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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Tuesday

October 11, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

In the public gallery I would like to welcome Ms. Lindsay Denine's Grade 10 French immersion social studies class from Holy Spirit High School.

Bienvenue!

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

**SPEAKER:** Today I would like to recognize Catherine Simms, an employee of the House of Assembly, who retired on September 30 after 21 years of service with the House of Assembly.

Cathy was a member of the original broadcasting team who produced the first broadcast of the proceedings of the House of Assembly on November 19, 2001. She continued to serve for many years as technologist and, in recent years, served as the highly capable manager of Broadcast Services.

I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize Andrew Petten, an employee of the House of Assembly, who retired also on September 30 after 37 years of service. Andy, as most of you know him, was hired by Transportation and Works on June 28, 1985, and started with the House of Assembly in Corporate and Members' Services on April 1, 2009.

I know that all hon. Members will join me in wishing Andy and Cathy a healthy and happy retirement, and I want to thank them for their dedicated service over the years. They will be dearly missed.

Thank you.

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

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Conception Bay South, Exploits, Ferryland, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Harbour Main and St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, with leave.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

On October 2, the Town of Conception Bay South hosted a dedication ceremony for the LAV III monument, which recognizes the 40,000 Canadian Armed Forces who've served in Afghanistan from 2001-2014 and commemorates the 162 Canadians who lost their lives.

The LAV III monument is a permanent community symbol of remembrance which symbolizes our continued support to our veterans and their families who lost their loved ones. It honours the 11 fallen soldiers who did not return home from Afghanistan and it's a tribute to the sacrifice of our military service.

The LAV III Monument Program was established to commemorate Canada's mission in Afghanistan. The Canadian-made LAV III could reach speeds above 100 kilometres per hour and protected soldiers against enemy firepower during the Afghanistan War. This full-size decommissioned replica was one of 33 to be dedicated in Canada, and the only one of its kind in Newfoundland and Labrador. The LAV III monument is on display in front of Conception Bay South's Town Hall.

I would like to thank the members of the LAV III dedication committee and a special thanks to Wayne Miller and Kathleen LeGrow, who were instrumental in securing the funding for the LAV III monument.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

This summer, Central Newfoundland was placed into a state of emergency due to a major forest fire in the region. This forced residents on high alert and some were displaced during this time. The volunteer groups in our area came to the aid of many, providing shelter, food and other needs and assistance to the people left stranded.

Some of those groups were the Exploits Search & Rescue, Salvation Army, local fire departments, Lions clubs, church groups, residents themselves and many more.

Speaker, I would like for all Members in this House of Assembly to join me in extending a huge thank you and gratitude to all the volunteer groups in the Exploits District and surrounding area.

Thank you.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I rise today in this hon. House to recognize the many Come Home Year Committees in the Ferryland District.

This past summer many communities and towns in the Ferryland District welcomed thousands of people home from parts of Newfoundland and Labrador and as well around the world. I am pleased to be part of the numerous events that were held. Most volunteers have spent the past few years preparing for these celebrations and have devoted countless hours in ensuring success on each and every event.

With visitors engaging in an array of activities including cornhole tournaments,

exceptional meals, activities for kids and adults, hikes, outdoor dances and local performers, it was enjoyed by all.

The Come Home Year Celebrations was a great success and showcased the spirit and friendship of the residents of the district. This was made possible because of the dedication and drive of the Come Home Year Committees.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members in this House to join me in congratulating all Come Home Year Committees for its many volunteers in organizing such memorable events for the citizens of their communities and their continued commitment to our province to highlight all that make us Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

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

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Keith Antle is retiring next month after 35-plus years of working with the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor.

Keith started as a summer student with the Parks and Recreation department and after graduating from Memorial University, he took on the role as a foreman of Parks and Recreation. He will now retire as the director of Community Services.

No matter what role Keith has had, his style remained the same: easygoing, accessible and welcoming; his door was always open. This philosophy is one of the reasons he will be greatly missed. Anyone can see that he is one of the most respected people in the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, by staff, volunteers, organizations and partners.

For 35 years, Keith has been the first one in his office, often before 6 a.m., and the last

one to leave each day. He has dedicated his life to making Grand Falls-Windsor a great place to live for many families.

For that, we say thank you, Mr. Antle. Enjoy your welcomed and deserved retirement with your wife Maria, close family and friends. Your community will miss you.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

Recently I had the honour of attending the 50th anniversary awards banquet of the Harbour Main-Chapel's Cove-Lakeview Volunteer Fire Department. I rise today to recognize the members who have served in the past 50 years and who currently serve today.

Thank you to the many volunteers who have given so much to ensure the protection of our communities. They selflessly give up their time and often put their own lives at risk. As first responders, they are our everyday heroes, and they are to be commended for their dedication and commitment.

I would like to specifically mention Dennis Mercer, Jason Lewis and Terrence Dalton for receiving their 15-year service awards. Darrell Wall for 20 years, Tom Costello for 25 years and John Corbett for 30 years of service. These people are a true testament to the dedication of the Harbour Main-Chapel's Cove-Lakeview fire department.

Speaker, I must acknowledge another distinguished firefighter from my district, Dave King of Brigus. He recently passed away September 17. For 55 incredible years, Dave was a proud member of the Brigus Volunteer Fire Department. The

stories of his courage and sacrifice will be forever remembered by his colleagues and the people of the community he loved and served.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, with leave?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**SPEAKER:** Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

**J. ABBOTT:** Speaker, with leave of my colleagues here in the House, I'd like to deliver this statement.

Speaker, today I rise in this hon. House to recognize a long-standing volunteer in the beautiful and historic District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

Born in Wesleyville in 1925, Mrs. Blanche Byrne moved to Merrymeeting Road in St. John's 70 years ago and became an active volunteer. Mrs. Byrne has volunteered with many community-based organizations including the Canadian Girl Guides, CNIB, Royal Canadian Legion and many health-based organizations. In 1997, Blanche was appointed ambassador for the Cabot 500 celebrations.

Blanche's dedication and commitment to community and province has been recognized with many honours and awards: Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee, the 50-year pin with the Royal Canadian Legion, the Meritorious Service Award in 1991, along with many other certificates of appreciation.

Speaker, Mrs. Byrne is watching us today on television, and I ask all my hon. colleagues to join me in thanking her for her

volunteerism, and join me in wishing here a happy 97th birthday today.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

**Statements by Ministers**

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

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

Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, I would like to recognize today as the 10th commemoration of the International Day of the Girl Child.

This day brings attention and awareness to the challenges facing girls around the world. It is also a day to highlight the importance of empowering girls, and the actions being taken to achieve gender equality.

Speaker, our government has a number of ongoing initiatives to support girls. We have made free period products available in all K-12 schools; we have visited schools to showcase the value of non-traditional career paths to students approaching graduation; and next week in this very House of Assembly, 40 young women and gender-diverse people will participate in the Future of the Vote event to help inspire political participation for our next generation of leaders.

Speaker, the girls of today are the change makers of tomorrow. Our government will continue to work to ensure that we are creating a province where girls have the choice and opportunity to be whatever it is that they want to be.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the hon. minister for the advance copy of her statement.

Speaker, my colleagues on this side of the House join the minister in recognizing the International Day of the Girl Child. Girls continue to face challenges in our society, ranging from mental health challenges, eating disorders to gender-based violence.

Speaker, I, too, am excited about welcoming the 40 young women and gender-diverse people to the House of Assembly next week. We all need to do more to encourage participation in the democratic process and I hope that the Future of the Vote event is a success that will inspire the next generation of leaders.

I do note after many years, though, of waiting, government has finally committed again to bring forward pay equity legislation. Speaker, if we are truly creating a province where girls have the choice and opportunity to be whatever it is they want to be, surely equal pay for work of equal value is not something we should be debating in the 21st century.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

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

This year's theme is Our time is now—our rights, our future. However, girls of today should not grow up in a world that treats them less because of gender. We remind this government, especially the minister, to be proactive and sincere on policies that achieve this goal, such as pay equity legislation, and not wait for ATIPPs from the media to shame you into action.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Auditor General's audit of Nalcor has uncovered egregious misuse of taxpayer funds.

I ask the Premier: Will you refer this report to the RNC?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

Of course the Auditor General's report into Nalcor is troubling to all of us in this House. There are many things that were revealed that were troubling, I think, to every citizen of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why this government took the extraordinary measure early in the mandate to get rid of Nalcor, Mr. Speaker –

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

**A. FUREY:** – and rebrand this as Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

I wish that Nalcor hadn't gotten out of control: it had. The Auditor General has recognized that and we're certainly looking at all mechanisms available to us in the future, Mr. Speaker. But I have every confidence in Ms. Williams and her leadership team that they have taken the right steps to address these issues acutely, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

If there are wrongs done, Mr. Premier, I would advise that you should contact the RNC to get it investigated properly.

While seniors are forced to move out of their homes, the Liberals have relaunched their outreach program and have sent staff door to door to justify their much delayed, flawed, cost-of-living rebate.

I ask the Premier: Does consultation work better before or after your government makes a decision?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, I wish there was consultation done with the PUB before Muskrat Falls; obviously, that didn't happen.

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

**A. FUREY:** Two or three Question Periods without Muskrat Falls; you can kind of give me a break.

Mr. Speaker, we consulted with people –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. FUREY:** We consult with people every day, Mr. Speaker. It's part of being government. It's part of being elected Members, as I'm sure they all know. We have heard the voices of the people, Mr. Speaker. We started with a fulsome program response in the spring of the year. We recognized that there was going to be stress and strain on people with furnace oil, Mr. Speaker, that's why we put in the home heating supplement.

We additionally know that the middle class is really feeling the stress and the strain of inflation, beyond their control, beyond all of our control, Mr. Speaker, but we wanted to do the extraordinary measure of ensuring that they had money in their pockets –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Premier's time has expired.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

We live in the present and not in the past. People in January and February are going to be looking to fill their oil barrels when there is no \$500 monies being paid out, Mr. Speaker.

The mayor of Fogo is speaking out publicly because seniors are forced to move out of their homes, as they cannot afford to turn on the heat. On the Liberal watch, the cost of living has skyrocketed so high that seniors are forced to give up their homes.

I ask the Premier: Will your carbon tax increase on home heating fuel keep more seniors at home or force them out in the cold?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

I'm honoured and privileged to realize that the Opposition thinks that we, as a government, controls inflationary pressures that exist throughout the world, Mr. Speaker. We didn't start the war in Ukraine, Mr. Speaker. We didn't cause COVID, Mr. Speaker. We are looking at local solutions for national and international issues, and we will continue to do so.

With respect to the carbon tax, I think the Member opposite is fully aware; I've made my position firm to the federal government. We won't be signing up for that when it comes to home heat in this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

We're looking for the Premier and his government to take some responsibility, not deflect, not smoke and mirrors, Mr. Speaker. That's what the people of the province want.

The minister responsible for Seniors said – I quote – the carbon tax is the right policy instrument and we need to stick with it, come high or low, when it comes to how popular it is or it is not.

I ask the Premier: Does he stand by his minister's statements?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, as I've made very public in a letter to the Minister of Environment, federally, I don't think right now is the time for this particular instrument. The inflationary pressures that exist on households across this province, on middle-income families, Mr. Speaker, is unsustainable. It's not the right time. The price of oil as we all know has increased, that has solved the market issues and the

disincentive with respect to oil and gas that the federal government is trying to achieve.

It's not our policy instrument; it's theirs, Mr. Speaker. We've made our voice known. There are other instruments available to the federal government including some things like the RAA that was introduced in the United States so that the incentives can be implied to the right area, Mr. Speaker.

I think that we have some of the best areas in the province right now with respect to renewable energies, which the United States has also recognized in transitioning to the future, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Yet, the Premier and his government supported the carbon tax this past spring. We lobbied hard against it; they supported it. Now you're telling me that all of a sudden you don't support it.

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

**B. PETTEN:** What's happening?

Tell the people the straight goods, Mr. Premier.

The Minister of Environment and Climate Change said: I have no issue with supporting carbon tax and I'm very supportive of what we're doing with respect to the carbon tax.

This Liberal government supports a tax which will cause the people of this province, especially seniors, to pay more for heat in their homes.

How will the Liberals let the cost of home heat fuel rise?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to repeat that we've made our position clear with the federal government, given the changing landscape, the changing marketplace, the inflationary pressures, externalities that are beyond our control, Mr. Speaker. What we can explain to the them is that we won't be supporting a rise in carbon tax today, Mr. Speaker, given the inflationary pressures that exist. The marketplace is taking care of the disincentives that were trying to be achieved by the policy instrument; we don't believe it's the right time to put extra stress and strain on the families of Newfoundland and Labrador – period – Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** That's incredible, Mr. Speaker. It's news to everyone in this province because this government has been a big supporter of the carbon tax and supportive of Prime Minister Trudeau's climate change plan. The Premier even went to Scotland; he was down with the photo op supporting all this. Now, all of a sudden, he's against it. I guess it must do with the change in the incentive of the public sentiment.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Another vote.

**B. PETTEN:** Yeah, another vote.

Speaker, it has been reported that a nurse at the Health Sciences emergency room pleaded at the hallways full of very sick people on stretchers to "please write their MHAs and beg them to fix this."

It's outrageous that our health care workers have had to resort to this.

Premier, why is this still happening under your watch?



**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

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

Let me take the opportunity to address the preamble. It was not me who stood in this House and said do I believe in climate change, Mr. Speaker. No, it was a Member opposite who said that, the Member who posed the question, doesn't believe in climate change – doesn't believe in climate change.

What we say is that the instrument that's being proposed to tax home heating oil is not right, right now, Mr. Speaker. We're not ignoring climate change; we're saying that the instrument is wrong and misdirected.

With respect to the health care, Mr. Speaker –

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

**A. FUREY:** I'm happy to continue to –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** With respect to the emergency room we recognize that that's an important issue; we recognize that that's a problem for people who are waiting to receive emergency services. It's a problem across the country, but we are employing local provincial solutions, Mr. Speaker.

Including, by the way, building a new emergency department, speaking regularly with stakeholders, including today meeting with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the NLMA and Eastern Health.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The time has expired.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I want to correct the Premier on something. I stood in this House this spring – check *Hansard* – I said I believe in climate change, but I don't believe in carbon tax. Check your records, Mr. Premier, and read from *Hansard*.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, in March –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, in March –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, in March the province was made aware of the 2021 suicide rate and it is heartbreaking. In Labrador-Grenfell Health, the province saw almost a 150 per cent increase year over year. Nationally, it is the leading cause of death in First Nations and Inuit communities.

I ask the minister: Why does this government continue to fail the people of Labrador in providing long-term mental health care?

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

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

Earlier this year during budget, we provided \$2.5 million. This year, going forward, it's \$4.5 million annually, Mr. Speaker, for Our Path of Resilience, working to reduce incidence of suicide in the province, promoting life in the province.

There are a number of initiatives that the province has put in place. This is a very serious issue, Mr. Speaker, and I know suicide rates fluctuate year by year. We did see an increase this year; we've seen increases in previous years, Mr. Speaker, but it is something that this government takes very seriously. We've worked towards solutions, including the new plan that we've announced and released this year.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, despite what the minister is saying, suicide rates are increasing significantly. In July, the government released *Our Path of Resilience: An Action Plan to Promote Life and Prevent Suicide in Newfoundland and Labrador*.

I ask the minister: How many of the 12 actions in this plan have actually been implemented and when does the minister expect all of the actions to be in place?

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

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

This plan, as the Member opposite has identified, was released this spring, Mr. Speaker. Officials in the department and in the health authorities and with other

stakeholders throughout the province are working towards this plan.

I did hear an individual who worked on the plan on the radio this morning saying that the increase in the rates of suicide this year, Mr. Speaker, fluctuate. While it's very disappointing and heartbreaking, it's not surprising because rates do fluctuate from year to year. Some years they're up, some years they're down, but the individual who worked on the plan said it is a solid plan. It is a good plan for the province and as the initiatives in the plan are worked on and worked towards having them fully implemented, Mr. Speaker, we should see improvements in the (inaudible) –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, a 150 per cent increase over a year? Just not acceptable.

The state of mental health care in Labrador is simply not acceptable. On top of the chronic shortage of mental health care professionals, at least 31 per cent of Labrador residents are without a family doctor.

I ask the minister: When can the people of Labrador expect your government to take their mental health seriously?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we do take mental health seriously. This government has seen huge improvements in the reduction of wait times for mental health. The former minister of Health and the Premier in this province has worked very

hard on ensuring that there are more resources available, that wait times for mental health services –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. OSBORNE:** – have been reduced.

Mr. Speaker, there is a shortage of health care professionals, globally, throughout Canada. We hear stories in every province, Mr. Speaker, about the shortage of health care professionals.

We are working in this province to increase the number of health care professionals. We have put a number of resources in place: incentives, signing bonuses, bursaries, very dedicated recruitment campaigns.

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

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

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

We have heard many times on mental health that it is long-term continuity of care that is missing. I have heard from individuals with lived experiences and they say mental health does not do well on wait-lists. That is what is happening here with this government.

