be an important point, I think as well, for me.

But beyond that we're just simply giving more powers to the self-regulating agency, again, which, primarily here in Newfoundland and Labrador, would be IIROC so that they can properly investigate any complaints or any red flags and ensure that there are no wrongdoings and that everybody is protected.

I'm sure that this is also going to be welcomed by the industry itself. I'm sure it will be, because anyone who's part of any kind of industry or an association and so on and who is operating above board and are professional people, they're going to want to have these protections. It protects them as much as it protects the consumers. Why wouldn't you want to have all these safeguards in place to protect all parties involved?

The only individual or individuals who wouldn't want these kinds of protections would be someone who might be thinking about doing things untoward. I think it makes sense to be

doing this and strengthening this legislation. As I said, I'll support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: There are no other speakers to the bill?

If the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL speaks now she will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister for Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the Minister of Education, the Members for Ferryland, Labrador West, Terra Nova and Mount Pearl - Southlands for their feedback on this legislation.

Just to answer and respond to some of the comments that some of the Members made, in terms of the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, he is correct in his understanding that it would apply to other self-regulatory organizations. I guess I'd also add that the *Securities Act* applies to everyone and the Superintendent of Securities regulates them all. The Superintendent of Securities in this way is delegating the IIROC powers to IIROC for its members, but the superintendent still oversees all members that would fall under the *Securities Act* and under the Superintendent of Securities.

I'd also add to the Member for Ferryland, a lot of what he mentioned was around consumer protection. There are other pieces of legislation that do protect consumers in other areas. We regulate insurance, for example, in many areas and we do have consumer protection legislation, as well as legislation in real estate trading and other financial service means to help protect consumers.

We are always looking for opportunities to strengthen our legislation and further protect consumers.

Thank you very much for the feedback and I'm looking forward to answering questions in Committee.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 16 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Securities Act. (Bill 16)

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

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

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Securities Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 16)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, 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 16.

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 Bill 16.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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 (Warr): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 16, An Act To Amend The Securities Act.

A bill, "An To Amend The Securities Act." (Bill 16)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

My first question is: Why are these amendments being proposed at this time?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the question.

We're always looking at how to improve consumer protection. Certainly, when regulatory bodies such as IIROC bring forward suggested changes to our legislation, they are certainly taken seriously and reviewed, so this is as a result of that process. We look forward to aligning with other Canadian jurisdictions to better protect consumers.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: IIROC has been calling for these amendments since 2019. I'm just

wondering why it took so long to bring this to the House.

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you to my colleague for the question.

Any changes in legislation have to go through the legislative process. Our department is responsible for the most – I think 176 pieces of legislation. I've been in this role a year and I know this was on the Order Paper in the last session and, unfortunately, we didn't get to it. I'm very pleased that it's the first piece of legislation being brought forward in this sitting of the House.

We have a lot more coming so get ready.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Feels like we're going to see all 176.

I notice there's no enacting clause in this legislation. When will this bill be enacted?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That is an excellent question and I will get back to you – upon Royal Assent. It will be shortly; as soon as the bill gets Royal Assent.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you.

This bill gives increasing powers to the self-regulatory organizations, which, in this province, is IIROC. Will IIROC have increasing powers over any investigations and complaints that may already be investigating or will it be only applied to future complaints or activity?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much for the question.

It's my understanding that this will apply on a go-forward basis, so any kind of new investigation that arises or any new complaint. There would be some opportunity, depending on how the issue itself is progressing, depending on the stage, it certainly could apply to it. But, generally, it's kind of moving forward after Royal Assent.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Minister.

Hopefully some of these people can get back what they lost. Hopefully it can go backwards and look at it.

Currently, the Superintendent of Securities provides oversight in this province. Can the minister provide an overview on how many investigations that have been completed in the last year or how many complaints they have received?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I don't believe I have the number of current investigations ongoing, although I'd be happy to get it for the Member. I'll get back to him on that shortly.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thanks, Mr. Chair.

The legislation notes that self-regulatory organizations can appoint an investigator. Can the minister outline what qualifications this investigator must have?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

Any investigator appointed would align with the processes in place by IIROC and outlined in the memorandum of understanding. There are criteria and processes assigned there for an investigator.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: The legislation talks about the ability of an investigator and a self-regulatory organization to compel witnesses to produce records. Can the minister give an overview of any protections which may be in place to protect information, which may be commercially sensitive?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the question.

We have reviewed this with the Privacy Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner didn't have any concerns. The normal court processes would take place in terms of protecting commercially sensitive information. So in this type of process, a party, if they have concerns for their commercially sensitive information, they could apply to the court for protection and that would follow the normal court processes for protecting that information from the public.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The legislation talks about the ability of an investigator and a self-regulatory organization to compel a witness to produce a record. As this legislation deals with financial services, these records may be related to personal and financial information. Has the Privacy Commissioner – well, obviously it has, you had said that. Sorry.

The legislation will give self-regulatory organizations such as IIROC the ability to hold hearings with their decisions enforceable in the court. Can the minister outline some protocols surrounding how hearing will take place?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The hearings would take place as outlined by the IIROC process, as it would in other provinces. That would also be outlined in our memorandum of understanding. It is a quasi-judicial process. There would be a set framework with very specific rules and boundaries, appeal processes and all those types of things.

I appreciate the question. Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Will they be public hearings or closed hearings and will their minutes or transcripts be public?

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

S. STOODLEY: Based on the quasi-judicial nature, my understanding is that they will not be public. I don't think you'll be able to just go and attend as a member of the general public.

