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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

First of all, I'd just like to welcome everyone back to the fall session.

Today, in the Speaker's gallery, I'd like to welcome family and friends of the new Leader of the Official Opposition: wife Patricia Wakeham, son Christopher Wakeham, daughter-in-law Jessica Wakeham, grandson Henry Wakeham, Constituency Assistant Oscar Kaus and his wife Gloria.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: In the public gallery today, I'd like to welcome Ann Mercer. Ann will be recognized in a Member's statement this afternoon. Ann is joined by her mother Kathleen.

Welcome Ann.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I would be remiss today if I didn't acknowledge the absence of a familiar face in this Chamber.

On August 31, Sandra Barnes, Clerk of the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly, retired after 11 years in this position. Sandra was appointed Clerk of the House of Assembly in July 2012 following extensive experience in the Executive Branch of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. She served as deputy clerk of the Executive Council, associate secretary to Cabinet, assistant secretary to Cabinet and deputy minister to the Department of Municipal Affairs. She also worked with the Treasury Board Secretariat and, prior to joining the provincial government in 1994, she worked with the

Newfoundland and Labrador Computer Services.

In her time as Clerk of the House, Sandra served ethically and with integrity, loyalty, impartiality and objectivity. She put the interest of Members and the Legislative Branch ahead of her own, and maintained and enhanced the public trust and confidence in the Legislature through faithful stewardship of public funds under our robust accountability framework.

While many Members passed along their well wishes to Sandra prior to retirement in August, I ask all Members to join me today in this hon. House, where Sandra served faithfully for 11 years, to extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude once again for her tireless work and for her dedication of a professional career to serving the public interest.

I would also ask Members to join me in welcoming Kim Hawley George, KC, who was appointed Acting Clerk of the House of Assembly effective September 1, 2023.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: A warm welcome to Kim and best wishes to Sandra on a happy, healthy and well-deserved retirement.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we will have statements by the hon. Members for the District of Terra Nova, Topsail - Paradise, Labrador West, Baie Verte - Green Bay, Placentia West - Bellevue and Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, with leave.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I stand today to once again congratulate a group of community volunteers on a successful festival held in Clarenville this past weekend.

The Wheels & Heels committee and their volunteers hosted 84 ATVs with 151 riders on a 40-kilometre ATV tour with a culinary experience second to none. There was also a 20-kilometre mountain bike and hike tour, boil-up and a gourmet picnic.

This full weekend event was enjoyed by many avid outdoors enthusiasts from all over the province as they all gathered in Clarenville.

The weekend started with a Friday night social with talent, there were tours throughout Saturday, a BBQ also on Saturday night, followed by a kitchen party; all finished up Sunday with a morning breakfast.

I'd like to personally thank the committee members and the hundreds of volunteers that were key to the success. This was the inaugural year for this festival that showed off our beautiful trails, amazing talent, scenery second to none and, of course, food that was prepared by some of the top culinary chefs in the area. If you missed it this year, I encourage you to book for next year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, October 1 was National Seniors Day, a day that recognizes the importance and valuable contributions that seniors make and have made. It's a day to celebrate the many roles they play in improving the lives of individuals, families and their communities.

Seniors help and give so much. Every day seniors are doing many wonderful things in my District of Topsail - Paradise, whether it be through volunteering their time at various events, coaching or cooking a meal at a social.

In my district there are two seniors clubs, Paradise Adventure 50+ and the Worsley Park 50+, that embrace being a senior while having fun. With a combined total of over 250 fully active members, the groups meet on a weekly basis for a game of cards, darts, shuffleboard and dancing.

With Newfoundland and Labrador being the fastest aging population, it is a great example of seniors being proactive while fostering both active, healthy lifestyles and close friendships among participants.

To all seniors, I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude, and I ask all Members to join me in thanking you for all you have done and all you will continue to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to acknowledge Gateway Labrador for hosting this year's Fall Heritage Festival in Labrador West. The festival is a celebration of the abundance of local talent we have in Labrador West. The staff at Gateway strive to continue growing this opportunity every year and this year many of the local artists were given an opportunity to showcase their talents.

In the last few years, our artists have been rained out from their annual Art Wander around Tanya Lake, and local artists have been very appreciative of the opportunity given them by Gateway to participate in the first-ever fall Art Wander expedition.

Another opportunity was spent at the Dessert Theatre, which was an evening of reminiscence of the local community actors of the Carol Players, who put off a production taking the audience back to the early days of the 1970s of Labrador West, and all the way up to present day.

I encourage all Members of this hon. House to join me in thanking Gateway Labrador, and everyone involved, for making the Fall Heritage Fair possible. On behalf of all our community, we are sending them a huge thank you for putting this off.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. WARR: Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the fishing tragedy near the community of Fleur de Lys that resulted in the loss of three lives on September 13, 2023.

All four fishers aboard the 23-foot open speedboat were part of the inshore cod fishery, a crucial sector of the town's economy. The towns of Fleur de Lys, Coachmen's Cove and the entire Baie Verte peninsula continue to grapple with the significant loss to the area. The impact of this tragedy will be felt deeply amongst those involved in the fishery.

Cousins Brian and Leonard Walsh are both originally from Coachmen's Cove; Tim Shea, missing at sea and survivor Dwayne Barrett are from Fleur de Lys. I visited both communities and it was remarkable how people band together, caring for each other through tremendous grief. I applaud the Canadian Coast Guard, the RCMP, Ground Search and Rescue and other rescue teams and local fishers for all of their efforts.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in extending sincere condolences to both the

Walsh families and the Shea family, and the communities of Fleur de Lys, Coachman's Cove, the entire Baie Verte Peninsula and all fishing communities throughout the province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I stand in this hon. House to recognize October as Breast Cancer Awareness Month with a personal story from a constituent I consider a friend and a recent breast cancer survivor, who is joining us in the gallery today: Ms. Ann Mercer.

On October 27, 2022, after two mammograms, Ann was diagnosed with invasive mammary carcinoma at the age of 46. She received multiple surgeries, which detected her cancer. It was in the early stages. Ann was informed by her doctors that her treatment would consist of radiation and the use of the cancer pill for the next five years.

On February 20, 2023, Ann travelled to the Princess Margaret hospital in Toronto, alone, to receive life-saving treatments; her last radiation treatment was on March 15, 2023. Without previous awareness, she may not have known about her cancer until the standard age of 50 for mammograms. As an advocate, she is hoping to spread awareness to other women to be self-aware and the importance of getting tested.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in advocating with Ms. Ann Mercer and her dragon boat crew on her brave journey to date and for showing the importance of Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, with leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honour a special individual who was a friend and mentor to many, the late Barry Saunders of Bishop's Falls, who passed away on July 17, 2023, at the age of 77 years.

Barry, who many called Sock, worked in all levels of government and dedicated his life to making a positive impact in his community and province. His work with Premier Roger Grimes, MP Scott Simms or a proud member of the Town Council of Bishop's Falls, he took his job serious and did it well.

Barry had a love for sports and engaged in broomball and softball. He was inducted into the Canadian Broomball Hall of Fame in 2003.

No greater love than for his family. He loved the family vacations, watching his favourite Toronto Blue Jays, fishing and, of course, getting his wood. He cherished his time with his children and especially his 11 grandchildren.

Barry, my friend, you are sadly missed but will always be remembered. I ask all Members to join me in offering heartfelt condolences to his loving wife of 54 years, Faye; sons, Stephen, Trevor, Dean, Jason, Justin; and daughter, Lynette; and their families.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

A. PARSONS: Speaker, small businesses and co-operatives make a significant contribution to the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is why I am pleased to rise in this hon. House today to recognize October 15 to October 21 as both Small Business Week and Co-op Week in Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are over 15,000 small businesses in this province that create jobs, build stronger communities and generate a more diversified economy. Our government invests significantly in small businesses through programs and supports for existing businesses, start-up companies and the entrepreneurial ecosystem. These have supported the diverse sectors in our economy such as technology, craft, tourism, construction, mining and quarrying, oil and gas extraction, agriculture, forestry, fishing and outfitting industries. We cannot underestimate the impact small- and medium-sized businesses have on energizing local economies and sustaining rural communities.

Our province has more than 70 registered co-operatives. These, along with social enterprises, are leaders in community economic development. This year, the Newfoundland-Labrador Federation of Co-operatives – the NLFC – is proclaiming that “Co-ops mean business!” My department works closely with the NLFC and other partners, such as credit unions, in an effort to help individuals and purpose-led businesses start, grow and make a meaningful impact. Together we work to transform the way business is done to build strong, community-based enterprises that

nurture the sustainability of communities across this province.

Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in recognizing the persistence and commitment of small businesses and co-ops in our communities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Speaker, my colleagues and I on this side of the House join the minister in congratulating small businesses and co-operatives. These are the economic engines that drive our communities and provide needed goods and services. They are also significant right across our province.

The minister also makes a valid point to recognize their persistence. Which is ironic, given the report card issued by the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses earlier this year. The minister's department scored an F – a failing grade on every measurement. From small businesses, F in regulatory accountability, F in regulatory burden, F in political priority and F was the final grade. Not only the final grade, but the worst in the country.

The numbers don't lie, Speaker. This is the Liberal government's record in supporting small businesses and co-operatives in this province.

Yes, Speaker, I do congratulate the persistence of small businesses and co-operatives in the province who are surviving, despite the regulatory burden inflicted on them by this minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Small businesses and co-operatives are integral to communities across this province. They set up and are in communities long before large corporations and they're there long after large corporations shut down.

Small businesses in my district are owed millions as Tacora mines goes through creditor protection. This isn't their first bout of small businesses going through creditor protection and being left on the sidelines.

This government needs to ensure that small businesses are protected from things like the CCAA so that they can continue to grow in small communities where they serve the best.

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, for the eighth time since taking office, the Liberal government has made a promise to fix the housing crisis in our province: eight years, eight promises, no action.

I ask the Premier: Can you tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador why it's taken so long?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Member opposite on a successful leadership campaign.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Of course, Mr. Speaker, the housing crisis that's facing the nation is certainly something that this government takes very seriously. We have made record investments in housing to try to deal with the crisis. As it evolves, we need to be responsive and we will be responsive.

Budget 2023 had the single largest investment in housing in the province's history with \$140 million. Now I know that has to translate to units. We had 750 units started between 2021 and beyond and announced a new 850 units, Mr. Speaker. So we will continue to be responsive to meet the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Minister, we all heard the announcement in the budget, but we would have liked to have heard in the budget as well is the fact that we were going out to tend and to do those repairs. We're only hearing about that now. It should have been done in the spring. Those units would be ready by now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the failure of the Liberal government to deal with the cost-of-living crisis has people in tents on the front lawn, food banks overwhelmed and seniors afraid to turn up their thermostats.