Yesterday marked another week of the Whitbourne emergency room being closed. It's been closed for months. The emergency rooms that are actually open are busting at the seams, staff are begging for relief and patients are waiting hours in ambulances to get the care.

When will emergency rooms in this province and their closures finally end under this government?

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

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

We have done very well with reducing the diversions of emergency rooms in this province, Mr. Speaker. Bonavista had 120 hours in July of closure, down to zero in September; Baie Verte had 276 hours in July, 258 in August, Mr. Speaker, down to 47. We have had Kittiwake with 378, down to just over 200 in September. Fogo had 163, down to zero in September. We have had Green Bay with 192, down to 48 in September.

We are working on it. The health authorities are working on it. We are putting additional resources in place. We are putting incentives in place and we are actively recruiting. We are working on it.

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

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

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

I would suggest those reductions are the result of our long, hard-working health care workers returning from vacation. They deserved it.

Over this summer, the deputy mayor of New-Wes-Valley, who has been a paramedic for 20 years, expressed his concern with emergency room closures. He said, "I'm afraid what's going to happen when the luck runs out."

I ask the minister: Will you act before the luck does run out?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I have just outlined a number of the rural emergency departments that have gone from very high numbers down to much lower numbers; some of them no diversions or closures at

all. So we are started to work on it, Mr. Speaker. We are started to work on it.

You will hear very soon, Mr. Speaker, this government has approved the provision of helicopter services. That is in the works. It's going to be organized by Eastern Health. They will service our Category B sites in the event that one of them are on diversion.

That is happening real time. That should be up and running very soon, Mr. Speaker. We are working on the issue. For the Member to say we're not is political.

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

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

**P. DINN:** It's amazing. From the career politician, he's calling me political.

Speaker, many paramedics in this province never make it to retirement. It is only a dream, as many leave their jobs well in advance due to the massive workloads, the stress on their jobs.

What is being done to ensure we retain our valuable first responders and allow them to work towards a well-earned retirement?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we've outlined – in fact, it was in the Speech from the Throne – some of the initiatives that are put in place for our first responders, our ACPs and PCPs. We've put incentives in place. In fact, it's \$50,000 for a PCP or ACP to return to this province, if they've got any attachment to the province, in order to recruit.

One of the ways we can improve the work-life balance and the workplace issues for our health care professionals is to recruit. Because if we've got people working side by side with the health care professionals who

have done a phenomenal job, who have carried a very heavy load, we will help them lighten that load.

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

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

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

A former minister of Health, when asked about the sugar tax had this to say, and I quote: "The last thing we need to do is create extra bureaucracy to collect a tax for a marginal benefit."

A previous Finance minister said, quote: "It wasn't something that we thought a province of 500,000 could take on."

The Health Accord didn't recommend it, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador don't need it and the Premier's own ministers see that there's no need. It's nothing more than a tax grab and we don't need it.

I ask the Premier: When will you axe the tax?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** Happy to take the question, Mr. Speaker.

What the people of Newfoundland and Labrador can't afford is to continue to lead the country in cardiovascular incidents, cerebral vascular incidents and strokes. Lead the country in diabetes. Lead the country in obesity. Lead the country in rates of amputation for diabetes.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. FUREY:** We need to do something. The status quo isn't working.

We're trying everything we can, including improving the system, but we also want people just to make a healthier choice, move their hand to the right or left and pick a less sugary drink, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, to answer the Premier, I thought that's exactly what the Health Accord was commissioned to do. Yet, the Health Accord says nowhere about implementing a sugar tax.

Again, the Premier said earlier in this Question Period he didn't want to put extra strain on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Yet, this sugar tax is ill-conceived, poorly planned and terribly executed. As a matter of fact, earlier last week the Premier made a comment to say that this is just the start.

I ask the Premier: What other products are you planning on putting the sugar tax on?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, we're interested in making sure that people are making the right decisions, the healthy decisions. We need to change the way we're behaving in Newfoundland and Labrador. This is one item –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. FUREY:** I can tell you what doesn't work, Mr. Speaker. The Member opposite made a career on trying to take nurses out of the health care system, Mr. Speaker.

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

**A. FUREY:** We're investing in the health care system, Mr. Speaker, not taking people out of the health care system.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I heard the question. I want to hear the answer, too.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** The last time I looked the government had introduced a *Rethink Your Drink* campaign, which would be great if they didn't have a penalty clause associated with it called the sugar tax.

The Seniors' Advocate noted that one of her priorities was to study how seniors are impacted by the high cost of living.

I ask the minister responsible for Seniors: Do you think the introduction of a sugar tax and an increase in carbon tax is going to make life more affordable for seniors?

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

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

I welcome the students from Holy Spirit here this afternoon for a spirited Question Period.

Speaker, the Member opposite is yelling about who supports this tax and why should it be supported. Well, allow me to say, the Canadian Pediatric Society, the World Health Organization, Canadian Cancer Society, Canadian Diabetes Association, Heart and Stroke Foundation.

Now, unless the Member opposite knows something that all these organizations that are dedicated to the health of the population don't know, I would suggest he understand why we're trying to implement this. I'll also say to him, because he's next going to say

something about what was implemented in other jurisdictions, I'd be happy to answer that question.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** My only three words would be: you're out of touch.

Speaker, a constituent of mine was recently on a plane coming from Alberta on his rotation when he struck up a conversation with his seatmate. It turns out the person was one of the 11 insulators coming from Quebec to work on the mental health and addictions facility.

Speaker, we have seen this story before. Why is the Furey government allowing workers from outside our province to work on our public infrastructure inside our province?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an important question in terms of projects such as the mental health institution that we're building, a very important building. In terms of people employed, we've had – I don't have it in front of me, but I believe in several months we had 100 per cent local employment. I think the next percentage was 98 per cent.

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

**E. LOVELESS:** So we're doing our best to take care of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on our projects. But sometimes expertise does come from outside the province to work on these projects. But we aim to employ at least 100 per cent Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I'll say again, Speaker, out of touch. I don't know where those numbers come from.

Speaker, the new long-term facilities in Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor employed lots of outside workers while our skilled workers sat at home and watched – shameful.

Can the minister tell this House how many out-of-province workers are currently employed on publicly funded infrastructure projects here in Newfoundland and Labrador?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**E. LOVELESS:** As I said, Mr. Speaker, our aim is certainly to employ 100 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. But the specific number that he's asking me, I don't have it in front of me. I'd be happy to get it and provide it to him.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I certainly appreciate that, Speaker.

There's a hotel in Corner Brook with an entire floor reserved out for out-of-province workers employed with the new hospital.

Why does this government insist on letting outside-the-province workers have these jobs, while highly trained workers from Newfoundland and Labrador are unemployed?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**E. LOVELESS:** Mr. Speaker, I will say I had an opportunity to go through that building and it was very impressive and impressive work done by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

As I said, our aim, our goal is certainly to employ 100 per cent of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Our record shows that we're doing a good job. Sometimes, yes, if we don't get 100 per cent, we're disappointed, and expertise sometimes does come from outside the province, but we aim for 100 per cent. I think our record shows that we've done a good job.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Mr. Speaker, there are workers out there disappointed, I can tell you that. There are also students out there disappointed.

There's a critical shortage of heavy duty equipment technicians in our province. However, after completing the first year of the program and the required 3,000 hours to move on, students are now being told it could be years on a wait-list before their second block.

Why is this government forcing more skilled professionals out of our province?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, I'm very, very happy to inform the House that this government is supplying a record amount of financial assistance to our apprentices and to employers to be able to hire apprentices. We're always looking for new ways and innovative ways to make sure that those who train for the trades of today are also available for the trades of tomorrow.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. Members for the incredible support that has been provided to apprentices throughout our entire province. We have built on the legacy of those who have built our province and those are truly apprentices.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, I can tell you there are many students in this province – maybe some in this gallery here today – who are going to be out in the cold because we have been told there are only four schools teaching the block one. However, College of the North Atlantic in Stephenville is the only school that offers subsequent blocks and they cannot meet the demand.

Speaker, we have 100 per cent employment for these graduates but they are currently being set up to fail.

I ask the minister: What is being done to resolve this bottleneck in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker. It's great to be here in a new role.

In answer to the question, we are working with the CNA to try and align very closely the courses that we deliver with the requirements of the labour market. We have information from Immigration, Population Growth and Skills. We are working with Ms. Kidd and her team – I met with them recently – on such an issue. We recognize that there are challenges and we're working to resolve them.

Thank you.

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

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

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

In 2020, provincial Liberals clawed back CERB benefit payments dollar for dollar for income support recipients despite advice from anti-poverty groups not to do so. Yet, under their watch, they had no problem turning a blind eye to blatant cronyism that turned Nalcor into a haven for writing blank cheques on everything from humidors to hot tubs.

I ask the Premier: What does he have to say to the single parents on income support going hungry so that their kids can eat?

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

In terms of our Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, we have an income support program that we are proud of in terms of meeting the needs of the people of the province. We're looking at areas how we can improve; we're doing a consultation right now on that. At the same time, we're developing a social and economic well-being plan that will incorporate all aspects of the social determinants of health so that on a go-forward basis, we have the right programs, the right policies and the right funding in place to address the issues such as the Member raised.

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

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

**J. DINN:** While the minister might be proud, I can tell you that the parents who are forced to use food banks or watch themselves or their children go hungry are not.

Premier, it's blatant cronyism and a double standard what's happening.

Speaker, recently an 85-year-old lady spent more than 10 hours at St. Clare's emergency room in pain and desperate for medical attention. You received this email, she asks: Why is government giving \$500 cheques to higher-income individuals instead of putting money towards our public health care system.

I ask the Premier: What is his response to this constituent?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I can answer from a health perspective. Having people wait a long period of time in an emergency department is not acceptable. We strive to do better, Mr. Speaker, we have been looking to do better; part of that is the recruitment of additional health care professionals to ensure that we lighten the load for the health care professionals that are there.

What we would say, Mr. Speaker, is the emergency departments prioritize the patients that come into an emergency department and the individuals that have higher need are seen sooner. Mr. Speaker, we would certainly like to get the numbers of health care professionals up and reduce those wait times even further.

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

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

**L. EVANS:** That is definitely not enough, Speaker.

Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador's suicide numbers increased 25 per cent in 2021 but more than doubled in Labrador-Grenfell region. I was saddened but really not surprised at the numbers. I was also



deeply disappointed to hear the Minister of Health this morning blame it on the pandemic. Now, I hear the phrases about rates fluctuating year to year. But we all know suicide rates for the Innu and Inuit of Northern Labrador are linked directly to intergeneration trauma as a direct result of the social and economic marginalization. That is what impacts our mental health. That is what drives us to give up hope. That is really what drives us to kill ourselves, Minister. That needs to be answered.

Will this minister admit to this and outline real action to help heal our communities? We will accept the return of the freight boat as a small start.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, the pandemic wasn't the cause of those; the pandemic may have contributed to part of the increase. There are a number of factors that contribute to the increase, Mr. Speaker, isolation for somebody who is suffering from mental health can be very serious. Mr. Speaker, there are financial pressures that people have experienced through the pandemic as well.

So not to diminish the question that the individual asked, because it is a very important question, but there are a number of factors that lead to and contribute to suicide in this province.

It is a very serious issue. Nobody wants to see any increase in numbers. They do fluctuate from year to year, Mr. Speaker; however, the goal is, with the new plan that government has announced, to see reductions year over year in those numbers and that is what we are working toward.

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

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

**L. EVANS:** Chronic social and economic marginalization is the result of, basically, colonialism. I think that needs to be addressed to get the suicides under control in my district.

Speaker, in the winter of 2019 teachers in my district told me directly they were worried about the removal of the freight boat from the island because they knew it would impact teacher retention and recruitment in my district. Now we see teacher shortages resulting in the shuffling of teachers and forcing high school students to take online courses instead of being in the classroom.

I ask the Premier: Will he step up and offer true reconciliation by returning the freight boat; not only to help teacher recruitment and retention but the overall economic and social welfare of my communities?

Thank you.

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

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

With regard to the recruitment of teachers for Northern Labrador, we mentioned in my response last week that this has and continues to be a challenge. I am pleased to inform this House that since I spoke in the House, we have actually recruited a teacher for Nain, in addition to those who are already there – a step in the right direction. Not enough, but we will continue to work to improve that.

With regard to connectivity, we have reached out to our colleagues across government to see what other maneuvers we can engage in for the school there, particularly, as my understanding is the clinic, for example, seems to have pretty reasonable internet connectivity. I am happy to report back to the House on progress, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

**Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees**

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

**B. WARR:** On behalf of the Select Committee appointed to draft a reply to the Speech from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I am pleased to present the report of the Select Committee which reads as follows:

To Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, the hon. Judy M. Foote, PC, ONL.

May it please Your Honour: We, the Commons of Newfoundland and Labrador in Legislative Session assembled, beg to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech which Your Honour has addressed to this House.

That is respectfully submitted.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Any other presenting reports?

Tabling of Documents.

**Tabling of Documents**

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

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

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

in-council relating to funding precommitment for fiscal years 2023-2024 to 2033-2034.

**SPEAKER:** Also, in accordance with subsection 18(9) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I am advising the House that members of the Management Commission are: the Speaker; the Government House Leader; the Opposition House Leader; the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation; the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs and Deputy Government House Leader; the Member for Bonavista; the Member for Burin - Grand Bank; the Member for Torngat Mountains; and the Clerk.

Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

**Notices of Motion**

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

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

I give notice that I will, on tomorrow, move the following motion: That notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day, on Wednesday, October 12, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of government business

AND THAT, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall then adjourn the House at midnight.

**SPEAKER:** Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

**Answers to Questions for which Notice  
has been Given**

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

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

I may have misspoke slightly on Thursday in answer to a question from my colleague from Torngat Mountains. I said that we, the department, had met with the NLTA about recruitment strategies the previous day. It was, in actual fact, the previous week.

However, to make up for that, I actually met with the NLTA president and executive director on this subject this morning.

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

**SPEAKER:** Petitions.

**Petitions**

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

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

Many roads within the District of Bonavista have destructive potholes, no different than what it was when we were in the spring 2022 sitting of the House of Assembly. Over a 20-kilometre stretch of one of our two main routes, Route 235, serving our historic district remains untouched. Residents are perplexed why these destructive potholes would remain throughout the tourism season, into the fall, leading to vehicle damages.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately assure that there will be no destructive potholes on either of our two main routes, 230 and 235, after July 1, 2023. With ingenuity and an improved master plan, we feel that there ought to be no destructive

potholes remaining in the entire district after July month, going forward.

We talk about tourists travelling our roads, and we usually send them down 230 and we ask them to come up scenic route 235. Well, if you travel the scenic Route 235, there's a 25-kilometre stretch where the potholes haven't been touched. So we have a Mr. Russell, from CBS in his 2018 Toyota LE, who had considerable damage, supplied the department with three quotes; no response back yet.

A good friend of the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, Mr. Jim Swyers, business person in Bonavista, in August month was travelling the road when a person in a rent-a-car pulled over on the side of the road – a couple from New York – and had damage to the tire. They brought them back to Bonavista where they had a two-night layover to wait to get the car back in order to travel back to St. John's.

We have sent lots of these in. The government does not accept any liability for these potholes, even though they exist from the spring of the year into the fall of the year.

How much ingenuity does it take to fix a pothole? Not a lot. I toured the aquaculture industry on the South Coast, the mussel farm in the Member's district I just referenced, and they have a lot of creativity and ingenuity in the way they operate and we can't get a pothole filled on a 25-kilometre stretch of road that is causing damage. Go figure.

Then we hear of NASA's DART program, which is the Double Asteroid – the collision test. That is very creative and, again, us here in the District of Bonavista and our government, we can't fill in a pothole that causes damage.

Thank you very much.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a response.

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for his petition.

I am aware of the routes that he is referring to because we talked about it previously. I think all MHAs in this House of Assembly realize the challenges around – I will challenge him in terms of the simplistic view that he is taking on filling a pothole. Yes, we agree, but there are many potholes in this province.

Where we need to get is, how do we tackle the maintenance program itself. We are working diligently on that; I believe that we will have a good plan in place moving forward. All I say to that is: Stay tuned.

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

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

The Witless Bay Line is a significant piece of infrastructure. Whereas many commute outside the Avalon on a daily basis for work, as well as the commercial, residential and tourism growth in the region has increased the volume of traffic on this highway.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade this significant piece of infrastructure to enhance and improve the flow of traffic to and from the Trans-Canada Highway.

Speaker, I have spoke on this a number of times since I came in, I'm going to say, in the last three years, I have certainly done many petitions on this road. I would say to the MHAs that are driving here when they

come to the House of Assembly, instead of driving on Trans-Canada, drive across the Witless Bay Line and drive in to St. John's to get to your hotel or get to wherever you're staying and experience the road. I dare to say there are not many roads for eight or nine kilometres worse than that.