The outcome, I guess, and depending on the adjudicator or the investigator and whoever is hearing the case, would make determinations as to whether or not things need to be public knowledge. Of course, any sanctions would be public knowledge and that's where the reciprocal orders take effect in terms of us and other provinces. So any sanctions that are delivered by other provinces and any kind of remedies, they would apply here, immediately, thanks to the reciprocal orders. But, no, the hearings themselves would not be public.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Does IIROC make public the list of complaints, investigations or hearings that they have before them?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you for the question.

IIROC does announce whether or not it's holding hearings. It doesn't announce a list of complaints that it's received.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: The legislation outlines that the superintendent has 30 days, after they're informed of a decision of a self-regulatory organization, to initiate a review on the decision. How is the superintendent informed of this decision?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

The superintendent would get a letter from IIROC notifying of the reciprocal orders and that would be outlined in the memorandum of understanding.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Legislation establishes reciprocal order provisions in the *Securities Act* to allow for the automatic enforcement of an order or agreements made by other security regulators in Canada. Can the minister provide an example of an order from another province which will be implemented here?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The types of reciprocal orders could be a sanction against an individual or a company. It could be a penalty that was issued that would also apply here. Any judgment by another organization in another province that impacts a

member in Newfoundland and Labrador would apply.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So any of these reciprocal orders that are only, I guess, for IIROC registered people, is that ...? If someone is sanctioned under IIROC, are they sanctioned under other agencies?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So the reciprocal orders are specifically around IIROC, but it would also include anything under the Canadian Securities Association, the CSA. Any organization that's a member of the CSA, the sanctions would apply to them.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: How will individuals who have financial security firms in this province be informed of reciprocal orders, which originated in another province and will not be enacted here?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So members of IIROC in this province would be communicating with IIROC on a regular basis to get updates. A lot of that would be reliant on the training or internal processes of those organizations. Like if you think about a bank and someone at a bank, if you might go see them to talk about investments you might have, they would have their own process from when IIROC, for example, communicates with the bank to when the bank tells the person in the St. John's branch or the Paradise branch that they have to know this new information. So IIROC would communicate that to their organizations and then the internal processes of those

organizations would be responsible for telling all of the members within those organizations.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: So, using the bank as an example, obviously, Scotiabank doesn't communicate with Bank of Montreal, with RBC. How would they communicate if someone were to leave one institution and go to another?

CHAIR: The Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So IIROC would oversee all organizations and members. Within a financial institution such as a bank, they would have a list of all of the members within their organization that are trade and that fall under this act. And this would be something that they would have to do for a range of legislation across provinces. So as soon as there's a new change that applies to them, the bank or the financial institution would have processes in place to ensure their members are aware of all the new changes in legislation that apply to them.

When I worked in the insurance industry, the same thing happened every time there was a new change. We knew it was coming and then we were told, sometimes after the fact, and then we just had to make sure we were aware and there's internal training and all those types of things.

So that would just depend on the organization and their agreement with IIROC and their internal processes.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: How will this act protect individuals who are dealing with people who aren't registered with IIROC?

CHAIR: The Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Anyone who's working with an organization, not a member of IIROC, would still be under the Canadian Securities Administrators and that oversight would still fall under our Superintendent of Securities.

There are very high standards for dealing in financial services, so all of those members are registered and there are no outstanding concerns for us here. I mean, if someone was doing illegal activity, we would have to follow the processes and someone could make a complaint or if someone was selling something illegally that they didn't have the authority to sell, then the enforcement processes and procedures would be in place, for example, through IIROC. And if they didn't fall under IIROC, then our Superintendent of Securities would handle that through the *Securities Act* and other pieces of legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: CSA and IIROC, do they communicate with one another? Or are they autonomous?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Canadian Securities Administration is kind of an overarching Canadian organization of all securities, whereas IIROC is specifically like a piece of the CSA. So let me get out my notes again, sorry. IIROC deals with a specific subset of the securities, whereas the CSA kind of is an overarching body and IIROC is a part of that. They have a memorandum of understanding as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Who funds IIROC?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Members fund IIROC. So the sellers and advisors, they would pay fees to IIROC. IIROC is not funded by governments.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Just one last question: How does this bill protect somebody? I guess, if an individual is an IIROC-registered investor, they're charged under the act and disbarred – for a lack of a better word – they still have the ability to go work with an insurance company and sell RESPs, RDSPs, different things. How is this bill going to protect people from that happening?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In other pieces of legislation, we regulate different industries, such as insurance brokers, and there are standards for being an insurance broker. In a previous sitting of the House, we brought in legislation around real estate trading and we increased the protection and the requirements around being a real estate agent and a real estate broker in that framework.

Different areas of financial services are covered under different pieces of legislation to ensure that anyone working with the public, you know, there are appropriate checks and balances in place to protect consumers. The *Securities Act* deals specifically with individuals working in the securities industry; we have the Real Estate Trading Act to deal with real estate; there's the *Automobile Insurance Act* and other insurance legislation that protects consumers when dealing with insurance.

We are looking at mortgage brokers, for example, and so there's legislation for each area. We also have overarching consumer protection legislation, Mr. Chair, and we're very confident in our ability to protect consumers. We have a lot of processes in place where people, if they

have concerns, they can bring them to our attention for investigation.

I look forward to answering any other questions the Member has.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Going down the same road as my colleague there and a little bit more. So, in terms of the consumer protection, if I'm a broker or whatever the case might be and I do something fraudulent, untoward, whatever the case might be, are they licensed or something? I would think that they would have some kind of a licence that would be pulled, and hence they wouldn't be able to leave one company and just go to another company, because they'd have their licence gone. Is that how this works or how does it work?

