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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

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The House met at 10 a.m.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

**Orders of the Day**

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 26.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt 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 (Trimper):** Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Chair.

With the consent of the House, I would ask that we pause Committee on Bill 26 and move to Bill 27.

**CHAIR:** Does the hon. Government House Leader have leave to proceed with Bill 27.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**CHAIR:** Leave is granted.

Order, please!

We will now proceed with the consideration of Bill 27, An Act To Amend The Pharmacy Act, 2012.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Pharmacy Act, 2012." (Bill 27)

**CLERK (Barnes):** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Chair, the act talks about extending the dispensing of drugs or medicines by registered nurses or, actually, it includes the licensed practical nurses now, under the supervision of a regional health authority.

Are there any plans to move that outside of the health authorities?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** No.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Okay. Good answer.

Chair, as we move into the new model of the Health Accord, when we talk about community health centres, I'm just wondering about where those maybe have practices – we talk about the full scope and range of practices with physicians, nurses, LPNs and others, they may or may not, necessarily, be under the jurisdiction of a regional health authority.

My question is related to that new model as it comes in place. This legislation won't allow, for example, an LNP, in that circumstance, to do this, right?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Yes. It won't. I'm not trying to be unnecessarily cryptic.

This is a start. The RHAs have existing protocols in place for dispensing for RNs. These would simply be altered, if the House approves this, to allow LPNs to follow those very same protocols; it's within their scope of practice. Once the bugs from that have been worked out, then it would be possible later to change the scope, should there be an operational need to do that, for community care teams.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Chair, again, it's a good piece of legislation.

I ask the minister: Again, on the issue with the long-term care facilities or personal care homes, does this apply in personal care homes? I guess the answer is no.

**CHAIR:** The Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** You are correct, Sir. No, it doesn't.

Again, this is a start. We have robust protocols that we know and understand through the Department of Health and the regional health authorities, as you would remember from your time there, to deal with dispensing. It is really aimed at those clinics where the licensed practical nurse might actually be the only practitioner available on site and the dispensing will be a short-term, temporizing measure to get them to fill a prescription or seek advice from further care providers.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** So, as you suggested, every type of facility that a regional health authority has responsibility for, whether it be a small clinic or anything or a long-term care facility operated by a regional health authority, this legislation would apply, correct?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Yes, that is correct.

**CHAIR:** Any further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** In consultations for changing this bill, did the pharmacists have any concerns with the broadening of the scope for the LPNs?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** None at all. The pharmacists have read this, they're happy with it and they support it.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** There was some comment that this would greatly help rural situations. Can you elaborate on how it helps the rural situations?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Certainly.

With the use of, for example, virtual consults and a diagnosis made by a practitioner off site in a small clinic, an LPN might be the only skilled health care practitioner on the premises. This will make their workload simpler. Otherwise, in my day, for example, up in Labrador-Grenfell, I would have had to seek a phone authorization and then they'd actually have to call somebody in to physically give them the pills to allow the patient to take them out of the building.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** The Health Accord talks about teams and, obviously, LPNs are a part of it. So, in the dispensing of drugs, is there going to be some kind of a pecking order or is it basically on a needs basis, I guess?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Again, within the constraints of RHA-run facilities, it would be done on a needs basis. If there were a multitude of providers who have this in their skill set, then whoever was

dealing with the client or patient at the time could simply do this as part of their visit, their consult. If that happens to be an LPN, that's extended the number of providers who can provide this service with regards to dispensing of medications.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

Question: What groups have been consulted on this change?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** This is particularly a matter for the Pharmacy Board which are the regulators of the practice of pharmacy and the College of Licensed Practical Nurses. They were the folk who were involved in this.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

So I take that as the department did no consultation with any groups, for example, like the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Medical Association and/or the Nurses' Union?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Chair.

It is normally the case that scopes of practice for self-regulating profession are a matter for internal discussion and, in this case, because it was effected by the Pharmacy Act, obviously we spoke to the Pharmacy Board. We don't usually ask their permission or involve other disciplines unless there is a clear regulatory or legal requirement to do so.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

Are there any limits to the types or amounts of medications that can be dispensed?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** It will effectively be the same range of medications as those that would be dispensed by an RN. The quantities will be – these are temporizing measures. These are to buy time. It's not anticipated that there would be large quantities of medication. Most RHA protocols provide for prepackaged with one or two doses in them. This would be to tide them over until they could get a regular prescription filled or have further treatment by another care provider somewhere else.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

Education on this has been mandatory since 2012. Are there any refresher courses or ongoing education that is required? What about LPNs that have been in the system prior to 2012?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Chair.

When the scopes of practice for LPNs were changed, there was an upskilling process that went on to include what was colloquially referred to as the medication module. All LPNs currently practising in this province as LPNs are required to have that or have had that as part of their training if they graduated since that time.

The issue of ongoing professional development is partly addressed in here by the ability of the college to set a quality assurance program and maintain educational standards. But there's no formal mechanism about refreshers for any element of their practice. This is a matter for a self-regulating profession to set for itself.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair and thank you, Minister.

It says: "... when practising with the approval and under the general supervision of the regional health authority."

So can they dispense in private community physicians' offices?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** No.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Any further speakers in this Committee?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Chair.

One quick commentary or question and maybe it goes without saying. My colleague for Stephenville - Port au Port said it was a good piece of legislation. Indeed, it is a good piece of legislation. I can envision the Bonavista hospital, which serves over 8,000 people, and you have people that may be travelling upwards of 45 minutes. The dispensing of drugs to these people who will not be able to access a pharmacy is a great thing.

It is a good thing in that part of the district, but I often think that the consultation with the patient sometimes – and it might seem like an obvious ask in the regulation, but I know that sometimes we have appointments where, in Bonavista, they have a specialist appointment arranged for 9 o'clock in St. John's and I know that they're pulling out of Bonavista area at 4:40 or 5 in the morning – not often, but on occasion.

So the only thing I would ask there, even though as blatantly obvious as it may seem, will it be in the regulations that they will consult with the physician that if somebody is 30-40 minutes away from where drugs are dispensed by a pharmacy that they will consult with them to find out how much medication they would need, that they can comfortably make sure that they can get to the pharmacy? They may be rare

exceptions, but at least a consultation would be important in those cases.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you.

That's a good point. To explain the process, that consultation would be required in actual fact before the dispensing took place because the LPN is not prescribing, they are dispensing on the authority of a prescribing-able professional. So that discussion would be part of the dispensing process so that they would know how much to give and so on.

The LPNs are not prescribing; they are administering. They can do that already. What we're adding with this amendment is the ability to dispense an amount that has been discussed with a prescriber in advance.

**CHAIR:** Any further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, just wondering – you've said in commentary to the Member for Topsail - Paradise that this is like a short-term measure to get you through in the pinch, so to speak. The amounts would probably be like a little blister pack with a couple of pills in it or whatever, as opposed to a full prescription and so on.

But if this is passed, what would prevent the regional health authorities and so on from sort of expanding upon this and having this go on in perpetuity, if you will? That now, all of a sudden, you have an LPN in an area and that's all you have and they're just going to do it all because they can.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Chair.

This isn't addressed directly in the act. The intent, however, between the College of Licensed Practical Nurses and the Pharmacy

Board was that this would be a short-term measure, episodic one-off. The continuity of care in a particular area is of concern to us and is being addressed by other mechanisms. It's not specifically addressed in this act.

It may be addressed in the protocols and policies that exist at the regional health authority level because, by and large, it is their policies that limit the amount of medication to be dispensed. But, as in my comments to the previous question, the amounts to be dispensed would be directed by a prescribing practitioner.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Any further speakers to the bill?

I thank you for your participation.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act To Amend The Pharmacy Act, 2012.

**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 Bill 27 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed Bill 27 without amendment, carried.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Chair.

With consent of the House, I would request that we stay in Committee and move to Bill 26.

**CHAIR:** Does the hon. the Government House Leader have consent?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** We can proceed.

Thank you.

We are now discussing Bill 26.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2005." (Bill 26)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

It's been a wild morning.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Already.

**P. DINN:** Already, yes.

A couple of questions here: What was the extent of consultations with the College of Licensed Practical Nurses?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** This was significant. This paper has its roots prior to COVID and the delays have been partly due to difficulties with scheduling meetings, given conflicting commitments from the staff also involved in this. So it's been lengthy and it's been detailed and it has been also, as I say, involved in connection with the previous bill, the pharmacists.

But we've had a lengthy discussion with the College of Licensed Practical Nurses and they're certainly very keen to see this move.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

Did you consult with any other health care groups outside of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Again, I would reference an answer I gave earlier. This is a self-regulating profession by and large. We do not consult with regulators outside of that unless there is a direct impact such as there were with the previous bill we considered. So this has been principally a discussion between the department and the College of Licensed Practical Nurses.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

Are all of the changes proposed reflective of the wishes of the College of Licensed Practical Nurses?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Yes.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you.

Did they request any changes that were not included in this bill?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** None that I'm aware of at this time, Chair.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

Clause 3 adds a new function to the college to administer a quality assurance program to enhance public protection and accountability.

Do the LPNs currently have a quality assurance program and, if not, do the College of Licensed Practical Nurses require any additional resources to administer a quality assurance program?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** They do not have one established in regulation. They may have had informal counselling processes, but this is kind of a development we've seen in other self-regulating professions where, rather than going from nothing to a full disciplinary panel to deal with an issue, a quality assurance program can be used to educate and inform and perhaps ultimately avoid a full disciplinary panel.

We have not been advised by the college of any external resources that they would require from us and they've given us to understand that they can do this from within.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

What is the process to deal with a complaint relating to LPN conduct?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Chair.

Quality assurance is kind of like a proactive approach. The complaints procedure for the College of Licensed Practical Nurses is a more formal approach and is already laid down in their current policies and regulation. That is not affected necessarily by this, except to say that a quality assurance process within that would be able to perhaps avoid such a more obvious issue process.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you.

What is the process to report to the registrar conduct deserving of sanction?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** I don't have that detail in front of me. My understanding is the information required by the public is available on their website.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Another question here: In terms of the licensed practical nurses, how does this affect or is this a positive or a pro when it comes to labour mobility to other jurisdiction?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** I have not been advised of any changes that people in the college have predicted one way or another based on the introduction of these amendments.

**CHAIR:** Any further speakers to Bill 26, An Act To Amend The Licensed Practical Nurses Act?

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 to 13.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 to 13 carry?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** I have a couple of questions.

The minister had referred to the duty to report. I know that within the education profession if we were looking at an assessment or we had seen something untoward that we would report, we would have an obligation to report to the person who may have committed the infraction, whether it be a courtesy or ethics.

You may not be able to speak to that at this legislative level, but I just wanted to make sure that I spoke to that. One would think that the most appropriate would be to inform the person who may have been seen or considered to be in the untoward act.

Would that be something that would be considered in this situation?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** I think the exact mechanisms around a duty to report would be a part of an education process and, in that, done by the college; those kind of details would be formally address. I wouldn't be able to speak to that in any detail at the moment because, should this go ahead, the college would then be in a position to make recommendations about how to do that and in what order.



**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Quality assurance is always a good thing in every organization and institution.

It had mentioned that you may be utilizing the RNs in this quality assurance program with the LNPs. We know the load that the current RNs carry.

Would there be any remuneration considered in this for RNs and other officials that would be a part of this quality assurance team?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** That's a good question.

I think, to be honest, it would be one that the college would determine as to whether or not it was able, prepared to compensate folk who participated in that. I wouldn't like to speak on their behalf; it's a decision they would make.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Understandable.

It also mentions that all records are confidential. I would assume that if you were in an organization and someone perceives something untoward, those records would be accessible by the person who is considered to have done something that was misaligned with the system or untoward, that they would have access to every document that would be – or the alleged act would be associated with.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** I think that refers to confidentiality outside of the process, Chair. There is an obligation to report results of disciplinary tribunals, particularly in the situation where a significant penalty has been imposed by the college. The confidentiality piece there would be around what was released publicly. Certainly, internally, with a complaints process, that is a quasi-judicial one, or can be, and is laid down in their regulations. Who shares what with whom is a matter for the college and

natural justice, as well as the legal profession to opine on. We wouldn't stipulate that in here.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Minister.

I noticed that the quality assurance committee would have immunity. I'm trying to envision is when you have a group – of which this LPN, I'm assuming their employment would be at risk, that would be there, that they would have immunity against, I guess, any persecution or rebuttal of which the LPN would have. What recourse would the LPN have in this particular situation, if something untoward or their employment was being terminated?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** That really speaks more to the disciplinary piece than the quality assurance.

The idea of quality assurance is to educate, inform and correct. In the situation where disciplinary action was taken, there is always an appeal mechanism. What that is, through the College of Licensed Practical Nurses, I wouldn't be able to stipulate; but every self-regulating profession has an appeal mechanism about decisions of a disciplinary tribunal.

**CHAIR:** Further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

I would like to propose several amendments – oh, no, we're not gone to the next clause, are we?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**P. DINN:** Good, thank you.

**CHAIR:** No, you may proceed and I understand there's leave for the Member to proceed with several amendments at the same time.

Thank you, proceed.

**P. DINN:** Yes, they're all very similarly related. So I'll read them to the record. There are six.

Speaker, I move that clause 6 of the bill be amended in the proposed subsection 12(2) as follows: (1) by deleting the words "he or she has" and substituting instead the words "they have"; (2) by deleting the words "he or she is not" and substituting instead the words "they are not."

Also, Speaker, I move that clause 8 of the bill be amended in the proposed subsection 14.1(3) by deleting the words "he or she" and substituting instead the word "they."

Speaker, I move that clause 10 of the bill be amended in the proposed section 29.2 by deleting the words "his or her" and substituting instead the word "their."

Speaker, I move that clause 10 of the bill be amended in proposed section 29.3 as follows: In subsection 29.3(1), by deleting the words "his or her" and substituting the word "their"; in paragraph 29.3(3)(b), by deleting the words "his or her" and by substituting the word "their"; in subparagraph 29.3(3)(d)(iv), by deleting the words "his or her" and by substituting the word "their"; in subparagraph 29.3(3)(d)(vi), by deleting the words "his or her" and by substituting the word "their"; in subparagraph 29.3(3)(d)(vii), by deleting the words "his or her" and by substituting the word "their" and by deleting the words "he or she is" and by substituting the words "they are"; and in subsection 29.3(6), by deleting the words "he or she provides" and by substituting the words "they provide" and by deleting the words "him or her" and by substituting the word "them."

Speaker, I move that clause 13 of the bill be amended in proposed paragraph 33(a) by deleting the words "himself or herself" and by substituting instead the word "themselves."

Finally, I move that clause 6 of the bill be amended in proposed subsection 12(1) as follows: (1) by deleting the words "he or she" and substituting instead the word "they"; (2) by deleting the word "has" and substituting instead the word "have"; and (3) by deleting the word "meets" and substituting instead the word "meet."

Those are the six amendments proposed all together, all dealing with very similar issues in terms of gender neutrality within the act, as we well know there are individuals out there who identify as non-binary so I think these amendments would help in (inaudible) – and that would be seconded by the Member for Terra Nova.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Committee will now recess to consider the proposed amendments to Bill 26, An Act To Amend The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2005.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The Committee have reviewed the proposed amendments to Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2005, and find that all the amendments are in order.

Debate will now proceed on the amendments.

I recognize the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm pleased that they're in order. Hopefully, it will all be voted as approved as well.

I think it's a reflection of our times forward. In this House, as we know, we have disposed of the salutation of Mister or Madam Chair; something I find hard to do because it's a sign of respect. We grew up saying Sir or Madam; however, in our society there are people that certainly do identify as non-binary. I think our legislation going forward – all legislation I'm sure – would have to be looked at in terms of going forward to ensure that the legislation reflects society. I'm glad to see that.

This piece of legislation, I think we're already well aware that it's a good piece of legislation for our licensed practical nurses. I look forward to it all being approved and moving forward.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Any further speakers to the amendments?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Chair.

I thank the Member opposite for the amendments. I think this is the second time now we've done this in Committee. We know this is a change that's going to have to happen in all acts going forward. I can assure you that going forward this will be a lens that will be put on all acts. I know there's a whole lot of stuff that needs to be changed, previously, but at least going forward we'll make sure that this lens is applied.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

No further speakers to the amendments?

Is this House in support of the amendments as tabled?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

The amendments are carried.

On motion, amendments carried.

**CHAIR:** Any further speakers to the bill?

Seeing no further speakers, shall clauses 2 through 13, as amended, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

The clauses as amended are carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 13, as amended, 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.'

The enacting clause carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act To Amend The Licensed Practical Nurses Act, 2005.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

The title is carried.

On motion, title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill carried with amendments?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill with amendments, carried.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bills 26 as amended and 27.

**CHAIR:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and report on Bill 26 with amendments and Bill 27 without amendments.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is 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 Lake Melville and Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**P. TRIMPER:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have been very busy. They have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report, first of all, Bill 26 with amendments and also I would like to report that Bill 27 has been carried without amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole have reported that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed that Bill 26 be carried with amendments and Bill 27 without amendment.

When shall the reports be received?

**S. CROCKER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bills be read a third time?

**S. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move seconded, by the Deputy Government House Leader, that the amendments to Bill 26 be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the amendments now be read a first 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:** First reading of the amendments to Bill 26.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that the amendments to Bill 26 be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the amendments 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:** Second reading of the amendments to Bill 26.