Now, we have some sections that have been paved over the years through a couple of ministers, but there are eight or nine kilometres that it would rattle your teeth for sure. And if you're drinking a coffee – and I've had some of our Members drive and say, b'y, that's impossible to drive, it's incredible. I get calls from people that have mobile trailers that they're driving and they'll drive out to St. John's and go the Trans-Canada rather than drive across to Witless Bay Line, it's too hard on their equipment and fellas that have motorcycles.

I listened to the minister speak on the maintenance, and I will certainly speak on the maintenance in our area. I have seen some improvements; they've done some roads and some ditching in our area. It's going to make a difference later on, and that's what's important to get done. The same in this area, you have to get the maintenance done. It's very important. I would also touch on the brush cutting in the areas as well.

So it's very important, as he touched on, to getting the maintenance done. I certainly agree with it. A lot of the communities are very happy with what's going on. It will prevent further washouts. Including the Witless Bay Line, there would be areas in there that it's impossible – fellas with motorcycles that it's just impossible to drive. They're going across to the opposite side of the road. I've driven it many times myself and you're taking your chances. You go in there on a foggy night, you're driving 70 or 80 kilometres and you can't see the pothole or you can't see the holes that are there.

It's something I just put that out there for the minister to have a look at and hopefully make it in his budget for next year.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a response.

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thought the first thing he was going to say was thanking me for the investment in his district this season, but he didn't do that. But I'll wait for that the next time, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of that road, I've driven that road and I've talked to some business owners that are on that road as well. It's like many, it's like the Terra Nova road; it's like many roads in this province, in this hon. man's district, this man's district, this lady's district, districts everywhere in this province.

We all know we have a certain amount of money that's budgeted for this. It's always a challenge, no doubt, but we will continue to consider that route, as well as many other routes in this province.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll read the petition and background:

WHEREAS our environment must be protected and the *Environmental Protection Act* must be followed to ensure the safety of our environment for future generations; and

WHEREAS the World Energy GH2 has submitted a plan to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to build wind turbines in Western Newfoundland; and

WHEREAS the company director has stated publicly that the government told the company to register only Phase I of the project; and

WHEREAS the company director stated they need the three phases to make the project viable;

THEREFORE we call upon the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the hon. House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reject Phase I of the World Energy GH2 project and complete an environmental impact study on the World Energy GH2 project as one to ensure the complete project is evaluated and the environmental study is not circumvented.

Mr. Speaker, I bring that up again today because, as I said last week, the company said we're just going to put Phase I. Once we get Phase I, then Phase II and Phase III will come. The minister in response to that on last Thursday, I think it was, Mr. Speaker, I'll just use my phone to read from *Hansard* on it. He said: "There will absolutely be no project splitting allowed to occur. The Member is correct; Environment has a strong standpoint on splitting a project. That will not occur."

Mr. Minister, I take your word as a hon. minister and a person. So if you really feel that there's no project splitting, you should cancel Phase I and order them now as we speak because right now, as this project is moving forward, Mr. Speaker, there is no consultations in the Humber - Bay of Islands where it's going to be mainly affected for Phase II.

So, Minister, you put it in the record that there will be no project splitting, that the department will frown upon this.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. JOYCE:** I know this is very serious, but I say to the minister, if you believe what you said in *Hansard*, that there is no project splitting, I call upon you now to say publicly that they will have to put in the full project, Phase I, II and III, so that the people of Humber - Bay of Islands will have a say, not on the front end, but once they get \$500 million spent on the buildings, you got to give them Phase II and Phase III.

Minister, these are your words. I ask that you stand up and say now that there will be no project splitting; there will be one project for the three phases.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for a response.

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Speaker.

On August 5, as I've said before, I'll thank the hon. Member for bringing forward the petition. I can assure the House of Assembly, the people of this province and the people on the West Coast of this province that there will be absolutely no project splitting with respect to this project. The guidelines have been released. The draft guidelines have been released. Sorry, I misspoke there. The draft guidelines have been released.

There'll be consultation from the public on those draft guidelines before any final guidelines will be put out. The proponent has to honour all those requirements within the draft guidelines as well as when they become final, as we move through this process, which is exactly the legislative process that we follow each and every time.

There will be no project splitting. I want to reiterate that point. We announced that it would be going to an environmental impact statement on August 5, in which case they'll give an opportunity for the public consultation both in the draft guidelines and

the final guidelines that will be coming out, as well as when they submit their final report.

There is absolutely – and I can't reiterate any more clearly than that – no project splitting. There was no consultation within our department to advise the proponent that they could offer up parts of the project; that is not on. That's not the way it works. They understand that. We've told them that and they've said so in other media that I've seen before.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to advocate on behalf of the residents of Northern Labrador for the Newfoundland and Labrador PUB to review the decision to apply a price freeze on summer fuel products, that's motor fuel and home heating fuel in zone 14.

Zone 14 is composed of the six Innu and Inuit communities in Northern Labrador. In past years, there was no price freeze on fuel during the summer months in zone 14. That is, historically, the maximum retail adjustments by the PUB were not suspended during the summer months; instead the prices adjusted week to week just like the rest of the provincial zones.

In June 2021 and again in June 2022, the PUB suspended maximum retail price adjustments for zone 14, resulting in questions from residents as to why this was done. It was really confusing. Our communities in zone 14 rely heavily on hunting, fishing and gathering our food supply; therefore, we are heavily dependent

on gasoline to be able to access our natural food supply.

We feel that the summer price suspension was put in place without adequate consultation as to the impacts this summer price freeze would have on our people.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to advocate for a review of the decision to suspend the maximum price adjustments for zone 14 during these months.

Speaker, this is about a price freeze that people don't really understand, because they weren't consulted. But in actual fact, the price freeze actually impacts our people in Labrador, not only in my district of Northern Labrador but Southern Labrador as well because we are the only places, Northern Labrador and Southern Labrador that we have a price freeze.

Now, in late June, the PUB froze the price in Northern Labrador at \$2.457 a litre. Eight days later, after that price freeze was put in effect, the gas prices dropped across the entire province by 20 cents. Looking at Southern Labrador, they were froze at \$2.35. Really, what I like to call is the difference between the Island prices and Labrador prices. In the Northern Peninsula, if you actually gassed up, when the price freeze was put in place, you would be paying 36.2 cents a litre less.

In September 28, people in Northern Labrador were paying 78 cents more a litre than on the Island. People in Southern Labrador were paying 58.2 cents more a litre than in the Northern Peninsula. We need a review and we need adequate consultation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I take this opportunity to present a petition on reforming the justice system to better serve survivors of sexual assault. This time 60 people have signed it. It has been a while, so I will read the full preamble and what they are calling on.

WHEREAS the global #Me Too Movement has laid bare the gross inequalities and obstacles facing survivors of sexual assault who seek justice; and

WHEREAS serious concerns about how the justice system handles criminal offences related to sexual violence are evident based on statistics about the reporting rates of sexual assault in relation to other crimes. These concerns also emerge from the reported experiences of survivors; and

WHEREAS in Canada, one in three – or 31 per cent – victimizations are reported to police but only one in five sexual assaults are reported to police; and

WHEREAS survivors hesitate to report sexual assault because they don't believe they will see justice; and

WHEREAS these facts and conditions all combine and result in a failure of the justice system for survivors of sexual assault.

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to acknowledge that the status quo is failing survivors of sexual assault; undertake a review of the K-to-12 curriculum to identify gaps in education about consent, healthy relationships and gender-based violence; implement alternative justice options, such as transformative-restorative justice practices and/or options rooted in Indigenous legal traditions and practices in response to gendered-based violence throughout the province; have the Minister of Justice ask the chief judge of the Provincial Court to consider a practice

directive which would prohibit opposing counsel from approaching witnesses and which would prohibit counsel from yelling at witnesses; introduce mandatory training for provincial judges on trauma, PTSD and consent model on the federal requirement; and consult with key community stakeholders to identify and appropriately fund new initiatives to prevent and address all forms of gender-based violence.

I think we should take one part of this very seriously – that, basically, survivors hesitate to report sexual assaults because they don't believe they will see justice. In my time as MHA, a number of the women who have come to me, looking to get out of abusive relationships, are reliant on court orders, restraining orders, you name it and they don't have confidence. They do not feel protected. We have had examples, I guess, in my district of people who have gone to the police, looking to file a complaint, only to be counselled to do the opposite.

I think, here, at this point in time, Speaker, let's get on with this and make this better for the survivors of sexual assault.

Thank you.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker, and thanks for the opportunity to speak to this issue.

I thank the Member for his preamble which outlines a lot of issues that individuals who deal with sexual assault face in the justice system, and I agree it is very difficult. As I said to the public many times, we do want to give individuals the space to make decisions that they feel comfortable with. Sometimes they are unable to come to decisions because there is not, necessarily, the right resources available to them to deal with the situation and court might not be the answer for all people.

So having said that and listening to what the recommendations were in the petition, I do want to outline two items that we are dealing with and we have taken steps from in the Department of Justice. One being we have funded a \$300,000 program from Memorial University to do a study into education to provide a restorative justice approach to individuals who are in the K-to-12 system. That application for funding was on my desk for a matter of days. As soon as I saw it, I thought it was a great idea and really important to help deal with the education issues that surround sexual assault and sexual violence in our province.

I also met with the new chief judge at Provincial Court this morning. We talked about a number of things in relation to the justice system in the Provincial Court. One of the items we did talk about was training for sexual assault issues for Provincial Court judges, and I am very pleased to see and hear him say that he is happy to work with us and, in fact, deal with this issue of training as soon as possible.

We will let him get his feet wet a little bit. He is only been appointed a week or so ago. But certainly that was an issue that we talked about this morning. I am happy to tell everyone in the House, the members of the public that is something that we will continue to work on as we move forward.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

### Orders of the Day

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

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

Orders of the Day, Motion 3.



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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that under Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 11, 2022.

**SPEAKER:** 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.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

BE IT RESOLVED that the following Humble Address be presented to His Most Gracious Majesty the King, expressing the heartfelt sympathy of this House on the death of Her Late Gracious Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, and also conveying to His Majesty the happiness felt by the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador upon his accession to the Throne:

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY:

Most Gracious Sovereign:

We, Your Majesty's most loyal and dutiful subjects, the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador in Legislative Session convened, humbly beg leave to approach Your Majesty to express the profound sorrow felt by this House and by the loyal people of this province with Your

Majesty and all the other members of the Royal Family, at the irreparable loss sustained by you and them in the death of our Late Beloved Sovereign Queen Elizabeth the Second.

We mourn keenly the death of our Revered Queen, whose deep sense of responsibility, whose devotion to the duties of Her High Office and whose wise and sympathetic leadership we acknowledge with profound gratitude. We pray that Almighty God may abundantly comfort Your Majesty and the Royal Family in your grief.

With feelings different but very deep and sincere, we now hail Your Majesty's accession to the Throne. We express the fervent hope that Your Majesty's reign will continue for many peaceful and prosperous years.

AND BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Address be engrossed and sent to the Governor General of Canada to be forwarded to His Majesty the King.

After 70 years of service, Speaker, I think, despite having lots of bills and legislation, that it only be fitting that I take a few minutes to speak of Queen Elizabeth's reign, much of it already known, but I think it's certainly –

**SPEAKER:** The Clerk has reminded me that we need a seconder for that motion.

**L. DEMPSTER:** I need a seconder. The guy who hails from close to the Queen, on the other side of the pond, seconded by the Minister of Education, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

Much of what we already know, but certainly deserving to be read into the record, Speaker, it was a sad day across the Commonwealth on September 8, when we all learned of the news that Queen Elizabeth

II had died at the age of 96 at Balmoral Castle in Scotland with the Royal Family by her side.

Absolutely incredible that she occupied the throne for 70 years and 214 days. Elizabeth was Britain's longest reigning monarch and second longest reigning monarch in recorded history.

She became Queen in 1952 at the age of 25 and was the first monarch to be crowned Queen of Canada. As the mother of a 25-year-old daughter, I reflected on that and I thought, my goodness, how much she had given up and how disciplined our Queen was for those 70 years, always putting crown and country before herself.

She was Queen of Canada for almost half our country's existence. We've heard many say since her passing that she was the only Queen that most of us knew. As a matter of fact, Speaker, 96 per cent of this province's existence since Confederation in 1949, she was serving. Over the span of 70 years, Queen Elizabeth II made 22 official trips to Canada and she was present for some significant moments in Canadian history. I won't read them all. I think about the opening of the First Session of the 23rd Parliament in '57, Canada's centennial anniversary in 1967 and the Summer Olympic Games in Montreal in '76.

But perhaps what's really noteworthy and significant – it stood out to me as I was doing a little bit of research – was the Queen travelled to Ottawa specifically to take part in one of the most significant events in Canadian history and a fundamental pillar that established Canada as a modern state. She signed the proclamation that patriated our Constitution giving Canada complete independence from British law. This also brought about the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* in which our democratic rights and privileges are enshrined.

Throughout her reign, Elizabeth saw 12 Canadian prime ministers rise and fall – it's amazing. She appointed 13 different Governor Generals, with the last appointment being Mary May Simon in July of '21. Many of us would've met Mary May Simon, she was appointed by the Queen. Her first visit to Newfoundland and Labrador was in '51, when, then, Princess Elizabeth and the Duke of Edinburgh ended their extensive tour of Canada. She actually visited our province a total of three times.

There are many, many notes here. I'm just sort of skimming some of it, Speaker.

I want to mention this because our province was just saddened to learn of the passing of the late John Crosbie Perlin. In 1978, her visit to the province included several events including the Royal St. John's Regatta and a banquet dinner at Memorial University. It was at that dinner that the late John Crosbie Perlin of St. John's first met Queen Elizabeth during this visit. He had this to say when he was asked about Queen Elizabeth: he said she was kind and courteous and had a way of putting people at ease. He also said she had a great sense of humour.

I think as leaders in the province, the 40 Members that take our seat, we can take something away from that. It's important that people feel valued in our presence, that they feel seen, but always I think there's a bit of work-life balance and, at the end of the day, we maintain a sense of humour through it all as well.

She was here in '97 – that's probably the visit that I remember most – when we celebrated the 500th anniversary of John Cabot's voyage across the Atlantic.

Also noteworthy is that during that visit she also made stops in Sheshatshiu, one of our two First Nation reserves in this province, and North West River, where Queen Elizabeth opened the Labrador Interpretation Centre.

I was delighted just last September maybe to take the Justice Minister, we had some time after meetings. I said I can't think of a better place to take you if you want to learn about Labrador and some of our history and our Indigenous histories and cultures than to North West River to the Labrador Interpretation Centre. Queen Elizabeth actually did open that facility.

Respected Innu elder and activist Elizabeth Penashue was there during the Queen's visit to Sheshatshiu and remembered that visit fondly as they set up a tent on the beach in Sheshatshiu where community members would visit. During that day she says her tent was full of children and elders.

As the minister for Indigenous Affairs, I'd be remiss if I didn't mention that many times when you read about the Queen that she was committed to reconciliation and she spoke often about the work that remained to heal. Having myself met, who is now King Charles, myself and him when he visited here, I believe it was in June, had a conversation. He was quite interested in the things that our province is doing around reconciliation. So now when I learn about the history of the things that his mom would've been involved in, those things sort of come naturally, being passed on to him.

She always maintained a warm, personal relationship with Indigenous people. During her first visit to Canada in '59 you will see that she visited many Indigenous communities.

A couple of things I want to say about her as a female, because she certainly raised the bar, she broke glass ceilings; she was a very strong leader. In 1945, she became the first female member of the Royal Family to become a full-time, active member of the British Armed Forces. She trained as a driver and as a mechanic. You know, a pretty different roles than what we are used to seeing her in. By the end of the war, she had risen to the rank of junior commander.

In addition to being the longest serving British monarch, Her Majesty was also married for 73 years, the greatest length of time of any British sovereign – 73 years. I have had a number of 60th anniversaries in my district and that's a long time. But 73 deserves a mention.

The Queen supported organizations that reflected her own varied interests such as education, health, professional institutions, children, science, the environment, arts and community work. Also noteworthy is that Her Majesty had links as royal patron or president with over 500 charities, professional bodies and public service organizations.

There is no doubt, as I clue up, Speaker, that Elizabeth provided a strong example of a woman leader. She was a constant figure in the life of Canadians. She devoted her life to serving people. She commissioned her 15th prime minister to form a government just days before she passed, and many of the media outlets were commenting on that.

The one thing that – I will sort of sit down after this – I wanted to mention, as I stand here in the presence of 40 MHAs that represent the constituency that make up Newfoundland and Labrador, this is one thing that always left me in awe with the Queen: She offered leadership and comfort in times of uncertainty, hardship and change. There is no doubt that people look to their leaders for that calm and assurance. I think as MHAs we can take a page as we go through various tumultuous times.

I may not have done quite justice to that, Speaker, but we certainly thank her for her service and we certainly wish King Charles all of the best in his reign.

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

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

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

It is with great honour that I stand here today on behalf of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition in the Newfoundland and Labrador Legislature of the House of Assembly. It is with great honour that I not only speak, but I also express our sorrow and deep sympathy of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth II on her death.

We will be forever grateful for many things in the Opposition. We will be grateful for her devotion and her dedication to the duties in Her High Office. We will be grateful for her wisdom and for her leadership during the tenure of her reign, which was over 70 years.