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

S. STOODLEY: Yes, thank you to the Member for the question.

So yes, members of these organizations are licensed and you have to be licensed to sell securities in Canada. IIROC is part of that organization, part of that framework. There are standards – actually, we just introduced – I think a press release went out in the last day or two and you can now renew your licence online.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: I'm just hearing my colleague here saying only for mutual funds. Can you clarify if that's for all securities or if it's only for mutual funds that that protection and licence applies?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My understanding is that all individuals who sell and trade in securities have to be licensed under our department or by IIROC, as we delegate the powers to them for areas under our memorandum of understanding with IIROC.

Mutual funds are securities, so they would apply the same as any other securities.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So going back to my scenario, I'm assuming that they can also do some kind of a temporary revoking of someone's licence while it's under investigation. If someone hasn't actually been charged with anything untoward, so to speak, and their licence is just taken from them, but they could be under investigation – so I'm assuming while they're under investigation, there are temporary measures that can be taken to protect consumers?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So absolutely, as the Member suggested, we have a range of penalties and sanctions available. The Superintendent of Securities oversees that. Depending on the type of financial service that is in question, the different appeal body or the different investigative process would be undertaken. Depending on the process that exists for that specific complaint, depending on the nature of the complaint, then different things would take effect.

I don't have all the specific paths for each in front of me, but I'd be happy to get the Member additional information on that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Final question: RESPs and everything apply to this as well? I know we talked about RRSPs, bonds, mutual funds, so these Registered Education Savings Plans, that falls under this same umbrella as well, does it?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, a Registered Education Savings Plan, someone who sells an RESP would be licensed under this legislation and it does count as a security.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I do have a question actually and it's kind of spurred on by my colleague from Terra Nova. When someone is sanctioned or found in violation and IIROC says so, will their name be added to any sort of list that they are barred from selling securities?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

If someone is sanctioned under IIROC than that is released publicly. That would also include not being able to sell securities in the future. That could be a possible penalty that would come out of the quasi-judicial process. Other penalties are also available depending on the severity and that would be up to the remedy that's decided. That is a potential outcome.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: There is no master list or anything kept for anyone who applies for a licence in this province to sell securities who may have come from another jurisdiction. Does this mean that there will be some vetting process after – say

they're barred in Ontario and decide to come here and sell securities, will we be able to track that?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think exactly the example given by the Member that would be something that IIROC would monitor and that's the point of enabling reciprocal orders. If someone were barred in another province then that would apply here. If an order applied, say, in the Province of Saskatchewan, that would also apply in Newfoundland and Labrador. If they were barred in another province, they would be barred in this province as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Another thing that my colleague from Terra Nova also brought up that brings a big concern to me is someone who sells securities can easily transition into insurance or real estate or anything like that. Will these people also be barred from getting licences like that in this province?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess in the last six or eight months in our department, we have also had a reorganization. Our Superintendent of Securities is also our Superintendent of Real Estate – it might be a tweak of the title there – is also our Superintendent of Insurance, so we do have one financial services team that has this oversight of these financial services areas. They would certainly make sure, through the internal controls and processes and through the renewal of licencing processes that exist, that we would catch that and that would fall within the usual processes of that specific industry. If it were in insurance, for example, it would apply to the insurance brokers act. All those superintendents are the same person.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 11 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 11 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 11 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: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Securities 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 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 hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 16.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 16.

Shall the motion carry?

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.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

B. WARR: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 16 without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 16 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 5, second reading of Bill 18.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Education, that Bill 18, An Act To Amend The Lotteries Act, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 18, An Act To Amend The Lotteries Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Lotteries Act." (Bill 18)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

This amendment to the *Lotteries Act* has already been approved and passed in three other

provinces: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and PEI, all partners in the Atlantic Lottery Corporation. It will provide the province with retroactive immunity from lottery-related civil class action suits filed against the province in which the province is named as a defendant.

The amendment only prohibits – the amendment only prohibits – an action for damages under a class action suit, while still permitting a person to bring an action against the Atlantic Lottery Corporation or any person acting on behalf of government in the operation of a lottery scheme to recover losses suffered as a result of negligent act or omission.

Damages for negligence claims are limited to compensatory damages in the amount equal to that which can be proved to have been incurred. The immunity applies to all lottery schemes developed, organized, undertaken, conducted and managed by the Atlantic Lottery Corporation such as video lottery terminals, ticket lottery, instant win or online versions of these products.

Newfoundland and Labrador's legislation is in line with legislation already implemented by the other three Atlantic provinces, with whom are joint owners of Atlantic Lottery: New Brunswick in November of 2019, Nova Scotia in March of 2020 and Prince Edward Island in July of 2020.

Mr. Speaker, I'll quote from the hon. member of Northside-Westmount, a Progressive Conservative member of the legislature in Nova Scotia, and I'll quote him from the brief debate. He said: "What's in the interest of Nova Scotia and Nova Scotians is in protecting the province from potential damages were such efforts to be instigated here in our province. Our neighbours in New Brunswick recently passed similar legislation and, as partners in Atlantic Lottery, it would appear prudent that we consider similar legislation here." That is what we're doing here for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The amendment also updates references to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to accurately reflect the current title of that department. Without this amendment, there is a higher financial risk to the government and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, other

than to the other provincial shareholders of the Atlantic Lottery Corporation, and that's most often called ALC, Mr. Speaker. Other provincial shareholders have taken legislative steps to protect themselves and Atlantic Lottery Corporation's operations in their provinces.