On motion, amendments read a first and second time.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 7, third reading of Bill 36, An Act Respecting The Office Of The Auditor General And The Auditing Of The Public Accounts Of The Province.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that Bill 36, An Act Respecting The Office Of The Auditor General And The Auditing Of The Public Accounts Of The Province be now read a third time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third 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:** A bill, An Act Respecting The Office Of The Auditor General And The Auditing Of The Public Accounts Of The Province. (Bill 36)

**SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, “An Act Respecting The Office Of The Auditor General And The Auditing Of The Public Accounts Of The Province,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 36)

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 11, second reading of a bill, An Act To Amend The Corporations Act, Bill 24.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that Bill 24, An Act To Amend The Corporations Act, be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 24, An Act To Amend The Corporations Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Corporations Act.” (Bill 24)

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

It’s a pleasure to speak in this House to Bill 24, An Act to Amend the Corporations Act. The *Corporations Act* prescribes the requirements for incorporation, governance and operation of corporations in this province; management of corporations is a shared responsibility between the provincial government and the federal government, Speaker.

These amendments would result in enhancing law enforcement efforts to counter the misuse of corporations and removing the residency requirements for corporation directors.

In December 2017, Finance ministers from throughout Canada agreed to pursue legislative amendments requiring all corporations to hold accurate, beneficial ownership information which would be available to law enforcement, tax and other authorities upon request. A joint federal-provincial-territorial commitment in June 2019 reaffirmed these intentions to work together on cross-government, anti-money laundering best practices.

The first phase is to amend legislation to require corporations to maintain a register of individuals with significant control, i.e. beneficial owners.

To date, six jurisdictions including British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, PEI, Nova Scotia, along with the Government of Canada have already implemented this. All other jurisdictions have committed to doing so.

Information pertaining to beneficial ownership or individuals with significant influence or control is difficult to collect or obtain. Yet, the availability of such information is crucial for law enforcement, tax and other authorities to identify persons who may be implicated in suspicious or illegal activities. This amendment to the *Corporations Act* will strengthen law enforcement's access to such information, Speaker.

The second amendment will remove current residency requirements for incorporation. Section 174 of the *Corporations Act* restricts a temporary resident from incorporating a business on their own or with other temporary residents. Digital Government and Service NL has heard from temporary residents, the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism and Memorial University that this restriction is an obstacle to entrepreneurial pursuits by residents in this province who do not yet have permanent residency status.

Nine Canadian jurisdictions including BC, PEI, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon have previously removed residency requirements for incorporation. Neither have identified any negative impacts from the removal of these residency requirements. The removal of these requirements, Speaker, reduce barriers for newcomers to start businesses here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I look forward to addressing questions from Members in Committee.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

First of all, I'd like to thank the minister and her department for the briefing that we received, I'm going to say, probably a couple of weeks ago now on this. They did a great job on it and glad to see it come. Hopefully, we'll get through all the legislation that we have proposed here.

Again, great to represent the District of Ferryland here. I thank the residents and the constituents for voting me in, I certainly appreciate that. Every chance I get, I'm going to remind them and thank them.

Starting with the bill, this bill makes two changes to the *Corporations Act*. It removes the residency requirements for directors and increases the transparency of beneficial ownership of corporations.

Currently, at least 25 per cent of directors of a corporation registered in this province must be resident Canadians, where a resident Canadian is defined as: "(i) a Canadian citizen ordinarily resident in Canada, (ii) a Canadian citizen not ordinarily resident in Canada who is a member of a prescribed class of persons, or (iii) a permanent resident within the meaning of the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* ... and ordinarily resident in Canada, except a permanent resident who has been ordinarily resident in Canada for more than one year after the time at which he or she first became eligible to apply for Canadian citizenship, (iv) an international entrepreneur, or (v) an international graduate entrepreneur."

This provision means that a temporary resident who wishes to start a business must find a Canadian to sit on their board. This can be a significant obstacle for newcomers to our communities, international students or other temporary residents who want to start a business, especially when a group of temporary residents who want to work together to start a business, like the case of international workers who are here studying at businesses.

This bill will improve this requirement from the legislation and, thus, make it easier for persons who wish to start a business to do so. In making this legislative change, we'll be following the eight other Canadian provinces who have already done so. I heard the minister say six, but we're saying eight. It's important that, as a

province, we're open to business growth and we are encouraging of newcomers who wish to start a new business. If we do not make this change we will be at a competitive disadvantage and temporary residents may choose other Canadian provinces to live and work in.

The second change of this bill is to increase the transparency of beneficial ownership of corporations. These changes are being implemented along with the federal government and all provincial governments. All governments in this country are implementing these changes in an effort to strengthen the investigations as it relates to money laundering and financing of terrorist activity.

So what is this beneficial ownership all about? It is defined in section 45.1 in the bill before us and it closely follows the definition provided by the Department of Finance Canada, which is: "Beneficial owners are the individuals who directly or indirectly own or control 25% or more of a corporation or an entity other than a corporation. In the case of a trust, they are the trustees, the known beneficiaries and the settlors of the trust. If the trust is a widely held trust or a publicly traded trust, they are the trustees and all persons who own or control, directly or indirectly, 25% or more of the units of the trust.

"Beneficial owners cannot be other corporations, trusts or other entities. They must be the individuals who are the owners or controllers of the entity. It is important to consider and review the names found on official documentation in order to confirm the accuracy of the beneficial ownership information. It may be necessary to search through many layers of information in order to confirm who are the beneficial owners, as the names found on official documentation may not always reflect the actual beneficial owners."

The federal government, with the support of all Canadian provinces, is making changes so that the law enforcement can investigate and see who is behind the ownership of corporations if needed. According to the federal Department of Finance, "The concealment of beneficial ownership information is a technique used in money laundering and terrorist activity financing schemes. Identifying beneficial ownership removes the anonymity of the individuals behind

the transactions and account activities, which is a key component of Canada's anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing regime."

By collecting financial information and confirming its accuracy, reporting entities "are performing an important step to mitigate the risk of money laundering and terrorist activity financing, and ultimately, to protect the integrity of Canada's financial system."

British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, PEI, Nova Scotia and the federal government have already implemented this legislation. What does this legislation do? This legislation requires a corporation to maintain a list referred to as a register of people who are considered to be beneficial owners or have significant control over the corporation. If this information is requested by an investigative body, police agency or regulatory, it must then be turned over. The legislation we are debating today also contains within it provisions for the protection of privacy and fines for enforcement.

I do have some questions when we do get into Committee and certainly look forward to asking those questions.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Speaker.

In examining this legislation, Speaker, I think my colleague, the Member for Ferryland, has quite aptly described the two changes that are being proposed by government with respect to the residency and the beneficial ownership. Those two changes, there are certain things that we need to look at.

First of all, with respect to the residency requirement, I think that is a good thing. Now, we are going to see any temporary residents who wish to start a business here in our country – and in our province in particular – will not face the obstacles that previously, with the previous legislation, they did. As the Member for

Ferryland had indicated, currently at least 25 per cent of directors of a corporation must be resident Canadians.

So what we're seeing now is that there is more encouragement of students, for example, perhaps international students, who may be studying here from abroad; they may be studying business. I think that's a good thing. They may want to start their own business together and now they will not face that obstacle.

This is good because it encourages business development and it encourages growth. I guess when we look at the *Corporations Act* perhaps it might be beneficial just to look at the corporation in general. The corporation is the most important form of a business organization. It is the predominant business vehicle in our modern commerce. We know that it is a separate legal entity. We also know that the cornerstone of corporation law focuses on limited liability. I think that is important to recognize the importance of corporation in our commerce today.

We know that corporations consist of shareholders and directors. When we're looking at, first, removing the residency requirement of directors, I think it is important to know that directors are really charged with the management functions, for example, in a corporation, like policy development. We also know that directors are elected by shareholders. We know that directors have important duties, fiduciary duty for example. We also know that they have very wide and expansive liabilities and they're exposed to a broad range of liabilities regarding the business corporation.

Just putting it in that context I think is important to understand why this residency requirement is a very welcome – removal is very welcome because we are going to now be supporting the development of business growth. It puts us, as well, at a competitive disadvantage if we don't make the change. Temporary residents may opt to go to other provinces because we know, as has been pointed out, that there are at least six or more Canadian provinces that have already implemented this legislative change.

I think that with respect to the residency requirement, that's a good thing. I think it is a

progressive change and it's certainly necessary to remove obstacles like that when we see legislation having those obstacles.

The second legislative change that is being proposed is with respect to beneficial ownership and that this legislative change will increase transparency. As we've stated, and even yesterday in debate I was discussing another piece of legislation which was looking at increasing transparency. Transparency is always very important. I think we see, perhaps, the lack of it at times in our policies and in our legislation. When we don't have that, we have less accountability. That's not a good thing.

So beneficial ownership really goes to the issue of money laundering and perhaps any kind of financing of terrorist activity. We know when we look at money laundering – for example, I looked at some of the information that the United Nations had back in 2011 with respect to money laundering in Canada. We are estimated to be between \$5 billion and \$15 billion money laundering in Canada, according to the UN. Estimated to be between that number – \$5 billion and \$15 billion.

We know what money laundering is. It's the false reporting of income from criminal activity as income from legitimate business. So when we see that amount of money that goes into money laundering, and whether it's funnelled through terrorist activity, any kind of legislation like this which addresses enforcement, which hopefully will increase and enhance law enforcement efforts and measures, is a good thing.

So we see that with respect to the beneficial ownership piece, this bill will increase the transparency of this kind of ownership. We know that the federal government and all of the provincial governments are looking to doing this. All governments in this country are implementing these changes so as to strengthen investigation.

My colleague, the Member for Ferryland, had indicated what exactly beneficial ownership is. We know what it is and we know that we have to look at the concealment of beneficial ownership information. It's a technique used in money laundering and terrorist activity. This will remove that anonymity. It will take away



the anonymity of individuals who have as their intent to engage in money laundering or any kind of financing of terrorist activity.

It would be my argument this is a good thing. What will happen now with this legislation is we will see the ability to collect information about ownership and to confirm its accuracy and to also report entities who are involved in performing an important step to mitigate the risk of money laundering and terrorist activity financing.

We know that British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, PEI, Nova Scotia and the federal government have already implemented this legislation. I think it's a good thing that this legislation will now require corporations to have a registry list. I think that's a good thing. Again, it's going to enhance the measures to try to target and combat money laundering. I think that's really important.

These beneficial owners, from what we understand they can have significant control over a corporation. So now we're going to see investigative bodies, whether it's police agencies or any kind of other regulatory body, if they want this information, they want to know the ownership, have the ownership information divulged or turned over to them, now they will have that power to do it. If it's requested it will have to be turned over to those authorities. Again, I think that's an important enhanced measure to combat this serious problem. We know corporate crime is a very serious matter in our country; it's very, very tough to combat and to investigate. So if any kind of legislation like this supports us in those efforts to limit and mitigate these problems, I think it's a good thing.

Now one thing I think is important, I note that the legislation does mention that there are provisions for the protection of privacy and there are fines for enforcement. I don't know what they are. I'm looking forward to finding out what that is, what kind of protections will be in place to protect people's privacy. We have to be very, very mindful of that when we're giving expansive powers to different agencies, whether they're investigative bodies.

There has to be with that power also safeguards with respect to privacy. They have to be limited, there's no question about that. I look forward to finding out what those limits will be. As well as enforcement. What are the fines and how are those fines going to be enforced? We've seen it time and time again, without proper enforcement of laws, then they're really toothless, they don't have any effect. It's very important to see what kinds of enforcement measures are going to be in place to actually give this legislation some of its power.

With that, Speaker, I think those are some of the concerns and some of the issues that I wanted to address. I think that in substance it's a very good piece of legislation and I'm very supportive of it. But, again, I would like to have those issues with respect to privacy and enforcement – and we can certainly get at that at in Committee.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Speaker.

In general, I do support the legislation. I'll be voting for it. I do have a couple of points or questions or issues, whatever you want to call it, one from each of the changes, because there are two significant changes here in this piece of legislation.

The first one I just want to speak to is the issue around significant ownership, or whatever the term is here, of the directors and ownership in these corporations, that there has to be a list provided of who these people are. That's a good thing. As my colleague for Harbour Main talked about the whole issues around money laundering, organized crime, terrorism and all that stuff, obviously, that's important. Anything we can do to enhance law enforcement efforts to combat those things, I think it would be prudent for us to do so. Obviously, as the minister has indicated, our federal government has endorsed this and a number of provinces have. Those who haven't are going to, from what I understand. I support that aspect of it.

My understanding of it is that the information on these directors or substantial owners is something that law enforcement can request – or I should say demand really, I suppose, not request – if there was an investigation and so on. What I don't see here, and I know it's not necessarily really that issue, but more public disclosure of these people.

The reason why I say that, I look back at, as an example – I'll just use this as an example; I'm not using it to beat anybody up but it is what it is. I look at the example of the Canopy Growth deal and that numbered corporation that allegedly resided on Plank Road – according to CBC or whoever investigated it in the media – that allegedly benefited from the Canopy Growth deal which involves public money, a deal with the provincial government and impacting public money.

Whether it's a direct grant or any dealings with the government on any kind of a deal, you had a numbered corporation and there's no transparency. The people had no idea who was involved. There was lots of speculation out there at the time, but the people had no idea who was being dealt with, who was potentially benefiting from this.

So when we talk about openness and transparency, which are great buzzwords, and while this is a good piece of legislation from the perspective of organized crime and allowing law enforcement to do their job, I'm disappointed to see that we have not addressed the issue of public disclosure of who these people are.

Not necessarily in general. If you own a corporation and you're doing business privately, arguably, it's none of my business who the substantial owners are. But if those businesses, those corporations, are benefiting from my taxpayers' dollars and yours, Speaker, then the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have the right to know who these individuals are who are receiving money from the public till, who are benefiting from government contracts and so on, benefiting from the province, from the taxpayer.

That is not addressed. What is being addressed here is law enforcement in some sort of a sting or investigation or whatever the case might be, being able to obtain those records if they

required it. But the general public are left in the dark as to who these people are.

If we want to be truly open and transparent, like we say all the time, when it comes to the public interest, public taxpayers' dollars and so on, then I think we need to go a little further in our amendments. We need to have something in here that says that should a corporation be benefiting from any government funding, grants or programs, or should they be engaged in any business dealings with the provincial government that's going to have any kind of an impact on the taxpayer, then the names of the persons involved in those corporation, a lot of them numbered corporations, those names should be public information so that we know who's wheeling and dealing in this province and who's benefiting from the public purse.

That's not there and that's very disappointing. So I do support that section of the bill from the perspective of your organized crime – support it 100 per cent. But it didn't go far enough in public disclosure in cases where that corporation is benefiting from the public purse. So that's my first point.

The other point I just want to make – the other side of this bill, the other significant piece of this bill: the residency rule. I understand why it's being done. I understand that we don't want to be at a competitive disadvantage with other provinces. We're really ramping up, the government has, its efforts in terms of immigration, trying to grow our population, for obvious reasons why we need to do that. I'm very supportive of that.

I understand that if we have newcomers to our province who we want to welcome and we want them to stay here, we want them to raise families – and, ultimately, we want them to do it because we want them to pay taxes. I mean, that's the cold, hard reality of it. We need more people paying taxes in order to support those who are not paying taxes and support the services that we require as a province. That's the reality of that.

We should be encouraging people to stay here when they come, obviously. I can absolutely understand why this could be a barrier, particularly, if we had students coming to Memorial University, perhaps studying business

and so on. They want to be entrepreneurs; they want to contribute to our economy. That's a good thing. I think we all support that; that's what we want. We want to try to remove barriers, so I'm not against it from that point of view – I'm really not.

The only thing I just question to some degree is – we actually had a bill come before the House maybe a year or two ago that was similar to this one. It had the same thing and it was to do with allowing, I think, landed immigrants, or whatever the case might be, to actually operate businesses. There were some changes that were made but it didn't go this far. We've just gone a little further.

Again, I'm not against it in principle but I just wonder – and I'm just asking out loud – are we opening ourselves up for anything in terms of, I don't know, those who might come in, start a business, incorporate and are not from here. I'm not talking about immigrants or MUN students. I'm not talking about that, but somebody just to come in from Nova Scotia, whatever and open up a business, not necessarily operate in the greatest way, leave a bunch of people hanging high and dry and then just leave the province because there's nobody attached to that corporation. They have no ties to Newfoundland, they're not living here so they come on, they do what they do and just take off so to speak, without necessarily that accountability or that want and that need to succeed and do right by their neighbours and people here.

Obviously if you are living here, then you're invested in this community. If you start a business you're planning on staying here. You want to be successful; you want to grow your business. You contribute to the community overall because you have those ties; this is where you are, this is where your family is and so on. Whereas you could have people now, especially – you can run a business from anywhere on earth now with IT and everything else, a lot of stuff can be done.

That's the only thing – I'm just asking. I'm not saying it's all doom and gloom or that it's going to be opening ourselves up for major problems. I'm not saying that. I honestly don't know. That's not what I'm suggesting; I'm just asking

out loud the concern around people from outside the province with no ties to the province. They don't have to be an immigrant. It could someone who is living in Halifax and they just open up shop, they operate out of Halifax and they benefit from our province. All the money that's being derived is not going back into our economy; it's all going electronically transferred to their bank accounts, so they're spending all their money in Halifax somewhere, not in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's just sort of the counterpoints to this initiative that, again, if we're simply trying to target MUN students, international students and people who come here that want to open a business while they're getting their citizenship, I'm all for it. I wish there was a way to do that and accomplish that while at the same time preventing, necessarily someone who doesn't live here, has no intentions of living here, starting up a business, benefiting from our province and taking all the money and all the benefits out of Newfoundland and we don't gain anything. All they're going to do is compete with locals and water down their business so they can take the benefits and off to some other province somewhere to the detriment of our own citizens that are living and paying taxes here.