I think, Speaker, that it is quite fitting today, being International Day of the Girl Child, that I speak with respect to the passing of Her Majesty. I indicate that there is no better role model than Her Majesty for young girls today. We see that she has provided all of the attributes, characteristics and values that young girls today need to follow and to emulate in order to have meaningful and positive lives ahead of them.

We wish to convey to His Majesty, as well, the happiness we feel for his accession to the Throne. We wish him many peaceful and successful years ahead.

Thank you.

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

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

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

As my colleague for St. John's Centre said, we do send our condolences on behalf of the Third Party to His Majesty King Charles for the passing of his mother, a grandmother and great-grandmother. We talk about Her Majesty as the Queen but

she was also a mom, she was a grandmother and she was a great-grandmother who actually, outside of most tradition, spent a lot of time with her children and her grandchildren. To be the monarch but to also continue and follow with your family duties as well as an active mother and grandmother and great-grandmother is impressive in itself.

She was the only monarch I had ever known and same with my father and most of my family. I think my grandfather would probably be the only one who could remember but he was only a boy when her father was the King, so it is a massive change in the Commonwealth that we are going to have a change of face and it's interesting here, even on the first bill here this morning, Charles III. A lot of people are going to have to get used to it and it's going to be a very interesting change after 70 years of a presence that we had here.

But like I said, we, as the Third Party, do offer condolences to His Majesty and that passing because it is significant. Even though these are public figures, that's still his mother, that's still a grandmother, that's still a mother and it's very hard on families to lose someone with such a long presence. I do sincerely offer my condolences to them.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers if the Deputy Government House Leader speaks now, she will close debate.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I thank my colleagues across the way for paying tribute to Her Majesty. She may have passed but I think her memory will live on for as long as we have memory, and we'll speak about her often and we thank

her for being the role model that she was as a leader, and certainly many, many attributes that we will be able to emulate from her and we wish His Majesty the very best in his time reigning.

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

All those in favour of the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, BE IT RESOLVED by the House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREAS section 4 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* provides that on resolution of the House of Assembly, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall appoint as a Child and Youth Advocate.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Linda Clemens-Spurrell be appointed as the Child and Youth Advocate effective October 25, 2022.

I need a seconder?

**SPEAKER:** Yes, you need a seconder, please.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, seconded by the Minister for Children, Seniors and Social Development.

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

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

I'm just going to take a couple of minutes to share some information on Ms. Linda Clemens-Spurrell. She has almost 30 years of experience in the social systems within the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. She began working as a public servant in 1993, as a front-line social worker and then Department of Social Services in the area of child welfare. So certainly a lot of value over those 30 years.

Ms. Clemens-Spurrell holds a Master of Social Work degree from Memorial University that emphasized leadership, social justice, diversity, research, anti-oppressive practice, community development, social policy and intervention with individuals, families and groups. This advanced skill set has been utilized in the various roles she has occupied throughout her career.

Noteworthy, Speaker, that Ms. Clemens-Spurrell social work career has included front-line social work experience, policy and program development, training and quality management, as well as front-line supervision and progressive senior management positions within the Department of Social Services, Eastern Regional Health Authority, Department of Health and Community Services and the former Department of Child, Youth and Family Services.

Prior to her appointment as the Child and Youth Advocate, Ms. Clemens-Spurrell served as assistant deputy minister for the Child and Youth Services Branch of CSSD, a position she has held since 2019, where she engaged with colleagues from across the country on matters of significance to child welfare. Ms. Clemens-Spurrell is a registered social worker with the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers and her career has focused

on the needs of children and youth of this province.

As a registered social worker, she believes in the importance of advocacy, collaboration and mutual respect. Speaker, I want to add that Ms. Clemens-Spurrell came into the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development while I was the minister there and I got to see every day her work ethic, and you would've too, Speaker, as the parliamentary secretary at that time. She poured her heart and soul and we got to see that up close and personal. I think her days were long there, and maybe sometimes you wanted to send her home at a certain time.

I think when we reflect on the things that I have just read into the record, that Ms. Clemens-Spurrell has certainly had a well-rounded, long career. During my time there, I know she spent many hours at the Innu Round Table, for example, building relationships with Indigenous peoples around this province. I believe that she certainly had a close look, starting on the front lines and working her way up. She certainly is aware of the provincial needs and scope. I certainly can speak with a great deal of confidence when I say I believe she understands the role of a Child and Youth Advocate.

From time to time, there would be reports come in to the department there from the Advocate, and we would always embrace those recommendations with a goal to make life better for the children in this province. So as a 30-year career, I think we can say that she cares and I believe, Speaker, that Ms. Clemens-Spurrell will fulfill her duties in a capable and competent manner, and I believe that the province will be well served under the mandate of Ms. Clemens-Spurrell.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

It gives me a pleasure to get up and speak on this motion for Linda Clemens-Spurrell. Actually, earlier today I met Linda for the first time – very impressive, and I think that office will be well served with her being present as the Child and Youth Advocate. I think she'll do a great job.

Speaker, the Child and Youth Advocate is one of seven statutory offices established by statute and that report to the House of Assembly through the Speaker. I mean, that's important to say they're just one of seven.

The office works independently of any government direction in carrying out their mandate. They protect and represent the rights, interests and viewpoints of youth under the age of 19. However, this extends until their 21st birthday if they have been in care or custody arrangements.

Speaker, we just recently made some changes with our own caucus duties and one of the things we're going to concentrate on or put more emphasis on is youth and youth needs. And I think that just broadens it.

I spoke to Ms. Clemens this morning and we alluded to that fact. Underneath a lot of our societal issues now, our youth are suffering. For whatever reason it's getting down to them and we need to really – if we don't start there in society, we'll never get it right. You have to start at the bottom and build your way up.

And right now the most important asset we have is our youth and our children and we need to put whatever care and whatever protections in place for them. It's very important. And I think Ms. Clemens will do a great job in doing that.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, this includes individual advocacy, voices heard and rights are respected, reviews and investigations, systemic advocacy, issues that affect groups and child and youth, and education outreach. Like I say, very important.

Speaker, I'd also like to thank Ms. Karen Gray, our Acting Child and Youth Advocate since January, for doing an outstanding job until this appointment of Ms. Clemens-Spurrell.

Speaker, it's not easy work. The issues facing children and youth in care, as often documented in published reviews of the Advocate's office, paint a grim picture of the lives of these young people and the challenges of the system they are interacting with.

We continue to hear reports of social worker vacancies, turnover, high workloads and impacts on individuals and their families. Inadequate housing, poverty, mental health and addiction issues are often cited as key factors.

And on that note, Speaker, and it's something I'm going to make an effort in the future coming months and the remainder of my term – the next two years, actually – I have to try to start speaking out more about those issues as they pertain to my home District of Conception Bay South. All you have to do is read the news lately or follow anything on social media. Conception Bay South, there seems to be a bigger problem of late with addictions, broken families, crime. It's unfortunate for someone who's lived there all their life, but it's the reality we face today.

It's something else I spoke to the new Child and Youth Advocate this morning about as well, that's something that I need to bring some more attention to my own district. I'm sure right across the province we're experiencing it. There seems to be a lot of it in my own district, and it's something that I think that we all, as 40 Members in this

House of Assembly, need to realize that that's the reality we're living in. Today is 2022; it's not the way it was when we were children, Speaker.

Speaker, Ms. Clemens-Spurrell has an impressive résumé with over 30 years experience, including as a front-line social worker. She's held divergent and progressively more responsible positions throughout the system which will suit her well in her new position.

Ms. Clemens-Spurrell holds a Master of Social Work and is member of the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers, and believes in the importance of advocacy, collaboration and mutual respect.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleagues in the Official Opposition we wish her every success.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

We, too, will not only support this motion, but also certainly wish Ms. Linda Clemens-Spurrell all the best in her new appointment.

I, too, had the opportunity to meet with Ms. Clemens-Spurrell and I want to thank the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development for that opportunity. It's certainly an opportunity to meet a person, have that conversation and you can sort of get the make or the cut of that person in that discussion and who they are. It's very clear, not only from meeting with Ms. Clemens-Spurrell, but also from hearing the Deputy Government House Leader speak to her, I think, in many ways, the qualifications that make her the right person for this job.

It's a significant responsibility, a significant set of duties that the Child and Youth Advocate has to undertake. Obviously, it's someone, I look at it, that Ms. Clemens-Spurrell has had 30 years of experience. She's been a front-line social worker. That's dealing with nuts and bolts, hands on, in the trenches, if you will, with the issues. She has a Master of Social Work but also in leadership, social justice and intervention. Definitely an advanced skill set for sure.

I think if anything else, it's a wide-ranging, diverse set of skills, Speaker, a wide-ranging, diverse experience which is going to enrich her work in this role. It's probably going to make her more grounded to bring all the different components together.

I think, if anything else, in my conversation with Ms. Clemens-Spurrell – we talked a little bit about priorities and about the collaboration and one of the things we spoke is collaboration between education, between schools and social work. One of the issues I have often encountered is that the sharing of information usually goes one way from schools to the health care system or from schools to social work, yet schools are an integral part of a child's well-being. Often, it is the school where some of the first, I guess, medical issues, social issues are first identified. I was encouraged to hear that Ms. Clemens-Spurrell is very supportive of that collaboration between the two.

Certainly, we talked about the inquiry into Innu children in care and that is something that she is going to be paying close attention to; about having further conversations about poverty; about the systemic issues that impact a child's success in school. It is often teachers, I guess, in the school system and that child comes in that day and they come in from home and you don't know what they are bringing in with them, and I am talking about the emotional trauma that they might have just gone through. Maybe they haven't had a meal to eat in days, and often I would realize that the children who are in front of

me also are being served by Children, Seniors and Social Development and the justice system and if anything else is we need to be aware of that and to address it.

Underlying most addictions as, I think, many school councillors will tell you – underlying just about every addiction is a mental health issue. Addictions don't exist in a vacuum. They don't exist, necessarily, independent of something else and I think there is a real, genuine concern here. I heard the Member for Conception Bay South speak to this, and it is something that we have got to address but look at the mental health issues that underlie this.

Secondly, and I guess close to a final point I will make on this, is that the children who we see in front of us – I am speaking here as an educator, Speaker. That is not necessarily who they will be later in life. When you get to meet some of your former students, who have sometimes gone on to succeed, in spite of my efforts or whatever else, as I say, they have gone and lived normal lives without me.

I think if anything is to keep in mind that it is good to have an office represented by a person who has a deep understanding of these needs and who will be a strong advocate for children, who are often voiceless themselves.

I'll end by using a quote from a news article recently; it was Innu Nation Deputy Grand Chief Mary Ann Nui. She said that, "Children are the future of our communities, and we need healthy children and families to build our nation .... We have to understand what happened to our children, what is continuing to happen, and look at what changes can be made."

While she is speaking to the children in her Nation, I think that can be equally said about all children, about the need to make sure that they have the best possible future; our province and our country have the best possible future. I think it is key, then, to



have a person of Ms. Clemens-Spurrell expertise, background and experience to be in this position, to advocate on their behalf, Mr. Speaker.

We wish her well in her new position.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Speaker, it's certainly my pleasure to speak to the resolution and for Ms. Clemens-Spurrell to become the next Child and Youth Advocate.

I know Linda from her work in the department; she will be an exceptional Advocate. I saw that in the context of the work that she is doing and has done, literally, over the past 30 years. In my conversations with her, the one thing that has always impressed me is her interest and her professionalism, but focused on the best interests of the child and youth that she would have to address.

As you can appreciate, the complexity of child protection is one of the more extreme or more difficult roles that any public servant in this province has to address. Interfering at times, cajoling at times and then using the legal systems at times to make sure that the best interests of the child is there front and centre in the work that our social workers do, the courts will do and others.

There is a lot of discretion and professional judgment required by our social workers in the practice of child protection. At the end of the day, all roads have led, up until now, to Linda Clemens-Spurrell in our department and in our system. She knows our system probably the best, I'd say, within the province; has worked extensively throughout our system, as mentioned earlier, working from the front lines, right up to an executive position in the department.

So having somebody of her calibre willing and wanting to take on this role, I think, is a testament to her professionalism and her vocation as a social worker to make sure that she can continue her work now in a new role.

Obviously, she gets to build on the work of the previous Advocates and, as mentioned, both the former Advocates who have really built up that office have developed a process to adjudicate and take issues forward, then advocate on their behalf and then issue very substantive reports that make significant recommendations that my department and others have to follow.

For those who are following those and read those reports, they are extensive. They outline the strengths of our system, but more importantly for the Advocate, in the past and will be on a go-forward basis, where are the gaps in our services? Where are the deficiencies? Where has the system failed the interest of a child?

It's that role that the Advocate is required. If you look at the Officers of this House, the statutory Officers, I would rate the Child and Youth Advocate really as probably the most critical of all the Officers that we have because the welfare of our children obviously has to rate first within our society.

Linda Clemens-Spurrell is well positioned to take on this role. It will be a new role for her but one I know that she will excel in. I'm sure I will be having numerous conversations with her as she undertakes her work in the days, weeks and months ahead.

But her advocating for the interest of children within the department amongst her colleagues, both in the department, in the other parts of our system, with our health system and elsewhere, to make sure their interests are protected, are advanced and are secured to the degree that law and society wants that to happen, then she is definitely the person to do that.

I wish her well, I wish her family well and hopefully her parents have resolved the communication in their household as the role that Linda has now taken on and that she will be supported by them as she will by us here in this House.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to speak and support the resolution.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no further speakers, if the Deputy Government House Leader speaks now she will close the debate.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I just want to thank Members on both sides of the House for their words of Ms. Linda Clemens-Spurrell. It certainly sounds like unanimously she has the support and the confidence of this Legislature.

I neglected when I spoke the first time to thank Karen Gray. We want to thank her. It's not an easy office to work in; very difficult work and she did an incredible job while she was there. We certainly want to thank her.

I want to thank the speakers and I want to wish Ms. Linda Clemens-Spurrell, the very best as she moves forward in this new role.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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.'

Motion carried.

I, too, would like to congratulate Linda on her appointment as the Child and Youth Advocate. Linda is joining us in the public gallery here today.

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

**SPEAKER:** I wish you great success.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 4, second reading of Bill 5, An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that Bill 5, An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund, be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 5, An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund." (Bill 5)

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

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

I have to say it is lovely to be back in the House of Assembly again debating important legislation and having the opportunity to debate issues that are of great importance to the people of the province. I'm glad to be back here today, wonderful to see people participating rigorously in debate.

Today, I'm pleased to speak about a strong future for our province, one that is founded on a financial plan that is strategic, responsible, reduces our debt and helps to build toward a stronger, smarter, self-sufficient and sustainable Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our financial management plan is comprehensive and addresses our financial challenges. It's a three-part plan, Speaker, one that I've spoken to many different bond-rating agencies about, and everyone in this House is aware that our bond-rating agencies have moved us from a negative watch to stable. I'm very pleased that we are able to do that. One that has helped us move from \$2.1 billion in deficit now to this year, in budget at least, it was \$351 million. Of course, the financial update will be coming in the next few weeks, Speaker.

But this three-part plan dealt with – one I think is very important was fixing Muskrat Falls. Our government is making major steps towards providing both secure and clean hydroelectricity for the province, but also ensuring that it does not become as big of a financial burden to the citizens of the province. Our rate mitigation plan, with the responsible path forward we found with the federal government, we were able to mitigate those concerns.

The second big thing is really prudent fiscal governance. That means keeping expenditures in the province under control, continuing with the transformational and modernization initiatives that we're undertaking and ensuring that we maximize the value of every provincial dollar.

The third big piece of this plan is really about responsible debt management. We need to continue to reduce our debt load, to lower the cost of debt servicing and enhance our Treasury management. We're doing all those things. It's fairly comprehensive.

Interest costs on our debt is one of our largest expenditures. Approximately a billion dollars a year, Speaker, that we actually have to pay in interest. It's like throwing it out the door; we have to pay it in interest. It's like paying a high value on your credit cards. This high cost of borrowing reduces the money available for programs and services to support the people of the province.

In light of this, we have prioritized additional responsible debt management, as part of the overall financial plan that is strategic and responsible and builds, as I said, towards that stronger, smarter, self-sufficient, sustainable province. This financial management plan is comprehensive and we are going to continue to work towards it.

A Future Fund is an important piece of that overall financial plan. It is a fund that will take a portion of non-renewable resources and/or any one-time sources of funding and it invests them. Monies accumulated will help pay down debt, thereby lowering the cost of borrowing.

Speaker, I think this is a very important discussion that we're going to have here this afternoon and I want to make sure the people of the province understand this legislation in terms of what it will do and what it won't do. So we're going to take a portion of our non-renewable resources and put it into a Future Fund and we're going to use it to pay down debt.

In 10 years' time, as we continue to build on the Future Fund – after a 10-year period, the money accumulated may also, in addition to debt repayment, be used for

things like decommissioning activities in our offshore or can fund strategic priorities. But we're talking about in 10 years' time, Speaker. Up until that point, the only use is for extraordinary circumstances or to pay down debt.