Will the Premier admit that his carbon tax and his sugar tax was a mistake?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First, it's a pleasure to speak about the carbon tax. As the Member opposite knows, constitutionally that is a federal tax. In fact, the Member opposite, I believe, was in the House when we repealed whatever we had to do with the carbon tax.

The carbon tax does not work for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I have been vocal on the national stage; I've been vocal in letters and in an open campaign. I've been vocal to the prime minister, Mr. Speaker.

What happens in Newfoundland and Labrador is there are no options to change –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: – and, as a result, it ends up punishing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

This side of the House, and I'm sure many others in the House, agree that it is not the right instrument at this time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, all we have to do is go back to *Hansard* and find out that the Liberal government here introduced the carbon tax, voted for the carbon tax and actually voted to increase the carbon tax.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So if the Premier is telling us that he can't do anything about the carbon tax, will he correct his mistake on the sugar tax and cancel the sugar tax?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it's a great opportunity to clear the air with respect to the carbon tax. The old instrument was brought in under a different administration, Mr. Speaker, and had carve-outs to protect our offshore, to protect the fishery and to protect furnace fuel. When they made the change this time, we were front and centre to make sure that we were fighting for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

This instrument does not work for Newfoundland and Labrador right now, Mr. Speaker. There's no option to change. If you go to St. Anthony there's no option to buy an electric vehicle, to buy an electric Ford F-250. Those hard-working women and men in the crab industry need those vehicles for their crab, Mr. Speaker, and there's no option to change. That's the reason it does not work for Newfoundland and Labrador right now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I think the question to the Premier was would you cancel the sugar tax? Does he actually believe that the sugar tax and the carbon tax are helping the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I'm happy to talk about the carbon tax all day, as I think perhaps we're aligned on that. I don't think it works.

With respect to the sugar-sweetened beverage tax –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: – the intent of that tax is for optionality. Different than the carbon tax where there are no options; there are options available to people with respect to the sugar-sweetened beverage tax. The money that's raised – and we hope there is none – but the money that comes in to the general coffers goes right back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: So would the Member opposite like us to cancel the glucose program, Mr. Speaker? Would he like us to cancel the school lunch program, Mr. Speaker? All that money goes in to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I find it astonishing that the only solution this government has to implement programs that should be automatic is to turn around and tax the poor of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I am glad to hear the speaker talk so much about the carbon tax because his government has taken \$35 million out of the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for the first three months of this fiscal year – in their budget, \$35 million.

I ask the Premier today: Will you commit to rebating that back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Let me be clear, we have been very clear to the federal government that this is not the time to increase or expand the carbon tax program. We have been extremely clear to the federal government. In fact, the Premier most recently met yet again with the prime minister to say that this instrument does not work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The price of gasoline is extremely high. We are doing everything that we can as a provincial government, as a people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, to address climate change, but this is not the instrument at this time.

We're asking the federal government to realize and recognize the impacts to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and not to increase or expand the carbon tax.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Obviously, government haven't done enough; look across the street.

Speaker, sadly one in four children in this province live in poverty due to the failures of this government to address the basic food security.

Speaker, why is government continuing to turn its back on the most vulnerable in our province?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I can say, with a full heart, that we have done everything that we could and we can do as a Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. Over \$500 million have been returned to the people of the province. We have cut the provincial gasoline tax by over

eight cents. We have made sure that we have increased the Seniors' Benefit and made sure we increased the income supports. We've made sure we've increased the Income Supplement. We made sure that we paid for, for example, the requirements for people who are over the age of 75 that require medicals. We pay for all that.

I can say one thing, Speaker, I don't know why but the Members of the Opposition did not vote in favour of (inaudible) –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: I say it again, Speaker, just not enough. And this government cancelled what was considered to be the best Poverty Reduction Strategy in the country when they took power in 2015 because it was devised by a PC government and not a Liberal one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Shame on them.

Speaker, overwhelmed school lunch and breakfast programs are a further indication that children are going to school hungry. Children that are hungry come from homes with food insecurity.

Why is government allowing children to go to school hungry?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

It is a privilege to speak about things that are happening in our schools here in Newfoundland and Labrador; the school lunch program being one of the crown

jewels and the ability that we have to provide nutritious meals to our students. Of course we wish we could do more, but the Member opposite keeps referencing the sugar tax and cancelling the sugar tax. I am wondering if that money that is going into the sugar tax, he thinks we should cancel that and cancel the money for school lunch at the same time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Obviously not enough.

I remind the minister – this is factual – parents are going to shelters to eat so that they can feed their own children. So that the children have food to eat, they're going to shelters to eat. That is a fact; I'm hearing that on the street. Maybe they need to move outside their bubble and get out on the street and listen to what the people are saying. Obviously they're not.

Go across the street – maybe that's where they should go when they leave here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, we have one of the highest rates of child poverty in the country. One in four children living in poverty is a provincial embarrassment and a national disgrace.

Will the minister bring forward action to end child hunger?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: I thank the hon. Member for his question.

We have a number of initiatives that we're taking on and we have taken on in the last

couple of years when it comes to child poverty. One of the main things that we brought in is child care for our residents.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: Back in 2020, it was \$40 per day for people to have their children in child care. Today in this great Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, it's only \$10 per day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, there are approximately 2,500 students enrolled in four elementary and one intermediate school in Paradise, and about 3,300 are bused out to high schools in adjacent communities and intermediate schools.

I ask the minister: When will Paradise families have a high school constructed in their community?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the Member opposite for the question and thank you to the members of the Paradise community who have stepped up and advocated for their school.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: Over the course of the summer, the Premier and I had an opportunity to sit with the mayor of Paradise and discuss the needs around the school in Paradise, as well as the MHA here for Paradise, for Mount Scio who represents a portion of Paradise. We've had the opportunity to discuss the growth and the potential that's existing in Paradise.

In terms of school allocations, as we work through the process and building new schools, we consider all things, about populations, about feeder schools, potential for growth and all of those factors will play into our decision as we build our schools and build our infrastructure on the Northeast Avalon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

This government deferred the school in Paradise for eight years now, even though it was demanded then. The minister just announced the school in Kenmount Terrace does not know the composition of that school and requires further consultation.

I ask the minister: What action is being taken to ensure a high school in Paradise?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: I know that I'm not hearing the Member opposite say that consultation with community is a bad idea. But I do believe that we have to ask the group that are going to be accessing that school, what their needs are. A very diverse group in Kenmount Terrace and we want to make sure that we get their needs right.

The same is true for the school that we are talking about for Paradise. We want to continue consultations. We want to walk down a path of appropriate allocations, figuring out the feeder schools, the resources that are available and how we can build infrastructure on the northeast Avalon to meet the needs of our continuing growing communities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: I don't need the minister putting words in my mouth. Consultation should occur before you announce a multi-million dollar school, when we have Paradise parents and residents who have been waiting eight years for something that's been fully consulted. That should not happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: So I ask the minister: Will there be an allocation in this coming budget for a high school in Paradise?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: As the Member opposite would know, those discussions are budget discussions, and there's a process that unfolds over the course of the year as we consider the things in communities, the growth of communities, the populations of communities, the students that are going to be attending those schools as well as the allocation of students in the whole catchment area.

So as part of our consultations, as part of our budget discussions, those things are feeding into our decisions about building a new school in any community in this province, and we're very pleased to be able to provide learning environments for our students and giving them all new and upgraded technology, new and upgraded spaces, where they can learn for a new type of world. And we can prepare students in Newfoundland and Labrador to take on these roles.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Liberal new policy is announce first, consult later.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: – Speaker, food bank usage in our province has exploded to the point where providers are cutting back on hours and reducing the size of hampers. Income support rates have not kept up with the cost of living, and housing has become unaffordable and impossible to find.

Are overflowing food banks a sign of Liberal successes?

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

P. PIKE: Thank you to the hon. Member for their question.

We recognize that the overall cost of goods and services has gone up in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, just as it's gone up in the rest of the country and –

AN HON. MEMBER: In the world.

P. PIKE: And the world, if you want to add the world as well.

And we're certainly doing everything we can. We have an all-party Committee established looking at basic income. We've had some meetings and we're getting some work done in that area, and we're soon going to hopefully have a report to bring to the House to talk about initiatives that we'll bring in to target the whole income support program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's funny; we talk about the rest of the country, so maybe we should grade ourselves against the rest of the country.

Speaker, this government got a D minus from Food Banks Canada, while Corpus Christi Church was forced to close after being promised a new home by the former minister.

Why is this government failing food banks and individuals who rely on them?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I will say that we put forward a cost-of-living plan that included a 15 per cent increase in Seniors' Benefit, a 15 per cent increase in the Income Supplement. We increased the payments that we make for income support. We made sure that we had as many programs as we possibly can to support the people of this province, the tune of \$500 million back to the people of the province. The Member opposite voted against all those supports.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: And the Member across the way voted for sugar tax and carbon tax. Make no mistake about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Speaker, seniors and those on low and fixed incomes are being priced out of grocery stores.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: Milk, eggs and bread are becoming luxury items.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I can't hear the question.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Milk, eggs and bread are becoming luxury items, all on this Liberal government's watch. We believe local food bank producers can be worked with to produce more local, affordable options at grocery stores.

What is being done to ensure those on low and fixed incomes can afford to go to the grocery store?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A very important question when we're talking about food to feed the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, myself, as minister responsible for Agriculture, we're certainly working with agricultural proponents on developing more land to provide more food and to really target the food self-sufficiency in this province.

We've done a good job, but there's more to be done and we'll continue to do that.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, we have a housing crisis with hotels full, shelters overrun and tents across the street, yet the Liberal government has 140 vacant units

that would provide homes for 140 families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The minister says – and I quote – we are doing a stellar job. If this is a stellar job, Minister, I ask, what is failure in the Liberal government?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, when anyone is without a home or a place to lay their head at night, Mr. Speaker, it is a crisis. We can all do better. It reflects on society in general. It is a crisis that's happening across the country, Mr. Speaker. We announced a five-point plan today, including the additional monies to renovate vacant housing units, 143 of them. We introduced 750 new units that are currently being built; 850 more that are on the way to being built. We had a five-point plan that will help developers today, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not saying that this is enough. We will continue to evolve as the crisis evolves. Part of being government is responding to how things are working in society, and we are totally seized with this issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Another example of how the Liberal administration, for the last eight years, has been nothing but reactive and never proactive with any program (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Speaker, while the minister congratulates himself for a stellar job, thousands of seniors and low-income residents sit on his department's wait-list for housing. The Liberal government has had

eight years and we have had a tent city out front for the first time in our history.

Will the Premier stand and apologize for his government's failure around housing and a number of other programs that are supposed to serve the people of this province?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we suggested, currently we are fully seized with the housing issue, Mr. Speaker. A five-point plan today to help with new people buying homes, new people renovating homes and developers; 143 units to be renovated; 850 new units, 750 being constructed.