That's my only concern. Maybe it's unfounded; maybe it won't be a big deal. I'm sure this has all – maybe the pros outweigh the cons; I'm not saying they don't, but I am just putting it out there as a question and a concern as opposed to an outright criticism.

With that said, I still will support the bill.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'm only going to take a couple of minutes. Again, I think we support the change. Anything we can do to help businesses start up is always a good thing.

But I would like to point out that right now, unfortunately, some of the regulations we have in place as a government are prohibiting small businesses and new businesses from actually being able to bid on government contracts. Many tenders, proposals or RFPs issued by government require a business to have experience and sometimes a points system is used. If you have no prior experience on a project you will fail to receive the points necessary or less points because you did not have any experience on comparable projects.

I would suggest that the experience of the company employees actually performing the task should be the key and not the actual company. A new company could start with employees of a dissolved company. The evaluation criteria is outlined in the Newfoundland and Labrador regulations. I mean, I think it should be re-evaluated to determine if changes are necessary.

I just want to make that point because I believe, as a result of these, government sometimes and taxpayers sometimes pay more for a project than they necessarily should. It's not because the people that are bidding on the contract don't have the experienced employees to do the work, it's just simply because they are a new company.

If we want to promote new companies, I think we need to take a look at those regulations and see what we can do to bring that down.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Any further speakers to the bill?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to speak briefly to this. I do applaud the idea of coming in line with the rest of the country now on curbing and its plans to help eliminate money laundering. That's been a serious issue for many. It's not just here, it's a global issue that we all have to do our small part to fight and to mitigate.

I do applaud the government on speeding along through that and to make sure that we do implement those things, but, at the same time,

trying to make it's easier for non-residents here in the province to start small businesses. We see a lot of entrepreneurial spirit here from people who do immigrate into Newfoundland and Labrador. I can attest, there are a couple of small businesses that started in my region by people who moved here from the Philippines. It does help contribute greatly to the region. I do applaud that we are helping this.

I do have some questions I'll bring to Committee on this as well, but I do think that we are going in the right direction with that, but, at the same time, we do have to make sure that we are not opening ourselves or any doors to anyone who has nefarious motives in that way. We have to make sure that we have every aspect to mitigate, monitor and to make sure that we're not putting ourselves or our residents at harm when it comes to some of these things as well.

We have some concerns about some companies, especially numbered companies and stuff like that on some of the things in the past that has happened. We need to make sure that we don't go down those roads again, but also that we're open and transparent about how some of these companies operate, who's on their board of directors and some of the things that go on there. We do need to make sure that we are aware, an ability to have resources and the proper monitoring to keep an eye on these kind of things. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands did make good points there about some of the things we do have to do and we have to be aware of.

With that, I do support this. I hope that we see further stuff when it comes to the *Corporations Act* to protect ourselves, protect residents, protect consumers and to make sure that we are going in the right track to be competitive, but, at the same time, we're not opening any doors to any other things that would probably bring harm to us.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Any further speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, if the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL speaks now, the debate will be closed.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I really appreciate the feedback and comments from everyone in this House.

I'll just address the questions now and then we can obviously answer a lot more questions in Committee.

To the Member for Ferryland, I just want to make sure I was clear in my opening remarks. In terms of the beneficial owner provisions, there are six other provinces and then in terms of the no residency requirements, there are eight other provinces.

I also want to clarify that a physical address is still required for all companies to register a company in Newfoundland and Labrador as per the articles of incorporation documents. The company does still have to have a registered office in Newfoundland and Labrador. I guess we are talking about the Canadian immigration status of the directors is the core of what we're getting at with the proposed changes, Speaker.

In terms of the protections for privacy that was raised by the Member for Harbour Main: the information would not be public; it would be collected and used by law enforcement as they look into different crimes or potential crimes and do those investigations. They would have information from many sources that would help them in their investigations. There is no element of – none of this information would be released to the public.

The fines are unchanged from the existing *Corporations Act* and they range from \$500 to \$5,000.

The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands raised many good points and I'll address those now. In terms of disclosing the beneficial owners publicly: there are two phases to what the federal government has been driving. This is the first phase in terms of the company creating a register and keeping a register of the individuals with significant control.

The second phase, Speaker: the federal government is looking at creating a pan-Canadian beneficial owner registry. This is something we've seen globally. In February 2020, the federal government undertook public consultations on doing exactly that. That is still in progress and that would be a second phase Canada-wide. It is where other countries are going honestly, Speaker. The UK have that now. There is a registry publicly available of all of the beneficial owners of companies. I think that is an excellent point.

This is the first phase. I can't speak to whether or not phase two will be something that we'll bring to this House, but the federal government is thinking about that. I know the federal Finance ministers are talking about that and there is a What We Heard document on the federal government website about that at the moment that is called Strengthening Corporate Beneficial Ownership Transparency in Canada. There was a White Paper done by the federal government as well.

The Member also talked about the Procurement Act in terms of requirements for companies bidding on government work. That would not be covered in the *Corporations Act*; that would be in the Procurement Act, which I believe I'm pretty sure falls in another department. Then, I guess, we also did consultations with the Privacy Commissioner as well from a privacy perspective.

In terms of the residency provisions that the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands raised, I think those are excellent questions. In 2018, there were changes to the *Corporations Act*; that was before my time. But in that the department was trying to do that same thing. We put in interim measures, we left the 25 per cent in and essentially we're taking it a step further because the measures that were taken in 2018 didn't go far enough in helping these individuals start businesses.

In terms of are we opening ourselves up. The Member for Harbour Main talked about this. Directors of companies have limited liability, they're protected by the corporate veil and there are limited situations whereby they would be liable. So, like I said, companies still have to

have a physical address in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I also want to clarify, they were talking about Canadian residency, not Newfoundland and Labrador residency.

Also, in terms of keeping track of the beneficial owners, as the Member for Mount Pearl referenced, the CRA also keeps a list of legal owners who own 10 or more of the shares, so now we're kind of getting at a different angle, the beneficial owners. I also think it's worth pointing out that sole proprietors do not have to be a resident in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're kind of following in the path of other provinces as well with that change.

The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, I think, referenced the Procurement Act as well. My understanding is the Procurement Act does not have points and that might be a condition of a specific tender or an RFP.

I also want to thank the Member for Labrador West for his feedback and the Member for Ferryland. I'm happy to answer any more questions in Committee.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is Bill 24 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:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Corporations Act. (Bill 24)

**SPEAKER:** This 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 Corporations Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 24)

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 24.

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

Is 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 24, An Act To Amend The Corporations Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Corporations Act." (Bill 24)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

Has the department consulted with groups such as the St. John's Board of Trade and the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce on these two changes?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The federal government did extensive consultations on this. We didn't do specific consultations outside, I guess, speaking with impacted parties. We talked a lot to Memorial University, for example, about the proposed change to residency. But primarily, the consultations were done by the federal government. All that is available on their website.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Has the Association for New Canadians been consulted on this legislation?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We have not consulted the Association for New Canadians, although we did speak with some – sorry, there is an organization. Not the Association for New Canadians, but we did consult with an organization that works with newcomers in Newfoundland and Labrador about this change.

I also want to clarify and add we did consult with the CPA and the Law Society, and the federal government consulted with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce about these changes.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** In addition to this legislative change, what is government doing to make it easier for immigrants, newcomers and temporary residents to create businesses in this province?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** I thank the Member for the question. I would defer to the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills to talk about what our government is doing to help newcomers.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** I feel like I might be like the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands at this point in time, wondering what I should say next.

Thank you very much. I would like to say a thank you to the minister for acting on the direct representation of newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador. One of the things that we found in our consultations, in terms of barriers to newcomers to Newfoundland and Labrador, is that they felt that the incorporation system for entrepreneurs is not as welcome as it needs to be.

This will correct – this was a direct measure which was introduced to the government, to our thought process, by newcomers. With that said, Mr. Chair, it does provide a more welcoming environment.

Now, with that said, I'll take that. Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**G. BYRNE:** The minister points out something which is very important: What are you doing to help newcomers, including starting businesses? Well, Mr. Chair, the incorporation process was daunting for newcomers because, of course, it required a director being a resident of

Newfoundland and Labrador. Of course, many newcomers did not have these associations, these relationships that were forged.

There was some question as to whether or not there could be questions about money laundering, questions about the incorporation process, why it would be necessary for those who would incorporate a business to have a director from the province outside of the newcomer themselves. Through the jurisdictional scan, what we found was that other provinces, in consultation with the federal government, felt no risk to public security or safety, or to law enforcement. The risk was minimal and, in fact, could be easily controlled and enforced. So when it comes to helping newcomers, what we have to do is listen to newcomers. When the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL sat with several newcomers who were entrepreneurs, this was a very specific piece of advice that they were giving to us.

In addition to that, Mr. Chair, when we look at job matching, we've introduced not only new portals, new pathways for newcomers, priority skills – for example, where we are now, including those who are graduates of Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic, those who bring advanced skills and experience to our province, we've opened up new pathways for newcomers – but we've gone even further. With our job matching, our Priority Skills matching program, we're also matching not only those who are here with open work permits, those who graduated from Memorial or graduated from CNA who have open work permits, but we've asked employers from the province to register under this pathway so that we can help match them and their businesses, their human resources efforts, with existing people in our province with skills.

Mr. Chair, we spend a significant amount of money educating people not only from Newfoundland and Labrador – we spend \$150 million annually on skills training – but we also spend significant money on educating foreign international students. It does not seem very practical for us as a province in a demographic challenge to educate those international students, but then upon graduation for them not to have a position.

I hope, Chair, that answers the question that the minister has posed to me.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

Minister, I note that you stated with respect to some of the concerns I raised about protection of privacy that it's not public information; therefore, that seems to address that issue of privacy. But, no, I don't think it does. I think that we need to know has the Privacy Commissioner been consulted on the provision with respect to beneficial ownership, first of all.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you very much.

The Privacy Commissioner has been consulted.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you.

With respect to this, though, this legislation with respect to beneficial ownership is not – you say it's not public information so it really doesn't have to be concerned about protection of privacy. But we note that the legislation will be examining, for example, individuals who are – like I say, the owners or controllers of the corporation. It's going to be looking at the names found on official documentation to look at accuracy of the information. It's going to search through many layers of information to see who the beneficial owners are.



So, again, what assurances are there that individual's rights with respect to their information is going to be protected? I mean, what's in place to address that?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess I'll just clarify that the corporations don't have to give us the data. The corporation just has to keep it themselves. A company would have to keep a list on hand and, you know, their own information and privacy policies or whatever would manage that. They have to keep a list of the beneficial owners of that company so that they can produce it to law enforcement, if and when needed.

So in terms of, I guess, how law enforcement protects data of the investigations that they do, that would fall under their normal kind of information management practices from the RNC and the RCMP.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** So just on that point, though, with respect to the privacy. You indicated that the Privacy Commissioner has been consulted. Did the Privacy Commissioner report back or is that in progress? Is there any direction from the Privacy Commissioner on this legislation?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Privacy Commissioner was consulted. That has concluded. My understanding is any feedback would have already been incorporated and there are no outstanding concerns.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Also, the issue with respect to fines. Now, you indicated that there are fines in the range of \$500 to \$5,000.

Can you just explain and expand on how that's going to play out, please?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The fines in the bill are \$5,000, consistent with existing fines in the act; 503.1(5) does have a fine of up to \$200,000. I guess, how that would play out is if someone commits an offence related to beneficial ownership, they could get a fine of up to \$200,000 or six months in jail, or both.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** So with respect to committing an offence with respect to beneficial ownership, what exactly do you mean by that?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** To me that would say that they committed an offence against – they did not meet the requirements in the act for beneficial ownership.

I can read that section of the bill, clause 8. It's clause 8, 503.1 "Every director or officer of a corporation who knowingly authorizes, permits or acquiesces in the contravention of subsection 45.2(1) or 45.5(2) by that corporation commits an offence, whether or not the corporation has been prosecuted or convicted. (2) Every director or officer of a corporation who knowingly records or knowingly authorizes, permits or acquiesces in the recording of false or misleading information in the register of the corporation referred to in subsection 45.2(1) commits an offence. (3) Every director or officer of a corporation who knowingly provides or knowingly authorizes, permits or acquiesces in

the provision to any person or entity of false or misleading information in relation to the register of the corporation referred to in subsection 45.2(1) commits an offence. (4) Every shareholder who knowingly contravenes subsection 45.2(4) commits an offence. (5) A person who commits an offence under any of subsections (1) to (4) is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding \$200,000 or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding 6 months, or to both.”

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

Those were all my questions.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Chair.

I do appreciate the minister’s commentary when she closed debate in second reading and she talked about the fact that there is a second phase that the federal government is considering, by the sounds of it, as it relates to publicly disclosing the names of all beneficial owners. That is great, I’m glad they’re considering it; when I hear someone is considering it, it means it may or may not happen.

I’m just wondering, Minister, from the perspective of substantial owners in corporations here in Newfoundland and Labrador that are benefiting from the public purse, whether that be grants, loans or other dealings, what is to stop us here in Newfoundland and Labrador – forget about what the feds are doing on a national level to disclose everybody because I am not talking about disclosing for every corporation. I’m only talking about the ones that are benefiting from the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador in terms of monetary favour or business dealings with the province.

What is to stop us from bringing in or amending this piece of legislation to make it mandatory that anybody who is involved in that regard, that corporation, a numbered company or whatever the case might be, that that would be public information in the name of openness and transparency?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you to the Member for the question.

The federal government is consulting on that. There is a document, *What We Heard*, in terms of – sorry, I’m just distracted, sorry. To the Member’s question, the US government have gone in this direction, 87 per cent of companies have to disclose, I guess, information to a central database that’s not publicly available. But in terms of the European Union, as of 2018 there’s a European Union directive that all members have to implement a central registry of beneficial owners.

I guess in terms of companies that get money from the provincial government, the Procurement Act would deal with that in terms of requirements of a company when they get a contract from the provincial government and the *Auditor General Act* that we talked about earlier this week would also be relevant as we talked about the authorities of the Auditor General as they pursue and – we gave the Auditor General the power to look at how public money is spent.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Follow the money.

**S. STOODLEY:** Follow the money my colleague says.

That is something, I guess, in spirit that we are working towards. This is the first phase, but, obviously, I can’t comment on whether or not that will be a direction but that is certainly the direction of the federal government and other countries. I have no reason to believe, at this moment, that that will not be the direction we’ll be going in.

Thank you.

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

**P. LANE:** I thank the minister for that.

Again, I appreciate what the minister is saying that that's something that the federal government is looking at and the European Union and so on in terms of a registry and so on. I also understand the Auditor General, if there was some concern that money was misspent, so to speak, or not utilized for what it was supposed to be utilized for, then the AG, under what we passed yesterday, could look into that. That's all good stuff. I'm not knocking any of that. I think that's a good thing.

But the point I'm trying to get at here is that as things stand currently, to the best of my knowledge at least and maybe I can be corrected, is that you could have corporation 1234, a numbered company and they could, in theory, get loans, government loans, non-repayable government loans. They could get grants. They could be involved in business dealings, as we've seen happen with the Canopy Growth situation with that numbered company on Plank Road. They may not have been spending the money wrong. Maybe they applied for it; they may have applied for the money and met the criteria to get the money. They may be spending the money the way it was intended, but the bottom line is the public doesn't know who the individuals are involved in that deal.

So when it comes to this concept of openness and transparency, when it comes to this concept of people with connections inside government who are hiding behind a numbered company and benefiting from their friends, that's the public perception. I'm not saying that's what's happening, I'm just saying the public perception, which is everything, if you want to instill confidence. You could have friends of government, connections to government, whatever stripe that government is, who are benefiting from the public purse in dealings with government, and then those individuals can hide behind a numbered company.

I guess what I'm saying is regardless of what the federal government is doing and regardless of what the European Union is doing and so on, I can't see why we can't address it in our

legislation to say that if any corporation is benefiting from taxpayer funds in Newfoundland and Labrador, they must disclose the names publicly of those involved. That's my point, Minister.

I'm wondering is that something that you would be open to looking at bringing forward. Whether the federal government decides to do a registry or not, whether the European Union decides to do one or not, is that something you would entertain in Newfoundland and Labrador in the interest of openness and transparency with public dollars? That's my question.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Chair.

I can't speak to all the nuances raised by the Member. I mean, what I will say is that the details for phase two are still in progress. We have to work out who's going to pay for such a registry. How are the provinces going to contribute to it? Is it all provinces? Is it mandatory? There are a lot of federal, provincial, interprovincial discussions that need to happen on a federal public registry. That depends on the outcome of phase two, the consultation documents, which I recommend the Member read. It's on the federal government's website. I'll certainly send to the Member.

In terms of directors of a corporation, in terms of the *Corporations Act*, we do not differentiate whether a company has a name, rabbit company, or whether it has a number, the 123 company. In terms of the *Corporations Act* there's no difference. The disclosure requirements are exactly the same.

When someone registers a company they have to list the directors. Now, with the beneficial owners' clause that we're proposing, that company also has to keep a list of the beneficial owners as defined in the proposed legislation for law enforcement. In terms of a company name versus the number of a company in terms of the *Corporations Act*, that has no relevance.

I thank you, Mr. Chair. I don't think I can add anything further.

Thank you.

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

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Chair.

I'm not going to belabour this, so this will be my last point on it. Again, I'm not suggesting that Newfoundland and Labrador is going to go ahead of the curb now and that we're going to create a business registry, at any significant cost or otherwise, for every corporation in Newfoundland and Labrador. That would be great if it happens. I hope the feds do it, and if they do, I hope we get on board. That is a good thing.