The intention of the Future Fund is to have a positive impact on the province's financial position by strengthening the financial standing of the province, lowering the cost of borrowing, and really making sure that we relieve the debt burden for the generation today and generations for tomorrow. It's both prudent and responsible, as I've said.

The *Future Fund Act* will establish the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund. The Future Fund provides a mechanism for investing a portion of non-renewable resource revenues and proceeds, for example, from major asset sales. More specifically, required contributions to the Future Fund will include: a portion of non-renewable resource royalties received in the previous year, and net proceeds of tangible and intangible assets sold for greater than \$5 million.

At this point, Speaker, we do not take a portion of non-renewable resources and move them into any kind of strategic fund. That has not happened in this province. And if we do sell an asset, say we sell a building or we sell our offshore oil assets, that would go into the general revenue fund. So now we're saying we're going to have this Future Fund, which is important.

I will table, because I think it's an important part of our debate, the regulations at this time. There has been some discussion around the regulations. And it explains the portion of the non-renewable resource royalties that are required to be deposited. So I'm happy to do that.

The contribution rates range from a low point of 2 per cent of royalties – and that's if you're only taking in about \$250 million in oil royalty revenues – to 75 per cent of

royalties that exceed the \$2.5 billion. So you can see that it is incremental, it's reasonable, it's responsible, it's prudent and it's capturing more of the upside, while still maintaining discipline over oil revenues when we receive a lower amount.

In a general sense, Speaker, we get between – just for the general public – \$800 million and a billion dollars per year in oil royalty revenue. So people can see that that's the general. But there have been times when it's been lower, and there have been times when it's been much, much higher.

So I wanted to table that so that the people in this Assembly here today have a copy of the regulations. I will say that it's going to strengthen our finances, as I said, many, many times, ensure that we pay down expensive debt and lower the cost of borrowing as well as plan for the future

In addition, the act will amend the *Financial Administration Act* to allow for the transfer of money – and this is important – between the Future Fund and the Consolidated Revenue Fund. That's to allow for the transfer. For example, when this comes into force, we'll be transferring money that we would have in our budget to this fund. So it's allowing that to occur.

Now, again, I'll repeat, money may be withdrawn from the Future Fund to service public debt or pay an amount required due to an extraordinary circumstance. So let's talk about extraordinary circumstances. Extraordinary circumstances mean a circumstance that in the opinion of the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, has materially impacted or is projected to materially impact the province's fiscal position.

The Canadian Auditing Standards define materiality as an amount that could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements. So I'm

going to give you a good example: the pandemic. That's an extraordinary circumstance. It materially impacted the province.

Hopefully we'll never have one again, Speaker, but should it occur, that will be an opportunity at that point in time for the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to say that this is an extraordinary circumstance, we need to withdraw an amount, but only during those extraordinary circumstances or to pay down debt for 10 years. So it gives time for the amount to build up in the fund.

The Future Fund will be managed by the Department of Finance with a board of trustees to provide oversight. The performance of the Future Fund will be transparent to the public, as the trustees will prepare three-year activity plans and annual reports as required by the *Transparency and Accountability Act*. These reports will include annual financial statements of the Future Fund audited by the Auditor General and, of course, tabled here in the House of Assembly.

Speaker, this is an important piece of legislation; it's an important piece, as I said, of our financial plan. Think of it this way. If this Future Fund had been in place since the beginning of our oil revenues, we would have over \$3 billion, plus all of the compounding interest. We've had a couple of decades of oil royalties, so you'd have all that money collected based on the formula. Again, I'll table the formula as to how much would be included every year. As I said, it ranges from a low of 2 per cent because, of course, oil royalties are important to the budgeting process within the government. We're not trying to hamper our ability to pay for programs today, but we need to make sure we capture that upside.

There have been times in this province, Speaker, we have collected well in excess of \$2 billion, yet we have just spent it all in that one year without anything strategic, without really considering how that money

should be used, without allowing it to have compound interest.

So as was said in the Speech from the Throne: "Just imagine, had this foresight existed in the past, the saving grace it could have been during tough fiscal times."

I will end on that. I think it is responsible. I think it has taken into account other types of plans across the country. It has made reasonable assumptions as to what we can afford in the province, ensuring that programs and services of today are maintained, are well-funded, while making sure we are really capturing that upside to help fund both paying down the debt, which we all know is really high in this province – the highest debt per capita in the country by a long shot. So it is paying down that debt and that will help lower our cost of borrowing. Again, we spend about \$1 billion a year just on the cost of our debt. It doesn't pay down the debt. It just pays for the interest on the debt and it will also help us save and be responsible for generations to come, especially utilizing non-renewable resources.

I thank you for the opportunity to bring this forward. I thank my colleagues in the Department of Finance for all of their incredibly hard work. We are really moving through the strategic plan for strong financial management. You have seen a number of pieces come through this House, and I think that we are making good progress. I think that's why you are seeing it reflected by bond-rating agencies. We want to continue on this path to continue to strengthen, to continue to ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador is a stronger, smarter, self-sufficient and sustainable province.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for her comments.

The idea of a Future Fund has been around for a significant period of time and in this particular case now we are talking about a Future Fund which seems to imply that somehow or other we have balanced budgets. Because the idea of a Future Fund or putting money away is like – the last time we were given a fiscal update, we had an operating deficit. So I don't understand how we can take money when we have an operating deficit.

It is like spending at the grocery store with your credit card and taking your paycheque and putting it in a savings account. I'm not sure how that works. But the thing we don't know, the transparency we don't have, is the fact that none of us, on this side of the House, have any idea what the fiscal position of the province is right now.

We've seen \$200 million given out last week. We're now talking about a Future Fund, yet we have no idea what the fiscal position of the province is because the government has failed to be transparent. Has failed to share this information. We don't disagree with a Future Fund. We don't disagree with the monies being given back to the people of the province, but we're here today, just like we were down at the Colonial Building, with no idea where the money is coming from.

So again, it implies that somehow or other we have a balanced budget this year, or a surplus? Are we projecting a balanced budget again next year? Is this what's allowing us to – quote – now start a Future Fund? Those are legitimate questions, and again it comes down to the transparency. Tell us where we are as a province, and then we can jump on board and say absolutely. But right now, we have no idea. We have no idea of what the financial position of the province is, yet we were asked to support a \$200-million payout, and now we're asked to support a Future Fund.

As I said, these are good concepts. But, at the end of the day, we have no idea because we have not been presented with the fiscal update for the fall. I would suggest that if this was brought to us after the fiscal update was presented, we'd be in a much better place to have comments on it, to be able to critique it. But we have no idea because it hasn't been shared with us or with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The other thing that it talks about in this particular situation is the idea that we're going to sell off assets to put into the Future Fund. Again, another part of a secret society: the lack of transparency. Five million dollars or thereabouts spent on a report done by the Rothschild to tell us, or to say what assets they would like the government to sell off or propose to sell off, yet none of us, on this side of the House, none of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador watching, are allowed to know what's in that report. We have not been shared one iota of what's in the Rothschild's report. Today we stand, again, and are talking about creating a Future Fund and selling off assets to put money into a Future Fund and we have no idea what assets are being proposed.

We have no idea – perhaps the deals are already done. Perhaps Marble Mountain, there is a deal already to sell it off. Perhaps the Liquor Corporation has been sold. We have no idea, because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are not allowed to know. They are not allowed to know what is in the Rothschild's report. They are not allowed to know what assets are being sold.

This is a problem when it comes to transparency and accountability. Again, the Future Fund sounds like a great idea, but the fact that you're talking about putting money into a Future Fund from the sale of assets – they are one time; we all agree with that. Some of our assets actually generate revenue for the province – the

Liquor Corporation being one. But again, we're here debating the Future Fund without knowing what the future holds because we're not allowed to know.

We're not allowed to know what is in the Rothschild's report. We're not allowed to know the fiscal situation of the province before we debate this. We're not allowed to know. If we were allowed to know, why wouldn't we know? Why don't we know? How come the fiscal update is not given to us before we debate this? It is a simple question. It is not a difficult question. The fiscal update of the province should have been presented to us and then we could have a great discussion on a Future Fund. But, no, not there; nothing there.

The other piece of this, again, comes back to that whole royalty piece under royalties. The minister has explained some of the things in the regulations which we didn't have prior to coming in to the House, which helps explain that, at the end of the day, this money is going to be kept for 10 years unless it is used for debt repayment or extraordinary circumstances.

I would question, do we really need a Future Fund to pay down debt? We're running a billion dollars in interest right now, according to the minister. So if we get additional revenue in a given year and run a surplus, do we need a Future Fund to tell us to put that surplus to the debt? I don't know the answer that, but I think – I haven't seen it in the past that we actually need a Future Fund to tell us where to put our debt.

Is it a Future Fund? Some people have called it a slush fund. Some people have suggested that, at the end of the day, it's simply going to allow for movement to take place when, in fact, you have a balanced budget and something happens, then you'll be able to take money out under extraordinary circumstances to make sure you balance your budget, especially if it's coming towards an election year.

So there are lots of questions like that, that I'm just not so sure about where this is going. Where are we going with this Future Fund? Again, if the province's fiscal position is such that allows us to be able to create a Future Fund, then good. But most of the revenue that the minister talked about coming in over the last number of years is extraordinary revenue – it is. Oil prices go up and they go down. We're continuing to balance our books and create surpluses. But, again, I don't know if we need a Future Fund in order to take a surplus and put it on a debt. That's the piece I don't know.

I don't know what, as I said, the position of the province is right now. Are we projecting a surplus this year? Are we projecting a surplus next year in the fiscal forecast? If we are, wonderful – wonderful. We would all love to see government return to a balance budget or a fiscal surplus. But I do not see any of that information in this Future Fund right here.

So those are the things, I guess, that are critically important. We have no idea what assets are being proposed to be sold and we've talked about the idea of a percentage of royalties going into this particular fund. Novel idea, good idea, but, again, if we're running a deficit, it's pretty difficult to put money away when you don't have enough money to cover your expenditures.

Ask any household in Newfoundland and Labrador that question today, most of them don't have the ability to put money away because they're trying to cover off their expenditures.

So, again, it implies that the financial position of the province is better than what it was. But, again, we're not privy to that information. I don't know if Members opposite are all privy to it, but certainly nobody on this side of the House is privy to that information.

It continues to be a challenge. The concept is great; enjoy the concept; look forward to

that, but, again, without information, it's very difficult to stand here and talk about a Future Fund when we have no idea what it's based on. Other than you're going to sell off assets and you're going to turn around and put a per cent of the royalties you get into the fund. That's the essential thing that this is about, selling off assets and taking a per cent of royalty revenue and putting it into a fund without any explanations as to how they're going to do it or where the assets are going to come from.

Assets are only going to be sold once, we all recognize that, and we've had this debate many times in this House about assets and the sale of assets. It continues to be an unknown because, again, after \$5 million of expenditure on a report, we're not allowed to know. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are not allowed to know what assets are up for sale. They're not allowed to know what they will be sold for or when they will be sold. I guess they'll come into the House one of these days and tell us, or we'll read about it, that an asset of the province, an asset of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador has now been sold and the revenue is going into a Future Fund.

Those are serious issues when you think about it. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve better. They all want their government to be accountable. They all want their government to be transparent. If the province finds itself in a position that it can now establish a Future Fund, great, but let us know what that position is before you ask us to speak to it. Let us understand exactly where we are, as a province. Right now, the only thing I heard was we're spending a billion dollars a year on interest expense.

So there is nobody going to argue against paying down the debt, if we run surpluses or we have extra money. Nobody will argue with that, I don't say, in this House. But, at the same time, it's very difficult to understand the Future Fund when we have

no idea what the future revenue of the province looks like or the future expenditure of the province looks like because we do not have a fall fiscal update.

You know, I'm starting to think that somewhere along the way the Finance Department has a drive-through window, because without having access to information it's like the Premier drives up to the window and says: Today, I want an order of \$200 million so I can give it out to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who make \$100,000 or less. So it's done. Oh, by the way, I want a side order of sugar tax to go with it and throw that on.

Now, today, we're coming into the House drive-through window again, we're establishing a Future Fund and we're going to turn around and use that Future Fund without knowledge to anyone in this House about where it is coming from, with no fiscal update. It's as simple as that, no fiscal update, no transparency, nothing.

I support a Future Fund but, again, I don't understand how they're going to come up with a Future Fund if we're running deficits. So I'd like to understand that a little bit better. I'd like to understand the fiscal position of the province but we're not given that privilege. We're debating a Future Fund without knowing the fiscal position of the province. That's a problem; that is a fundamental problem right here, right now.

Yes, you may not think it's a problem but I can tell you the people of Newfoundland and Labrador sure do because they'd like to know what the fiscal update of the province is. That's not a difficult question. If that was presented to us, then we could all start a debate and talk about Future Funds. It's a great position to be in, a balanced-budget position or a surplus position. But, again, all we hear is we're going to sell off assets and we're going to take a percentage of royalty revenue to put into a Future Fund.



The selling off of assets, you know, that was in the Greene report, I think. They talked about selling off assets to pay down the debt. The Greene report recommended that. Then we had the Rothschild report which was going to tell government how to do it.

But the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the representatives here in the House of Assembly are not allowed to know what assets are you talking about? What assets are you talking about? Can the minister, during this debate today, tell us what assets you are planning on selling off to put into your Future Fund? Identify them. That's all we're asking, tell us what assets you're talking about.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** There's got to be a plan.

**T. WAKEHAM:** There must be a plan; there should be a plan but we don't know it. It's in the Rothschild report, but we're not allowed to see the Rothschild report. When are we ever going to have the ability to see that report? Only after everything has been sold. Only after will we be allowed to see, only after we approve this will we actually get the fall fiscal update. Doesn't anybody find that a little ironic, that we are asked to approve a Future Fund without having a fall fiscal update? I find that –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Transparency – oh, I don't understand or I misunderstood. Totally understand that. What I do understand is that we do not have transparency or the people of Newfoundland and Labrador certainly do not have a fall fiscal update. They do not have a fall fiscal update. Simple as that. They do not have access to the Rothschild report to talk about exactly what assets are going to be sold off.

So if you are going to turn around and sell off assets, tell the people of the province exactly what you are plan is. Simple as that. Just tell us. I don't think that's an

unreasonable request to say these are what we are considering. You are talking about a Future Fund and you are going to put revenue into a Future Fund from the sale of assets. So how difficult is it to tell the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador what assets you are thinking about selling off? When are you going to sell them off? When do you plan on putting money into a Future Fund? Is it going to be next week? Is it going to be next year? When? When will that take place? Those are questions and we will have a lot more of them when we get into Committee.

So I am not going to prolong it, only to look forward to it to say that other people will have the chance to speak and I look forward to a lot of questions being answered in Committee.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to address the House from this side of the House. It's my first time speaking off script –

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

**P. TRIMPER:** – and I do want to start, first of all, with a personal thank you to the Official Opposition for hosting me these last two years. You are a very professional group. You have a tremendous staff and I want to thank you very much for that opportunity and for putting up with me for the last two years. It was fascinating and thank you for that. Also to the Third Party for their collaboration and working together. It is another sharp, professional team and it has been good working with them.

I think I have sat in just about every chair in this Assembly in the last seven years,

except for the Sergeant-at-Arms, and I threatened him last week that I might come looking for that at some point but you are good for now, Sir.

With that, Speaker, thank you. I wanted to thank those two parties for their accommodation.

I guess I am going to speak about Bill 5 and there are a few thoughts that I'd like to put out there. First of all, let's just bring the audience and anyone else who is paying attention to what we're discussing. This is Bill 5 and it is talking about the future of this province. It is saying that if passed, the *Future Fund Act* will require government to invest revenue from, as the minister said, one-time sources and non-renewable resources. It will also – I'm quite sure of this and confident – have a positive impact on our province's financial position through increased savings and income from long-term investments. Finally, I think a third key point is that it will provide us a longer term impact of this legislation and help us strengthen the financial standing of the province.

We have often been known, in this country and this confederation, as the one that struggles and, boy, we have struggled for a long time. It was fascinating, last week, to be in the Colonial building, where so many of the decisions and so many of the pressures that representatives of the day faced and how we are still feeling that.

To that end, I'd like to start my remarks in thinking – and as I have spoken in this Legislature before – about seven generations out. This concept – it is in Indigenous philosophy. We believe it came about some close to 1,000 years ago, but it is certainly several centuries. It came out of the confederacy of the Iroquois and the governance structure in that group of Indigenous people has fascinated many other leaders and politicians that have come forward.

Essentially, today, how we look at thinking seven generations out is we think about the decisions, the implications of the bills that we pass, the decisions that we make, whether as an individual, as an organization, as a government, on future generations. I have spoken to it regarding climate change; I have spoken to it regarding the Health Accord, education and so on. Here is another example of thinking, frankly, seven generations out – we're talking many years out from now. But, as I said, it was a philosophy, a belief that was espoused and essentially enshrined in a governance of the Iroquois centuries ago and it is one that we need to take a good lesson from.