All proceeds of lottery schemes are returned to the provinces; they are not retained by the Atlantic Lottery Corporation. Without this immunity provision, if an action were to proceed and be successful against the ALC in an egregious amount, it could either force a bankruptcy of ALC or place the shareholders in a position to pay the amount of the award on behalf of the Atlantic Lottery Corporation. Given that a recently terminated class action in this province sought disgorgement of all VLT profits for the period of 13 years, roughly \$900 million, this amendment is a prudent and responsible action to take in defence of the interests of the public at large.

As well as the province, immunity will include ministers, directors, officers, employees and agents of government. It will also offer immunity to the ALC or any other person acting on behalf of the government in the operation of a lottery scheme, including their directors, officers, employees or agents. The amendment is retroactive to the inception of the *Lotteries Act*, February 21, 1992, and therefore offering immunity for the duration of the legislation.

I will add, again, Mr. Speaker, that this is prohibiting, I guess, the action for damages under a class action suit. That does not mean that individuals cannot sue for damages. It is strictly around class action suits. It will still permit a person to bring action against the ALC or any person acting on behalf of government in the operation of the lottery scheme to recover losses suffered as a result of a negligent act or omission. So I wanted to make that distinction. It is only for those class actions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I, again, reiterate this has been put in place in three other Atlantic provinces that are partners in the Atlantic Lottery Corporation, and I've indicated how it was felt in the legislature of Nova Scotia.

And I'll leave it there, Mr. Speaker, and wait for colleagues to give me their discourse and ideas.

Thank you.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess the fact that we actually had to bring in legislation to limit people's rights in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador when they believe they've been harmed is not something that any of us want to do.

Certainly, we all know that there is a significant part of VLTs that are addictive. We all know of people in our communities who are addicted to VLTs and have suffered significant losses. In fact, such is a way that some have actually completed suicide. So it is a very serious thing when we talk about a funding source that actually has the potential or has had significant impact on people's mental health and addiction.

We're bringing this bill in today to limit people's abilities in that particular right, and it's a serious discussion. We are speaking about Bill 18, as the minister has alluded, which seeks to amend the *Lotteries Act*. The government has provided an explanation of what the bill does and why it's being brought forward, and we've also been told that the core piece of this bill was already passed in New Brunswick in 2019 and in PEI and Nova Scotia in 2020. And now we're here, I guess, at the end of the day to say okay, we need to keep up with the Maritimes.

The question is: Is it the right thing to do? The Supreme Court has already limited the way action on this matter can be brought before the courts. Essentially, they are saying it must be shown that a person suffered damages and the corporation and the government ought to have known those damages could be caused by what they were doing in setting up state-sponsored VLT gambling.

We are right to be insulating people who may have done such a thing and benefiting from such an action from the consequences of their action. Shouldn't people be held accountable for the damages they cause? We know that VLT gambling causes damages to some people. We've been told that VLTs were configured in

such a way that they exploited the vulnerabilities of people prone to gambling addiction.

It's hard not to draw the comparison between this and cigarettes. Cigarette manufacturers allegedly hid data showing their product was addictive and causing harm. They were later sued over this in class actions, and I believe our province was actually somebody that got involved in a class action lawsuit.

Should the Atlantic Lottery Corporation and the Atlantic governments be shielded if they did something similar with respect to VLTS? But suppose others want to come forward to make a case for real, measurable harm or for negligence? The bill seeks to prevent such class action lawsuits. Individuals will have to come forward on their own which is an onerous and expensive proposition, especially for people who may have been left destitute by gambling.

The bill seeks to limit amounts that can be awarded to proven losses caused by acts of negligence or omission. The bill seeks to exclude the possibility of punitive and exemplary damages. The bill is presented as a reasonable means of protecting taxpayers from people who seek too much. But one can also say the bill raises a very, very high wall for anyone harmed by VLTs to seek justice and fair compensation.

It is a noble ideal to protect taxpayers but, remember, where much of the VLT revenues have come from. Remember the people pumping the money into those VLTs hour after hour, day after day. That's why the VLTS are so lucrative in this province.

So, perhaps, people should be held to account for what they've done and, perhaps, the damages should not be limited by legislation but left for the courts to decide. That's why we question some of the aspects of the bill. It just doesn't feel like it's the right thing to do. Whatever damage you might have caused to people over the last three decades, don't worry they got you covered. That just doesn't seem right.

When people were talking about gambling addictions – it would be justified, I guess, if a gambling addiction was an ailment completely unknown to science until just recently. But

people have been talking about gambling addiction and other negative impacts of VLTs 30 years ago.

I want to take the Members on a little journey, if you bear with me, back to *Hansard* of December 11, 1991. The government of the day was the Wells Liberal government and the Official Opposition of the day was the PC Party. Earlier that same year, the Liberals had facilitated the Atlantic Lottery Corporation putting VLCs in bars throughout the province. This was at a time, of course, during severe budget cuts, job losses and cod collapse in the eve of the moratorium. The legislative review Committee, at the time, called for the bill to undergo further study. That didn't happen.

I want to quote what Jack Harris, who was sitting as an NDP Member in the House of Assembly, at that time, had to say at that particular time.

If you just bear with me for a second. Jack Harris stood in the House – I guess we were allowed to stand then – and said: “What kind of money is Atlantic Lotto Corporation hauling out of communities in this Province, and where is it coming from? Is it coming from the communities that can least afford to have the money drained out through this process, or is it coming from the people who have lots of money and do not mind spending it?”