We're continuing to do more, Mr. Speaker. Of course, as the Member opposite knows, we put together a cost-of-living budget this past year –

(Baby cooing.)

A. FUREY: That's very sweet.

The Members opposite voted against, Mr. Speaker.

The second-lowest gas tax in the country, Mr. Speaker; \$500 million for the cost of living. On top of that, \$400 million to \$500 million to help prevent electricity rates from doubling because of Muskrat Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I was waiting for that one.

Speaker, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador are desperate for help on the housing crisis in every corner of our province. They're calling for grants to support the efforts to build affordable housing throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Can MNL expect specific support for affordable housing?

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

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

Delighted to stand in my new portfolio –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: – and the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis asking a question in a sensible and orderly way. It's a novelty.

The short answer is there is no legislative prohibition for any municipality in this province to get involved in housing. Not at all. I've conveyed that message directly to Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, and we're working on what they would like to see from this department to help them with that.

As a sideline and a relevant one, we increased the Municipal Operating Grant last year with the *Budget 2023*, and it is in the fiscal forecast for a further increase next year. That will be a 26 per cent increase in two years, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, I'm happy to hear there's going to be an increase in the MOGs because municipalities are struggling, just

like every household in this province is struggling with the cost of living.

Speaker, there is a crisis that we're facing and we're facing it now, not tomorrow, not next month's time. The people and the municipalities need support.

MNL president, Amy Coady, stated municipalities "can't do it alone."

Why is the minister ignoring the needs of municipalities?

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

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

It is a shame that the Member opposite voted against that increase in Municipal Operating Grants.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: Moving on from that, I've met with the president of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador very recently and the Premier and I met with them. We can't do this by ourselves. Municipalities can't, the provincial government can't and the federal government can't. We need to sit around a table and figure out what works in a Newfoundland and Labrador context.

I'm meeting with PMA this week and MNL again next week, and in terms of any barriers that are identified by MNL in terms of their involvement in housing, we will shift them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, as a former mayor, I know that many municipalities in this

province are overwhelmed. They're overwhelmed with the work that's required and the bureaucratic paperwork and simply don't have the in-house expertise to apply for many programs on a regular basis.

How are smaller municipalities in our province supposed to address the housing crisis in their own communities? Because the mayors and elected officials are feeling the heat.

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

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

The Member opposite raises a very important question. We have significant challenges with capacity in small, rural areas. When you have four members in a community and they're the town council as well as the service deliverers, there are capacity issues. We have, in the form of \$500,000, community collaboration grants on offer to any municipality, any group of three or more who wish to collaborate together.

Some of the projects that are coming in – and the deadline is not yet closed, so if you have a municipality in your district, the deadline is the end of this month. We have a range of ideas around procurement, around delivery of services, around the very paperwork that the Member opposite references. That's just started and I'm looking forward to what we can come up with next.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, landlords have exploited landlord-tenant legislation to jack up rents and evict tenants. Just this week,

I've heard of a family in my district being kicked on to the street. Speaker, seniors have been thrown out on the street while the minister has sat on her hands. We are in a housing crisis.

Why has the minister refused to act and protect the vulnerable seniors and low-income individuals?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for the question.

I've met with a lot of individuals and I guess I'm assuming the Member opposite is referring to rental control or caps on rent increases. I'm very open to having those conversations. I have had a lot of those conversations lately. Speaker, the data shows that provinces with controls on rent have seen a higher increase in rental rates than Newfoundland and Labrador who does not have a cap on rental increases.

Speaker, I've spoken with some of my colleagues across the country who has rental caps in place, and at the moment they wish they did not, Speaker. Because we need more development. We have a supply problem. We need more housing to come on the market.

I'm happy to have these conversations with anyone who is interested but I do not believe now is the time to add more red tape and spend more money wrapping around rental control.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, the people in the tents out front do not think the government is doing a very good job. Again, seniors are

being evicted by landlords or are doing renovations and then jack up the rents. Community stakeholders say it is a huge problem but the minister is in denial.

Where is the action?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm happy to talk about rental control if the Member wanted to reach out; I'm happy to have those discussions with him. We have data from CMHC – I know it's not perfect, but it shows that provinces with rent control have seen a much higher increase in monthly rental rates than we have in Newfoundland and Labrador without rental control, Speaker. If we were to go ahead and put caps on rents, then landlords would just evict people and increase the rents in the eviction period.

There are lots of different mechanisms. I have looked at them all. I'm happy to have those conversations but there is no perfect model, Speaker. This is something that we are actively looking into and I am happy to have any conversations with anyone who wants to discuss it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the combination of rent control and vacancy control will address many of the issues that the minister has brought up.

Mr. Speaker, will the Premier admit that the main reason he made a housing announcement today was that the homeless people of the province have embarrassed him? They have brought the reality of this

government's failure to the front lawn of the Confederation Building, within eyesight of his office. Not downtown, not in bus shelters, not in the woods. They are here because government have failed to look after vulnerable people.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have been dealing with the housing issue for quite some time, Mr. Speaker. These conversations date back to coming out of COVID-19, Mr. Speaker, which is conveniently forgotten about in the whole equation. We have been seized with this at the Atlantic premier's desk and in fact with the Canadian premier's desk, Mr. Speaker.

We have certainly tackled this issue: 750 new housing units. Certainly the Member opposite can admit that is not completely ignoring the issue, Mr. Speaker. There are complex needs across the street, there are vulnerable people and that is why we deployed the full force of government to help them. Whether that is Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, the harm reduction team, the RNC are all there to make sure these people know that they have a shelter every night and that they're on the appropriate list for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

If government were actually dealing with it and putting the full force behind it, they wouldn't be living in tents over there – simple as that.

Speaker, the Liberal government has known about the housing crisis since they were elected almost a decade ago. I knew about

it then. It was in their little red book in 2015 and they promised it in their 2017 Throne Speech.

Why has it taken until now, the opening of the House of Assembly and two weeks after the appearance of the tent city, to announce a plan?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The plan has been in the works for a while. The Minister of Finance, of course, lobbied the federal government to ensure that they would match the PST removal on the new rental builds.

Of course, society changes, the pressures are more intense than they were two years ago, Mr. Speaker, and the government has to respond and we are responding. You can't have a plan for something that hasn't occurred yet.

We were addressing the issue of homelessness with the new units; we are now addressing the issue outside with deploying government officials, experts in the field – not politicians – to help them and we'll continue to do so, Mr. Speaker.

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

J. DINN: Mr. Speaker, it's amazing that they have been blind to the growing housing crisis for the last decade, it truly is. That's a politician response, I guess.

I ask the Premier: When can those forced to live in the tents across from the Premier's office and those forced to live in emergency shelters expect to have permanent housing? They want a timeline. I asked this question around the same time last year and I'm reminding the Premier again that winter is coming.

When can the 'tenters' expect to be housed – pure and simple?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I support every comment that the Premier said here today. It does take time and this government is addressing it.

I went over to those people who are living and sleeping in the tents on Thanksgiving Day, had a conversation with them and said: What are your specific needs? They provided me with a list of individuals who would need housing, shelters, food, et cetera. They said: But don't worry about it, we've already provided that list to the Member for St. John's Centre.

Well, funny enough, that list didn't make it across the street, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

J. HOGAN: I'm so glad that I went over and brought that list over to the Members over here and to the departments over here who can work on it and then found shelters and homes for those individuals that the Member for St. John's Centre chose to keep to himself rather than help them and get them in to the shelters that they need.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Actually, Mr. Speaker –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. DINN: – those demands were sent to the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development in writing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. DINN: – in writing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. DINN: And I haven't yet received an answer from them.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. DINN: That's how much consideration (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Take your seat, please.

Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Thank you.

What's the use of giving something if it's not responded to?

The provincial coordinator of the Transition House Association said in a recent interview that the Liberal government is not focused on people who need it most: the vulnerable, the housing insecure or the poor of our province.

Will the Premier admit that today's housing announcement is actually about salvaging his tattered political reputation rather than about helping those who find themselves homeless or in danger of being homeless?

And by the way, Speaker, one day over there does him. I've been over there every day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I would say to the Member opposite, you ask the people who are now in shelters and now in homes if providing that information to Members of government and to members who work at housing in this government, if it helps to provide that information. Because they provided that information to me, I provided that information to the departments here and they now have a warm roof over their heads.

So it does help. Don't hold on to that information. If you know someone that needs a shelter, you let the minister know.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I have three documents to table. Firstly, in accordance with section 9 of the *Chartered Professional Accountants and Public Accountants Act*, I hereby table the 2022 annual report of the Chartered Professional Accountants of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In accordance with section 6 of the *Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act*, 2008, I hereby table the 2022 annual report of the Embalmers and Funeral Directors Board of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thirdly, Speaker, in accordance with section 10 of the *Engineers and Geoscientists Act*,

2008, I hereby table the 2022 annual report of the Professional Engineers and Geoscientists Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Are there further tabled documents?

The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Speaker, I'm pleased to stand today to table the 2022-2023 annual report for the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board in accordance with section 29 of the *Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Newfoundland and Labrador Act*.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

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

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Towns and Local Service Districts, Bill 54.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker. I have a lot.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act, Bill 47.

SPEAKER: Continue on.

S. STOODLEY: I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the King's Printer.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Change of Name Act, 2009.

SPEAKER: Would you mind giving the number of the bill too, please?

S. STOODLEY: Okay, sorry, thank you.

Insurance Companies Act is Bill 47; *King's Printer Act*, Bill 49; *Change of Name Act*, Bill 50.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act, 2008, Bill 51.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Buildings Accessibility Act, Bill 52.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, the City of Corner Brook Act, the City of Mount Pearl Act, the City of St. John's Act and the Municipalities Act, 1999, Bill 55.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend

Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022, Bill 48.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts, Bill 53.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

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

S. REID: Speaker, I give notice of the following private Member's motion, which will be seconded by the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

WHEREAS Newfoundlanders and Labradorians fully appreciate the need and importance of addressing climate change; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is doing its part to address climate change by developing and deploying innovative clean technologies and renewable energy, developing green hydrogen and reducing the province's carbon footprint by improving energy efficiency of homes, businesses and government buildings; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to achieving net zero by 2050; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada's decision to impose federal carbon tax and to enact the *Clean Fuel Regulations* fails to acknowledge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's efforts to meet emission targets and fails to consider the hardship that residents, families and businesses are experiencing with the high cost of living resulting, in part, from the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS the federal carbon tax and the *Clean Fuel Regulations* have a disproportionate impact on Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada's decision to impose the federal carbon tax and to enact the *Clean Fuel Regulations* does not consider this province's unique geography and economy; and

WHEREAS the imposition of the federal carbon tax and the enactment of the *Clean Fuel Regulations* further amplifies the dramatic increases in food prices, the cost of energy, transportation and other essential goods and services in the province; and

WHEREAS the Premier has publicly expressed his belief that the carbon tax and the *Clean Fuel Regulations* be repealed and has stated this belief in a letter to the prime minister dated August 15, 2023;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House urges the Government of Canada to immediately repeal the carbon tax and the *Clean Fuel Regulations*.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: In accordance with Standing Order 63(3), the private Member's motion referred by the Member for St. George's - Humber will be the private Member's motion to be debated this Wednesday, October 18, 2023.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not

adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 17, 2023.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 19, 2023.