It is interesting, Benjamin Franklin – in some of my reading about this over the years – actually used this philosophy in carving up the American constitution versus following so much of the European structures at the time. If we think about it, at the time, they were pure monarchies. It was a whole different world than what we see today with democracies, including our very own. But there is a lot of wisdom there and I would like to put that forward as a way that I think that is how we can look at it.

Just listening to the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, and he had a quote there, he said: What does the future hold? He's frustrated because he's looking for a fiscal update. I would offer that we are legislators. We are essentially here defining, debating, coming up with the rules of engagement, the laws, the structure of which this Future Fund will follow. I agree with him; there are some questions here that remain. I think we have to do our job in such a way here today, and over the next coming days to complete this process, that whoever's in charge, whoever is running the government, whoever comprises that Lieutenant-Governor in Council, that they have rules before them for how this money, how this fund will be spent. That is extremely important.

So I take the point about what's our fiscal status, but I would ask everyone to stay focused on we're here to create the rules. I look forward to the fiscal update, but in the meantime let's make sure we do this in such a way – and I look forward to the positive structural debate as to how this fund needs to operate in the future.

As I said, another key aspect of thinking seven generations out, is talking about sustainability. We were last week in the Colonial Building, where Members essentially in 1934 and then again another key milestone in 1947, when they set down the path with talking about their own loss of sustainability. We were unable to govern and function as a Dominion, as Britain's oldest colony. There was very serious, sober decisions made then and frankly dealing with so many issues beyond their control, whether it be a world war, whether it be the economic Depression that swept around the world, and how important it would have been to have had a fund at the time, and as the minister said, for other things that come to us externally such as a pandemic, and the ability to have some buffer, some ability to deal with the unforeseen.

You know, we're legislators. We're not soothsayers; we're not looking into the future. We're going to prepare for the future, but as we all know, circumstances and world issues change dramatically.

To that end, I'd also just like to introduce – I have a bit of time – just some other examples, and that's what I'm going to talk about, is just looking at some other situations where the funds are being used. I've just come back from a very emotional and powerful – and I will speak to this in greater detail – trip to Turkey, where I joined the Premier, federal representatives, many people from this province in commemorating the final Trail of the Caribou – fantastic.

The point I want to make is that Turkey is undergoing some tremendous economic upheaval right now. I draw to some federal politics that are happening. The president, Mr. Erdoğan, decided just recently that he was going to replace the financial chief of the Central Bank of Turkey. That resulted in a 44 per cent collapse in the currency – 44 per cent.

Since my last trip there, which was just a few years ago, it was amazing, the Canadian dollar had twice the buying power from just my last trip there. This is three trips I've made. I had the occasion to on my own and with support of the government to be participating in this. A tremendous collapse in their currency by poor decisions, but also by pressures that are on them and their geography.

The British pound: I remember in 2016 arriving in Frankfurt to learn that the Brexit vote had just happened. I don't know if anyone is tracking this currency right now, but it has dropped by one-third in six years, the British pound against the US dollar. They are really feeling it.

Earlier during Question Period, we talked about pressures of oil and gas commodities and what they're (inaudible). Britain is really feeling it. Again, one-third of their value of their pound has disappeared by these external pressures. You need to have a fund to be able to withstand what's going on.

So with that sort of sobering thought, I wanted to talk a little bit about what I've come to understand about Bill 5. As the minister said, if we had this in place now and we applied it to last year's performance, I believe, understanding what I'm hearing and following the rules that she's alluded to already here in debate today, that would represent – we would've had some \$100 million that we would've directed from our Consolidated Revenue Fund to put into this Future Fund, that we would start to build this. I like the idea of building it. I think we

all need to challenge ourselves, whether it be today or future Assemblies that gather, to see what they can do to build to this fund because we need to be ready.

In the history of government in this land we, like no other place in Canada, understand the implications of not being prepared for the future. Essentially giving up our own statehood I think was as a result of not being able to withstand those external pressures.

I wanted to talk just a couple of minutes, if I could, about some of the other examples. Quebec, for example, has a fund. It's called the Generations Fund. It is designed to exclusively repay Quebec's debt. The sources of revenue that they use are from hydro-power royalties both from their Crown and privately owned sources, mining revenues and they have a specific tax on alcoholic beverages. Of course, they also receive monies from the liquidation of unclaimed property by Revenu Québec.

We went looking this morning – and I thank the staff in the government caucus this morning for helping to dig up some of this information – that current fund in Quebec is projected to stand, as of March 31, 2023, at \$19.1 billion. That's a handsome amount of money. Anyway, good on them. They've set it up and that should give them a lot of ability to deal with future unforeseen circumstances.

The Northwest Territories has another fund. They're just establishing it. They call it the Heritage Fund. It's a trust fund for the benefit and use of the people of the Northwest Territories. The financial board serves as a trustee. Excess funds will be received into the Heritage Fund, but nothing can be transferred for 10 years in order to build up the principle. Similarly, they're looking to use the interest from wise investments that they can then use to provide them that buffer.

It's really interesting, these initiatives in the Territories are really fascinating, I think – not I think, I know – to watch because it's really about autonomy being given to the North, provided to the North and then wisely thinking for the future. So hats off to the folks who are deliberating this in Yellowknife. This is actually happening these days, the setting up of this Heritage Fund. They said, "Transfers of income from the Heritage Fund to the Consolidated Revenue Fund will be authorized by a Special Act."

Another one that we can all – certainly growing up in Canada we've all heard about Alberta. Their Heritage Fund, I can remember hearing a lot about it, even as a young person not so interested in politics. It was actually set up in 1976, given Royal Assent in May of that year. It had three objectives for the Heritage Fund: to save for the future, to strengthen or diversify the economy and to improve the quality of life for Albertans.

Well, they certainly have contributed several billions of dollars; there's a great amount of money. But they found that for a lot of reasons the contributions have stopped. They stopped in 1987. As far as we could determine, it really seems to be about rewriting the rules, making sure the rules – again, I mention that, our word – are written appropriately so that future decision-makers really are just following a very prescriptive direction.

What's happened is in 1995 government asked Albertans what should they do – the question was actually: Can we interest you in an \$11-billion decision? That's what they had in their Heritage Fund at the time. Based on that feedback they have rewritten, they have amended, the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act to reflect the direction of the feedback they received so that the fund can no longer be used by government for direct economic development or social investment purposes.

I think that's what some of the Opposition have already alluded to and I think everybody in this room wants to make sure that this is specifically for those, as the minister said, extraordinary circumstances so that we are ready for that in the future.

Interesting that they raced into this and then parked it. We can learn from those lessons, from those experiences.

As the minister was saying, it's nothing like a pandemic, a worldwide pandemic to really get the attention of every entity, every nation in this world and how we have come out of the other side of it. I mean, yes, we are struggling with a whole bunch of issues and so on.

It was just fascinating for me to spend a bit of time in Turkey and then I visited some relatives and friends in Germany on the way back and very similar issues: health care, the economy, education and then the frustration of feeling and having to deal with the issues and pressures that come from outside your own borders. They certainly were feeling the Ukraine war, for example, in those locations.

So we are doing relatively well. That doesn't mean that we have to take our foot off any accelerator. There is a lot of attention needed to be done. As I said at the start, and I can recall sitting in this House, first time in November, December of 2015 and then preparing for that very famous – infamous – budget of 2016. I can recall having it first explained to me that our second line item in the budget was debt servicing – imagine. And as the minister said, we are still facing approximately \$1 billion, just goes out the window to deal with past deficits, which in this cumulative debt, that we have got a monkey on our back. That's a big one and we need to deal with.

We were spending more money on interest payments then, than we were on educating the youth and people of our province. You know, that's a shocking thing. Only health

care was leading the pack, but there was debt financing rated number two.

I just remember the struggles of that. I can just imagine having an opportunity where the Finance Minister would come to ministers of the day and say, okay, your challenge is now to figure out how you can increase your spending by 5 or 10 per cent in your budget as opposed to clawing back one-third, which was the rule of the day at the time.

So as I say, Speaker, whoever is running the province, we need to, through our deliberations of this bill, challenge ourselves and challenge, frankly, each administration to come in the future, that your objective is to build this fund. To make sure that it's there for us. To make sure that this province remains strong, healthy and has a bright future for all.

I think, with that, I will say thank you very much, Speaker, and I look forward to hopefully being able to give some feedback from future generations that Bill 5 was a very important piece of legislation for them.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER (Warr):** The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

I don't think any of us would oppose a Future Fund or putting money away for that rainy day, or to pay down debt or to shield us from the uncertainties of the economy, whatever life throws at us. We'd probably all try to put some savings in place to begin with for that, where you can.

I have to start off with the comments and pick up on what the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port talked about, and it has to do with transparency. I have to start with Rothschild – the report we can't see.

Yet, this Future Fund legislation is calling for the Crown assets valued in excess of \$5 million, the sale from those assets will be put into this fund, which suggests, in a way, that government already has a list of assets that is going to be sold. These are public assets, bought and paid for by the citizens of this province. Paid for with public revenue to serve and meet the needs of the people of this province. If anything else, they deserve to know.

Now, the Greene report recommends the sale of public assets. I'll make it very clear: In the Third Party, in the New Democratic Party, we will not be supporting the sale of public assets, especially to private companies so that they can go on and make profits out of assets that have been built up by the people of this province. It's never going to happen, and we're going to say no to privatization as well, period.

But the Greene report calls for an external advisory committee to oversee this Future Fund – an external and, I would assume, an independent body. Yet, what we've got here is the deputy minister of Finance, the assistant deputy minister responsible for Treasury management, the comptroller general of the Future Fund, the director responsible for Treasury management in the department, one person within government who has expertise in environmental matters – and I'm going to come back to that – appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council and one person responsible for the general public interest.

I would've liked to have seen an answer to the House of Assembly and not to the minister, since the assets are not necessarily government's assets, they belong to everyone on this side of the House, the people we represent, and the people you represent.

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

**J. DINN:** They are not the purview of any one political party, period. Despite our

disagreements on how we might approach it, the fact is that these are publically owned, publically funded assets, period. So they should be front and centre here in this. The trustees are not independent.

Now, if anything I've learned since I've been elected here, it's certainly a consistency of failures when it comes to transparency. We've had recently the AG report on Nalcor – a lack of transparency. Hell – sorry, my apologies; I take that back. When it came to the election, remember, 2019, hey, we've got the facts; we've got the information. No transparency on that.

The amalgamation of the school district into the department came out of nowhere basically, in many ways – no plan. I asked that here during the Estimates: What is the plan? Well, we will have a better idea once we get into it. That's the planning. That troubles me, when you're looking at an education system and you're going to make a major seed change and you don't have a plan. Now, I find out that there's a consultant's report that is going to guide the Department of Education on this amalgamation.

Speaker, we can't see it. We cannot see it. It is protected under Cabinet confidentiality; again, a lack of transparency. The cyberattack plan – even when it came down to establishing the Committee on the Elections Act and reforming the Elections Act, one of the things that we did want was the appointment of two people from the from the public. You can't have that and now we're back to this establishment of a Future Fund.

We're going in with one hand tied behind our back and blindfolded, because we're going to have to take it on trust that this fund is going to be looking after the future of this province, of the people of this province. We've got to take it on trust that the best decision as to which assets are going to be sold and what they're going to be sold at has the best interests of the people at heart

and not the private enterprises that people are going to stand to make a lot of money. That's a problem. I would say there are many smart people on both sides of this House who can probably sit down and let's work out something that we could all agree on. That's not going to happen.

The other part that troubles me is when it comes to the fund, it's going to be used to pay down debt and transition to a green economy. Now, you know, I really don't want a green economy used as the rationale to sell off our public assets – I really do not. One of the things that our party called for was just-transition legislation and an office of climate accountability and a climate accountability officer to see the transition through.

But guess what we wanted in that? You might remember we wanted that officer to report to the House of Assembly. Not to the minister, not to the Premier but to the House of Assembly, because from our point of view, a just transition that protects workers, that protects communities, that protects the environment is something that we all have a vested interest in.

But please don't use a transition to a green economy to justify basically what's going to be, in many ways, a cover for a fire sale of our public assets to investors to reap profits for themselves. Somehow we're going to be led to believe that it's going to benefit the people of this province. So lay the cards on the table. Put the Rothschild report on the table. Let's have a look at it all and let's have a fulsome discussion on this.

Like I said, the fact that you've got a certain amount there of over \$5 million suggests to me that you already got the list of public assets that are up for grabs. I suggest that while we may not have a plan around this, I would suggest that Rothschild and its investors already have a plan. They already have the plan to reap in profits and to take advantage of the fire sale.

So a Future Fund, yes; but let's not add one more to a Liberal consistency of failures here and start looking at how we can start making sure that we have the best interest of the people of this province at heart instead of the corporate buddies and investors who are going to make big money on this.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's great to have an opportunity to get up and make a few comments on this bill before the House today. We are in seconding reading of this piece of legislation so this is the stage where we talk about the principle of what is trying to be established here, the Future Fund. What is the principle of the Future Fund, how does it work and things like that.

I'm going to make a few comments in relation to the principle around future funds in general. One of the things, in terms of managing oil revenue, it has been a problem that has been perplexing for many jurisdictions that have discovered oil. In the academic literature related to the management of oil revenues, one of the concepts or one of the theories is the paradox of plenty. Now, the paradox of plenty is about why do some places that discover oil end up worse off than they would have been if they had not discovered oil? So some countries get this windfall of revenue and they still end up worse off in the long run than places that did not discover oil.

You look at places around the world, like maybe Nigeria; you look at places like Venezuela; you look at other places; even look at Norway in the beginning of its oil revenue and you'll see that the revenue

dissipated from the oil and the country spent the revenue as it came in. There was no lasting benefit and some places were worse off after the oil boom was over. Oil prices are something and natural resource revenue is something that fluctuates. It goes up and down and the countries that are dependent on the oil, their economy and their political system is racked by this uncertainty and this dependence on oil revenue, natural resource revenue.

So that's the sort of concept of a Future Fund. The idea a Future Fund is that the resources that are non-renewable don't just belong to this generation, but they belong to future generations as well because they're going to be gone –

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

**S. REID:** – for a long while. They're a one-time revenue that we have to manage, not just for this generation but future generations as well. This is the concept behind a Future Fund.

It's sort of like if you won the lottery; you won \$1 million, you won \$2 million. What do you do with the money? How do you manage the money? Some people take the money and they spend it all and in two years they're worse off at the end of two years, after winning the huge amount of money, than if they hadn't won it.

They maybe have addictions, they have problems; maybe they ran up a debt based on thinking that, okay, this line of revenue is going to continue. So that's what the paradox of plenty is. Sometimes people or places that get a big influx of revenue and don't manage it properly, end up worse off than people who didn't have that influx of revenue.

So to go back to the example of the person who wins the lottery money: How do they spend it? Well, if you're a person who's living in poverty, you spend some of it to address the immediate problems that you

have in your life. But if you're prudent you also try to put some of that money aside and save it for the future. Maybe save some for your children. I think this is the concept that the Member for Lake Melville was talking about.

Indigenous people: there are a lot of Indigenous people and they talk about seven generations into the future. This idea of the Future Fund sort of builds on that.

So I just want to add those things to the debate. I want to say the amount of money that we've put into – the minister tabled the regulations in terms of how the amount of money we put into that fund from resource revenue is going to be determined. I think it's reasonable to do it that way. The amount of money we get in resource revenue, the more we get from resource revenue, the higher percentage of it that we put into the fund. I think that's a reasonable approach, given our situation.

You look at the most successful resource sovereign wealth fund – as some people call them or future funds – in the world is the one in Norway. What happened in Norway was they had an oil boom in the '70s and '80s. In the early '90s, the price of oil plummeted.

There was such a reaction in Norway when oil prices dipped. They had been living in a very wealthy place and oil revenue went down, the situation quickly changed. So there was such a turmoil in the politics of the place that there was a national will that they should do something to save some of the oil revenue for the future. So there was a national will to put a certain amount of revenue aside.

The way Norway did it was they put 100 per cent of oil revenue into a fund. No money was allowed to be taken out of that fund, just the interest on the amount that was earned. So that was their approach in the very early days. Now, they have a fund that



the interest alone sort of protects them from crises that might develop.

I think that is an approach that a lot of people have looked at and said that's what we should be trying to do here. I think this piece of legislation is a part of that process of getting to looking at ways we can take some of that revenue we have from non-renewable resources and put it towards the future generations and the way.

So I'm hopeful that we will put this fund in place and that we'll have the wisdom, knowledge and good sense and the political will here in the province to manage it properly into the future so it'll be there for future generations.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

I am recognizing the hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand and have a few words on this here. I agree with some of the speakers that already spoke and said there'd be no one in this House who disagrees with a heritage fund, as some provinces call it, so that we can have a rainy day. I think as everybody in this House would say, that's a smart idea; that's a good idea. I don't think there'd be any person who would vote against that.