“Now that is something we should know about, and the public of this Province ought to know the facts. This Government can produce those facts and they can provide the information to the public. There ought to be an opportunity for public response in it, and there ought to be an opportunity for the people of this Province and this Legislature to direct this Government as to what they shall do with this power that they want for themselves now, which they seem intent on harbouring to themselves, to have a government monopoly on gambling, to raise taxes, to raise revenue, from this form of gambling which has been called, I think quite accurately, a voluntary tax on the poor. That is what it has been called. Government sponsored gambling of this nature has been called, I think quite accurately, a voluntary tax on the poor, using the psychology of gambling to extract

money from people who can least afford it, a voluntary tax on the poor.”

“I am giving them a request right now, Mr. Speaker, that they engage in a form of public discussion about this, make the facts available to the public, set up a Government task force or committee to make those facts available, hear what the public have to say about it, and listen and change this legislation so that government will, in carrying out” this “conduct themselves in accordance with the wish of this Province and of the people of this Province”

So, again, to me that’s what we should be doing. I think we should clearly listen and take some advice from that and put this towards a Committee.

I’d also like briefly to quote from the late Jim Hodder, PC Member for Port au Port in the same debate. He was talking about: “Why, Mr. Speaker, do only the Atlantic Provinces and Manitoba, at the present time, have those lotto machines? Why couldn’t this Province say, no, we have gone far enough with gambling.

“The Government House Leader got up and talked about New Brunswick. New Brunswick had machines. Yes, they had machines. They had machines in 1962” and so on. Again, I guess he was basically trying to make an argument that perhaps we shouldn’t have gone down that road, but we did go down that road.

Again, I just want to reiterate the fact that Lynn Verge, again, who spoke at the same time, talked about the fact that the Committee that was reviewing this was a Committee made of the legislative review Committee, which at the present time had represented three political parties. All of them had agreed, at the time, that the action that they were taking deserved more public discussion, but it never happened. I believe we have an opportunity to do that here.

That’s where I would like us to look and see whether or not the review Committee could take this and look at it from – have public engagement, have people involved. It is a serious, serious piece of legislation and I would like to see that review Committee do some more work and come here to the House with it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I’m just going to take a few minutes just to make a few comments on this as well.

Mr. Speaker, in all likelihood, I’m going to support this bill because I do understand the intent of wanting to protect the taxpayers from the potential of any big class actions suits.

I don’t support it just because Nova Scotia or PEI did it. I couldn’t care less what they do. They can do what they want and we’ll do what we want in here; what we think is best for our own province. So I certainly don’t feel pressured to support it because of the other Atlantic provinces.

But I do have some mixed views, similar to what the Member from Port au Port had talked about. I feel as if, in principle, Mr. Speaker, I feel like supporting it makes us hypocrites. I feel like me supporting it makes me a hypocrite, to support the bill for the same reasons that the Member from Port au Port outlined.

Why I say that is because gambling is an addiction, same as smoking is an addiction, and as the Member so rightly points out, Newfoundland and Labrador, we’re part of a class action lawsuit against the tobacco companies. Why are we part of this? Because we’re saying that smoking does harm to our citizens.

Smoking, as we know, causes heart disease. Smoking causes cancer. Smoking causes other lung diseases. As a result of that, it’s costing taxpayers in terms of our health care system because, ultimately, the results of people smoking for extended periods of time – not in all cases, we all know examples of we had a grandfather or someone we knew who lived to be 99 years old and smoked his whole life. They’re rare. They’re very rare. The data is very real about the negative impacts of smoking on health and then the cost to taxpayers.

That's why we're part of this class action lawsuit against tobacco companies. We're part of it, despite the fact that tobacco companies, as an example, have to have on their cigarette packages – I haven't even seen a cigarette package in a long time, to be honest with you. I used to be a smoker myself, many, many years ago. Best thing I ever did was quit that. But, now, cigarette packages, to my knowledge, they got pictures of like black lungs and whatever and they have to clearly say that this stuff is going to kill you, basically, and it has to be outlined.

Tobacco companies aren't allowed to advertise anymore. If you go into a store, the cigarettes are in a cabinet, a closed cabinet with no identifying features on it. Unless you were a smoker, you wouldn't even know there were cigarettes in the store, probably.

But, despite all of those measures to warn people about the harm of cigarettes and to limit access, certainly by children, to discourage access, to not advertise it, to hide them in the stores, despite all those things that are being done that, arguably, due diligence is being done to help prevent people from getting addicted to cigarettes, even after all that, we're still going to sue them because of the harm and the addictive nature of cigarettes, and we are part of that as a province.

Even though I'm probably going to support the bill, I feel like a hypocrite in doing so. We can draw the exact same analogy around gambling. I'm not talking about somebody who goes and gets a 649 every now and then or whatever, but VLTs in particular – and we know the addictive nature of VLTs. I'm sure we've all heard stories about people who have lost everything they've owned as a result of VLTs.

I recall – and this is going back many years ago now – a couple that we knew; this is years ago now. I can remember listening to the news one day and they were talking about an armed robbery that had taken place in a particular restaurant. The restaurant doesn't exist now, but it used to be a restaurant and they had VLTs in it. There was an armed robbery that took place. We were absolutely shocked to learn that the individual who actually committed that armed robbery was a spouse of a co-worker of a family

member, who we didn't know really well but we had socialized in the past at office functions and so on.