SPEAKER: Are there any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition urging the House of Assembly to ask government to amend the *Limitations Act* to clearly state that there is no limitation period for civil claims involving child abuse of any form.

Various forms of child abuse often co-occur and are highly interrelated. Treating child sexual abuse differently from non-sexual child abuse for limitation period purposes is inconsistent with the shift in society's awareness and understanding of the damaging effects of child maltreatment.

Victims of child abuse may take many years to process, come to terms with their trauma and to find the courage to report it. Victims may be reluctant to bring claims because of misplaced shame, guilt, fear of coming forward or simply the desire to avoid thinking about and confronting the horrendous pain. Those who have experienced child abuse may not discover their claims right away, especially when the

abuse was committed in a climate of secrecy and/or where the abuse produced severe physical, emotional and psychological damage. The damage from child abuse may be lifelong. It may present itself fully later in life.

The passage of time may exacerbate and compound a victim's suffering where they do not receive the help, the treatment and closure they need. Child abusers should not be able to rest easy under the protection of a limitation period where their victims continue to struggle. Limitation periods for child abuse send the wrong message. They enable abusers and perpetrate harm.

Eliminating the limitation period for child abuse ensures that those responsible for these horrendous acts can be held accountable, regardless of how much time has passed. This will act as a deterrent for child abuse, increase access to justice and ensure all victims receive the redress they deserve. It would also bring Newfoundland and Labrador's approach to child abuse claims in line with human rights standards and the revised statutes in most other provinces.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor, (a) within an intimate relationship; (b) within a relationship of dependency; or (c) where the defendant was in a position of trust or authority.

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitations periods do not run during any time a defendant, (a), willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about essential claims of the claim. That is the fact that an injury, loss or damage has occurred and was caused by or contributed by an act or omission, or that the act or omission was that of the defendant; or (b) willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of the proceeding as a

means of remedying the injury, loss or damage. The above-mentioned legislated changes should be retroactive and apply regardless of the expiry of any previous limitation period.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

WHEREAS there are approximately 2,500 students currently enrolled in four elementary and one intermediate school in Paradise, with an additional 3,300 students enrolled in intermediate and high schools in neighbouring communities; and

WHEREAS with a population of approximately 24,000, Paradise is growing every year with some school-age groups doubling in size over a 10-year period; and

WHEREAS there is no high school in Paradise and hundreds of students are being transported to nearby communities to attend school; and

WHEREAS nearby intermediate high schools are beyond capacity and seeing class sizes escalate to unmanageable sizes;

THEREFORE, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge government to see the urgency for the need of a high school in Paradise and plan a course of action for when this will be implemented.

Speaker, this has been ongoing for quite some time. It's been deferred by this government for eight years. This school was needed for eight years. It was needed in 2018, it was needed in 2019, it was needed in 2020, it was needed in 2021 and it was

needed in 2022 and '23. It's a school that's needed.

There is no consultation required here; this has been on the books as a top priority for the English School District for eight years. It's good to hear that some projects can be announced after consultation is done, or before consultation is done and have consultation with your own colleagues, that's wonderful. I've reached out for myself and the chair of this parents' committee to meet with the minister and it's deferred, deferred, deferred.

I respect these parents and what they're doing. They need a high school in Paradise. They always did and they always will. If there's one group I would sitting down to chat with, it would certainly be that group. I'm so proud to be a part of that group, and have them come together as a community and one voice to try and get the school that this community so needed eight years ago.

This community group, and myself included, we are not giving up on this until there is an announcement in this year's budget on a high school for Paradise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Route 350, 351A, 352 and other routes in the Exploits District are main highways for the travelling public in the district.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that the immediate attention to brush cutting is needed in the areas, as trees are now growing along side of the highways, and this is causing safety issues with increased moose-vehicle accidents in the area.

Speaker, this is a great concern of people on those routes, especially in the lower part of the districts. We have brush growing this year; it's even coming into the roads. The obstruction is very, very bad in those areas. I've gotten lots of emails, lots of calls from individuals in my district that feel that the brush needs to certainly be cut back to at least a clear view, especially in the nighttime for safety travelling on those highways, especially for emergency vehicles in those areas.

I know I did put a list out for some areas that I wanted some brush cutting. I didn't see anything yet with regard to the brush cutting details, so I'm hoping that the minister will be informing me pretty soon that there's going to be some brush cutting in those areas of 350, 351A and 352 in the Exploits District. We look forward to getting some of that brush cut and hopefully we can get it started this fall.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The Member's concerns about brush cutting are duly noted. We did have a budget of roughly \$2 million this year. We've allocated it and we are informing the districts now as to what funding is available for them.

One of the things that I know in this portfolio, in the short time I've been in it, is that this is a big need across the province and going forward, and certainly for next year's budget, it's something we'll be looking at more closely.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Route 10 on the Southern Avalon forms a large section of the Irish Loop. This is a significant piece of infrastructure and is the main highway along the Irish Loop. This highway plays a major role in the residential and commercial growth for our region.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that immediate brush cutting is required on Route 10 on the Southern Shore Highway as large sections of brush along this highway is a significant safety hazard for the high volume of travelling motorists who travel this highway daily. This work is essential in the prevention of moose-vehicle accidents along Route 10.

Speaker, I drive this area three times a week. Sometimes when you go to these events that you have to go to you're coming back in the nighttime. I went last week with the department as well in one community, but I went to a dinner theatre show in Ferryland and you're driving back in the nighttime and every time you're leaving the people in the area say be careful of the moose, the trees are right out on the road. And they are literally out on the road.

I did inquire to the minister and will give him credit that he did answer me back. On October 19 there is going to be a tender awarded for brush cutting in the area. So a tender is coming out on October 19. When is it going to be awarded?

I'm in here four years talking about brush cutting; we haven't seen a thing. Now, good, it's coming out October 19. When is it going to be done? That's when we need to know when is it going to be done? It's getting

awarded or getting the tenders going out, when is it going to be done?

I drove in a community the other day, I was on the passenger side – I didn't drive – my hand out through the window and I could touch the alders driving along in the passenger side seat. So these communities need maintenance. I spoke about it to the previous minister.

The problem we've had in the department of highways is not with the people who are working there; it's the equipment that they have to be able to do this job. It's the equipment. They can't do brush cutting, I'm well aware of that, they can't do brush cutting.

They should be awarding tenders. It should be getting done. Next thing you know you can't do it in the summer because of bird migration and nesting. So when is it going to be done? That's my question. We need it done on the Southern Shore and we need it done now for the safety of the people in my district and every district across this Island.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition to fix the housing crisis. These are the reasons for this petition:

Article 11 of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights states that adequate housing is a fundamental human right.

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation projects that 60,000 new housing units will need to be built in this province to restore affordability, that's in addition to the ones that are currently being built.

Reliance on market mechanisms alone will not result in the construction of the houses needed and the public sector, therefore, must take the lead in restoring housing affordability in this province.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the provincial government to draft and release a credible plan to tackle housing affordability and build 60,000 new homes in this province by 2030.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard about a five-point plan today and the first point in that plan had to do with the advocacy for the removal of GST from construction of new rental units. The problem is if that was part of the plan, then why wasn't the rest of the plan, the other four points, released at that time? It suggests in fact that there is no plan. That this plan was cobbled together as a way to offset some of the criticism that government has been facing.

But I think here, there are options when it comes to modular homes. I've visited a plant recently in Hamilton, Ontario, and this rapidity with which they can construct homes would certainly address some of the more affordable issues. There's an Atlantic option here as well.

With regard to affordable homes, it's also supportive. I had the opportunity to meet with Indwell. It's an organization in Hamilton, Ontario, that specializes in building communities of support and affordable and supportive housing. There are models out there; there are organizations that can help with this.

But, right now, if we're looking at getting 60,000 new homes and we want to make sure that those who are currently without homes have it, that those who are facing exorbitant rent increases, that the newcomers to our province have a place in which to live, then we need to get on the ball quickly and go beyond much more than

the 750 that are announced. We need to get on to address this issue.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to ask leave to move the adjournment of House for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance.

I will move that the Orders of the Day not be called but that business of the House be adjourned so that Members can, today, address the serious cost-of-living and affordable, accessible housing crisis that is threatening the security of the people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador right now and solutions that are urgently needed to address this crisis during the brief fall sitting of the Legislature.

This is the first time that the House of Assembly has been in session since May and the House will be open for just five weeks before adjourning until next March.

There is a very small window to bring in measures to address this urgent crisis so we cannot afford to lose even one day to decide what must be done. If budgetary measures like relief or Legislative measures like tax cuts or other actions are to be taken during this fall sitting, there are only five weeks to get these decisions through the process so we cannot afford to lose even one day before deciding what to do. That is why we need a focused debate right now, right here, today, on a solution that will help those suffering in this crisis.

Speaker, people are homeless outside this building; many others are in danger of

losing their place to live. The measures announced today – extremely late I might add – are a bandage, not a cohesive, comprehensive, thoughtful, collaboration-based, timely and satisfactory solution to a grave, complex crisis needing a much broader and timely response.

Others are also suffering. People are going hungry and dividing their medication, endangering their immediate and long-term health. Children's health and education, seniors' health, the mental and physical health of individuals and families clinging to the edge, the responsibility for their well-being falls on our shoulders, Speaker.

This is where the buck should stop. This crisis demands an urgent response, which must be preceded by an urgent conversation. So urgent, in fact, that nothing on our agenda in this House today can possibly eclipse it. Nothing is more important, nothing is more urgent; time is of the essence.

Let's agree on the urgency and let's open the discussion about solutions we need to take right now, this fall, to bring relief to people desperately in need.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand and I'm going to support this motion here today.

As I said before, and I've been trying for two years, and today's announcement by the minister is almost like you shake your head. I was speaking to the mayor there – shake your head.

The housing in Corner Brook is a crisis. I heard the minister on one of the news casts

stating that government is doing a relatively good job. I said: Why don't you come to Corner Brook and let's go meet with the people staying in the hotel. Let's go into Corner Brook and meet with the man whose kids were taken because they're not allowed to stay in a hotel. Let's go meet with him. So to stand up and say that we're doing a good job is totally irresponsible.