But the issue comes in with transparency. That's where the issue comes in. When you go back at the history, and I go back a number of years and I look at Muskrat Falls for transparency, a prime example. I look at a few decisions – the Rothschild report; we can't get it. I look at the health care report; we can't it. We're told what's going to be done, yet we can't see the report. There's an issue there with trust. And people may

say, oh, you're only in Opposition, you're only just saying that because you're in Opposition and you want to create a few headaches for the government. But the question is, produce the Rothschild report to prove me wrong.

So if you go out and pay \$5 million for a report and say, yeah, we're going to go and we're going to implement this report, yet not produce the report, telling everybody that we have it, we're going to follow it, but not getting it out to the general public and we have to trust what's going to happen in this – this is the issue with this piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker.

When you go through it bit by bit, when you just read – and, Mr. Speaker, I'll go through some of the legislation on just a few of the concerns that I have in it. It says right here: royalties from petroleum produced in the offshore; quarry royalties; and other royalties prescribed in the regulations. Here is the problem I have with the regulations: We'll never see the regulations. They'll be done. I haven't seen the regulations.

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

**E. JOYCE:** The regulations are there? Here's the other thing; I never saw the regulations. Did anybody in this House see the regulations? But apparently they're here. So this is the issue, when you get a piece of legislation with no regulations attached to it. And now I'll go ask for the regulations.

But I remember the last time we said trust me on the regulations was the helmets. It was the last time we were told trust me; we understand. We will have a very serious look. We understand the concerns now. We have got it now. Everybody in this House left with the impression that it was going to be done – even the Liberal Members.

So these are the regulations. We have got to see the regulations, which I haven't seen.

I don't know if any Members opposite have seen the regulations.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No.

**E. JOYCE:** So I am not the only one. Everybody is shaking their head that they haven't seen it. So we need to see the regulations.

**S. COADY:** They are here.

**E. JOYCE:** They are there, but we never got them, I say to the minister – another oversight. This is a prime example and if you really wanted to have an open transfer, you say, here are the regulations attached with the bill. It is not there. I will go and get the regulations later. I never looked at the regulations, but the words “trust me” is a problem.

Everybody agrees with the concept. The concept is just fine. There is no doubt. I will just go through another part. In section 4(1): “There is established a fund called the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund. (2) There shall be deposited into the fund (a) net proceeds from the sale of any Crown asset or group of Crown assets with gross proceeds in excess of \$5,000,000.”

So what is a group of Crown assets worth \$5 million? What is it? Can anybody in this House tell me what it is? We just don't know. So once we agree to this – and it will be thrown back in your face. Trust me on this. I will say to the people in the Opposition, the minute they get four or five things together and say this is \$5,000,001, we are going to put a fund in, but we didn't know you were going to sell this off or we didn't know you were going to get rid of this. Oh well, it was in the bill, the group of assets valued more than \$5 million. It is not prescribed in here what the assets are, what they should be.

That is the flaw that you run into, and I don't mean to be bringing this up because I don't want to be accused by the Premier of

bringing this up on a regular basis, but Muskrat Falls should teach us all a lesson. It should teach everybody in this Legislature a lesson.

I don't think there is one person in the Opposition was even here or the NDP, Third Party, when Muskrat Falls was done – none. But it is still thrown in their face. I was there. I was in the Opposition. I was sitting in the front row at the time and I asked for all of that information. I asked for it. We continuously asked for more. We said, this is not correct. This is what we must do here and if we don't do it and if the government don't provide it, the legislation is flawed. We hear day after day, we have got to spend another \$500 million or \$600 million to ensure the stability of our lines, because the Muskrat Falls lines, they're saying there's no security in them. So we have to ask questions.

When you see something like that, what is the group of assets? We have to ask, what are you talking about? Is it schools you're going to shut down? Is it buildings? Is it the Newfoundland Liquor Corp? I'm telling you once we put this in here and we agree to it without getting the final details, it will always be thrown in your face, well, you voted for it. When there's no lack of clarity in there, we have to ask the questions.

This is doing your due diligence as being an Opposition Member in a Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, in this hon. House. If you showed that to any other person – if you went to a lawyer today – and there are a couple here – and said we're going to sell a group of assets. Well, what are they? I don't have to tell you that. Well, how can they put anything in there, if you don't tell me what the assets are? That's doing their due diligence. They would never sign off on it. They would never sign off.

As you go through the bill, which I'm going down through bit by bit, you pick up some of that information, that from a past experience, back in 2011 up to 2015, I went

through it, and we could see the results when we don't do our due diligence.

I'll just go through it again. "Notwithstanding paragraph (2)(a), in the event of an extraordinary circumstance, the net proceeds from the sale of a Crown asset or a group of Crown assets is not required to be deposited into the fund."

Okay, what do you call extraordinary circumstances? Do you know what I'd call extraordinary circumstances? Eight hundred people, mainly seniors, who can't get cataracts, that's extraordinary.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Now, should money be put into that? Should money be put into that when that's an extraordinary – when you're a senior in this province right now who can't drive, who can't get outside their house, who depends on somebody else, that's extraordinary. We may not think so, but that person's life is changed. Their quality of life is gone. So what do you classify extraordinary – what do you classify extraordinary? That's the question.

I go back to Muskrat Falls again; I go back to that. There's a clause in Muskrat Falls – and this is for the minister. The minister wasn't in the House at the time. There's a clause, and I can't remember the legal term of it. What is it? Where nature of – God's nature –

**P. LANE:** Force majeure.

**E. JOYCE:** Force majeure.

Here is what happened with the Voisey's Bay deal – and I was there; we were in government – the last hanging block that we had was that they said, okay, what happens if they don't bring the ore over and they use force majeure. Say a war started; they don't have to bring it over.

We got together – and I'll tell you that it was Kelvin Parsons who came up and got lawyers involved. The last meeting we had was at Jim Walsh's house. What they got in place was that under force majeure, if that kicks in and is a part of the decision, what is being shipped out of this province – not shipped in – what is being shipped out of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador at the time, if it is for two years or for four years, what happens is they have to bring back that amount of the ore – bring it back to the province or give us the equal amount in funds. That is what is in the Voisey's Bay agreement which now we see was a great agreement.

But the force majeure ensures that if this government says, okay, we got special circumstances here, extraordinary circumstances, there should be a clause here to say that when that has ended, we have to fill in the gap of what we spent. That is what we should do with that. Because we cannot leave it up to any government to walk in this House and say, oh, that's extraordinary; let's go and take the fund. Let's go use the fund. That is why we need that in there. That if it is done, that we should have the force majeure or some agreement in this bill to say that the money has to be replaced to put back in. Not that you can't use it – that's going to be a separate thing that I am going to speak about – but if it is, it should be put back in.

Voisey's Bay is a prime example of force majeure, whereby they have to replace the ore or replace it in the cost that was not used. That is a prime example, and that was approved in this House of Assembly. So I'll just bring that to the minister's attention.

The second thing is – and this is very important also with the extraordinary circumstances – should that not be brought back to the House of Assembly and have a debate on it? This is not for this government – some of it is, no doubt – but what happens in three years when the PCs take over – if they do, just say they do –

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

**E. JOYCE:** But just say you do. Just say you're the new government, should you have the right now to –?

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

But just say whichever government it is, should they have to right to say this is extraordinary? What constitutes extraordinary? Should we not put it in here that it comes back to the House so that we can have an open debate? That's not a big ask.

**P. LANE:** Same as Interim Supply.

**E. JOYCE:** Same as Interim Supply, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands said. That's exactly what I was going to say. We do it for Interim Supply. Special warrants, we have to table in the House of Assembly. Special warrants are tabled.

Interim Supply – I remember the Minister of Health and Community Services was the minister of Finance at the time when he came in and asked for, I think, it was 90 days instead of 60 and we had a rigorous debate in this House. Everything was put out, everything was discussed and it came to a mutual agreement if there should be 60 or 90 days, then we had to come back again.

But when you do that and bring it to the House of Assembly, then there is accountability. Because people may go in with all good intentions – trust me, I go back to Muskrat Falls. People come in with all good intentions, every Member over there has good intentions, but all of a sudden when something pops up and you're on the bind, we're going to say we can go in here without coming back to the House of Assembly and without having it spelt what extraordinary circumstances.

That's the concern I got here. I've been in this House a long while and I've seen things done that should have been brought back to the House that weren't brought back to the House of Assembly.

So that's another thing I say to the minister that if you can define what – you used one, for example, the pandemic. Absolutely, that was extraordinary. But shouldn't we, as the former minister of Finance, the Minister of Health and Community Services, when he wanted to put Interim Supply longer, that he came back to this House – what is the difference of having a rainy day fund here, going to use it and come back to the House? When the minister used the idea of COVID, I said but we did that with Interim Supply, we brought it back to the House and the minister asked for an extension. So I said, well, if you're using that analogy of what could happen, we may need the funds, bring it back to the House like you did when you needed more for Interim Supply.

The logic doesn't make sense that we're going to say it's an emergency, yet we don't need to tell anybody. We don't need to let anybody know. We just deem it's an emergency. It's wrong.

The example that the minister used has already been proven in this House of Assembly when the minister brought it back on two occasions about having Interim Supply extended because of COVID – a prime example.

So that's something that the minister should definitely consider, is that it has to come back to the House. I bet you if you said it's coming back to this House of Assembly, not one person in here would say, oh, you shouldn't – not one. None on the government side and not one on this side will say it. Let's come back so at least then we could have debate and let the people know. That's something else that the minister should consider, especially after using the analogy of COVID when it was

already brought back to the House for Interim Supply.

Another thing, Mr. Speaker, section 8(1): “Subject to the approvals in subsection (2), money may be withdrawn from the fund to be transferred” – and here’s the issue – “(a) the Newfoundland and Labrador Government Sinking Fund to service the public debt ....” The question is, again, should we have that debate here in the House of Assembly if you’re going to do that?

This is what you call democracy. This is why we need to have openness and transparency so we don’t have the situations that we had in the past. This is why we’re elected in here, so we can come in here and debate. Every person in this room on the funds – and I’ll just give you a good example. How many people in this room think \$178 million spent last week should have been brought back to this House?

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

**E. JOYCE:** Made the announcement and bring it back to the House. That’s another prime example. So what do you do? Go out and tell everybody, here, you’re getting \$178 million. Oh, by the way, we have to bring it back to the House to get it approved without having any consultation or any debate.

The reason why I’m bringing that up: I’ve been around a few places the weekend. Even my nephew was at a wedding and he said that was the talk of the wedding. If we went and polled every person in this House of Assembly right now, we polled every person in this House I would say we would get different views of what they should have done.

Every constituent here would say, okay, this is the limit. No, this is the limit. We should combine that for the lower incomes. We would have different views. When you get

different views from the people across Newfoundland and Labrador through us, elected people, that’s when you come up with good bills and good reasoning in this House. The minute –

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

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

**E. JOYCE:** Yeah.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Good public policy.

**E. JOYCE:** Good public policy is that every person in this House of Assembly had people talk to them and they bring their concerns forward in this House of Assembly, that’s when you get good legislation and good consultation and you’ll have good outcomes in this House. But the minute you don’t do that, which is not being done here, this is when we’re going to have problems, no matter who’s in there, no matter which government is in there; I’ve been there with many of them. We need to put it in so that it has to be followed and it’s done to the spirit and the intent of the act and the regulations and the whole bill itself.

Mr. Speaker, I’m going to sit down now in a few minutes – I only got a minute left.

The other question I have to put in there, I’ll just ask this question. Just say we got an extraordinary circumstance, just say we do, COVID, a prime example the minister used, shouldn’t this House decide how much we need or should we just leave it up to the Cabinet? That’s a question. Should we not have a debate?

I could tell you why. God bless the people in the Department of Health at the time during COVID, but there were other things we could’ve brought forth if there was a debate here. Because we may do it in general terms, but there may be a Member in here that may have some special needs, special

concerns in their district. So by allowing Cabinet to do it, you're looking at 14 or 15 people making a decision, not the House of Assembly.

The views of whoever is on the Opposition side and a lot of the backbenchers also, whoever's going to be in government, they won't have a say. So when you allow a fund in this House of Assembly to be put forth for a rainy day and then you don't know what's classified as extraordinary circumstances, then it's up to a bunch in Cabinet who can't talk about it until after. Once you approve it in Cabinet – and I would agree with that, by the way – you can't go out and say why and who spoke about what and what concerns. You can't do that and I understand that.

So we've got a little room of 14 or 15, we're going to say, okay, we're going to decide now this is the special circumstance so we're going to withdraw the funds and no one here will even know. So then after that, once it's all said and done, we have to say well, how did that happen?

This is why we need tight legislation. This bill is not tight legislation. I'm sure everybody is going to vote for it, but this needs to be improved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I'm going to say right off the bat that I am going to be very challenged to vote for this bill. I know my colleague said everyone's going to vote for it, but I'm not sure if I am yet, to be honest with you. I do agree with it in principle, as others have said, but I have many concerns about how this bill has been written, how this bill has been proposed.

Some of it comes down to the fact that, like other bills that we've had come forward in this House of Assembly, a lot of the details

and the meat will be in the regulations. And while I do appreciate that the minister has said she'd table the regulations, which she did, I'm not arguing she didn't. But for anyone who might be watching, it's probably not a lot, but anyone who would be, when you table something in the House of Assembly it's simply taking a piece of paper and handing it over to the Clerk to the desk. Now, nobody came and made a bunch of photocopies and handed it out to everyone here to have a look at the regulations. I know you could've gone over and asked and whatever, I'm just saying it didn't happen.

The other thing is that when you're debating a bill, it's not something that you're here, you're in the middle of a debate; all of a sudden someone tosses you a bunch of regulations. Now, all of a sudden, you're supposed to read and digest and understand and think about the implications of it and debate it on the fly. I mean, that's not – how can you do a proper debate like that?

So if we were going to do it properly and legitimately from the perspective of understanding the regulations and the rationale and everything else, then we would've received these regulations a couple of days ago –

**E. JOYCE:** With the bill.

**P. LANE:** – with the bill. And we could've gone to a briefing, like you would with the bill, and started asking staff or whoever was there questions around the regulations so you understood the regulations and the intent and you had time to think about the implications associated with it, the same as you would with a bill.

So to simply come in here today and say we're going to debate this bill. By the way, here are the regulations. That doesn't do any justice to the process. It does none. So I think it's important that we note that and that be said when we talk about these

regulations. To say, you know, I've tabled the regulations. That's kind of disingenuous.

Technically, you've done it; technically, it's been done, but it has been done in a way that Members had an opportunity to understand, to read them, to ask questions about them and so on, so you could have an informed debate. That did not happen. That is one problem that I have with this bill and with this process.

Now, as my colleague has pointed out and others have pointed out, so it may sound a bit repetitive, but for *Hansard*, for the record, I like to have my own opinions on record, I will agree with a lot of the points he made, certainly.

**E. JOYCE:** Who's he?

**P. LANE:** The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands and some of the Members in the Official Opposition and the NDP as well.

We are talking about asset sales and this was one thing that I never thought of. I thank my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands who talked about the fact of this bundling of assets. Technically speaking, you could come forward with five or six assets or 10 assets that all totalled up to \$5,000,001 and all of a sudden say, well, this is a bundle of assets. So that's something that is not clearly defined here that could happen that I never picked up on it but he did.

The other thing is I would not want to give the impression that simply supporting the notion of this bill and the notion of a Future Fund, which, as I said, in concept I agree with, I would not want this to infer in any way that supporting that notion supports the concept of selling off of any particular assets, which is what is being suggested here, that there would be a sale of assets that would go into this fund.

Now, unlike my colleague from the NDP, the leader, and I respect his opinion, we agree

on a lot of stuff but, you know, their position is point blank, zero privatization of anything; not supporting the sale of any public assets, if I heard him right. That is sort of like a hard stop.

For me, there could be some flexibility depending on what the asset is. I see the assets as all being different and unique. I would see the NLC being in one category versus selling shares in offshore oil, perhaps, as another. What else is there? Marble Mountain is another situation that could apply to this. Perhaps transmission assets, I don't know, there might be some suggestion that there is some transmission asset opportunity to sell off the Fortis that belongs to Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

That was one of the concerns that I had and one of the reasons why I asked the Auditor General in this latest report to look at the relationship with the former CEO and being able to hold shares in Fortis, while, at the same time, being the CEO of Nalcor. Because that was a concern I had about a conflict of interest, if there was any work being done behind the scenes that would shepherd that process through, that we would see Hydro assets somehow being up on the chopping block and going to Fortis, as an example.

To my mind, while I won't say I'm not going to support the sale of any asset, I would say that, for me, they have to be debated in this House one by one by one. We need to have a thorough debate on each and every asset before they are sold off. I won't stand for it. Now, whether I can stop it is another thing, but I will do everything in my power, as I'm sure my colleagues over here will, that if you have any inkling that you're just going to go out and just start selling off assets unopposed, you're going to get opposition from me. I'm sure you're going to get it from all my other colleagues. I'm sure you are. I think you can trust me on that one. That's going to happen.

So I would say to the government, do not confuse any support for the concept of a Future Fund to simply giving the go ahead and the green light to start selling off public assets unopposed, because that isn't going to happen. That's not on.