That individual actually committed an armed robbery, went to jail, lost their home and lost a marriage. The wife found out, after the fact, that they were thousands of dollars in debt, huge loans taken out and credit cards maxed. The individual had lost his job and never even told his spouse. All these things happened over a VLT addiction. That's just one, and I'm sure there are thousands of stories and everybody knows people who have been in – maybe not as extreme now as committing armed robberies but in very, very troubling situations because of VLTs.

It's hard not to draw that analogy between the addictive nature of cigarettes, the harm that cigarettes can cause on not just individual but the families and compare that to the harm that can be caused by VLTs in particular, gambling in general, I guess. Now we have online gambling and everything else.

To me, I feel hypocritical, really, in supporting this at the same time that we're saying way to go, government, jump on board that class action lawsuit against the tobacco companies; but it's okay because in this case it's not the cigarette companies that are making all the money, we're making the money. Because Atlantic lotto, as we know, is government-sponsored gambling, is what it is. This is money coming into provincial coffers in all the Atlantic provinces. Because we are the beneficiaries or the public coffers are the beneficiaries of the money, then we're going to protect ourselves. The tobacco companies cannot come out and say: Do you know what? We're going to put legislation in place now so that we can't be sued. They don't have that ability, but we do because we just happen to be the government.

I guess that's what I mean, Mr. Speaker, when I say that I feel that it's hypocritical, and I don't mean that in a disparaging way towards the minister or the government because I'm including myself in it. I'm saying that I feel like a hypocrite in doing this. But, by the same token, I also understand the fact that this could mean, potentially, a big hit to the province if there were class action lawsuits.

Now, I understand in the briefing and in the bill, it talks about the fact that individuals can still sue. We're not taking away the rights of individuals. However, if Joe Q. Public decided he's going to sue Atlantic Lottery, first of all, where's Joe Q. Public getting the money to hire a lawyer to do it? One person is not. What lawyer is going to take it on pro bono for one person? It's not going to happen.

So while it might sound nice to say that an individual still has the right to sue, they really don't. We can say they do, but they really don't. The only way that anybody is going to be able to sue Atlantic lotto and take on the corporation and the money that they would have to back them is for a class action where hundreds, thousands, I don't know, tens of thousands of people, whatever the number might be, can all collectively jump on the bandwagon together and now a lawyer is going to say I'm going to take that on and for 40 per cent of whatever is going to be awarded to all those people, it's worth my while.

I think it's a little bit – and, again, I don't mean this in an insulting way to the minister or the government, but I do feel to say individual rights are still protected, I think it's a bit disingenuous of us to sort of suggest that they are protected, because they're really not protected. Let's call a spade a spade. They're not. Maybe if a millionaire on principle or something decided to sue Atlantic lotto then they're protected, but the average person is not protected. Let's not kid ourselves; they really aren't.

I guess that's kind of the quandary I have. We'll call it a moral dilemma, for lack of a better term, with this particular bill. I'm going to listen to further debate, questions in second reading and so on and see where this goes. My initial reaction was there is nothing wrong with this; I'm going to support it. At the end of the day, I probably will still, but I'm going to leave that open. I'm going to keep an open mind, listen to the debate, Mr. Speaker, listen in Committee and I'll make up my mind for sure at that point.

I think it would be irresponsible for us to ignore the parallels between what we're doing and then the fact that we're part of a class action against tobacco companies. I can't ignore that fact in my mind. It does present a little bit of a challenge in

that regard, but I understand the government's rationale and wanting to protect consumers.

I would say that we've taken all these actions against tobacco companies, as I referenced earlier, in terms of displaying on a package of cigarettes – showing that picture of the black lung. Maybe we should be displaying a big sign on the VLT machines warning people of the addictive nature of those in the same token. Again, that's kind of hypocritical in a way that we take that action against the tobacco companies. Maybe we should be clearly educating and identifying on those VLT machines the serious addictive nature of that. Maybe there should be a sign up next to each one of them talking about it, I don't know.

They're both addictions. They both have and, I'm sure, will continue to ruin lives as long as they exist. Mr. Speaker, I know that there are some people as well – and I'm somewhat of that nature, to be honest with you. It's kind of like you make you bed; you lie in it. I understand that, too. There are some people that would say, well, if you chose to gamble, put up with the circumstances. It is no different. And then there are people that say if you chose to smoke, well, then don't come crying to me when you get some disease.

People have different views on all those things but, as legislators, we have to be concerned about the overall public good and try to be fair and reasonable to everybody. That's really all I have to say about this bill at this point. Perhaps I'll have some questions when we get to Committee.

I look forward to what others have to say, but I do agree, once again, with my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port that it's not as simple a decision as we might have thought off the get-go. There is a lot to consider as it relates to this bill. It's not as straightforward as one might initially think because it all sounds great when you see the bill first, but there are two sides to this story. I certainly look forward to hearing what others have to say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to have a few minutes on this. I heard all the people speaking on this today. I'm probably the only one here going back so far that can remember this being brought in. I remember when it was brought in, it was debated in the House and it was put to the point where it was a revenue – making revenue for the province. That's why we joined in and this is how the VLTs and other things became the Atlantic lotto because of the revenue.

We were stuck at the time and I'm sure any government, Liberal government or PC government, if they had some way to make up the \$75 million or \$80 million that they rake in from the VLTs and Atlantic lotto that they would do it and scrap them. It is revenue making and that's the big reason why we're still doing it, is revenue. There are no ands or buts about it; it's revenue. Sometimes it's hard to just take \$80 million or \$90 million, I'm not sure of the exact figure now but it was up to that amount. I'm going way back when people were saying then that we're going to have problems with it once we start.