I'll give you a good example. There are 32 units out in Crestview area – the minister acknowledged it. Thirty-two units, the statement was we didn't need the housing so we shut them down; they were four and five bedrooms or three- and four-bedroom apartments. The statement was, well, we didn't think there was a need so we let them go.

I have never, in my over 30 years, not had a need for social housing in the Corner Brook area because they just don't serve the Member for Corner Brook's area, they serve the Humber - Bay of Islands and it also serves the Member for St. George's - Humber on a regular basis, people coming down from Deer Lake.

Here is the most galling thing to me, what the minister said. There are 32 units there and he said the federal government never gave us the money to go ahead so our shovels are ready. Here is the minister today and the Premier announcing this \$350 million. Instead of going to Treasury Board and saying, b'ys, we got 32 units there, we could demolish them and we could build one or two units and have it done within a year, do you know what he said? We're waiting for the feds who have already denied the funding.

It is shameful. I know people who are looking for it. I know people who are couch surfing. I know people who lived in the woods in tents this summer. I wrote the former minister last year on several occasions about this. I wrote him. There is documentation on it and the sad part about it is his own department sent out and said –

his own department – besides these 32, there is another 30 units not even open.

And you look at me and say it's not a crisis and that we're doing a good job? A lot of those people come up and they're from the Corner Brook area; they're coming from the St. George's - Humber area; some are coming from Deer Lake and want to move down because they can't afford where they're living and they want to be closer to the hospital. So this is not just the Humber - Bay of Islands issue; this is an issue and today, Mr. Speaker, if there was funding available, there could be over 60 units built in Corner Brook that could feed the whole area.

For the minister to come out today and said they're going to put funding in for 12, it is shameful. There is not very much gets me in this House of Assembly but when you see families separated because they haven't got housing, when you see people in tents well before this tent city set up here in St. John's – I'm talking about in Corner Brook. I'm talking about trying to get people in. I even called friends who have apartments and begging them, when something comes up, can you get the person off the street. I'm doing that because I know the people and I want their families back together.

Today, for Western Newfoundland when there are 60 units that could be opened that he announced 12, it's a slap in the face to the people who are under privileged, the people who need it, the people right now who are going through the cost of living in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially on the West Coast. I just think it shows that this government is out of touch with the housing crisis.

The minister, last week, with the federal minister – and like I said, there's not very much really gets me upset here because I've been through it all. The federal minister and the minister from the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador went to St. John's, made announcements –

SPEAKER: I just want to remind the Member the emergency debate –

E. JOYCE: It is.

SPEAKER: No, we're not debating the issue; we're just debating on whether we should move forward –

E. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Can I speak first?

We're just debating whether we should be moving forward with this here before we make a ruling on it. We don't need to debate all the issues of it.

E. JOYCE: Yes, I know.

He went to St. John's, made an announcement, went to Gander and made an announcement and stopped there and came back home. Wouldn't even come out to Corner Brook to show the minister what he was talking about. This is the kind of stuff, Mr. Speaker, that when you don't help the people, the vulnerable people who need social housing in tough times, this is the time that government should step up.

I can tell the minister when he sent me a little note saying I'll be out to talk about it, I'm still waiting. I'm still waiting for the minister to come to Corner Brook to meet with those people. I'm still waiting to come out and meet with the city council of Corner Brook. I'm still waiting to come out and meet the coalition of housing in Corner Brook. Never met him and you want to stand here and say, oh, look what we're doing.

I can tell you there's a housing crisis. There's one in Western Newfoundland and there's one in the Corner Brook area, the Bay of Islands and the St. George's - Humber area and people from Deer Lake are using it also. There's an opportunity to open up 60 units. It's not being done by this government and I can tell you, I will stay on this here, just like the cataracts, until it's

done, until people are needed and you get families back together and give the people some value in their life where they can get their life and prosper.

One of the most essential things in the Health Accord is stable housing and if the Premier and the Minister of Finance are announcing this by blowing it up, this 300, put some in Corner Brook so people in Corner Brook, the most vulnerable, have a place to live.

I'm begging you, I'm asking you on their behalf and I can tell you until it's done, I will raise the issue every opportunity I get because today with the announcement of 12 units when there are 60 there to be opened it's a slap in the face. It just shows how people, the most vulnerable, are just taken. Let's just give them this. Let's just give them a few crumbs to see if it's all right. Mr. Speaker, I can't stand for it, because I know them personally.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: I'll be brief, Speaker.

We fully support this motion and look forward to it being debated.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I guess, just for the record, I will join my colleagues in supporting this motion.

It's a huge issue throughout the province. I've certainly seen it first-hand. I know all Members have and I certainly hope that when we get into the actual debate, we

won't just be talking about housing alone, we'll also be talking about the supports that are required for a lot of vulnerable people that go in that housing. We'll be talking about the inadequacy of shelters and the safety issues that are associated to shelters. I hope we'll also be talking about the issues with slum landlords, which is a real issue as well and it all ties into people having a safe place to live and a safe roof over their head.

I commend the Member for Conception Bay South and I join with my other colleagues in the NDP, the other independent Member, in supporting this motion wholeheartedly.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: As per section 36, the Member did provide advance notice that he would be putting this statement forward. We're going to take a recess now to review the content of the motion and we'll report back very shortly.

Recess

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before I make my ruling, I would recognize that the Member for Conception Bay South has provided me with a copy of the motion, as per Standing Order 36.

I recognize this issue is a very serious one and affects many people in our districts, provincially and on a national level. In this matter, I will be guided by the rulings of previous Speakers in this House and particularly a ruling of Speaker Hodder on April 22, 2004.

In his analysis, which was based on various parliamentary authorities, Speaker Hodder examined the matter under debate on the basis of urgency of the debate of Members of this House rather than the urgency of the matter. His approach is confirmed in the

various parliamentary texts, including *Parliamentary Practice in British Columbia*, fourth edition, page 86, where it says: Urgency has been consistently interpreted as urgency of debate, not urgency of the subject matter.

While I recognize that this is an ongoing issue, which affects many people in our province, Members and other parliamentarians have opportunities to raise the matter of debate. The matter of urgency of debate in this House today which would supersede all business of the House has not been established.

Therefore, I am ruling that the matter do not proceed under section 36, Standing Orders.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 8.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, October 16, 2023.

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 Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act to Repeal the Farm Products Corporation Act, Bill 42, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Member do have leave to introduce Bill 42, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice to introduce a bill, "An Act to Repeal the Farm Products Corporation Act," carried. (Bill 42)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Repeal the Farm Products Corporation Act. (Bill 42)

SPEAKER: This bill has been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: On tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 42 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997, Bill 43, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 43, and that said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997," carried. (Bill 43)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997. (Bill 43)

SPEAKER: This bill has been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: On tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 43 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 3.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, that Bill 17, An Act Respecting the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 17 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province." (Bill 17)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This bill, in terms of the legislation, covers in the fishery industry but, in particular, aquaculture that is certainly beneficial to many aspects in my own district that I'm proud of and other parts of the Island as well where aquaculture is certainly alive and well in those districts and which is good for the province.

Mr. Speaker, it's certainly a pleasure to stand before this hon. House today to discuss a new, modernized Aquaculture Act that reflects this government's commitment to developing a responsible and sustainable aquaculture industry. An industry that provides the world with a nutritious source of safe, sustainably produced seafood, while making a meaningful contribution to the provincial economy and rural communities and coastal communities, as in my district and in other districts in this province.

We can certainly appreciate the geography of our province. It offers some of the best sites in the world for sustainable aquaculture development. I recently went to Norway and that was evident by those that want to invest, they want to invest here in Newfoundland and Labrador, which is very positive. Our proximity to valuable markets in the United States also provides our

province with a strategic marketing advantage.

We recognize the unique opportunity we have here in Newfoundland and Labrador to grow the industry. This is why we are modernizing the Aquaculture Act and I'm confident this will guide future growth in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner. This updated regulatory framework for aquaculture brings legislation in line with the suite of robust policies introduced in 2019.

Just to highlight a few changes in the Aquaculture Act, they will support orderly development of an environmentally sustainable aquaculture industry, which is extremely important, Mr. Speaker. Establishment of Newfoundland and Labrador as a leader in aquaculture, health and production and increase public trust, which is important.

We are, as a department, certainly aware of concerns being expressed by some about aquaculture development and we take those concerns very seriously. Many of the improvements to the act specifically address animal health, biosecurity, transparency and accountability.

A little bit of history, Mr. Speaker, fish farming has been around for a long time, certainly in bays scattered across the province since the early 1980s. Since that time, there has been gradual growth in the sector building expertise, acquiring knowledge about best practices and improving environmental stewardship, which is important.

In 2017, this government announced a comprehensive review and modernization of the aquaculture policy and procedures which included stakeholder consultations with industry, Indigenous groups and organizations and the general public.

In the fall of 2019 a new, modernized suite of aquaculture policies and procedures were

publicly released and implemented. Since then, the department has been working with the Office of the Legislative Counsel to formalize regulations into a new and improved, modernized Aquaculture Act.

The aquaculture sector in our province has grown to the point where we have the key elements required to establish Newfoundland and Labrador as a global leader in aquaculture, health and production. This includes: a professional, dedicated workforce; investments from the largest aquaculture companies in the world; industry leaders in technical and technological expertise research at university-level institutions directly engaged in aquaculture.

Just to talk about the benefits, our government recognizes with new growth comes the need to update policies, procedures and legislation to ensure they reflect the realities of an ever-evolving industry.

The first *Aquaculture Act*, Mr. Speaker, was introduced in 1987 with minor updates made since that time. Much effort has gone into preparing this new, modernized act to be forward facing to provide for the orderly development of the aquaculture industry now and into the future. I'm particularly pleased with the fact that this modern Aquaculture Act will enable the provincial government to legislate best practices to prevent escapes and raise the standards for aquatic animal health.

This strengthened legislation will help ensure transparency and accountability are ever present, including strict requirements to publicly report escapes, mortality events and incidents including any quarantine or depopulation orders.

Changes to the legislation also support industry compliance through ticketing and fines, and promotes transparency by fostering greater openness, accountability, biosecurity and environmental stewardship.

Another key element of this new legislation is how it will provide greater direction and guidance for aquaculture operators and facilities regarding development licensing operations and aquatic animal health responsibilities.

Just a few highlights, Mr. Speaker, of the new Aquaculture Act increased licensing and operating requirements. We want to ensure that companies with an interest in undertaking aquaculture activities in this province meet our stringent operating standards and are environmentally responsible. Under the new act, there is expanded and strengthened requirements for aquaculture licence applications, annual validation reporting and licence renewals. This will ensure the collection of detailed technical, business and financial requirements, including the prerequisite of good financial standing with the province.

There are also clearer expectations around licence categories, site utilization, inactive licence application – use it or lose it – site transition, selling and buying licences, temporary licences, surety requirements and site restoration, with an increased focus on compliance standards and optimal site utilization.