I'm not talking about a registry. All I'm simply asking about or suggesting is that if company 123 applies for a non-repayable government loan or a grant, or they benefit in some other way through some dealing with the government and the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador, then I, as a citizen, should be able to – whether there's a website with it all listed, that's one thing. I should be able to call up some department in government and say, listen, I've just seen that company 123 just got money from the government. I want to know who is company 123. I want to know the names of the people involved in this deal, which didn't happen under the Canopy Growth situation – it didn't happen. CBC had to investigate and find out that there was some company on Plank Road and nobody could tell us who the person was.

My question and my point is – and if you can clarify it, that'd be great. I really hope –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Stop talking.

**P. LANE:** Who said stop – Chair, I'm not going to stop talking.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs might think this is a big joke, but I don't. I'm sure the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador don't either.

Anyway, my point is that if there's a corporation benefiting, then we should have the right to know who those individuals are so dots can be connected, if necessary. It's not about this

government; it's about any government. That's all I'm asking.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and happy to contribute to the debate.

The Member asks an important question, which is when it comes to taxpayers' dollars where is the accountability? So a couple of things I'll just point out here. Number one – and our department does deal a lot with providing funding through various means to various enterprises, corporations, companies and entrepreneurs in our province.

I can tell you that there is not one dollar that goes out to somebody that is not publicly known or accounted for, and the Auditor General has the ability to do so. I would put a challenge out that if anybody can find me a dollar that was put out to a company, in taxpayers' dollars, where that accountability was not there, I would be interested in seeing where that was and where it is because I do not think that is the case.

I can tell you from having been in this department now since August of 2020, everything is extremely scrutinized, to the point where in many cases we're criticized because we don't get it out fast enough because we do the due diligence behind it. Because nobody wants to see a situation where money is expended without the ability to know where it went or how it is recovered, but it is a good point.

The second part, I will say just for the record, there was never a taxpayer dollar that went into Canopy. What happened there is there was remittances to the Newfoundland liquor corporation when it came to taxation. In fact, last year, when everything went sideways there, I actually tweeted a picture of the remittance cheque that was sent back from Canopy to the NLC with every dollar. There was no actual money from our department put into that corporation, everything there was through a taxation and remittance format. I do think that's an important distinction that needs to be put out there.

Again, coming back, it is a good point and, hopefully, I have answered it satisfactorily.

Thank you.

**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 10 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 10 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 10 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 Corporations 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, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 24.

**CHAIR:** The motion is the Committee rise and report Bill 24.

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

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 Committee of the Whole.

**B. WARR:** Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 24 without amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that Committee have considered the matters referred to them and have reported Bill 24 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**S. CROCKER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** When shall the bill be read a third time?

**S. CROCKER:** 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 very much, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that we do now recess.

**SPEAKER:** This House do stand recessed until 2 p.m. this afternoon.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Admit strangers.

Order, please!

Good afternoon, everyone.

Joining us today in the Speaker's gallery, I would like to welcome Toby Obed. Mr. Obed will be recognized in a Member's statement this afternoon.

Welcome, Sir.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Exploits, Cape St. Francis, Baie Verte - Green Bay, Placentia West - Bellevue, Torngat Mountains and Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, with leave.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

It's my honour to stand in this House of Assembly today and recognize the volunteer efforts of the BGC in Norris Arm. The BGC are enormous to youth programs in the town of Norris Arm.

I had the honour to join them on many occasions in supporting them with seniors' activities sponsored by the BGC. During the pandemic they provided meals to seniors of the community and provided help with seniors' activities.

The BGC have been a valuable contribution to the youth of the community and to the province to enhance their skills and productivity.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members in this House of Assembly to join with me in recognizing the BGC of Norris Arm.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

**J. WALL:** Thank you, Speaker.

Today, I recognize Rose Nichols of Pouch Cove. Rose has been a community volunteer for many years, but it was 11 years ago that she began knitting Hats for Newborns.

Following the birth of her eldest granddaughter, she saw that all newborns were wearing knitted hats. She thought that the hats were purchased by the hospital, but a nurse explained to her that volunteers supplied them, and that's all that Rose needed to hear.

Purchasing the materials that she needed, she began the process of knitting hats for newborns in her spare time. Over the past 11 years, it's estimated that Rose has donated over 2,000 baby hats to the Labour and Delivery unit at the Janeway Children's Health and Rehabilitation Centre. What a fantastic way to volunteer your time and your talent, all the while supporting those young lives in their first days. Such a level of volunteerism has to be applauded.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members in joining me in thanking Rose Nichols of Pouch Cove for being a kind-hearted volunteer. We can all learn from her example.

Thank You.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

**B. WARR:** Speaker, today, I'd like to highlight an amazing young athlete from my district; an up-and-coming star. At just 15, Logan Colbourne from Coffee Cove, a community of 13, is minding the net for the provincial AAA hockey team.

Logan was a late starter compared to his teammates when he joined the Springdale Minor Hockey Association in Grade 6 as an atom, on to peewee and now a bantam. Logan played with the provincial AA hockey team before being chosen for the provincial AAA team.

Logan's desire was to be a goalie and seized every opportunity to excel in the net, including summer hockey camps with Impact Hockey training. Logan Colbourne is attracting the interest of provincial coaches. This summer his hockey coach requested him to play with the under 18s.

Logan tried out for the High Performance Program this year and made second cut for the HPP NL team. After only four years of playing hockey, Logan is beyond thrilled with the opportunities he's been given and anticipates another great season. Logan is very grateful to his family, his coaches and teammates and peers for their support and encouragement.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in wishing Logan much success as he continues to pursue his love of hockey.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

**J. DWYER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I sit in this hon. Chamber today to recognize the Ride for Andrew Smith, which was held on September 18 in the beautiful town of Arnold's Cove.

This charitable event was organized by Mr. John Barrett and was in aid of a young man, Andrew Smith, who was involved in a life-changing car accident that has left Andrew confined to a wheelchair. The fundraising goal of this event was to raise enough money to purchase a custom motorized wheelchair for Andrew so he could travel the community to visit friends and family.

The event, which had 55 motorcycles, the fire truck from the Arnold's Cove Volunteer Fire Department and many other vehicles from the community, travelled around Arnold's Cove and then proceeded to Vernon's Antique Car Museum in Swift Current. The ride then returned to Arnold's Cove where they had a reception at the local Lions Club.

The Ride for Andrew raised a total of \$9,280 towards his wheelchair, which is now in the purchasing stage.

I invite all hon. Members to join me in showing our appreciation for the people of the Arnold's Cove area for coming together and ensuring Andrew got his new wheelchair.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

In 2007, Toby Obed began a journey toward healing as lead plaintiff of the residential class-action lawsuit against the federal government and testifying about trauma he suffered at a residential school.

Moulded by loss and trauma, taken from his family at age three, he doesn't remember his family fighting back; he only remembers their cries when he was taken from his home. Since then Toby has never had a home.

His journey was filled with physical, emotional and sexual abuse. He aged out of the system at 16. Turning to alcohol, in 1993 he passed out in a snowbank. At 50 below, Toby's liver and kidneys were frozen. Waking up from a coma two months later, he had no feet and no left arm below his elbow. Toby's scars are physical and emotional.

Moulded into a strong advocate, he advocates for affordable housing, the ability for families to heat their homes and feed their children. He challenges all levels of government.

He shares his memories of abuse so no child will ever have to hear their parents cry as they are removed from their home; so children can have a home, surrounded by their language, culture and love. All of which was taken from him.

Please join me in applauding Toby Obed.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, with leave.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all my colleagues for granting leave.

Speaker, today, I would like to recognize a very brave little girl from my district, seven-year-old Olivia Parsons of Shearstown.

Olivia loves unicorns, school, her friends and her favourite pastime is playing and spending time with her four sisters. She's full of energy, love and kindness.

But just before the close of last year's school year last spring, Olivia started to feel unwell.

Following medical appointments and blood work, Olivia was diagnosed with leukemia.

She was admitted to the Janeway hospital to begin treatments immediately. Needless to say, life changed for the entire family. But as challenging as this new journey has been, her parents, Allan and Jessie, say their seven-year-old daughter demonstrates outstanding strength and positivity every day.

The communities of Shearstown - Butlerville and surrounding areas in Conception Bay North have rallied around Olivia and her family, supporting them with fundraisers, fire truck parades and a family fun day with a community softball game and live, local entertainment.

Today, I ask that all hon. Members here in the House of Assembly join me in commending Olivia for her courage, strength and determination. Olivia, we are all behind you, wishing you a full recovery.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

Today, I would like to highlight the 70th anniversary of the Arts and Letters Awards Program and to remind artists throughout Newfoundland and Labrador that this year's submission deadline is November 19.

As one of government's flagship and most popular arts programs, the Arts and Letters Awards were initiated in 1951 when the then-Minister of Education Samuel J. Hefferton convened a meeting of prominent citizens to explore the possibility of promoting wider interest in cultural activities. Subsequently, in 1952, this annual series of arts awards was launched.



Today, the program continues to stimulate and celebrate creative activity by providing 62 cash awards, adjudication of all submissions by professional artists and the opportunity for winners to participate in a group exhibition at The Rooms.

The Arts and Letters Awards Program is open to both emerging and established artists in junior and senior divisions. Categories include: music, literary, visual art and multimedia. As well, the program includes the Percy Janes First Novel Award, which honours the life and work of one of Newfoundland and Labrador's most distinguished writers by awarding a cash award for an unpublished novel.

Speaker, I encourage all creative, artistic-minded Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to consider making a submission for this program. More information can be found on the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation's website.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Speaker, and I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

The Official Opposition supports the Arts and Letters Awards Program and congratulates the program on its 70th anniversary. The program has been and is continuing to support artists throughout by awarding of prizes in a variety of categories.

This program throughout the years has encouraged and developed our cultural creativity in the form of books, multimedia and the visual arts. This province's artists, many from within the District of Bonavista, are well known throughout the country and the world for their works and it's through programs like this that has enabled them to continue their passion.

Seventy years is a long time to all those who had adjudicated during this time and a huge thank you from all of us in the province.

We encourage all artists to participate in this year's competition – and as the minister stated the November 19 deadline – and to submit your work for consideration. It may be your stepping stone to future success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

I would like to encourage any artist listening to make a submission to the Arts and Letters Awards Program. Reward recognition for your work is not easy to come by so please don't miss this opportunity.

If we want our artistic community to continue to flourish, we need to invest more in accessible spaces for artists and more venues to showcase their work. Like I mentioned before during the debate on the budget, we need to start looking at a tax-rebate program for young artists who are also coming up through the system.

I encourage government, the private sector and the public to show continued support for artists in this province, many of whom saw their livelihood affected by this current pandemic.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Education.

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'm pleased to take this opportunity today in the House to recognize primary, elementary and secondary teachers in all disciplines who've demonstrated exceptional innovation in instruction or compassion in teaching.

Last week, the Premier and I announced the first-ever recipients of the Premier's Award for Teaching Innovation and the Minister of Education's Award for Compassion in Teaching.

The Premier's Award recognizes teachers who have demonstrated innovation in instruction and who have gone above and beyond to find innovative ways to deliver the curriculum resulting in greater educational outcomes for students.

The Premier's Award recipients are: Colin Barry of St. Matthew's school; Matthew Grant of Holy Trinity High; Stacey Hopkins of Leary's Brook Junior High; Lindsay Janes of Crescent Collegiate; Celine Monnier of E'cole des Grands Vents; and Sam Paterson of Brookside Intermediate.

The Minister of Education's Award for Compassion in Teaching recognizes inspirational and compassionate teachers who have gone above and beyond to support the social, emotional and mental health of their students, colleagues or school community as a whole.

The Minister of Education's Award recipients are: Pamela Avery of Swift Current Academy; Kim Bonnell of Eric G. Lambert School; Nathalie Brunette of Macdonald Drive Junior High; Erin Coates of Mount Pearl Senior High; Dustin Rideout, ConnectED; Gail Spicer, St. James Regional High; Catherine Tansley, Mount Pearl Intermediate; and Sara Toope, Beachy Cove Elementary.

Speaker, I ask all Members of the House to join me in recognizing the recipients and, in fact, all educators throughout the province for their dedication and contribution. Like the rest of us, teachers have been impacted considerably by COVID-19 and I commend them for their adaptability and willingness to put students first.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Speaker, my colleagues and I join the minister in congratulating these teachers for excellence in

their profession and for being role models in society. Anything we can do to celebrate and promote the qualities these teachers exhibit is to be celebrated. They have shown strong, innovative ideas and compassion in teaching.

Speaker, the ability to inspire and shape your minds is perhaps one of society's greatest callings. These winners have demonstrated outstanding commitment to their classrooms, schools and indeed our community. They have gone above and beyond and I want to thank each one of these deserving individuals.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement and I thank the minister and the Premier, too, for instituting these awards for teachers.

Teachers in this province go above and beyond every day. During the pandemic, they stepped up when there didn't seem to be a plan, and even now they continue to do so, not just as educators but as social workers, mentors to fill the gaps when a lack of resources might mean a child falls through the cracks.

We recognize the many burdens placed on our teachers and we owe these award recipients and all teachers our sincerest thanks.

Again, I thank you for instituting these awards.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I want to acknowledge the government's new conference this morning, which offered more clarity than has been offered prior to today. It may have taken five days and a dozen questions here in the House but we thank you for listening.

I ask the minister: Can you give some sort of timeline for when we might return to normal in our health care system?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

It continues to be a difficult time. I want to recognize the work of Mr. Hepditch and his staff at the Centre for Health Information, as well as all our health care providers who, once again, have stepped up to deal with yet another totally unexpected and unprecedented issue.

In terms of restoration of services, that is a staged process. Mr. Hepditch said it would take at least several days to begin that process and it has to be done in a staged fashion to ensure any unknown factors in the machine are dealt with as and if they arise to prevent any further occurrence.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

We do acknowledge there are stages that have to happen here, but we want to keep reiterating that people are in peril here and we need to move as quickly as possible and all the resources that are necessary need to be put into this.

Speaker, in this morning's conference the word "rebuild" was used a number of times to describe some of what is happening to repair the situation.

Does the minister have any timeline for how long it will take to rebuild the province's health information system?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

Without giving away anything that would be unwise to mention, this process has already begun and is instrumental in being able to move us onto the next steps of bringing in our most critical systems first.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, the Deputy Premier indicated she does not see the situation at an emergency, yet the four regional health authorities have activated their emergency operations centre. A cybersecurity expert based in Fredericton is publicly declaring this cyberattack the worst in Canadian history.

I ask the Deputy Premier: Do you believe the situation is an emergency?

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

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

You know, our hearts are with and our efforts are for the many patients, families and the health care providers that are caught up in this situation, and has as been determined this morning it is definitely a cyberattack. This is very difficult. All of our focus right now is on restoring services and making sure we get those services up as quickly as possible.

I can certainly say that for those that are involved in this particular situation, it is an emergency; it's very difficult for these patients, for these families and for health care in general. We're going to continue to work as determinedly and as diligently as we can to restore the service as quickly as possible.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I will say that the Official Opposition sees this as an emergency and we need to treat it as one and address it as one.

Speaker, we recognize this extraordinary event remains ongoing, we're in the middle of this event but we have to be ready for the next one.

I ask the government: Will you commit to a full public review of this incident to inform increased cybersecurity measures to prevent the next one?

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

**S. COADY:** Certainly, Speaker, our provincial emergency operation centres are up and operational. I think that the public has been well informed by Eastern Health, by the department as to the processes that we're undertaking. We're trying to move through this as expeditiously as possible.

Obviously, as a security matter, we can't go further into disclosing information or further details, I'll certainly say that. We have committed, in this House, to do a full debriefing once we understand what has occurred, how it has occurred and how we're handling it.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Deputy Premier for at least acknowledging that we need to do more to be prepared for the next one and we will diligently keep continuing to push to make sure that we're ready for whatever happens in the future.

Today, Western Health's operations were halted, much like the other regional health authorities.

I ask the minister: Was this change made purely out of caution or because Western Health's system maybe more compromised than initially thought?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** The information I have and that was provided at the briefing this morning by the VP from NLCHI was that this was done out of an abundance of caution.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

With chemotherapy appointments in Western now being cancelled until at least the end of the week there are a lot of people feeling uneasy in our province at one of the most difficult moments of their lives.

I ask the minister: What extra measures are being put in place now to ensure cancer care can hit the ground running once this attack is over?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

There are two centres in Western Health that are still able to provide service and those services continue uninterrupted. I have spoken with Mr. Diamond, Eastern Health runs the provincial cancer care program, each appointment that has been deferred or moved is examined by the appropriate medical oncologist, the clinician in charge each day to see what priority and how long these people could or should wait before bringing them back in.

It is not safe, currently, to offer services in certain areas because of uncertainties around the infrastructure piece. As soon as those are remedied and our critical systems are back online that will make life a lot easier for everybody; they have my sympathies and support.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

They have our sympathies, but we want to echo – and I’ve echoed this to the Premier – they have our support. If there are extra resources or anything that needs to be done, we are here on this side of the House to support the government in moving that forward and providing those services.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, the CEO of Eastern Health today referred to those who have travelled long distances, particularly from Labrador, only to have their appointments cancelled.

I ask the minister: Will you show leadership by fully covering the extra costs incurred by these people through your Medical Transportation Assistance Program?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

Certainly, we welcome the offer of assistance from the Members opposite – very much appreciate it.

As far as those individuals who have travelled long distances are concerned for investigations and procedures that they weren’t able to avail of, we will not count this against their liabilities under the MTAP program; it is a reimbursement program. Obviously, the income support clients are fully reimbursed anyway.