I heard the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands talking about targeting. If you read in the news recently about Facebook, how they target people, target young people. Facebook actually targets them once they get on, what they like and they actually target them.

I remember going back a number of years – and it was a big issue at the time – it was on the VLTs. They would actually set it up for the music and the sound that would attract you to stay there. They actually did studies on it so they can make people stay there more and excite them more and want to stay more. They actually targeted people who had an addiction, a gambling addiction, to stay at the machines even more. We actually were part of that as a government. We, as a government, didn't partake in that but that was one of the schemes at the time.

I agree with my colleague about the class action suits about the tobacco. That goes way back. That goes back 10 or 15 years also. I'm going back probably in the 2001, 2002 when that was started. I remember the first lawyer we hired to

start that case back in 2001, 2002. A class action suit, joined with other provinces eventually, against the tobacco companies because of the damage they were doing to our health care system and to our youth. This is where the packaging came in and all of the danger signs and the health concerns came in. It is a dilemma.

I'll ask this question to the minister because I'm not 100 per cent sure: Wasn't there already a class action suit filed and it didn't get standing in the court of Newfoundland and Labrador about VLTs? I stand to be corrected, but on memory, if there was already a class action suit brought in, in Newfoundland and Labrador, and it didn't get standing in the court, why are we bringing this in, if that is the case? And I'm just going on memory. I thought there was one brought in somewhere, and I think Newfoundland and Labrador might have been one of those places.

And I agree again with the people that spoke here, that if you have an individual who wants to put in a class action suit, they won't be able to do it. They cost too much, they won't be able to get lawyers to take it because it is an expense – you're taking on a big corporation, you're taking on a room full of lawyers that's been hired to go through it, to work with it. I can't see any person that would do it. And if you're addicted to the VLTs, where are you going to get the money to put forward to do it?

So this is the dilemma that I have also with the bill. It is a dilemma. We, as government, are raking in money for it. I'm not sure the exact amount, I say to the Minister of Finance; I think it's up to \$85 million or \$90 million. I'm not sure of the exact amount. Higher?

P. LANE: One hundred and thirty.

E. JOYCE: One hundred and thirty now? Okay, \$130 million coming in from it. And I'm sure that government, all governments, wish they had some way to replace their funds without having to get rid of them. I'm sure of that. I'm positive of that. But then again you have the online gambling, which is prevalent also.

But I remember those machines and I remember the big issue when the sounds and the lights and all that started flashing. It's almost like addicting

people to it. I never forgot that. We all know – and I know people that got addicted to it. I know a lot of families got broke up because of it. I know a lot people had to go into bankruptcy. I know people who lost their houses because of it. It's tough.

Now, what we're saying is, okay, if we own Atlantic lotto or part of it, we're one of the owners of it, how come we can't put in – like the Member mentioned cigarette packages – that this is harmful? How can we find some way to educate people more? I always hear: Okay, well, there's an education program; there are services, addiction services. But it's how can we get – it's almost like smoking: How can we stop people from even gambling in the first place, just like smoking? How can we stop people from starting to smoke at a young age? We worked on that for a number of years and you can see the decline, the gradual decline in the smoking over the years.

The other thing I haven't heard mentioned today is the revenues for the bars. Actually, that's one of the biggest revenues that they have in the bars right now is the VLTs, their share of 17 per cent or 14 per cent. If you notice most people now they'll set up – not most, some – and they'll have a little bar in the corner and they'll have four or five machines or the maximum they can get. That is the biggest revenue for the bars to keep operating right now is the VLTs.

That's tough for the bar association. It's tough for us as legislators. It's tough for the people who are – actually very tough for the people who are addicted to the machines and spending their money on it.

Again, I'm not sure if I'm going to vote for this or not vote for this, but I can see both sides; I can honestly see both sides of this here because it is a tough decision. I know government has to bring in legislation that's going to protect the consumer. I know that. I can understand that, but if we're going to collect the money – if we're going to take the money from it and say we're doing a good job, shouldn't we have a right to allow people, if they feel, the same with smoking, same with other things that happen with class actions suits, if we're a part of it, shouldn't they have an opportunity to, as a

group, express their concerns about how this is being operated?

I'll wait for the minister to discuss that and answer the questions, if there was a class action lawsuit already in the province that was thrown out or never got standing in the court – I think is the way it was deemed – and you never got standing, then why are we doing this, if that is the fact?

I'll just close it there and I'll wait. I'll have questions in the Committee stage. I just hope that there's some way that we can help people – not addictions with it – so we can stop people from getting addicted to it, if there's some way. I know the Atlantic Lottery Corp. does have programs in place, but I just don't have the answers. I don't think anybody in this Legislature has the answers, but we know that they are raking in a lot of money for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and we know that we have to take responsibility to find some way to replace the revenue, one, if possible, and, two, try to stop people from gambling – or gambling responsibly so that you don't have people who are losing their homes. Families losing everything they saved over this.

So I'll close there and I look forward to the discussion during the Committee stage.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

It is very important that we take a little pause here, and I compliment the Official Opposition and the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port because I can tell you we have a very serious problem here. My experience with supporting and helping people who have found themselves in a very addictive state with VLTs and gambling in general goes back two decades. I've just reached out and I've had a few messages come in from some people, so I am going to mention a few names just as by way of reference. Because I think, as the Opposition are suggesting, we do need to pause and just make sure that we fully understand what this issue is doing to so many people.