The other thing which I have a concern about, and this has been talked about as well, is the concept – oh, before I get to the concept of extraordinary circumstance, going back to the regulations that have been tabled, here's something else we have to bear in mind. Regulations can be changed – and you can correct me if I'm wrong, Mr. Speaker – by the minister of the day at any given time.

So just because the minister tables these regulations in the House of Assembly right now for us to have a look at, there's nothing to say that two weeks or two months from now she can't change her mind. Or maybe there's a Cabinet shuffle and the new minister decides to change those numbers. Or perhaps there's a change in government and they decide to change those numbers.

So while you may be presenting, tabling regulations, and in those regulations you're talking about the responsible approach you've taken on excess profits and funds that would be derived from royalties and so on – and a low of 2 per cent up to, I think he said 75 per cent, or somewhere thereabouts – those numbers can be manipulated and changed at any given time by this minister or some other minister. So anything, really, in terms of regulations that are tabled is only tabled as of today, but once we approve it, the minister can change that at any time. So that's an important point to make as well.

In terms of extraordinary circumstances – and my colleague from Bay of Islands and others talked about this, I think, as well – it's basically a judgment call of the Cabinet. That's what it is. It's in the definition. It's what the Cabinet determines is an extraordinary circumstance. Yes, the minister gave the example of the pandemic,

and everybody would agree that's extraordinary circumstance. But as my colleague for Humber - Bay of Islands said, in his mind, 800 seniors who are basically blinded for the next two years, that's an extraordinary circumstance in his mind.

The minister is shaking her head here. I'm not saying that's what you're going to do with the money. I'm not suggesting that. What I'm trying to point out, though, is that it's all up to interpretation. It says what the Cabinet determines to be an extraordinary circumstance. The amount of money that you figure you need, for that extraordinary circumstance, that's also the call of the government and of the Cabinet, the amount of money you figure you need to deal with the extraordinary circumstance.

So, as my colleague said, and I agree with him 1,000 per cent, that no different than we had the pandemic, which was an extraordinary circumstance, we came to this House of Assembly – there was an emergency call of the House of Assembly to come in here for an Interim Supply or a special warrant, looking for money to get us through the pandemic. There's no reason in the world – none – why the exact same thing cannot be done for this fund. Rather than the Cabinet just deciding, we've decided this is extraordinary, we've decided this is how much money we want to take out, bring your request to the House of Assembly. Call an emergency debate if you needed to.

We have technology now. Even during the pandemic, we set up a system now where if Members can't be here, they can be here virtually. We have the technology. We have a policy in place and everything about how to do that. So there is no reason – none – why the approval of any money coming out of this fund, there's no legitimate reason why that request cannot come before Members of the House of Assembly so that we can debate it, so that the government of the day can be held accountable as to what it is they want to do, why they want to do it,



how much money they want to spend and that we can all have a say. We can all make recommendations, suggestions. We can all vote on it, and the public become aware of what you're doing.

Because right now, under this system, that could happen and, yeah, there might be some update at some point at time. Once a year there's an update on your fund or whatever the case might be, but there's certainly no approval process required and you could just basically do it and people would be unaware of what's going on, until after it happens, and I have a big problem with that as well.

It comes down the old concept of trust me – and I don't mean this as any disrespect towards this particular minister of anybody else, but I've been down that road. Again, my colleague talked about Nalcor. Yeah, I was here too and I voted for that disaster. I didn't vote for the disaster we have today, of how it turned out, but I did vote on what I was told with numbers and projections that were nowhere near this. I certainly didn't vote for all these embedded contractors to be making –

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

**P. LANE:** Do you have something to say? Stand up and say it, instead of over there mouthing off.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**P. LANE:** Stand up and say it.

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

**P. LANE:** He got all the answers. He can't even get the elections right.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, we ended up with that situation, as my colleague said, and, personally, I got burnt for it – personally. I

think about it all the time; it's the one thing that just eats away at me, knowing people who sat across in a boardroom feeding us false information and hiding risk reports and fudging numbers and everything else that went on that's been uncovered under the Muskrat Falls inquiry and all the things that happened that has been unveiled here by the Auditor General, because we trusted that it was going to be done properly and trusted that it was going to be done right.

So any opportunity we have to close loopholes, ensure things are done right, ensure there is scrutiny and, most importantly, ensure things come before this House of Assembly when it comes to public funds for approval before it gets spent, perhaps unnecessarily, perhaps inappropriately, based on the judgment of a handful of people when we were all elected.

That's the point that gets lost in here as well sometimes, you know. We were all elected, not just a dozen people in Cabinet; we were all elected. We should all have a say when it comes to these major issues in this province, when it comes to these policies, when it comes to these decisions of the expenditure of taxpayers' money, we should all have a say, not just a select group.

I can get into more and I will, I guess, when we get to the Committee stage; I'll certainly have some questions. I'm going to leave it to the minister. I don't know if anyone will be speaking, but I will leave it to the minister to respond to some of the stuff I've said because she's been shaking her head a bit. That's fair enough. Maybe the Minister of Justice has some words of wisdom he wants to offer. He seems to have all the answers. We're all wrong, he's right apparently.

But at the end of the day, these are, to my mind, legitimate concerns, Mr. Speaker. Again, I want to say for the record that the concept of a Future Fund is not a bad one. It makes sense when you have the money to put away. But, again, I do have concerns

of the assets that we're talking about, of them being just sold off without public debate and scrutiny. I have a concern there.

I also have a concern, as my colleague from Stephenville when he started off; we don't even know what fiscal position we're in as a province. So do we have a surplus? Again, that doesn't make sense to me either. If you're already running a deficit, how can you then say we're going to make the deficit even greater and put money – again, it's like someone said, it's like I'm going to buy my groceries on my credit card and put my money in my sock. It doesn't make sense.

It makes sense if you're running surpluses. Absolutely, it does. So maybe there's a big surplus. Maybe there's going to be a big surprise. I don't know why it needs to be a big surprise. I asked about it in the briefing and the official said, I can't tell you. I said, can you tell me where the revenues came from for this \$200 million in cheques? No, I can't tell you. Can you tell me how much money came from the sugar tax? No, I can't tell you. Can you tell me how much came from oil royalties? No, I can't tell you. Yet, we're supposed to support a bill for a Future Fund and we don't even know what the fiscal circumstance is. We just have to trust, but no one will give us any information. So it puts us in an awful tough position to legitimately vote and approve for anything if you don't have the information.

Maybe it's all fine and dandy, maybe that's why the Minister of Justice was chirping at me there because he knows all the answers, he's got the information. Maybe it's a good-news story. He's saying, Paul, what are you getting on with? We got a big surplus coming. We're going to put money in the Future Fund. We came upon these huge windfalls. Somebody finally discovered how to grow money trees; we're growing them at the back of the Confederation Building. There's lots of money. Perfect. Maybe he knows something I don't. Maybe he does. But if I don't know the information, how can I be expected to support it?

Anyway, I'll leave it there, Mr. Speaker. As I said, when we get to the Committee of the Whole if there's any questions left after my colleague from Stephenville is done, because we know how diligent he can be, I may have a few more. But I have to be honest with you: I'm out on a limb. I don't know. I want to support the concept, I really do. But I really do have a problem with just handing it over to the Cabinet to do what they see fit with the money when they do.

Thank you.

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

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

I'm just going to have a few words on this myself as well because I do have a lot of issues, especially with the idea of Crown assets and grouping them and selling them. Just for context, you know, it says over \$5 million will be put in. That will be the sale of 50 used flyers would cost \$5 million; that's how much you'd get for it. So I have a feeling that this is not to sell used equipment or anything that belongs to the government. This is for substantial assets because I don't think we have 50 used flyers to sell.

This is the really scary part about it: we don't know. We don't know what's going to be sold. We have no idea. If we come into Committee tomorrow and the minister has a list of assets that you plan to sell, that would be wonderful. I'd like to see it because this is the scary part about it: what are we selling. Actually, this is supposed to be a Future Fund, so if we're going to, you know, cut our nose off to spite our face, to sell off assets to put them into this fund, this is the scary part about it.

This is walking down the road of privatization; this is walking down to take away things that we built up as a population, as a province, to take it away and to sell it. So this is where I have great concern. If this

was removed right out of this thing, I see a better thing. We're not going to sell assets to put into the fund. If it's just to take the mineral royalties and stuff like that, that makes more sense to me. I think it makes more sense to a lot of people here, the idea of taking the royalties from our assets, our mineral assets that we sell on a world stage, that makes sense to me.

But to tell us to sell off, you know, for example, the Liquor Corporation, which actually brings in a profit to this province. Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, that's a great asset. Our utilities shouldn't be private because you could just take a look at Texas and what happens when you have private utilities. So these are the things that bring great concern.

At the same time, I understand the idea of a commodities market; I grew up in a commodities market. My entire life was based around the price of ore growing up in Labrador West. I understand that side of it and I understand taking those royalties and putting it away for a rainy day because some days it's raining and some days it's pretty dry.

But at the same time, we shouldn't be having a discussion of basically this creates a motivation to sell off our Crown assets, which is perplexing. I don't see this as a Future Fund; I see this as an excuse to sell off Crown assets. That's what I see right here and that's what really disturbs me is that we would cut our nose off to spite our face and get rid of things that we built up as a province that actually does make money and actually does good for this province.

The idea that we have to take it now and sell it just for our Future Fund and then cover it under the idea of this is for climate change and this is for green technology. All I see is just an excuse to privatize a lot of assets in this province; that is what I see here. That is what is really scary about this and what I think is bad.

But if it's removed and the government comes in with an amendment tomorrow and removes that line about selling off Crown assets, it makes more sense to me because that is what everyone else's future funds or heritage funds or sovereign funds or whatever the terms are that every other nation use; that's what it is for. It's for the idea of taking what they're actually generating from an economy and putting it away for a rainy day. Not what we built to do public service and sell it off for a rainy day.

This is where I think this is a very wrong approach; an approach that would probably do more harm than good at the end of the day. I don't think that we should actually be going down that road of putting it in directly to sell off Crown assets and things like that because I don't think we have 50 used snow flyers to sell for \$5 million.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The level of chatter is getting a bit loud; I can't hear the speaker.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

I don't think we have \$5 million worth of used equipment to sell to dump down on this fund; I honestly don't think that is what it is here. I think this is what we are all fearing.

I do ask and I do hope that the minister does take the time to write down a list of what Crown assets are up on the chopping block and present it tomorrow in Committee because I will ask because I don't think that this is the right approach. This is why I can't support it. I support the idea of a sovereign fund or a Future Fund, I support the idea of that, but not when it comes at the cost of privatization in this province because I definitely do not support that.

I think I'll have more to say in Committee, but this is a very wrong approach. This is going down a path that I don't think we

should be going down. I think this is a motivation to sell off Crown assets and not actually a motivation to save for a rainy day.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board speaks now, we will close debate.

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

**S. COADY:** I appreciate the opportunity to review some of the – I have sticky notes so forgive my stick notes; they are reminders of some things that I heard this afternoon.

Allow me to say this, Speaker, I listened with really intent interest this afternoon to the debate and there was some, I think, confusion as to what we were debating. I'm going to go back to what my hon. colleague for Lake Melville started with. He talked about thinking of the seven generations and how this Future Fund is about thinking about those seven generations.

Imagine if previous governments had taken the opportunity to save some of the extraordinary amounts of money that was brought into this province when we were in peak oil situation, Speaker. I'll be happy to give some information on that. Imagine if we had saved some of that money and put it in a Future Fund. Imagine how better off we would be today in this province.

I will say there's a good quote and it says: "Let us be the ancestors our descendants will thank." That's from Winona LaDuke. When my hon. colleague for Lake Melville was speaking about the seven generations, I thought I hope that with the approval of this legislation, let us be the ancestors our descendants will thank. That is what this legislation is for.

Then I listened to my hon. colleague for St. George's - Humber. My hon. colleague for St. George's - Humber talked about the principles of why you would start a Future Fund. He spoke about the fact that these are non-renewable resources and we should respect today the fact that future generations will not have had the benefit of those resources. So the principles of making sure we've placed money aside to ensure we do several things: that we're financially responsible, that we pay down on debt, that we save – and people are calling it a rainy day – some money for our future investments and that we make sure we do what is right and proper for those generations. I'll again say: Be the ancestor our descendants will thank.

I will say to my colleague opposite from Stephenville - Port au Port – he spoke and he said he doesn't disagree with the Future Fund. It sounds like a great idea. I will say to the Member opposite it's too bad that in previous years, in previous governments, his former government, they didn't do this.

Let me just tell you, Speaker, in 2009 we took in \$2.5 billion.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** All gone.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**S. COADY:** In 2010, we took in \$1.8 billion and in 2011, \$2.384 billion. Speaker, these were the peak oil days and the money is gone – the money is gone.

If we had taken some of that money and put it in a Future Fund, we'd be better off as a province today. Utilizing the formula that

we've put forward, we would have over \$3.2 billion in a fund, plus all the interest from the last two decades, compounding interest. So all I can say, Speaker, is how important this fund could be to this province.

I will say to my colleague opposite – he's asking for a financial update – I indicated to this House it's coming in a matter of weeks. But I will say it's the first year that I can find in many, many that we're having a financial update in October.

Let me just remind the Member opposite that in 2014 it was on December 16.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**S. COADY:** I know they're very sensitive about this, because our government will be bringing in the financial forecast in a very short period of time. It was December in 2013; it was December in 2012; it was November 16 of 2011; November 30 of 2010 just to give you an example.

So when I hear the Member opposite say he has no idea on the finances, Speaker, I am telling you right now that regardless of where we are financially, this is the right thing to do. We're taking a portion of non-renewable revenues and putting it in a Future Fund.

Now, allow me to address some of the other comments that I heard this afternoon. There seems to be from the NDP a lot of concern about the selling of assets. All I will say, Speaker, is the intent here is to capture anything that is ever sold.

Right now, if we sold an asset, if we sold a building, it would go to our general revenues. I'm sure the Member opposite wouldn't want that to happen. I'm sure he would say: You know, we just sold an asset, we should put that into a Future Fund, earn interest on it for the betterment of the province. Right now, we would take it to general revenues.

So the point of the matter here is we should not, as a government, have the ability to take the money because we sold an asset. We want to take that money and invest it, not just for future generations, but to pay down debt – good financial management.

Allow me to also say there was a lot of discussion around extraordinary circumstances. I did earlier talk about the definition and the fact that it required material impact. There are very strong accounting standards around this. The Canadian Accounting Standards define materiality – which is the definition in the legislation; it has to be material impact – as an amount that could be reasonably expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements – material impact. There is an Auditor General definition that really does, again, solidify that. We would have to use the accounting standards that are required.

Now, the Member Opposite also talked about, oh well, if it's an extraordinary circumstance government can run off and spend the money. Everyone in this House understands that in a budget process you have to have a budgetary appropriation. I can't spend money. I came to the House and asked for a special warrant last week because we wanted to give the rebate that we talked about, the \$500 cheque for those under \$100,000 and a pro-rated amount to \$125,000. But because it wasn't in budget I had to come for an appropriation. Now, the Members opposite know this. Either they are trying to confuse people or they didn't

understand it. All I'm saying is you'd have to have a budget appropriation.

Paying down on debt is something different. I will also say I think the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands talked about there is potential to tighten the legislation. Yes, there is potential to tighten legislation. We have 10 years between now and the time you can withdraw from that money. For any other circumstances it's 10 years. So I would expect that there will be tightening around this as we move forward. Probably very soon we will start to tighten that. Put more controls, looking at how we set this up, lessons learned and listening that we will make some amendments to improve and to really tighten the legislation because I think that was a valid point.

Concerning the regulations, I was happy to table them. It does only really deal with one particular issue and that's how much money we place in that fund. As I said at the beginning of my speech, Speaker, it is very important that we have a sliding scale, if I may, that we capture more of the top amount.

So, in a general sense, on an average we have between \$800 million and a billion dollars in oil revenues that this province relies on to fund its programs. Anything above that, we should capture as much as we possibly can; that's why it's a sliding scale.

But there are times when we're only bringing in, let's say, \$250 million, we want to still have the discipline of putting money aside for the future and for paying down debts, but we don't want it so that it'll impact too much our programs. So that's why it's a sliding scale. I've tabled it. Members can review and we can have good discussions with it.

Again, just to wrap up, I think I've covered all the topics. The Interim Leader of the NDP raised that we have to do what is in the best interests of the people of this

province. Speaker, I'm saying to this House that we are really focused on ensuring strong financial management. I've laid out the three-point plan that we have about this. There are multiple, multiple tactics involved in this. This is one piece of that puzzle.

We need to pay down our debt. We are strangled by debt in this province. Here is a very prudent, responsible way to do that. I implore the people of the House to support the development of the Future Fund so that we can be, as I quoted earlier, the ancestors that our decedents wish to thank.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

The motion is that Bill 5 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund. (Bill 5)

**SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a second time. When shall the bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Newfoundland and

Labrador Future Fund," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 5)

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

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

Given the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change that this House do now adjourn.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.