Anybody who feels that they have some special circumstances we need to be aware of, they can bring those to our attention and they will be viewed sympathetically.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I would think in this situation they are all unique and all should be covered 100 per cent, based on the principle here that they were not at fault. This unfortunately happened outside of their (inaudible).

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, the Cameron inquiry gave recommendations on proactive disclosure for government in a crisis.

I ask the minister: Do you feel you met the recommendations of the Cameron inquiry over the last five days?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

As soon as we became aware of the possible nature of the issue, we engaged expert advice, world-class advice. We informed the appropriate authorities and, quite frankly, Speaker, we have followed their advice, which is to limit our comments to those concerned with operational impact, mitigation and concentrate on dealing with the challenges the people of this province face.

Speaking about matters of cybersecurity in any venue, particularly a public one, is totally inappropriate and we will stick with that advice.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, the minister indicated that chemo patients have been reviewed and priority established.

I ask the minister: When will chemo be fully restored?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

It is impossible, currently, to give a definitive date. Obviously, if this starts to extend beyond a period that the medical oncologists feel is safe or wise, then, we will, through Eastern Health, look to operationalize them attending as urgent or emergent patients.

Currently, I have not been advised of any cases where that needs to happen at the moment. It's a discussion we discuss at least twice a day.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, the minister said patients with cancelled appointments whose condition changes should follow up with their primary care provider.

Speaker: What are the 100,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians without a family doctor supposed to do?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

Those people who have been referred into the acute care system for investigation or are going to specialist opinions will have had a primary care provider or a specialist provide that referral and order that test. That is their first point of call.

Those physicians working at private offices have not had their operations impacted in the same way as the regional health authority and they remain ready; otherwise, there is 811. Also, I use this opportunity to emphasize that for people who are acutely unwell, emergency services are still fully functional.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**P. DINN:** Speaker, my office has heard of a woman who had successful IVF a few weeks ago in Calgary, but has encountered serious complications. When she showed up to her urgent ultrasound she was told she wasn't emergent. I can't imagine the stress that this crisis has placed this family under.

When are urgent appointments going to resume?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

Any case deemed urgent by the referring clinician, my understanding is those are being done. This sounds like a communications failure. If the Member opposite wishes to supply me with details and consent, I would happily look into it for him.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I have many instances like this, so there's been a communications failure many times, apparently.

Speaker, today we learn another Newfoundland and Labrador hospital does not have any doctors. This time, the brand new Green Bay Health Centre in Springdale will have zero doctors on site this coming Friday, diverting patients to Grand Falls-Windsor.

Speaker, the Premier and the minister just cut a ribbon on their multi-million dollar piece of infrastructure that does not have staff.

Again, when is the government going to address this crisis of physicians in this province?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

Contingency plans have been put in place by Central Health to cover this situation. We have committed very recently to further enhancements to physician and health care provider recruitment with a package totalling some \$30 million.

Prior to that, however, we had been working with the Medical Association – for example with the Family Practice Renewal Program – on local initiatives to recruit and retain doctors. It is important to stress that even under the circumstances the Member opposite described, emergency care is available, both on site. Transportation is also available. If you are unwell call 911.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

It's good to hear the \$30-million figure tossed around again and again, but there's not action happening. They're still without doctors.

Speaker, patients, residents and community leaders have spoken out about the ongoing physician crisis in the Green Bay area. Now, entire communities are on edge about what will happen in case of an emergency when an ambulance will drive right by the brand new hospital in Springdale, adding over an hour to the drive. Speaker, minutes if not seconds matter at these moments.

I ask the minister again: When will a full complement of doctors be in place at the new hospital in Springdale?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

Recruitment and retention of health care providers, particularly physicians, to rural and

remote areas is a challenge across the globe, it's a challenge across Canada and it has been a persistent challenge in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have contingency plans in place, including the availability of advanced care paramedics in the area.

We have on a medium term arranged for the establishment of collaborative care teams, at least one in Central and one in Western, with the options hopefully of more even by the end of the fiscal year. The long-term strategy is that which we had laid out quite clearly a couple of Mondays ago. I would argue that recruitment for those positions, for a provincial recruitment program is under way.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

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

Now that the government has confirmed that we were indeed the victims of a cyberattack on critical government IT infrastructure, I ask the minister: Will she commit to a full external security audit of the government systems?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of our cybersecurity and protecting the government IT assets, we have a range of providers and solutions in place. We are continuously looking to see best practices and getting external feedback in terms of how we can improve our security, Mr. Speaker.

This is an ongoing activity that's part of every piece of IT work that happens. This is extremely high priority for us, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you.

Since the minister has refused to answer if an external security audit has been conducted on her watch, we can only assume that the review from 2015 that was commissioned by the OCIO, as posted on their website, was the last time it was done. The recommendations in that report are redacted so the minister is not divulging anything that will compromise security by answering the question.

Were the recommendations in this report implemented?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not exactly sure of which report the Member is talking about. There is an AG report – Auditor General's report – where there are nine recommendations for the OCIO, of which all were done except for one.

That recommendation that is kind of ongoing is the Auditor General recommended that we not hire external consultants and use internal staff where possible, which we certainly do. It's just we can't always find internal staff here to join our OCIO team. We do have to augment our services with consultants in order to make sure that we have appropriate services for the people of the province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Speaker, considering that health authorities have activated their respective emergency operations centres, I ask the minister: What role is your department playing at the provincial emergency operation centre to ensure core government agencies, boards and commissions are secure?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Our teams have reviewed and are closely monitoring all of our systems to make sure at the moment there are no out-of-the-ordinary things to report in terms of core government IT. The OCIO experts are working with the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information. They have our full support in anything they need.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** One of the initial criticisms of the Irish government during the cyberattack was that their head of IT security was vacant. We're aware that there are at least three vacancies related to IT security in our core government.

Is the OCIO short staffed when it comes to dealing with IT security?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I recommend the Member check out the OCIO Estimates from June 2021 where we talk about this very challenge. We do overcome this by managed services and bringing in consultants.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** We did see that it was short staffed when we checked; there are three vacancies. We'd like to see those filled and not be able to shop them out.

Speaker, I ask the minister: Does OCIO have any managed service contracts similar to the arrangement that Health has with Bell?



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

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

I'm sure the minister would be happy to answer that question more fulsomely. I would like to add, though, that on last night's news there was a computer security expert, a professor at Memorial University and I'm going to quote from him. He said: There's no reason to believe that there's anything the Department of Health, or NLCHI or anyone else did that made them more vulnerable than any other organization. He also went on to say: It was good to hear the minister talk about the extensive backups that were taken; these are good words to hear.

I think, Mr. Speaker, we would like the people of the province to understand what the computer security experts say. We'll continue to work to ensure safety and security of our computer systems.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for that answer, but I think that what we've heard from across the way is that we're not sure yet what caused it all. We know there was a cyberattack but we don't know – or if you do know, we haven't been told – what exactly caused it so we'll wait to hear more information on that.

Yesterday, when speaking to the media, the minister said there would be no impact to payroll for employees of the regional health authorities.

I ask the minister: Can you confirm that people will get paid based on their timesheets and their hours worked?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

The health authority employees will be paid on time this pay period.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Good to hear, Speaker.

We are concerned that this cyberattack may have spread into the payroll system as many systems are down.

So, again, I ask the minister: What contingency plans are in place in the event payroll operations have been affected by this attack?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

The RHAs have what we would call downtime protocols; these are usually in place for periods when there is planned cuts or reduction for upgrades in maintenance. These are currently in effect. As we work through the rebuilt process, obviously, it will become clearer whether or not there has been any impact there and, if so, of what nature. Once we know that, we'll be able to activate further contingency plans, if necessary.

Thank you.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

I ask the minister: Have you explained the contingency plan to pay employees to the union leadership so that they can be satisfied that their members will be paid on time and accurately?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** The short answer there is yes. Our union colleagues have been extremely supportive and offered to help in anyway they can. They understand the nature of the situation

in which we find ourselves, and I would like to thank them for their help.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, we recognize that there is a big effort going to have to be made for the restoration of health services. We know expertise is required in these situations, we know long hours and overtime will be needed to address these concerns.

I ask the minister: Are there any early estimates for how much this situation may end up costing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

As this is a security matter, we don't want to compromise any efforts that are underway so I'm going to say to the Member Opposite and to all people listening: We are very focused on getting our systems up and running again and on restoring service. That is our focus right now. We are fully prepared. We have engaged the experts that are needed and we're fully prepared that it may cost us something here in the province to restore the service – to bring in this expertise.

Mr. Speaker, we really want to make sure the patients, the families and the health care providers are cared for and that is our focus.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I couldn't agree with the minister more, that indeed should be our focus and, once again, we recognize this is an extraordinary situation that may require an extraordinary response.

We, in the Opposition, are willing to forgo constituency week if extra emergency funds are required to help us through this situation by way of a special warrant or anything.

I ask the minister: Are emergency funds required to help get this province through this situation?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

At this point in time, there is no necessity for a special warrant. We certainly have the funds available at this point in time.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

**J. WALL:** Thank you, Speaker.

In Estimates, when referencing the need for new fire protection equipment, an official said: There is a great need, there is no doubt, right across the province.

Can the minister inform this House how many fire departments are operating with outdated emergency equipment?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you for the question, Speaker.

Yes, there are applications every year for fire trucks and fire equipment throughout this province. Unfortunately, due to the fiscal constraints, the applications we received last year were valued at over \$18 million and we've budgeted almost \$3 million for that.

There have been fire trucks given out throughout the province this year and, in fact, I signed dozens of letters yesterday for fire equipment that's going out to districts throughout the province; Members on both sides of the House will be happy with the letters that they'll be getting.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

**J. WALL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I appreciate the answer from the minister. I look forward to some of that coming to my district, as well.

Speaker, having up-to-date fire protection equipment is key to ensuring the safety of our firefighters. It also helps to lower the insurance premiums for the residents of our communities.

How many communities are operating with vehicles that are currently over 20 years old?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Again, thank you for the question.

I'll just reiterate what I said. There are obviously fire departments throughout this province that have made requests for fire trucks and fire equipment. We're doing our best within our fiscal constraints to deal with all those applications. But, again, there was 60 applications at \$18 million this year. Funds have went out for equipment and for trucks, and they'll continue to go out in the next few years.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, Health Canada has authorized COVID-19 vaccines for children age 12 and over and it's only a matter of time before children five to 11 are included.

Given the recent cyberattack, is the Department of Education working on a contingency plan with the Department of Health to ensure that any vaccine rollout for school-aged children is not delayed?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

We have plans in place for rollout of vaccine for the five- to 11-year-olds as soon as it's released to us. Our order is in and we have been guaranteed, I think, 34,000 doses in the first instance. We are able to deliver those regardless of the state of the IT infrastructure.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I ask the Minister of Education: How much of the decision not to provide extra buses to transport students to and from school is based on the advice of Public Health? How much of it is a calculated budget-based political decision not to invest in necessary resources to keep our school community safe?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the Member opposite for his question. The advice comes from Public Health, Mr. Speaker. We follow the advice of Public Health. Public Health has advised that it was safe to go back to regular busing this year and that is what we've done.

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

The minister maintains he's following the advice of Public Health. This week, teachers in a metro area primary school had to cancel a field trip. Even though the students arrived to school on one bus, the NLESD said the field trip could only proceed if the school hired three separate buses so students could maintain their cohorts.

I ask the minister: Who is actually following the advice of Public Health, your department or the NLESD?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** The NLESD.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. DINN:** So will the minister now agree that, like the NLESD, he has within his discretion to err on the side of caution and implement measures above what are recommended by Public Health?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Speaker.

The department and the NLESD follow the guidelines of Public Health. We always have. We will continue to. They've guided us very well, Speaker.

I'm not aware of the situation that the Member brings forward but if he'd like to share the information I will certainly speak with the NLESD and find out the correct details of that situation.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The high cost of food in my communities is resulting in many families going hungry. Chronic hunger is ruining many lives.

Will the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs commit to working with the Department of Transportation and the Premier to return a direct marine freight service from the Island to our North Coast communities?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank my colleague for the question. Food security is a concern and that's why, as a government, in our platform, I believe, we had stats there to increase our food security by 20

per cent. I know in Labrador we're only growing about 1 per cent, and there is tremendous need.

Mr. Speaker, we're certainly open to working with our colleagues on all sides of the House to find solutions and to advance and to support people, whether it's through Income Support, whether it's through subsidy. I've actually been to Ottawa twice meeting with officials up there and we've had some success in getting food items added to the Nutrition North program to help make food costs sustainable for people on the North Coast.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** The high cost is reflected in the stores, Speaker.

Labrador's level of health care is unacceptable. Lives are being lost as a result of acute and chronic failures to provide adequate health care services.

So I ask the minister: Will this government work to designate Labrador as its own health authority, allowing for adequate health care resources to be centrally placed in Labrador instead of on the Northern Peninsula?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you, Speaker.

A very timely question given that the Health Accord NL is currently in the final stages of its consultations, which have been extensive, and included Indigenous and Labradorian input in quite significant ways.

I wait with interest their recommendations about any changes or direction that we could take on governance, and certainly the Member's views opposite have been noted, I think, in their deliberations.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Health Accord has not consulted with the public in my district, make note.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the Minister of Transportation in April to provide an update on the prefeasibility study for the road to the North Coast, but he could not at that time.

So I ask him again: Can he provide an update for me now?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you for the question.

In terms of status of the feasibility study, as the Member is aware, we allocated \$200,000 for that study for a road to the North in the budget of '20-'21, and we are currently preparing the terms of reference for the study. We anticipate releasing the RFP before the end of this year.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice of the following resolution:

That in accordance with Standing Order 8(8), notwithstanding the Parliamentary Calendar issued by the Clerk for 2022 or any Standing Order to the contrary, the Parliamentary Calendar for the spring 2022 sitting of the House shall be modified as follows:

That this House will meet in accordance with the daily schedule prescribed in the Standing Orders, as follows: From March 15, 2022, to March 17, 2022, inclusive; from April 4, 2022, to April 14, 2022, inclusive; from May 2, 2022, to May 19 inclusive; from May 30, 2022, to June 2, 2022, inclusive; and that the week of May 23 shall be a constituency week.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, 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 Thursday, November 4, 2021.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I bring forth the following petition:

We, the undersigned residents of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, bring the attention to the House of Assembly to the following:

WHEREAS in accordance to the document *The Way Forward on Climate Change* the province is already experiencing the effects of climate change; NL joined the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change in 2016 but it is not on track to meet our 2020 targets; financial costs resulting from climate change

will unequally impact municipalities due to responsibilities set out in the *Municipalities Act, 1999*;

THEREFORE your petitioners call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to: Declare a climate emergency; establish a task force on decreasing the effects of the climate crisis while building community resilience; and consider climate in all policies and decision-making.

Mr. Speaker, I brought this one forth before. Actually, many hon. Members in this House have brought forth this one before. We are experiencing climate change; you can see it everywhere. This was the first winter in many, many years, longer than I have been here, that Labrador West never had snow on Halloween. We only had a little dusting the day after.

My wife couldn't even believe it. She was sending me pictures. She said she just couldn't believe that the kids didn't have to wear snowsuits under their costumes. It was actually a nice evening out. Then it rained but (inaudible). It was something that has not been seen in our area before. Our neighbours next door in Fermont, I seen some of them had posted the same thing that many of them up there couldn't believe that there was no snow on Halloween.

We're facing climate change in Labrador, twice as much as the Island of Newfoundland. Climate change is actually hitting Labrador harder than even the Island part of this province. We rely on winter in Labrador very substantially. It's a massive part of our culture. It's a massive part of our transportation. It's a massive part of the way of life for Indigenous people and Labradorians.

This is very serious. I believe this is very serious and we need to take it very seriously, that we need to be doing everything in our power as a government, as a people, as a nation to effect this. Like I said, there is the COP26 there going on now and you just laugh at all the people showing up in private jets and all that, too, but that's another thing for another day.

But at the same time, it's just that we have to take this more seriously than we are right now. We are in a climate emergency. We are facing this down and the Minister of Energy did

actually mention that he does agree that this is probably one of the greatest challenges facing us as a province going forward. And it is. It's not a joke. It's a serious, serious matter. And these are

—

**SPEAKER:** Order!

Time has expired.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for a response.

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the hon. Member for the petition and I couldn't agree more; we fully understand that the decisions we make today have far-reaching and long-lasting impacts on not just our community but the entire global community.

This is the make-or-break decade of our time so we've got to push as hard as we can. We've made numerous changes. We've invested through the Low Carbon Economy Leadership Fund with our federal colleagues. Many different announcements with partnering with municipalities throughout our province, whether it be waste management in the Burin Peninsula; whether it be Grand Falls-Windsor, Gander for a \$4.7-million investment for climate change; whether it be fuel switching out in Port aux Basques to the sports complex out there; whether it's going to be the announcement that we will be doing in the next couple of weeks in Lab West.

All of those are going to make impacts on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and I'm glad that so many people in the House of Assembly are bringing this forward – not just the people in the House of Assembly, but the people of our province. Any change we make, regardless of how small it is, makes a difference and it's compounded over time. So I'd encourage everyone to make those slight changes.

We have two programs that we've announced in budget 2021-2022 for fuel switching in your

homes to move to electric from oil, and also moving to electric vehicles, which is an important piece because transportation accounts for a lot of our greenhouse gas emissions in this province.