There is a tremendous amount of revenue. Some of the numbers I have: VLTs, for example, have generated something like \$406 million. I think that was two years ago. I don't know what the current figure is, but there is a lot of money coming into these coffers. That is almost half a billion dollars. Again, as the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port identified, it is not coming, for the most part, from folks who could afford it. It is people who are just trying to get ahead.

By the way, another thing that really bothers me is how the media embraced winners. How is this a newsworthy item that somebody has won \$1 million or won many millions of dollars? How is that not just all part of this whole societal acceptance of let's go collect \$406 million from the people of this province and we'll pocket something like \$130 million for our own efforts? And then think about, in each of these other departments – I look over here at CSSD and some of the other departments have responsibilities and all the fallout that goes on from that. All the broken homes, the lost businesses, the serious addictions.

I'm going to refer people – no, I'm going to go back to how I got started in this. It was over 20 years ago. I was the president of the golf club, the Amaruk Golf Club in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. I often talk about that Golf Club; it is a great little facility. It has been a big part of my life and just different things that have happened. But 20 years ago when I became president, I walked in and we had a series of VLTs. As some have alluded to – I think previous speakers have suggested – the revenue that came in. Forget green fees, forget golf course memberships; VLTs were the generator. That's how that club was making its money. It was a shocking amount of money.

I feel for the bar owners and the businesses and so on when they hear their MHA talking this way, but I can tell you, you've just also got to realize what is happening in terms of the money we're taking from people who can probably least afford it.

So I convinced everyone on my team and we got rid of those VLTs. We turned the golf course into a golf course; left the situation to others; took a lot of heat. And, frankly, we took a lot of

financial hits for it. But we, at least, were not contributing to the problem. I wasn't sitting in a Legislature where I could join my colleagues across the province and you can actually make a law to change or influence and try to help the strategy, but I can tell you where I live, ladies and gentlemen, we have a very serious problems with addictions.

I'm going to reference – he's just asked me to do it. You can go to Mr. Derek Montague. Just punch his name in and you'll see some of his own experience. Derek is a journalist. A couple of years ago, he and I teamed up to talk more about his story and what he was dealing with. It just about took his life. We had to send him, collectively, to Humberwood just to deal with his addictions to VLTs. That's just one example of a very high profile person who just went beyond rock bottom.

When I see us moving with what seemed like a very innocent suggestion that we join our other Atlantic colleagues and making sure that we're all caught up as a jurisdiction to prevent further class actions, I think we need to do some more homework here and really understand what is happening, how many people are being affected.

I'm just going back to some of my numbers that I had in my mind. I think it was about a decade ago. We had close to 3,000 problem gamblers at that time. Three thousand people in our province with a serious addictions problem. Just think what kind of damage that's causing in our society.

As with my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands, you got advertising restrictions now on cigarette packs to deter. Well, we need to do a whole bunch of other things in terms of pushing back. Let's face it, we as a government, we're also addicted to this revenue.

So I have many strong concerns about what we're doing here. It looked quite innocent, but I believe there's a very troublesome point to this. I'm not sure I see any confusion as to what I'm going to do. Right now, I'm very concerned and I'd like to see government pause and/or at least address some of the comments that we've made here today. Have a look at Derek Montague's story. That's just one example of what's been going on, but there are many, many others.

I thank you for your time. I do look forward to the discussion. I look forward to hearing from the minister at the points that I've made and others here today. Let's see where we go.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to echo a lot of what my colleagues have said in the sense that I'm very concerned about this. I'm very concerned about taking away the ability for individuals in a class action situation to hold a predatory industry at heel. VLTs are a predatorial system. They spend – not only ALC but these companies alone that make these VLTs – millions of dollars a year in research on how to make them more addictive. They spend millions on that. You could just go to Vegas and find out how they do it.

I wish this act was to actually ban VLTs – my personal opinion of it. They're a problem to society. They have caused so much destruction in society. They have destroyed the lives of thousands of people in this province. To say that now, as individuals, you can't hold the company responsible when damages or something occurs. The most people that would actually want to do this would never be able to do it on their own. The only way they would be able to hold these people responsible would be through a class action situation.

These are dangerous devices, and now we see the emergence of moving the VLTs off the floor of a bar and on to your smartphone. This is a dangerous industry that has to have hard regulations and that has to be held accountable when they do something wrong.

I know there was a story I heard there about the casinos and after an investigation found out that they actually were taking in more money than returning back out through their algorithm; they were actually taking more from individuals. When we move to this, they are not games of chance. They are programmed to take as much as they can from individuals, and the people they're taking from are people in our society that are not as well off. These are people that are not

– they target a particular group in our society. We cannot allow this there.

I can tell you, right now for a fact, I will not be supporting this in any shape or form, unless this is reviewed and amended to do something about the problem with VLTs in this province. They're an addiction. They are no different, like you said, than smoking or illicit drugs or anything like that. It's an addiction and they harm so many people

We cannot just say: Do you know what? No class action lawsuits. Responsibility has to be held. We, as a government, allow it. Therefore, for every decision, there's a repercussion. Well, do you know what? Maybe it's a time to address the VLT issue in this province. Maybe that's where you should start instead of just saying: Do you know what? No class action lawsuits.

This is where I think we need to pause, come back and say maybe there's a deeper issue in this province than just class action lawsuits when it comes to this.

I can say, right now, as it is, me and my colleague will not be supporting this.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Mr. Speaker, I move we adjourn debate on Bill 18.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: Before we adjourn, I just want to remind Members of the Public Accounts

Committee. There will be an in camera meeting tomorrow morning at 9 here in the Chamber.

The motion is that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Tuesday, at 1:30 p.m.