For example, there are increased technical and specs for all new salmonid sea cage culture operations to install marine site cage system components that meet ISO or certified third party marine engineering standards. Mr. Speaker, there are also strict new requirements regarding movement of aquatic animals, waste disposal and sanitizing equipment such as nets.

Formalized aquatic animal health practices: This new act also takes important steps to formalize aquatic animal health practice, which is absent from the existing act. There is now formalized approval and auditing of biosecurity plans for aquaculture facilities, motor vehicles, vessels, boats and barges, equipment and wharves used in aquaculture

operations to ensure that high standards of biosecurity are maintained.

This new act will see enhanced surveillance measures for farmed finfish and shellfish, with stipulations for designated licensed veterinarians and diagnostic laboratories to ensure regular diagnostic testing is conducted.

There will be a requirement, Mr. Speaker, for companies to implement and monitor integrated pest-management plans which include the management of sea lice and the requirement to publicly post monthly reports of sea lice abundance numbers.

Prescribe mitigation and monitoring requirements in this act: Another important change taking effect with this new legislation is a requirement for all finfish operators to implement mitigation measures to address any potential mortality events. There are new recordkeeping and reporting requirements that requires companies to provide daily biophysical site data and quarterly reporting submissions for all active aquaculture marine sites.

Companies, Mr. Speaker, are required to provide proof of financial assurance to address any environmental remediation of the aquaculture site resulting from aquaculture activity. Provide proof a developed, implemented and maintained incident management system that ensures effective reporting hazard analysis and corrective action to prevent incident reoccurrences, increase sea cage sites diving inspections from below-surface sea cage inspection and, Mr. Speaker, adhere to the Newfoundland and Labrador Salmonid Code of Containment. The new Aquaculture Act will also introduce increased penalties and compliance measures for companies found in violation of operator licence regulations.

Stringent public reporting requirements: Public trust in the province's aquaculture sector is important as new opportunities for

growth are considered. Our government has a positive working relationship with companies currently engaged in the province's aquaculture sector and we have taken steps to increase public confidence in the industry.

This new Aquaculture Act introduces strict requirements related to accountability and transparency for aquaculture companies to abide by. The new act requires companies to report all confirmed escaped events, quarantine or depopulation orders or directives issued by government within 24 hours; any detection of federally reportable diseases within 24 hours of confirmed detection; any incidents that cause abnormal mortality, harm or any imminent threat to farmed finfish, marine or hatchery installation or structures or vessels and any other event deemed to be reportable by the department within 24 hours; and Mr. Speaker, all incident event response plans within 24 hours of approval being granted by the required agencies.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, as the provincial regulatory body, we are pleased to have introduced an act that strengthens and modernizes our aquaculture industry policies, procedures and practices. As industry can attest, we have processes in place that ensures that industry is transparent and accountable in their use of our public resources.

I, Mr. Speaker, as MHA with aquaculture focus in the district and we, as a government, take pride in this industry and are committed to ensuring new growth occurs in a responsible manner. We will remain focused on new opportunities and applying a regulatory lens that will support future sustainable growth.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It is certainly a privilege to get up and speak on this bill, the Aquaculture Act. Aquaculture is a big part of our province and a big part of the industry, especially in the rural parts of our province. I know that we've seen aquaculture in my district growing as well. In the Exploits District, aquaculture is growing and on the South Coast and the other coasts. I know down in the minister's district itself there is some big aquaculture happening down there.

So to see this legislation brought in, we will be supporting the motion, of course, of the legislation, but I would just like to have a chance to talk about aquaculture as a whole in the region as part of the province. We will certainly have questions when it comes to Committee.

We've seen the importance of aquaculture when it started. I know back on the South Coast when they were mostly loggers and some were fishers but aquaculture came in. That area was really depleted, especially the Harbour Breton, Bay d'Espoir, St. Alban's, that was certainly depleted with regard to industry. Spirits were low, of course, so the aquaculture industry came in and revived the area, basically. We saw it happen.

There were companies that came in there. It took some learning processes, no doubt about it. They're still learning today with regard to the aquaculture measures that need to be done because we did see, of course, the way aquaculture took place on the South Coast at the time and what happened.

So it is good to see this legislation brought up to more standards of what they need to do because we know, certainly, as they did go along, the mortalities, the loss of fish and what could happen to the local rivers, all that sort of stuff that can happen with regard to the loss of the fish and the mortalities and what they need to do to protect the

environment as they move along for the industry.

As a whole, the importance of aquaculture, we saw the importance, especially the jobs on the South Coast, what that provided and it turned out to be a very big industry. The spinoffs, even out as far as Central Newfoundland and other areas with regard to supporting aquaculture, especially in Grand Falls-Windsor, it became a hub when it comes to the aquaculture industry. They know the supplies and the industry, as a whole, supplying materials for the industrial and residential in all types because as the area grew down there people started to get more income. They started to order from, basically, the building suppliers, that kind of stuff.

So there was a lot of material that went down that way to increase the housing part of it for building and renovating houses for the people down in that area. It also created a lot of employment with regard to other jobs as well for people down in that area; jobs in the Central area as a whole, especially in Grand Falls-Windsor. Those companies then employed other people because they needed to expand their businesses, of course.

Aquaculture is a very big industry in parts of our province and it will continue, no doubt. So it's good to see some initiatives taken with regard to legislation being upgraded and taking care of our environment, taking care of our fishery and expanding our fishery.

There's a company in Exploits that's started to invest more monies in the Exploits District. We have two people with aquaculture businesses there now and, sure, that'll help the region and help the areas in the lower part of the regions that needed attention.

So to see some of the legislation brought through there, because, in the past, we did see escapes of the fish that was in those

nets. We've always heard of fish being lost and mortalities, fish dying and that sort of stuff. It's not what we want to hear in the aquaculture industry. It's something that needs to be taken care of.

They've been there probably 30 years now, probably some of them. They've been there quite a while. They've learned and they should know what it takes to protect our fishery, protect our waters and protect our environment so that everybody can be safe within our environment and that we can have a sustainable fishery for years to come in aquaculture.

We know the act is old. The act was legislated in 1987, so that's a ways back. As the industry grew, we learned from mistakes. Companies learned from their mistakes as well and we worked together. There's more legislation that can be brought in.

So to see this brought in to today's standards, to bring up the fishery is a good thing. Again, like I say, we will support it, but there will be some questions in the Committee part.

Providing a sustainable environment for the fish itself, it takes a good, sustainable environment. They increased the net size. I know that they were having problems, or we heard that they were having problems with regard to net size over the years and that caused some of the escapes because the size wasn't big enough or they weren't down deep enough.

We've heard all those questions asked with regard to sustainability and the environment of that and the numbers of fish that were in the cages. The sizes of cages and sizes of nets that they used, I'm sure that over the years they have learned. They have learned the size of nets, what to use and keep it sustainable for all the fish to have a sustainable environment.

You're looking at wild fish as well in those areas. We have to be able to protect the

wild fishery as part of the aquaculture. We have to understand the wild fishery compared to the aquaculture part of it to know that maybe there are some diseases in the aquaculture side, especially with the sea lice and other diseases that may spin off into the wild fishery. We certainly don't want damages to our wild fishery.

We've heard of circumstances in the past where local rivers were probably being hurt by some of the aquaculture activity. That was said to happen. The more we can protect the local rivers, especially the salmon industry with regard to that part of it.

We need to be able to have a sustainable environment for both – the aquaculture side and the wild fishery. That is a balance that we need to find there, which it's good to be bringing in some of that legislation. I'm sure that some of that will be brought into legislation and the regulations will state that.

Licensing and operating requirements: It's good to see we can have some increased licensing, the operating requirements for the licence holder to deal with the licensing side standards, because they need to be able to detail what they're doing in their business, with regard to the financial part of it and details of what they're doing in their business. I'm sure being in good financial standing with the province we need to be able to ensure that all that's kept as upstanding reports come from licensing and requirements.

That utilizes the legislation to create clear expectations around licensing categories, size utilization, inactive licence applications, site transitions, buying and selling licences, temporary licences, security requirements, site restoration, with an increased focus on complements of standards and optimal site utilization.

It's good to be able to operate that site as best possible within the size of the limitations of what they need to protect the fishery again with the size of nets to

increase and keep those fish as a good an environment and be able to make a good living with that. That sustains the environment that everything is a balance between the wild fishery and the aquaculture.

Increase technical specifications for new cages: That would mean that the marine site and systems would be up to standard regarding the cages that are required to be able to get those licences and to make sure that all those cages and standards are up to standards before the licensing fees are put forward. That would increase protection of our environment and increase protection of the fishery.

Fee structures: I did notice some of the fee structures there. Some of the fee structures now with regard to the licensing are really gone up more than what they were in the past and that's probably understandable with regard from the past to now, that's understandable to see the fee structure going up because, of course, everything has gone up today.

Sometimes with regard to bringing in new a new aquaculture industry, we have to make sure that the fees are not overwhelming, that we're just looking at the aquaculture industry and they're looking at what we need and our standards with regard to fees and licensing that they just don't go on and move somewhere else. That way, is that too high? I don't know but I'm sure the government will pay due attention to that and make sure that everybody is on a balance with regard to fees and licensing when it comes to the aquaculture industry.

It's like I say, there are some standards there that need to be done. Some changes that need to be done to strengthen requirements for the permits and the aquaculture safety with regard to making sure that all the fish are secured, that they have a well-protected environment to live and that the fishery is up to standard. That the boats and vessels that carry those fish

from the shores, when we go out and make sure there is safety on those vessels, and with regard to transportation requirements that those vessels are up to standards, especially the requirements for the fishers that are going to be involved in the production of the aquaculture. Make sure all the standards are there and all the standards are there for the health and requirements of the fishery so that we can have a sustainable industry in that.

It's good to see some of the reports. It's good to see some of the inspections being done and the reports having to be done so that we can get an up close and a good look at what's happening in the industry throughout inspections. I don't know how we would do the inspections sometimes or how that report is going to be done. We've seen that inspections in the past with regard to area-wise and geographical area, how the inspections are done with regard to getting their times a year, depending on winter, summer, different weather-regulated inspections. Or how it would be done with regard to lots of times now people need the system, certainly, for the emails. So are we equipped to be able to do electronic inspections that way and whatnot?

So that's some of the questions that probably would need to be there but it's good to see that the inspections are done so that the requirements are, again, there to sustain a good fishery, keep the environment and make sure everything is there. So those inspections are done to make sure that those companies are held accountable for how they apply the aquaculture industry and what they do and the way they do it and, like I say, sustain it for years to come so that it's monitored and it's a well-balanced fishery.