I'm happy that the hon. Member mentioned something about COP26 and I'm very excited that –

**SPEAKER:** Order!

The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS the Shamrock Medical Clinic in Ferryland is without a nurse practitioner when the single nurse practitioner is not on duty. Eastern Health cannot find a replacement nurse practitioner to fill the gap when the current nurse practitioner is off work. The people of this area are concerned that their primary health care needs are not being met under the current plan that is maintained by Eastern Health.

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 address the lack of nurse practitioners in Shamrock Medical Clinic catchment area by allocating a second nurse practitioner to the Ferryland area so there is another nurse practitioner in place to address the backlog of patients in the area.

There is interest from local nurse practitioners to work out of the Shamrock Medical Clinic if a second nurse practitioner position becomes available. Given the driving distance from St. John's is over an hour, we call on the minister to address this situation immediately by adding a second nurse practitioner to ensure that these residents are not left behind.

Mr. Speaker, I became aware of this last week, but for two weeks prior to that, the nurse practitioner was off due to an illness or a family event or whatever that may be and there was no

one to fill in. So they had two full weeks of no one there to take care of the needs of the constituents in the area. So it's very concerning. When the nurse practitioner is unable to work, the people of the area are left with cancelled appointments; therefore, losing their accessibility to care. So one person had an appointment on a Friday, they rebooked it for the following Friday and, again, couldn't get in. They had to call and cancel.

Now, this week we did get some information that they were coming up on a Wednesday and a Friday of this week. But there are nurse practitioners in the area that are interested in filling a position, if they put one there, to become available for the residents of the area. Then, to be able to alleviate that problem when the original or the one nurse practitioner goes off on holidays or whatever it may be, whatever family event comes up or some crisis, that there is still help there to support the residents and the people in the community.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

**P. TRIMPER:** Thank you, Speaker.

This is going to sound remarkably familiar, but it is very much a problem, especially in Labrador. I thank my colleagues from Torngat Mountains and Labrador West who've already spoken to it.

We, the undersigned residents of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, bring to the attention of the House of Assembly the following:

WHEREAS according to the document *The Way Forward on Climate Change* the province is already experiencing the effects of climate change. Newfoundland and Labrador joined the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change in 2016 but is not on track to meet its 2020 targets. Financial costs resulting from climate change will unequally impact municipalities due to responsibilities set out in the *Municipalities Act, 1999*.

THEREFORE your petitioners call upon this House of Assembly to urge the government to declare a climate emergency, establish a task force on decreasing the effects of the climate crisis while building community resilience and consider a climate in all policy and decision-making.

I'd like to thank my colleagues again from Labrador, because you know what, as I have indicated in a private Member's motion and I referenced it again yesterday in Question period – I want everybody to think about this – only 29 years from now, if we don't aggressively tackle this the average temperature in this city will be 3.4 degrees above normal; in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, six degrees above normal; and in Nain, 7.3 degrees above normal.

Guess what this means? It means Nain will have a warmer climate than the capital city of this province. This is the reality. Until we take and make every single decision we make as individuals, as communities, as provinces and nations, this world is going to burn. The future generations, our kids – I think every one of us should be thinking about that next generation that's coming right along behind us. By the time they're 29 years older, they're going to be facing a reality that is just going to be terrifying. We have to get a serious grip on this.

I thank my colleagues for continuing to speak on it. I recognize the minister in his efforts. I'm going to tell him that he and the rest of Cabinet and everyone of this Legislature need to get at this much more aggressively.

Thank you very much.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for a response.

**B. DAVIS:** Yes, thank you, Speaker.

Thank you to the hon. Member for bringing forward the petition again. That's the exact reason why our Premier – being the first Premier in the history of the province to go to COP – is there, because he understands how important it is. It's the biggest issue that we've ever faced as a global community.

He's there working hard to bring back insight into this, make partnerships, work with individuals over there, countries and jurisdictions like us. We've created a Net-Zero Advisory Committee that will help to keep us on task as well.

I thank the hon. Member for the petition. I look forward to working with him and every Member of this House of Assembly to get to where we need to be for 2030 targets and 2050 targets.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members' Day

**SPEAKER:** This being Wednesday, I call upon the Leader of the Third Party to introduce his resolution that will be our private Member's resolution for today.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Moved by me, seconded by the Member for Labrador West:

WHEREAS the 2016 census showed that St. John's has the highest level of income inequality in all of Atlantic Canada, with the top 1 per cent taking home nine times more than the bottom 30 per cent and seven times more than the bottom 50 per cent; and

WHEREAS Canadians from all parties and all walks of life, including CEOs, Senators, doctors, community support workers and economists are now championing some form of basic income program; and

WHEREAS federal Finance Minister, Chrystia Freeland, has called for a new deal in light of the vast transformations occurring in our economy due to automation and information technology –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!



**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

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

**J. DINN:** Which see the bulk of the productivity gains going to the wealthiest, while real wages stagnate and an insufficient number of jobs are created to replace those lost to automation; and

WHEREAS former governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney, echoed Minister Freeland's comments in 2018, explaining how technology has decimated the share of income going to workers, increased poverty and underemployment, with the effect of hollowing out the middle class and replacing the work with more lower skilled jobs, and the vast majority of productivity gains going to the wealthiest as a result; and

WHEREAS the federal government is already pioneering in the provision of income support to those who need it through the Canada Emergency Response Benefit; and

WHEREAS evidence from the Alaska Permanent Fund found that when low- and middle-income families received extra money every year they bought more education, clothing, recreation and electronic purchases for their children, while giving more money to the high-income families did not result in increased investment in their children; and

WHEREAS the current income support system amounts to a poverty trap and still leaves many to fall through the cracks; and

WHEREAS Canadian data from basic income pilot projects has shown that such programs increase public health, foster improvements in nutrition, improve mental health and well-being, lower the immense public costs associated with poverty, encourage entrepreneurship and allow people to pursue education and training; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has calculated that poverty costs this province a total of \$959 million in preventable health problems, crime, lost productivity, foregone public revenue and intergenerational costs; and

WHEREAS a poll conducted by The Gandalf Group on behalf of the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security (June 28-30, 2021) indicated that significant support exists among Atlantic Canadians and among all demographics for a basic minimum income that would provide a safety net for all Canadians; and

WHEREAS a 2017 study by the Roosevelt Institute showed that even a \$1,000 payment to all adults once a year would expand the American economy by 12.56 per cent over the baseline after eight years and permanently raise the level of national economic output; and

WHEREAS this House voted last year to set up a Committee to study a pilot project on basic income and create a timeline for its implementation;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House consider truly ending poverty in this province by establishing an all-party Select Committee on basic income, with a mandate to review and make recommendations on: eligibility and minimum income amounts, interaction with existing income supports, additional poverty reduction initiatives, cost-benefit analysis, potential models for such a program and a timeline for implementation;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the House ensure this Select Committee has the resources it needs to conduct its work;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this Select Committee engage federal Members of Parliament from Newfoundland and Labrador to participate.

Speaker, we probably wouldn't have reintroduced this again except for the fact that we were unable to get any firm commitment from government to reinstate or to start up this Committee.

Secondly, from our point of view, the issues of poverty, the effects on the health care system are too dire to put off. We know that there's a good chance that the Health Accord, Speaker, is going to bring in recommendations to address the social determinants of health. If that's the case, then maybe what we need to be doing is to start this process now because what this motion is

calling to do is to set up a Committee to look at this; to study it, come up with a pilot project and look at implementing to get the information we need.

In many ways, it's probably going to require a paradigm shift in how we look at things. The best analogy I can think of is with regard to when learning to drive, when it comes to skidding, going into a skid. The first instinct is to slam on the brake and try to bring the car to a stop. All that does is it emphasizes or it exacerbates the issues of the skid.

The same thing here, whenever we hear something along the lines of the –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The level of chatter is getting too loud; I can't hear the speaker.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

**J. DINN:** The same thing with regard to any talk of a guaranteed basic income. The first instinct we have is, no, we can't afford it. We just can't do this. It's out of our range. We have to find some other measure. Again, we sort of slam on the brakes. What we end up doing, in fact, is making matters worse. We know that the issue is too important; we know that the Health Accord is heading this way as a strategy to address the social determinants of health and the time has come so let's get ahead and investigate.

We know that the food banks are not an effective policy in dealing with poverty and, trust me, I've been volunteering at food banks for well over 35 years in some capacity or another. I think we need to get at the root of it.

We know, also, that there's research by David Card that suggests that even raising the minimum wage is not going to, in any way, shape or form, decrease employment or increase prices or shut down businesses.

The Gandalf Group, interestingly enough, did a survey of Canadians and Atlantic Canadians on June 28 to 30, 2021 for the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security. It's interesting –

here are a few things that they asked. They found that women aged 35 to 44, young men and those earning less than \$25,000 a year, were worse off than they were two years before.

They found that there was an increased – the negative assessment was more so in Atlantic Canada, they found. They also found that those earning less than \$25,000 a year felt they were – 24 per cent of that group felt they were somewhat better than two years ago. But interestingly enough, about 77 per cent of those earning \$150,000 a year felt they were much better or somewhat better off financially.

COVID crisis, no doubt about it, impacted those who were already vulnerable to begin with.

The survey also showed that Atlantic Canadians agreed, by a whopping 71 per cent, that it's time for government to seriously address social issues like poverty, racism and inequality.

The same study also showed that Atlantic Canadians are much more concerned about rising prices of essentials. The number of Canadians, including children, who are hungry, go hungry on a regular basis and the number of Canadians, including children, who live in poverty. And that's the consequence.

When we talk about poverty and food insecurity, we're talking about the effects on children.

They found in this study for Atlantic Canadians, that becoming a more caring and just society was deemed to be either a 53 per cent very desirable or 36 per cent somewhat desirable. So, in other words, there's a strong push that if we're going to be a caring society, there's a strong support for that, to look after each other.

By the end of the survey, they found that 65 per cent of Atlantic Canadians versus 44 per cent of Canadians across the rest of the country supported a guaranteed basic minimum income floor that would provide a safety net for all Canadians

Of course, the support for this is greater amongst females. The support increases with the older demographic so ages 75 and older, 84 per cent of that population supports a guaranteed basic income; 86 per cent of those earning \$25,000 or

less support some form of guaranteed basic income; whereas those earning \$150,000, it dropped by over 20 points.

Part of that is probably because they're afraid of taxes and also, for many of us, this survey found that most people in this country, 80 per cent, have never had to face inadequate access to food. Many of us probably never had to really go without one meal a day or go hungry and those who experience food insecurity were mostly unable to access free or subsidized food program.

The point here is this is the reality of having an inadequate income. The Health Accord has basically focused on social determinants of health, that life expectancy in Newfoundland and Labrador has decreased since the moratorium; that cancer, cardiac issues, stroke increase mortality in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We spend an enormous amount on health and little on social determinants of health, yet the health care system only makes up 25 per cent of health. Michael Marmot said that health is a good measure of social and economic progress. Let's start addressing the underlying causes of poverty rather than funding the consequences of poverty and keeping people poor.

Evelyn Forget, a health economist, said, "you become aware very quickly that we use the healthcare system to treat the consequences of poverty, and we do it in an inefficient and expensive way ... We wait until people live horrible lives for many years, get sick as a consequence, and then we go in all guns blazing to make things better."

The basic income here is at least trying to, as we suggested before, bringing up especially the bottom 20 per cent to the next level even would save the health care system significant savings and give people the opportunity to participate in the economy and to feed themselves.

I'm looking here at the monthly basic income benefits. A couple will receive, just based on this, \$14,388 a year. A single adult will bring in \$11,724. Think about that. That, I would say, is probably half the salary of many of us in this House that we get for our pay. But \$11,000, it

seems like a significant amount, but spread that over a year, roughly \$1,000 a month, that's nothing – nothing.

I have here as well – and I probably won't get a chance to go through all of them – a number of personal stories – and I'll come back to them – of real life examples; names have been changed, details have been changed – of people who are on income support or on minimum wage and who are struggling.

The key thing here, there are a number of options that are available to us. Whether you look at it in terms of, I guess, the public cost of a guaranteed basic income, whether it's going to be some form of a universal basic income or a negative income tax model. However you want to look at it, it's a large topic. It's a bigger issue than what we can accomplish here today.

What I'm asking from the House today is that we at least start the process of exploring it, of investigating the possibility of a guaranteed basic income plan. We've seen in Ontario and Manitoba plans that have been successful and that have merit, so let's look at what other jurisdictions have brought into play and let's see how they can apply here.

I think the problem is too big to do it just by tinkering or raising the income support levels by a little bit here and there. I think we've got to be bold – to quote the Premier, take bold initiative and take bold action. This is definitely going to require us to go outside the box, but, Speaker, it will require us to take action and solve this problem.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I do believe there's strong support for this particular reference to study the issue further. One of things that we recounted, we may recall from a previous discussion or debate on a similar motion in the last session of the House is that this is not uncomplicated.

I think we all came to an agreement when we agreed to agree. It was a unanimous agreement to take up this particular study. We agreed that it was complicated. One of the factors that complicates it is there is very little definition. I think it's fair to say, it's not pejorative to say that there's been apprehension about defining what exactly is the public policy solution to ending poverty, what exactly is the definition of such important concepts and somewhat abstract concepts about what is a living wage, for example.

We took up the discussion about how a living wage for someone who did not have dependants, that may be in a station in life where their expenses were relatively low. For example, such as a single younger person. Their living wage is very, very different than what might reasonably be expected the requirements of the provision of a living wage for someone whose expenses, whose cost of living for their family unit is much higher. Someone having a lower income, but many dependants.

So one of the things that we will obviously want to advance is a discussion about what are our basic definitions, what are our basic public policy objectives. This particular motion, as the mover said themselves, it doesn't define whether this is a universal basic income which would be examined, or a guaranteed basic income which would be examined.

There is a very important distinction and difference between the two. Universal basic income, obviously, Speaker, would not be income-tested. It's universal. Everybody, rich and poor, would be a recipient. Under the standardized definitions of what a universal basic income – for those who embark on studies and advocacy for this public policy, there is consensus that a universal basic income would not be income-tested. Everybody, rich and poor, would receive it.

That's very substantially different than a guaranteed basic income, where advocates and academics alike, and public policy practitioners agree that a guaranteed basic income is income-tested. This is a topic which has reached the national level – I would think it is fair to say it would be an international discussion. Certainly here in Canada, it has reached a national

platform. The current pandemic has brought attention to this matter even more clearly with the Canada Recovery Benefit that has been introduced by the federal government that as brought attention to this, and rightfully so.

Speaker, what I think we need to do is not to limit the discussion in any way, shape or form. I think it needs to be broad and open. We have experts we can draw upon which may have differing of opinions, which may promote contradictory evidence or analysis or opinion about this initiative. I think we should hear from them all so that we can come to a confident resolve as to where we should be.

People such as the Canadian parliamentary budget officer has done detailed work on a guaranteed annual income and have provided estimates of cost and benefits, obviously that would be a source. I do make note that in the prayer itself of the motion that is before us today, the work of the parliamentary budget officer is not mentioned. I just simply point that out, as we should not limit ourselves as to what evidence we receive; we should be open and available from all sources that provide good, strong, peer-reviewed, credible research on the topic. As well as those who offer living experience to wage inequity, what it is to live below the poverty level.

Mr. Speaker, we can gain valuable insights to this because we know the parliamentary budget officer has indicated that based on their modelling of the cost of a guaranteed annual income supplement, based on the model that they would have brought forward, would be approximately \$1 billion for Newfoundland and Labrador to implement. A billion dollars is not a small amount of money but neither is the consequence of poverty. So any initiative towards poverty reduction, obviously, would be offset or balanced by the positive influences and impacts of people raising people out of poverty.

We know that this would be a billion dollars in its broadest sense, as articulated by the parliamentary budget officer, based on the modeling that they've presumed. So, obviously, we would want to hear further to better understand what the report that they tabled in the House of Commons, what that really means.

What are the elements? What is the substance behind that conclusion or that analysis?

We'd also want to hear from poverty groups, but we'd also want to hear from employer groups. We want to hear from everybody.

Mr. Speaker, while I respect and appreciate the fact that the prayer of the motion does highlight good, solid pieces of academic work and advocacy work towards a specific outcome, it's important that we just, at this point in time, reflect and analyze; we need to be eyes wide open and not to direct the conversation in a particular way but to be open for a full discussion about all parameters of where a guaranteed annual income would face.

Mr. Speaker, it is, obviously, very important that we engage our federal partners. There is a lot of evidence that comes from pilot projects, not only here in Canada but I know that we're all very aware of the Dauphin, Manitoba pilot project that was engaged back in the '70s and some of the new analysis of the Dauphin, Manitoba pilot project.

We know of some of the work in Ontario, which was arguably less successful and less thought out and less well planned, but still we can draw on certain evidence or certain facts from some of this work.

What we also know is that this is a discussion that has reached important audiences at the federal level. For example, one of our colleagues within the Liberal caucus of the Parliament has put forward a piece of legislation, a private Member's bill towards creating a strategy for a guaranteed basic income.

We also know that an NDP Member from Winnipeg Centre has put forward a motion on the floor of the House of Commons calling for a guaranteed national basic income. But one of the things that I – and this is where we need to be very much aligned, we need to be engaged, we need to influence some of these decisions. One of the things with the NDP motion from Winnipeg Centre is that they called for accounting for regional differences in living costs. So the NDP are saying that we need to balkanize Canada, in some respects, and have a different calculation for Toronto than it would

be for St. John's. So caution needs to be exercised when we start to do that, when the federal government starts to consider that.

We'd want to be involved in that discussion because, of course, sometimes their calculation, their formula may not necessarily reflect the full realities of Newfoundland and Labrador. Sometimes Atlantic Canada is referred to as a homogenous place. It is not.

The circumstances of Newfoundland and Labrador is very different than the Maritime provinces. So it would be important, Speaker, that we can direct and have influence on the federal level, but as well, any federal initiatives – any initiatives at the national level are fed into our own initiatives so that we don't trip up over each other. Because, of course, when you consider a cost, a public purse cost of \$1 billion with federal programs offsetting some of these costs, with provincial programs offsetting some of these costs, potentially, we'd want to be paired into that.

Mr. Speaker, reflecting those points, the fact that we really want to be open. We don't want to be seen or deemed to be exclusive in the direction of our initiative, that we don't want to just simply take certain points of view, certain academic evidence over others, I would like to propose an amendment to the private Member's resolution, which seems to also bring it into what was on the floor in the last session.

Mr. Speaker, with that said, I will move, seconded by the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, that the private Member's resolution currently before the House be amended as follows: In the clause beginning with the words THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by deleting the words "by establishing" and substituting the words "by urging the government to establish" and by deleting the word "Select" and by deleting the final two clauses beginning with the words "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that" and substituting the following: BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this House urge the government to ensure that the Committee has the resources it needs to conduct its work and engage federal Members of Parliament from Newfoundland and Labrador to participate.

This is my amendment.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

This House will adjourn now to review the proposed amendment.

**Recess**

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

We've had an opportunity to review the amendment and we find the amendment to be in order.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Seeing that there is limited time left in my allotted time, I won't take up any –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Take your mask off.

**G. BYRNE:** Oh sorry, I am told I am far more attractive with my mask on.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**G. BYRNE:** So, Speaker, I won't consume any more time. I do believe there is strong consensus to support this within both sides of the House, but we'll see when the time comes.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Member across there for the amendment. I am glad to see that we have continued support for researching and doing all this work on basic income and other poverty reduction strategies. It is really important that we continue down this path. We see it currently with the Health Accord and we see it in all kinds of other work that has been recently published that we're going down the path to make sure that

we are helping the most vulnerable in our society.

The pandemic has shown a lot of vulnerabilities in our society and in our social systems. We see that across the country, across the globe, that people who are vulnerable are actually more vulnerable than we ever expected. I'm glad to see that we are going to take some leaps and bounds forward and I hope that when this Committee is struck, it is struck expediently and it gets to work quickly.

Like the Member for Corner Brook has said, this is also being talked about on a federal level so we also want to be prepared for when that happens as a province. I think that we, collectively as a province, have a very kind heart. We do believe in helping others and helping up. Multiple times it has been said we are one of the most charitable provinces in the federation, so let us continue down that path of helping one another, hand in hand.

I am glad that the Member said with his amendment to help strengthen this, but I do move an amendment to the amendment. So we're going to have amendment-ception here.

I move, seconded by the Member for Torngat Mountains, that the amendment to private Member's resolution that is currently before the House be amended as follows:

After the clause beginning with the words "BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED" by adding the following: BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Committee shall consist of two Liberal Members, two Progressive Conservative Members, two New Democratic Members, one independent Member who will act as a Chair of Committee;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Committee table a final report on its research and recommendations to the House.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

This House will recess to review the amendment to the amendment.

### Recess

**SPEAKER:** Just for clarification, the Member for Labrador West presented a subamendment to the main amendment. Upon review of the subamendment, we do find that it is in order.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank everyone in the House for the recess on top of recess and bearing with us there now. I think it's really important that we all work together on this as equals, as a team, as a collaborative group. This goes beyond any politics or anything like that; this is a very serious issue that we're facing. Poverty in our communities is a very serious issue. Lumped on top of that with the continually rising costs of goods, services and the ability to sustain oneself, we need to continue to work together as a group collaboratively to face down this issue, to find solutions and to help our fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We're very privileged to live where we live; we're very privileged that we do have a great sense of community in this province. We all wear our hearts on our sleeves around here and I think it's great that we collaboratively work together to continue to do that. I think we can do some great work.

We have done some great work in the past in this House, when it comes to Committees, to get to the bottom of some serious issues. Some great work was done by the mental health Committee. I know that was a very proud moment for all those Members who participated in that. I think a Committee of equals, of people who want to work together and to do the right thing for the people of this province is very important. I do appreciate the government Members who have come out and supported the ideas of this kind of work.

I also want to say we do have some great research and stuff here, done by a lot of academics across this country, across this continent and across the world, on the importance of lifting people up, supporting them and helping them. Just supporting people can make a big difference for their health, for their

own personal self-esteem and for the fact that they can participate in society equally, with all of us. If we can do that, I think we can do some great work as a province.

I think we, as a province, have the ability to be a leader in poverty reduction. I think we can be a leader in the fact that we can be a society of great individuals who have opportunities. We just need to help those people reach those opportunities and to find their feet again. It's great. Having the ability to participate in society is great for mental health, it's great for personal health and it's great for a sense of accomplishment. Sometimes people just want to have a sense of accomplishment. That's where we should come in and be the hand that reaches out and helps them.

So with that, Speaker, I say thank you. Hopefully, the Members will support this subamendment.

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Just before I begin, I just want to recognize those watching at Shirley's Haven in Catalina. The last time I mentioned that, Speaker, it was probably a little past 11, at midnight, so I'm sure they weren't watching at that time. If Irene and Wilson Duffett and all those who are at Shirley's Haven are watching, good for them. I'm sure that they're interested in what we will be discussing.

On this side of the House, we support the establishment of a Committee to look at and explore the basic income options, but we think it ought to be studied in the context of a Poverty Reduction Strategy. My learned friends and colleagues who spoke before me, I was really shocked and surprised that neither one of them, Speaker, mentioned the Poverty Reduction Strategy that was launched back in 2006, which was entitled *Reducing Poverty: An Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*.

Why I'm surprised that they didn't mention it is because it was quite a successful strategy that when they did their data analysis in 2013-'14, they made some phenomenal inroads in reducing

poverty in the province. That's available for all to see. I'm sure that the Committee, when they embark upon it, that will be a strategy they will study and hopefully be able to reflect upon and use large components of it.

How significant is poverty reduction in Newfoundland and Labrador? Well, in this past Budget Speech, they mentioned that there were 158,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on income supplement. So if we're 158,000 and if we're a population of 520,000 thereabouts, then that puts us over 30 per cent of our population. That is a significant number of population. In fact, before the aforementioned Poverty Reduction Strategy that I had mentioned, we weren't at 30 per cent then. I know that where we are now that COVID has compounded it. That is not within our control and that's something that we're left to battle and to work with.

Poverty reduction is a very complex issue and I think the minister had stated such. It is very complex. I know when we were doing the all-terrain vehicles, I did some research on Stats Canada and that's where I cited that there were 269,000 all-terrain vehicles. But in that same document, I had noticed that Newfoundland and Labrador was the only province and/or territory that is projected to lose population by '43. I thought initially when I looked at it, that we may be the only province, but I thought that there may be territories that would be in a similar situation, Northwest Territories, the Yukon, Nunavut, but if you search Stats Canada you will find that its only Newfoundland and Labrador. I think that is an issue that I know that we're moving on but we really have to make sure that we do grow our population in Newfoundland and Labrador, and that would be part of the umbrella of looking towards poverty reduction in our province.

We've had the benefit of going through four meetings with the Health Accord team, Sister Davis and Dr. Parfrey, and several things stood out in the presentation. As a Member in the District of Bonavista, I always looked at our district in Bonavista as a lens for whatever information that they were saying in the Health Accord in the presentation, but a couple of things jumped out at me.

Probably one of the things was that if you lived in the Province of Ontario, the statistics stated that you got a greater chance of living 2.4 years longer than what you do in Newfoundland and Labrador. I thought that's pretty significant within the same country of Canada that they would live, generally, 2.4 years longer.

The other thing from the Health Accord, and it was mentioned by my colleague from St. John's Centre, he mentioned about the social determinants, how important they were when we look at our health care cost and providing care and try to create our population to be the healthiest in the country by 2031. Just how significant are these social determinants?

Well, in the Health Accord they had stated that there were many determinants to draw upon – and conscious of the time now I'm going to just give the treetops. They talk about the conditions of childhood, income, education, employment security, working conditions, food and housing security and availability of health and social services. Then they looked at social locations. The social locations such as Indigenous descent, social class, the disability, gender, race and immigrant and refugee status are all part of the social determinants of health care.

But here's what they state: 50 per cent of the health care in our province is related to your life; your early childhood development, your education, your social safety net, the community belonging, the housing, homelessness, safe and nutritious food; 50 per cent of our health is based on our lives. If we have 30 per cent of our population, which is cited in the Budget Speech, 30 per cent on Income Support, we know that they're going to struggle in a lot of those determinants; 10 per cent was your environment, where you live; air quality; civic infrastructure, such as clean water.

So it is complex. Add up 50 and 10, that's 60 per cent of the social determinants are outside of the health care control. Because what the Health Accord states is 25 per cent is related to your health care; 15 per cent, your biology. That is rather significant.

The *VitalSigns* came out – one week rolls into the next week – probably the week before last, *VitalSigns* came out and what they did was they



did a – that’s the Harris Centre in MUN – study and they looked at the determinants as well. They stated that eats fruit once a day, we ranked 10th of the 10 provinces; eats vegetables once a day, 10th; physical activity, we were 10th, especially in the age 18 plus. As far as smoking and alcohol, children living with lone parents and lack of education, we were between eighth and 10th within the country.

I don’t say that to be alarming, even though the statistics may be alarming, but I do state those statistics to say that the Committee and poverty reduction is a real issue in Newfoundland and Labrador that ought to be prioritized and really given consideration as to what we would do.

The minister before me had spoken that we need to have our eyes wide open – and we do – and we need to be cautious as to how we embark upon it and what we do. The only thing I would say is we ought not to wait.

We can say in the Budget Speech that we take small steps. But I would say, if those figures are accurate, what is contained the Budget Speech, what is contained in the Health Accord, what is contained in *VitalSigns*, then I think we ought to be taking more than small steps now.

This Committee is a good idea, which we support in whatever formation it would be, and we should begin, in earnest, to make sure that we make inroads in fighting poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador.

When I spoke about the sugar tax, one thing that consumed me on the sugar tax was that it’s going to inordinately hit those who can least afford it. That was my understanding of which I would have voted against.

I know in school we dealt with poverty. When I first became an MHA in 2019, I saw poverty at a different level, a different schedule. Some of the homes that I had visited, surprised me. And even though I did visit homes as a school administrator, but some of the homes I did visit, they surprised me. And if I know they have compromised health as a result of their living conditions, I think it’s quite obvious.

When we talk about schools, one of the goals of the poverty reduction, *Reducing Poverty*, our

plan that was launched in 2006, was the fact that education was paramount. It is. If we have a 10 per cent dropout rate or if we have a 10 per cent absenteeism rate, that is huge.

If we find that our children are not as active as what they are in other provinces, Alberta and BC which would lead the way, that is huge and significant.

While those may be challenging to remediate, there ought to be strategies ongoing to make inroads to make sure that we are improving those statistics which are really within full government control – or mostly within government control.

I just want to spend a couple of remaining minutes mentioning about the poverty reduction plan entitled *Reducing Poverty: An Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador* that was released in 2006 and some of the inroads that it did make.

I would say it ought to be the cornerstone. The minister referenced Manitoba. He didn’t reference Newfoundland and Labrador in the statistics that occurred from 2006 to 2014. That’s good data. It’s here in Newfoundland and Labrador; use it, if it was there. Find out what works because it didn’t solve poverty. It didn’t do it. But the only thing we can assure is that it made inroads. There were vast improvements at that time.

There are other factors that contributed to that. I realize that that time and this time, they are different times, but we certainly can tap into what worked and what didn’t work. What didn’t work, don’t use. What worked, reactivate it and let’s see if we can get that 30 per cent back down to 7 per cent which it was in 2013. If we can’t get it to 7 per cent, let’s get it to 15 per cent, because now 15 per cent of our population we’ve brought outside of the poverty range.

As a statistic, back then in 2003, there were 63,000 people had low incomes; whereas, in 2011, this number had fallen to 27,000 – a good statistic that we would have.

The goals that this strategy had: “Goal 1: Improved access and coordination of services for those with low incomes.” They found that

government programs were difficult to access; we're striving to improve that. That was one goal that they had.

"Goal 2: A stronger social safety net. Goal 3: Improved earned incomes." They looked at the low income tax reduction threshold and they played with that. "Goal 4: Increased emphasis on early childhood development. Goal 5: A better educated population." A better education in our population serves us in a lot of faculties.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. Member's time has expired.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**P. PIKE:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the Member for St. John's Centre for bringing forward the private Member's motion today. Collectively, we all must work together if we are to reduce and eradicate poverty and explore the merits of income and finding better ways of how we look after our most vulnerable in our society and ensuring that there are appropriate safety nets, socially, as well as financial support.

The Member for Corner Brook explained – ever-so eloquently, by the way – the number of supports that exist throughout the provincial government but also at the federal level. I really support the engagement of a Select Committee to ensure that federal Members of Parliament would participate from Newfoundland and Labrador in exploring anything that would be undertaken from a model to develop basic income and explore how that could be undertaken because in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have a number of benefits currently.

When the last Poverty Reduction Strategy was undertaken, there were expanded benefits to the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program. There was the creation of Supportive Living Community Partnership Program; a

reduction in income tax paid by low-income earners; and employment and education incentives.

Since then we have seen, for example, under the Income Support Program, where there were more than 10,000 bus passes provided to income recipients in the St. John's metro area. This type of program is meant to provide to those who would be on income support to be able to participate more wholly in the community, whether it is being able to travel to various places in the community, pick up groceries, participate in programs attached to the workforce or even to get to hospital appointments.

My understanding is that this engagement is also taking place with the City of Corner Brook and now looking at bringing in this program as well.

As a government, one of the things we did in 2016 was that we implemented the Income Supplement to cover lower income earners in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as an Enhanced Seniors' Benefit. This, as well, was meant to provide support.

If you look at those types of benefits – and there are many, many more benefits that are provided within and across departments – at a social level to help people, whether they are on income support or whether they're a higher income earner that's been talked about in the Estimates, or whether it's for the Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement for support, there is a threshold as to what somebody would earn at a certain level before they wouldn't receive support, whether it would be access to housing or a housing supplement.

The federal government is certainly key to being part of a discussion on basic income. As we have seen in other countries, Finland being one of them, with their trial and the United States and other jurisdictions, the pandemic has really highlighted the inequality that is now present in our Canadian society. The federal government said from the start they would provide timely assistance directly to Canadians to help them through the challenges that they face.

We saw there was a mix of programs, such as the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy. That

helped businesses retain their employees so they could continue to earn a paycheque to work to support their families. The Canada Emergency Response Benefit helped nearly nine million Canadians be able to have support to pay their bills for them and their families.

We saw in a recent Throne Speech of the federal government there is going to be new flexibilities in the Employment Insurance program: an EI premium freeze; three new support programs that will provide \$500 per week to support Canadians impacted by COVID-19: the Canada Recovery Benefit; the Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit and the Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit.

The federal government has stated that they have a plan to build back better – the three Bs. The pandemic, as I said, exposed fundamental inequalities in our society and the federal government is planning to build a better society while making the economy better for all.

There are pillars that include ending chronic homelessness, accelerating universal pharmacare and building more affordable housing. They are certainly very important pillars as we look at reducing and eradicating poverty and ensuring that people have a basic income to live on.

There are already programs that exist as well. For seniors in Canada, they receive an Old Age Security benefit. Some would receive the Guaranteed Income Supplement, which is a form of basic income. As well as parents with children under the age of 18 can receive Canada child benefit. These two programs would cost about \$80 billion. The parliamentary budget officer has cited that national basic income for low-income Canadians would cost about \$43 billion per year.

If we were to look at universal basic income, an alternative method to social support, which basically every citizen is provided funding with no strings attached. This idea has certainly seen significant resurgence with the COVID pandemic. Some who are proponents of basic income argue it's the best way to end poverty. Those who are proponents would say it does boost happiness, health, school attendance, trust in social institutions and also reduce crime.

We have seen in Ontario the former Liberal government launched a basic income pilot in Hamilton, Lindsay and Thunder Bay to help 4,000 low-income people over the last three years. In 2018, the current Progressive Conservative government cancelled the project. Finland is a relatively new example where they provided about \$640 per month as a basic income to their citizens. It highlights here in *The New York Times* that Finland's basic income trial boosts happiness but not employment.

One of the outcomes of the study is that it certainly gave some individuals in the study the confidence to pursue entrepreneurship and other mechanisms, but it had not necessarily had the employment-attachment incentive with it. This does not mean that this would be the case, of course, here in Newfoundland and Labrador. You want to be able to create a program or basic income that would allow people to have the ability where they may be able to take on work and not provide consistent or regular hours. This is something that, of course, during COVID came through as well, that the economy may be shifting, especially post-COVID, and we continue to navigate through it. I think that's one way to do that.

These are all important mechanisms we have to consider. This is why I think we need to look at evaluating all these matters as how we reduce poverty. The inequality and the insecurity that exist, how automation is playing a role in terms of jobs in the future. How we can reduce the red tape and how we can continue to have the right incentives and support for allowing people to be able to really have a positive impact on the labour market.

With that, Speaker, I want to say I fully support seeing an all-party Committee struck, having this explored and looking at the options that can happen. Maybe we can take all the programs that exist at a provincial level and a federal level and really create something that can have a bigger impact than what the programs currently have. And make sure that we are going forward at the provincial or federal level in terms of exploring universal basic income and the merits and benefits to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'll start off by saying that we support this resolution to establish a Select Committee to explore basic income options by gathering research and consulting experts. Once we have the facts, we can make a determination collectively if this is the way to go and how we go about doing it.