Reports of escapes and mortalities within 24 hours: I think the government has a right to know within 24 hours. It's a good, standard time to let the government know that we've had a mortality rate in the aquaculture industry or there's some other problem with

aquaculture that need to be reported to government. Government should know what's going on in the aquaculture industry, especially if government is investing some of the funding, whether it's federal, provincial or whatnot.

If government is supporting those industries to, especially to get up and running, whatever they need, I think the onus would be on the companies to make sure we have detailed reports to support the industry that was there. So that would mean a good relationship between government and the fishery.

Disposable waste: Make sure that disposed waste is done in a secured manner, that the waste management part of it is certainly done to standard requirements as government would want so that the wastage is not getting in, again, to interfere with the environment or the wild fishery that we already have. So that the waste or contaminants don't get into the oceans to cause damage to the wild fishery.

Again, I'll use the salmon examples. With regard to the wild fishery part of it, if there are contaminants, if there are diseases or the waste gets out, how this affects the wild salmon industry. I know the wild salmon industry is something that a lot of people protect and they want to protect, especially in some of the areas where there are some rivers and streams that the fishery has been in. It's good to see that disposing of waste will be acted on and will be part of this legislation.

Processing fees and licences: I just discussed that. With regard to the aquaculture industry, it's been discussed a number of times. I would like to have a chance now just to bring it up again that the secondary processing with regard to aquaculture, I've asked the questions a number of times in Estimates over the years. I know my colleague for Bonavista is well up on the fishery and he's certainly interested in the aquaculture. We asked the

question with regard to secondary processing and we can't seem to get the answer from government, basically, of what we're looking for. Most of the processing now is not done in the plants. There is some filleting done in the plants, but it's not packed ready for market to go to the market. There is somewhere around 25 per cent maybe that's being processed and ready to go to market.

It is part of our resource, growing the aquaculture. We certainly need as much of the full benefit as we can from the aquaculture. Secondary processing would be an asset, would create more employment to the industry and the people involved. That way, we could have more plants open. They're all looking for licensing operations for different plants here and there and we know there've been plants closed down over the years. Some of them were automated, some of them they spent a lot of dollars on to automate those plants and they're just not operating anymore. If we could have more of the operations in our province due to the secondary processing of the filleting, the cleaning, actual packaging ready for market. Not shipped out H-O-G – head on, gut out – in containers so that they can pack it and fillet it somewhere else.

That's the part that we're losing, so we need a little bit more secondary industry. We've always said that we wanted to have some of that industry here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have the facilities and, of course, we got the resource. The aquaculture is here. We have the resource, we have the facilities and I think we can probably utilize more of that in some of our plants that are around, especially the outport areas, rural Newfoundland. If we took some of that and went to more of the plants that are looking for other species right now to get involved in so they can process, create more employment, keep more monies in their areas, I'm sure they would appreciate more processing in their area.

That would come through the spinoffs of the secondary process. Like I said, to have the secondary processing, we would need actually more of the product filleted and packed, ready for market. It also employs, not only people in the industry, but I can see in Central Newfoundland alone, Newfoundland Styro is there. They do all the different sized packaging boxes. If there was a contractor, or whatever, buying that they can do, they're well equipped. They have been at it before and I know they can have boxes ready to go whenever they are wanted.

So that stuff needed to be done in regard to employment and that would certainly support Newfoundland Styro in their initiatives to help aquaculture. I know they were there before and I know they're still there. I know there are some operations still happening with Newfoundland Styro and the aquaculture, but we can increase that volume. I do believe we can certainly increase that volume in regard to Newfoundland Styro being a big support to the aquaculture industry. Especially in the shipping part of it and, again, in regard to the filleting and processing of that fish.

One of the biggest parts of the process was to have a secondary industry in regard to more employment for the industry, more employment for Newfoundland and Labrador and I think we could certainly expand on the aquaculture. It is a good industry, it is viable and it's shown proof especially, again, in the minister's district, it has shown proof that it grew the communities down there. It brought faith back into communities. It brought more vibrant community spirit. People started to get jobs and they took pride in their communities because they were working again and they were able to do more for their communities. With that, it comes time to do that kind of stuff.

With regard to secondary processing, I certainly would like to see more of the secondary processing done here in the

areas, especially where the aquaculture industry is set up, right in those areas. Not just take the fish out of the water and go with it and have it packed and shipped somewhere else, that's where we're losing some of the industry, some of the volume that we could attain that way. I'm sure government and the industry will have those sort of communication lines, will have those talks to make sure that we get the biggest impact from that fishery as we can from the aquaculture industry.

Stringent public reporting requirements within 24 hours, that's also a good requirement to have in the legislation, especially for the people in that area, they want to know what's happening in their communities. They're proud of their communities. They like to know what's happening there so that they know the requirements for reporting, especially to the government within 24 hours, and that those reports are done so that fast action can be done to detect what's happening there to get those rectified.

With that, there will be some questions in Committee. We'll leave it right now. We will be supporting the motion but there will be questions in Committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. WARR: Speaker, I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 17, An Act Representing the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province.

We're all aware of the incredible growth that has occurred in the aquaculture industry over the past 20 or 30 years, especially the incredible growth over the past decade. In fact, we see in Newfoundland and Labrador in 2023, communities and regions that are experiencing growth and economic stability as a direct result of aquaculture.

I believe that many people in this hon. House can reflect on their own districts and see where aquaculture has provided benefits and/or where potential exists for future development. As a result of this growth, it is imperative that the legislation that governs the industry keeps pace and provides for the orderly development of an aquaculture industry that is environmentally sustainable.

Newfoundland and Labrador has always been synonymous with a vibrant fishing industry and indeed it is the fishing industry that gave rise to our place in this world. I don't need to remind anyone that there have been periods of prosperity and periods of challenge in the fishing industry, but, above all, I believe we all realize that sound management and legislation is required in a world where a focus on being environmentally responsible is absolutely necessary and expected.

We recognize that we have every ability to be world leaders in aquaculture, both in production and in the health of the species we harvest; thus, it is essential that we carry out our aquaculture activities in a manner that garners the trust of the public because we manage and oversee our resources on their behalf. That is why we need to update our legislation to reflect the current situation in the aquaculture industry with its enormous potential in a manner that reflects that responsibility.

It is interesting to note and has probably been mentioned that the initial *Aquaculture Act* in 1987 had 18 sections; the current bill has 71. That reflects the growth the industry has experienced over the past 36 years. Once again, we only need to look at the aquaculture industry around the province and we see that growth. We also witness the industry becoming the economic backbone of many communities, providing needed employment, stability and a solid foundation for the future of those communities.

It is crucial we have legislation that enables that to continue in a way that ensures the trust of the citizens of the province in a manner that is environmentally responsible.

I would like to take a few minutes to focus on one species that has been at the forefront of the aquaculture industry in this province, the cultivation of blue mussels, which certainly happens in my District of Baie Verte - Green Bay.

Blue mussels have played prominently in the aquaculture industry in our province for a while and highlight the success that aquaculture can provide to the province. Blue mussels are succulent, sweet tasting, affordable and grow quite well in the waters around our coast. I know the Speaker is quite aware of both the taste and the benefits of the mussel aquaculture as his district is the location for the annual Mussel Bed Soiree.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. WARR: This annual event brings together people for several days of entertainment and camaraderie that highlights the quality and benefit of the delicious blue mussel.

Newfoundland and Labrador has the cold, nutrient-rich waters, which provides a high quality mussel that is superior to what is found in many other parts of the world. Our place in the global aquaculture industry has grown significantly because of the quality of the product that we produce, which is a direct result of the high quality of the aquaculture that we practice.

As an example of the growth this particular industry has experienced, the production of mussels tripled the period from 2000 to 2018 – Mr. Speaker, it tripled. That is amazing and highlights the growth and potential of that particular segment of the aquaculture industry.

Our mussel farmers are independent and environmentally conscious who produce only 100 per cent natural mussels. To further illustrate, let me briefly elaborate. The process of farming mussels is very sustainable, producing virtually no carbon emissions and leaving minimal impact on the environment. In fact, mussels actually have a net positive benefit to the ecosystem, sequestering CO₂ and acting as an ecosystem engineer which increases biodiversity. Mussels also don't require any inputs such as feed, meaning there is nothing new being introduced to the ecosystem through mussel farming. Everything that a mussel requires to survive and grow is supplied naturally by the nutrients in the water column. That's pretty sustainable and Newfoundland and Labrador is at the forefront of this industry.

In addition, mussel framers grow and harvest their crops as orders are received so there is no wastage. They are licenced and follow extensive, thorough regulations; practice sound management of their business; and provide a product that is in demand across the country and around the world.

The mussel aquaculture industry is a solid example of how to successfully grow an industry, while also following sound environmental practices that reflect the requirements of our modern world. The improvements to the Aquaculture Act that we are addressing reflect the aquaculture industry of today and the potential of the industry going forward.

It is absolutely necessary that we provide the structure for that to exist, as the industry has so much potential and has demonstrated so much potential, and will be a key segment of our economy in the future.

The ocean and its wealth brought the first people to our shores and I believe we all realize the ocean, in so many ways, will continue to provide for our people well into

the future with sustainable and responsible management.

Aquaculture will be a key pillar in that respect. It is an absolute requirement that we enable that to occur by ensuring that development is orderly, environmentally sustainable, enables us to remain a world leader in innovative and leading-edge aquaculture production and health and receives the trust of the public.

In closing, I support the continued debate and subsequent adoption of Bill 17 regarding an approved and updated Aquaculture Act.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Fish farming has been around a long time; it's relatively new to Newfoundland and Labrador. It probably came in at the same time that the commercial cod fishery was collapsing, about 30 years or so ago. Maybe the reason for the need for regulation is that there's really nothing natural about open sea pen aquaculture and its questionable sustainability.

So I'll talk a little bit about that, some of the gaps or the weaknesses, but also that there is a way of doing aquaculture that actually will increase the employment opportunities here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

If you look at it based on some research, anywhere from an average of 15 to 20 per cent of farmed salmon die off every year. That's a significant chunk. The other part is that wherever they go, wherever salmon farms are set up, inevitably wild salmon stocks decline. That's a simple thing.

You can take a look at Conne River. Thirty years ago, at the time aquaculture was first being set up, it was probably one of the most productive salmon rivers in the province, averaging in the tens of thousands, 8,000 to 10,000, to returns last year under 300. That's a significant drop. It's in danger of being exterminated.

If you look at some of the ATIPP information that local advocates have come up with, that for every two fish stocked, less than one make it to the market. If that's the case, then it questions sustainability.

If we look at fish meal, because the fish do have to be fed, they're not foraging for themselves and they're not in the quantities, then you look at the huge industry in fishing forage fish, not on our shores, but elsewhere, which are also adding to the depletion, not only of those stocks, but also impacting the livelihoods of people who depend on those forage fish for food. The employment of cleaner fish in nets, hopefully to decrease the presence of sea lice, to pick them off the fish. Even that is a question about whether that's a sustainable or inhumane practice itself.