We supported this PMR when it was debated in October of 2020, and we will support it again today. We have no objection to the creation of an all-party Select Committee on basic income. However, we believe that basic income should not be studied in isolation, but should be studied in the context of developing a new Poverty Reduction Strategy.

My colleague from Bonavista has spoken about this, about the previous plan, and certainly the need for a new plan. The province needs a new, wholesome, fulsome Poverty Reduction Strategy which will look at all the factors which contribute to poverty; which considers and evaluates strategies to help people who are experiencing poverty; which has a goal of reducing and ending poverty in our province; which includes stakeholders in the creation of a strategy and in implementing the strategy; and which studies basic income, minimum wage, living wage, job prospects, training and other employment-related considerations as part of a poverty reduction.

One of the things that we can do in addressing a Poverty Reduction Strategy is perhaps look at how we increase those low-income tax reduction thresholds because the more money we put in people's pockets, the better off they will be.

I think we sometimes get caught up in the oversimplification of simply talking about minimum wage increases. Minimum wage increases will not end poverty. The strategy has to be more wholesome and it has to talk about, as my colleague already mentioned, the social determinants of health. Housing, for example, I've said in this House before there are over 100

people on a list right now waiting for housing with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. That's just my district. I can only imagine what it's like across the Island.

We also have many people come into my office – and I'm sure yours as well – who were are on income support. They come in talking about how they need additional help, but they also come in and say we'd like to get off income support, but we can't afford to. Now, that's a scary statement for someone to say I can't afford to go to work because I'll lose the benefits that I have on income support. That's where it's important for us to sit down and talk about that. It's meant to be a support. How do we continue to support them?

One of the ways we can certainly look at that is to start talking about how do we allow them to keep some of the benefits they enjoy on income support while getting back and re-entering the workforce. Instead of clawing back dollar for dollar when they go out and get a job, maybe it's time we started looking at a program that allows them to earn some money, to get back in the workforce so we don't pull back dollar for dollar. Once you reach a certain threshold or have been working for a period of time, then we can start to ease back. Because that, in itself, will encourage people to go back into the workforce. That's what we need to create. We need to create a workforce where people can go back in and feel comfortable re-entering the workforce.

We need to talk about rewarding businesses, finding ways to incentivize businesses in our province that hire full-time, permanent people with benefits. Many of the large employers in our province do not do that. When we talk about reforming the payroll tax, maybe there's a way of reforming it for people who actually go out and hire full-time, permanent employees with benefits. For those large employers that refuse to do that or create temporary positions, maybe it's time that the payroll tax went up instead of down. I think there are ways of doing that.

Small businesses need to be encouraged to hire more staff. Again, instead of simply focusing on the minimum wage, we need to focus on those companies that employ full-time people and give them benefits, and reward those who pay above

a – quote – minimum wage. Those are things that we have to start looking at: How do we put more money in people's pockets? That in itself will help with this particular challenge that we face.

The mandate letter for the Minister of CSSD directs him to "lead the development of a renewed poverty reduction strategy in consultation with stakeholders, experts and community leaders." We don't think there should be two processes happening in isolation of each other, but the consideration of basic income and the development of a new Poverty Reduction Strategy should all be part of the one conversation.

The Health Accord, again which my colleague has referenced, has identified poverty, housing insecurity and food insecurity as areas of concern when looking at the social determinants of health, noting that these impact a person's health. Thus, we wish to follow their lead and to study the issue of poverty in the province, and to put in place a plan to prevent people from experiencing poverty and lift people out from poverty.

One of the reasons for the poor outcomes of so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is the impoverished conditions in which they live. Poverty reduction is a wellness strategy.

The costs of poverty and the inequality to individuals and society are increasingly well documented. More equal societies do better. What we think we're saving in income security, we pay for elsewhere in homeless shelters, food banks and a host of social ills from health problems to crime. Talking about a Poverty Reduction Strategy and basic income for people helps reduce these downstream problems and their costs.

Again, we'll support the motion but we believe the two go hand in hand. A poverty reduction strategy has to be part of the solution.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Thank you, Speaker, and I want to thank the previous Members who spoke on the motion.

This past year has been uncertain and a difficult time for all of us. The global pandemic has touched our communities, creating hardship for many and changing many facets of how we live. Certainly, people with low income, our Indigenous citizens and persons with disabilities, children living in single-parent families, women and older adults are bearing the heaviest weight of these events.

From these challenges, however, we see opportunity: opportunity to learn, to change, to do better. Our government has committed to develop a renewed strategy to reduce poverty, as the previous speaker mentioned. This will be done in consultation with stakeholders, experts, communities and persons with lived experience.

Speaker, poverty is a complex issue. Poverty is about income levels, but it's also about a lack of resources, a lack of opportunities and a lack of power to achieve a standard of living that allows full participation in life.

The Clerk may want to check the clock.

**SPEAKER:** The Member only has that time. At 4:45 we will close debate.

**J. ABBOTT:** Got it. Understood.

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Okay, sorry about that.

So structural factors create vulnerabilities to poverty. Gender, family circumstance, barriers to inclusion such as attitudes about disability, racism and other forms of discrimination are all relevant and they are relevant in our society here in this province. This complex nature is why our government takes a whole-of-government approach to reducing, alleviating and eliminating poverty. We have many programs and services across departments that provide support to individuals and families across their lifespans.

Speaker, our government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in poverty reduction measures. We have recently announced the \$25-a-day child care and that will be reduced down to \$10 a day. This move towards affordable child care will help families and our economy as a whole. We know that affordable quality child care supports women, in particular, to avail of more opportunities in education and the workforce. It also supports children, providing age-appropriate learning opportunities, setting the foundation in childhood for educational success, a key social determinant of health.

Speaker, we are investing about \$66 million annually in the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement, which supports approximately 155,000 individuals and their families every year. We are also investing over \$56 million for the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit, which supports approximately 48,000 seniors and their families each year. We have the Low Income Tax Reduction, which is a provincial personal income tax reduction for low-income individuals and families where below a certain income level you pay no provincial income tax.

Speaker, the concept of a sliding scale of benefits based on income and need is best practiced in reducing, eliminating and alleviating poverty. This approach helps people transition into higher income and greater self-sufficiency without the loss of benefits and social supports they need.

Another place we see this stepped approach is in our Prescription Drug Program where people on income support receive 100 per cent prescription drug coverage. Thereafter, they can move on to a drug plan which offers an affordable copay based on income and family, if their income increases.

Speaker, this year the income support program was transitioned to my Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development. This realignment provides further opportunities and synergies to strengthen supports and services for people with low incomes with a focus on poverty reduction efforts throughout the province. We are also now beginning a review of the income support program, which will include the examination of the program

structure, how people access income support and benefits.

Speaker, two of my first meetings with community partners, when I started in my new ministerial position, were with representatives from the Coalition for a Just Recovery NL and representatives from Basic Income NL. The Coalition for a Just Recovery is a group of community agencies from across the province that has submitted a proposal to the federal government for economic recovery. This proposal includes 10 initiatives outlining an inclusive, empowering and just recovery from the pandemic. One of their recommendations is to pilot a widespread basic income program for individuals between 18 and 64.

Basic Income NL is another coalition of community agencies that has produced a policy paper and website called Basic Income NL, which proposes a model of basic income for Newfoundland and Labrador. I have reviewed this report, including the design options, cost modelling and revenue implications that were noted. Departmental officials continue to meet with members of this coalition to explore their proposal.

Speaker, I want to assure this House that my officials and I are keeping up to date with the discourse across the country on this issue, as well as research around the world. All of these initiatives are of importance, given our focus on a renewed Poverty Reduction Strategy. We know people are debating the merits and challenges of a basic income approach. There have been successes and complications in jurisdictions that have tried this around the world. We look at Finland, we look at Ontario and we look elsewhere, and there continues to be – and rightly so – a push across jurisdictions, including our own, to explore the concept of a basic income and how can we get it right.

Three senators from PEI and one from Ontario recently sent a letter to the prime minister asking for a nation-wide guaranteed basic income, starting in PEI. In February past, Liberal MP Julie Dzerowicz introduced Bill C-273 in the House of Commons towards a national guaranteed basic income, it entered second reading and, obviously, it was terminated with the call of the general election. Most recently the

PEI Premier's Council for Recovery and Growth released a report outlining a number of recommendations to best support the people of PEI and Premier King has committed to implementing the recommendations in the report, one of which is to examine livable income options, including wage increases, increases to the basic personal amount and a form of basic income guarantee.

Not everyone is on board with a stand-alone basic income approach as the one solution to poverty. I'll point to an expert panel appointed by the BC government recently which concluded that moving to a system with a basic income for all as its main pillar may not be the most just policy option. They instead believe that it would be more effective, in general, to address social issues directly and that a combination of cash transfers and basic services reformed to better align with a justice-based objective would be a better approach. We understand that funding a basic income project in Newfoundland and Labrador would mean examining current investments in social supports and this would need to be done in partnership with the federal government.

We look to the success of the Guaranteed Income Supplement in Canada, the Old Age Security pension is slated to increase by 10 per cent for seniors over the age of 75 beginning July of next year and we have the Canada child benefit which has lifted nearly 435,000 children out of poverty across Canada. We have the disability tax credit and, recently, in this past year, the federal government introduced Bill C-35, An Act to reduce poverty and to support the financial security of persons with disabilities by establishing the Canada disability benefit, which would be a guaranteed basic income program for persons with disabilities. So, just to let you know, there is a lot of action going on.

Speaker, I would like to conclude my remarks by looking towards the future. Our government has committed to a renewed poverty reduction strategy and leadership for this work rests with me and my department. Our vision is that Newfoundland and Labrador is a place where families and individuals have high levels of well-being, are empowered to move out of poverty and have the appropriate skills and support to fully participate in society. Our goal

is to take the lessons of the past year and a half and build on this work with guidance from the community. We look forward to continued partnership with the community in helping to support people who live on a low incomes.

Speaker –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Your time has expired.

**J. ABBOTT:** Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** If the Leader of the Third Party speaks now we'll close debate.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I want to take the first few minutes just read some real stories. Names are changed.

Crystal is a 20-something-year-old single mother who works in a pharmacy for \$13.50 an hour. Now, this pharmacy will only give her 30 hours a week in order to avoid offering her a medical plan and benefits. This mom must pay for daycare, food, transportation, phone, rent on a one-bedroom apartment, as the child sleeps with her, and she can't keep up with the cost of living and can't get ahead. She says she may quit her job, but knows that income support isn't enough to live on either. She'd like to upgrade her education, but cannot afford the programs or to take time away from work. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador will pay in the end in this case, as at some point she is overwhelmed with her situation and will need the mental health support, and the pharmacy will be out of a hard-working employee.

Tim is another constituent of mine. A part-time single father, he has been employed in the oil and gas sector for over 12 years as an engineering technologist and was employed with one of the major companies. He has run out of EI, is out of his savings and has sold off as much as he can. Tim cannot compete in the workforce: he has the professional experience, but has been out lapped by newer graduates. He needs further certification, but he cannot afford his training. Tim cannot pay his mortgage, or for his car, or

insurance or the child support that his ex-spouse relies on. He has no safety, nor a job.

Heather has been living in an apartment building owned by one of the large REITs for the past 18 years. Her rent has increased to \$850 a month over time and she has relied on her rent subsidy from NLHC. Heather has one adult child living with her who suffers from an untreated mental health issue and is unemployed. She was given a three-month notice of eviction without cause. The owner is reclaiming the unit – knows that they can get more money for a two-bedroom apartment, especially if they put in a few upgrades to the old unit. She has been looking for a new place but a two-bedroom anywhere is over \$1,000 a month. She has no savings, is in debt and cannot even afford movers. She's on a wait-list consisting of some 900 people for NLHC. And I can go on.

The Member for Bonavista talked about (inaudible) of 60 per cent of the issues outside of health care, and he comes from an education background and listening to him I was thinking in many cases I think the hard part for educators, everywhere, and we see the effects of poverty in the children in front of us. It's real, it's why we get into fundraising because there are families there that cannot afford the field trips sometimes or the extras, or sometimes teachers, I will tell you, have bought coats. Why we get involved with breakfast programs and so on and so forth. Because if that child comes that day it's to get out of a situation where they have other issues related to poverty, related to other mental health issues and related to family life. I do remember my first years teaching some students would come in and they did nothing, but why they were there, the school was warm. It was a warm place to be, that's why they're in school.

I look at it and, again, I go back to this because even in our own families – I think my brother will certainly attest to this – I can't say we were wealthy, but I'll tell you one thing: there was food on the table, dad worked hard, seven of us were raised and we all had a university education. Each of us had those benefits; that's a privilege in many ways. I look at my grandchildren and what they will have, because whatever their parents cannot afford, I can guarantee you, between the two sets of grandparents, they will want for nothing. But

they're entering school right now with all of that behind them and with those levels of support.

So for me, when I'm looking at this – and I agree; maybe this should be part of a larger Poverty Reduction Program, but somewhere along the line it cannot be piecemeal – it cannot be piecemeal.

I think it's got to be a coordinated effort and maybe that's what I would look for here. I've listened to the discussion and I envision that this Committee – and hopefully we've got some runway with this – is going to carry on with this discussion over the next few years and come up with some recommendations. I agree it's complicated on one hand. On the other hand, it's not. So for me it's very much about the children. As a teacher, former educator, it's very much about the children in front of me.

I've heard here the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port talk about full-time, permanent employment with benefits – totally agree. The first example I read from Crystal, that's exactly the issue here. If there are incentives to employers to do that, then so be it. But you should be able to have full-time employment and if your employment is such that you can get by, that's what it should be.

I do know that some of the recommendations that were brought up – if I have one here. We talk about universal basic income – and by the way, I'm just putting out some of the ideas that have come here. I'm hoping that this Committee will take a deeper dive into this. Universal basic income is a non-taxable amount assigned to all adults annually and it's in a similar manner to Old Age Security. It's clawed back gradually after income passes a certain level, a given level.

A negative income tax involves setting a minimum and individuals or families below a given line of income are topped up to the maximum on a monthly basis and an income above the minimum would become taxable. So it's reduced the maximum amount, which is reduced as the income increases.

We have a pilot project that was Manitoba's MINCOME in 1974 to '79. That's the model we're sort of thinking of for Newfoundland and Labrador. It mirrors that of Ontario, which all



individuals and families are guaranteed a base rate of income or slightly above the poverty line.

Now, obviously, we're going to have to look at – and I think it was mentioned here – what does a single individual require versus what does maybe a single mom or single dad with children or a family. The important part for me is that we begin this discussion. The Member for Bonavista said that 15 per cent, I think, of health is related to your biology. And I would agree with him, with that.

But here's the thing. I would say that those of us who have the income and the health plans and everything else, if we've got health problems, our chances of dealing with those health problems if you got money there, if you got a good income, you're better able to handle them than a person who's living in poverty. I've seen the effects, whether it has to do with teeth, whether it has to do with the diet. It comes back to your ability to afford the standards of living that would grant you the means necessary to live a decent life.

We talk about the cost here and it was mentioned about the parliamentary budget officer. It is interesting; the parliamentary budget officer certainly weighed in and said that the cost of this program wouldn't be as much as some people think. I would agree certainly with the Minister of Immigration as well that we need to work on a definition. Again, this would be the role of any such Committee.

I will say this, in addition to the people with a program like this who would be able to participate in the economy, there's a public cost of poverty which we never seem to weigh into this.

The public cost of poverty in Canada was some \$24.4 billion in 2007, with an additional private cost to individuals of \$48 billion according to the most conservative estimate by the Ontario Association of Food Banks in 2007. The cost of bringing everyone up to the poverty line after tax was about half that.

There's also the savings that would occur to the health care system. I remind you of the example here of raising the bottom 20 up the next

quintile, it would result in 6.7 per cent savings to the health care system: \$217 million.

When we take a look at this, we need to weigh in not just the various supports that are out but what are the costs. I guess do a cost-benefit analysis. But, for me, I can tell you that as a teacher, when you're dealing with students who have all of the necessities, they're already way ahead.

As one group of teachers said to me, fundraising – and here's a clear example; I think my colleague from Bonavista would agree. Depending on the school you're in, depending on the financial situation of a parent, you can raise an awful lot of money. But go to a school where the families are struggling, the ability to raise money, to subsidize, to help build the school is not there, you can see a very clear distinction, a very clear difference between those schools where families are not income secure or food insecure and those families that don't. This is about levelling the playing field.

Now, Speaker, we have an amendment. To me, as long as there's a Committee here that's going to look at this – I do like the idea if we're going to have an all-party Committee that it be balanced. I would like to believe that regardless of political stripe, it's about making sure we come up with the best approaches. This is not an Opposition issue, this is not a government issue, it's not a Liberal, it's not an NDP, it's not a PC, it's not an independent issue; it belongs to all of us.

We may go home tonight to our comfortable beds, to our heated rooms, to a decent meal, but every man and woman and every child's health and well-being is our concern here. Not just because we're a Member of this Legislature, but also because I think we have a vested interest in making sure that all of our brothers and sisters in this province and their children are looked after.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**SPEAKER:** Is the House ready for the question?

Just for clarification we'll be voting on the subamendment first followed by the amendment, then the main motion.

All those in favour of the subamendment.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**SPEAKER:** The subamendment is defeated.

On motion, subamendment defeated.

**SPEAKER:** All those in favour of the amendment.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The amendment is approved.

On motion, amendment carried.

**SPEAKER:** Now we'll vote on the main motion, as amended.

All those in favour, of the main motion, as amended.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**SPEAKER:** This being Wednesday, in accordance with Standing Order 9(3), this House do stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.