Let's talk about die-offs because it talks about abnormal die-offs in the legislation. Well, what is an abnormal die-off versus what is a normal die-off? A definition will be fine. Is it 5, 10, 20 per cent, what do we count there? It's not really defined.

It's been mentioned here what operators pay, it talked about the licensing fees. Well, there's a reason that a lot of these companies came to Newfoundland to set up, because Norway knows the value of their natural resources, they're charging more. There are also more environmental regulations. For the most part, in Canada it's the Wild West when it comes to those kinds of regulations.

We saw the die-off of salmon from aquaculture on the west coast of this

country; let's move here is the next one, we're the next ground zero.

We saw in 2019 just how the die-off of some almost three million fish was handled. To me, that's not a sustainable industry. Whereas it seems that the Newfoundland and Labrador industry is regulated by conditions of licensure. Norway has gone, as I said, more towards environmental regulations, but let's talk about some of the challenges of aquaculture. I'm talking about specifically open sea pen aquaculture here. It's probably the cheapest way of doing it. It has other environmental costs and costs to other people, not necessarily all aquaculture but this form of it.

Now, we had talked about sea lice and I've heard people in the department here talk about sea lice: well, they're naturally occurring. That they are, except in the natural world when the smolts decide to leave the river, the population of sea lice are low. So they swim out and they go about their business. They come back in when they've also probably got the mucus, the scales, you name it, that protects them from it, but in the world of aquaculture, where you have millions of fish swimming around in circles, that become then a virtual breeding ground for sea lice, which then escape into the wild. As little as two or three sea lice on a smolt will kill it, it will never make it back to the river to breed.

That's what they're finding, that fish do survive. The numbers of fish that leave the river, the stocks are healthy, but something's happening in the ocean. Significantly, you look down in Bay d'Espoir it probably helps explain why we've seen such decimation of the wild stocks there.

Infectious salmon anemia is not harmful to human beings, but can be devastating to both farm and wild stocks. Piscine orthoreovirus are just some of the numbers that we've had here. Sea lice, according to some groups, the 10 largest companies spent roughly \$3.5 billion to \$4 billion since

2013 in trying to eliminate the sea lice problem.

We know that, again, I've talked about cleaner fish, the mortality there. They've used Thermolicers, Hydrolicers. In Norway they've adopted a traffic light system. They look at, in areas where the sea lice populations are low, a green light system where you can expand. If it gets up to red, the production levels are going to be hauled back.

We hear here of the requirement to report sea lice levels. Well then, what then? What is going to be response to that? Does that mean that the fish then have to be taken out? If sea lice levels get to a certain level, will that mean that the production, the nets must be emptied at that point? It's great to know about that information, but what are we going to do with it to protect the fish in the pen and the fish that are in the ocean next door? Let's not talk about the open sea pen, about the pollution, feces, the food, the dead fish and its impact on the ocean floor, the benthic habitat.

Then it comes to escapees. Now, in terms of fish that then will outcompete not-wild salmon, or fish that also bring disease to wild salmon, it comes down to then, Speaker, what is the response to it? I've asked in this House here and asked in Estimates about the use of fin clipping, the adipose fins, so that at least, if nothing else, that anglers themselves if they should catch one of these fish, there's no limit on them to make sure that they don't stay in the river system and outcompete the natural wild salmon.

I've been told here that, no, too much handling of a fish could possibly kill them, yet it ignores the fact that from the time the farmed salmon are eggs there's a huge amount of handling of the fish, including taking them and vaccinating them. I find it very difficult to think that this simple act of while they're being vaccinated that you could clip their fins, as one solution, would

be the straw that, in this case, breaks the fish's back. But, make no doubt about it, that might be a federal responsibility once they escape, but I think it belongs to the farm. I think here, as a province, we've got to start taking ownership of that.

We've seen it here in terms of reading the *Salmon Wars* by Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins. They talk about here – and maybe this is why we do need strength in aquaculture legislation as well – about corporate response to critics, especially when we have catastrophic events. There are three primary stages that we've see here.

The first is denial; that actions caused no harm and the corporate experts are hired, sometimes universities are hired to create doubt and discredit the critics. We've seen that here. Acknowledgement and pretense of accommodations. Token steps towards addressing problems but nothing substantive. Then strategic engagement where they basically engage with critics and develop ways to neutralize regulators, quiet the public and continue to operate profitably. So if anything else, this shouldn't be a PR exercise, but it should be based on data as well.

The cod moratorium came about and the aquaculture was a saviour. I would pose that the aquaculture is not the savior because more people were employed in the cod fishery than what are employed in the aquaculture industry.

A local professor said, in a Dean Bavington report, that aquaculture is a death-producing industry and it's causing serious harm. So I think we've got to take those warnings seriously because if we want to make it sustainable, then we've got to address these very serious issues with open-sea pen aquaculture.

There's no definition, as I said, of abnormal mortality or for normal mortality or what's going to happen after that. Regulation is

enforcement, and that's the other thing: Where are the regulations for this new act? This act was supposed to be debated in the spring session, so I'm assuming then that there has been an extra few months to at least come with regulations that would give force to this.

There seems to be nothing on environmental protection or the need for registration of aquaculture projects as undertaken. The act now says sustainable development versus orderly development and I guess it comes down to, with what I've been saying here, is what does sustainable mean? If it can wipe out wild salmon stocks, if you have serious die-offs in the pens, if you're not addressing the issues of sea lice and so on and so forth, well, what does sustainable mean?

Because it basically makes no reference to reducing, eliminating or managing the impacts on fish and fish habitat. While that may be a federal responsibility, the fact is I think it's incumbent upon this province to make sure that fish and fish habitat are protected.

There's talk about sea lice reporting, but no mention even though companies now are required to do it and it's not even in the current act – but it's in the current regulations. So what about sea lice reporting? What's the threshold by which something must be done to protect fish and to deal with the sea lice issue?

Part II of this Act, Aquaculture Management Areas, gives minister authority to exclude aquaculture from areas, and this seems to be positive, but nothing says the minister has to delineate management areas or protect sensitive areas.

If I look at section 3(2), it would seem to say, basically that the Cabinet can, by regulation, arbitrarily simply waive the application of any of the legislative requirements of the act and regulations. That could be a significant issue.

Section 4 plays lip service only to minimizing conflicts with competing interests and uses. No apparent thought is given to what those conflicts are and what constitutes a competing interest or use, but clearly aimed at sidelining public concerns about wild Atlantic salmon, lobsters and so on and so forth.

Again, regulations are important, because they will give force to this. But there is an opportunity here, and I'll spend a few minutes on this to clue up, because in many ways I pushed for land-based operations, which are closed containment systems. And it will be argued that, well, it's too expensive here; we'll drive the industry out. But other jurisdictions are doing it.

But here's another idea. Let's forget land-based for a minute, and let's look at closed containment systems that set up basically impermeable barriers between the fish in the pen and the fish outside.

I'm thinking one I brought up here, and I've seen several reports on, the blue donut. It's totally enclosed. It probably could have even raised a fish from a smolt up to full size, with minimal handling. It draws water in, Speaker, from below the sea lice level. Because it's closed, it minimizes the amount of feed that fish in these pens would have and it eliminates the pollution of the benthic habitat below on the sea floor.

It would definitely then virtually eliminate the infestation of sea lice to farmed salmon and definitely has to virtually eliminate the threat of sea lice then to wild salmon stocks as they swim by these cages. If it's totally enclosed, it's also then when it comes to predators, whether its tuna, sharks, so on and so forth, it becomes a deterrent to them since they can't really sense the fish thrashing or sense them in other ways, but it is a totally enclosed system. It would virtually eliminate the problems.

Here's the other part. Since its construction would require specific technologies, specific

skills, you'd think of the opportunity here in this province of constructing these closed containment systems right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'll speak to what my colleague said about the processing of fish. That's the other part of it. If we're going to have this, making sure that most of the processing takes place right here in this province but here's a chance to actually hire people in the construction of these donuts or other closed containment systems right here. We've got plenty of, I guess, areas here either in Argentia, Bull Arm, whatever else, so maybe they can be converted or use a system here, but you look at the job opportunities, the planning, the technology, these donuts are solar-powered so there's a cost effectiveness in energy.

I think, for the other part of it, the win-win-win, is that it minimizes as much as we can the impact on our wild salmon stocks and other wild stocks, lobster and so on and so forth. I think if we're truly interested in making aquaculture to be sustainable, let's make sure that the act is about protecting our natural resources as well and protecting the resources of the farmed salmon that are in these cages. They are fish, but they still deserve to be treated humanely in this way and not subjected to the mass die-offs that we've seen.

But it is also an opportunity here, if we look at this technology, Speaker, to go one step beyond the regulations and look at a way that maybe we don't have to worry about raising cleaner fish and so on and so forth, because we'll actually have a healthier population of farmed salmon, which are also less likely to escape than they would in an open sea pen.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

I will be supporting Bill 17. I'm not going to get into great detail. A lot has been said about it.

Obviously, anything we can do to strengthen the legislation around aquaculture in our province, I think it would be in our best interest as a House and as a province to do just that. I do appreciate some of the comments from my colleague from St. John's Centre and some of the reservations he has about aquaculture.

I think we all understand that while it does provide great benefit to people in the province, particularly in the rural areas of our province in terms of the jobs and economic development in those particular areas – and I don't think anybody could argue that – it has been a saviour for some small communities, no doubt. But it is important that we always be cognizant of the risks associated to aquaculture, particularly on our wild stocks.

Let's never forget that it was the fishery that brought our people here to begin with several hundred years ago. That's what Newfoundland and Labrador was founded on, really, was on the fishery and it still is over a billion-dollar industry. Many would argue that it could be much more than that. I would be one of those people that would suggest that we could be growing our wild fishery and going from a billion-dollar industry to a \$2-billion or \$3-billion industry but that's not what we're debating here today.

It is important that we do protect wild stocks, so there is a balance. I think everyone realizes that there is a balance that we're trying to create in recognizing and protecting our wild fish stocks and all of the economic benefits that that brings and has brought for years and years, while at the same time trying to create other employment opportunities, particularly as I say, in our rural areas because we've seen

so many fish plants and so on shut down over the years – wild fish processing. It has been a way to, sort of, replace that and replace those opportunities.

At some point in time, a number of years back, we decided that we're going to go down the road of aquaculture. We've seen it evolve. We've seen situations happen. There have been good news stories, obviously, for communities but we've also had some instances which have occurred over the years where there were large escapes and so on and issues. We all know that as well.

It's kind of part of, I guess, you learn as you go, to some degree, but what we're seeing now is some more strengthening of legislation. As my colleague from St. John's Centre said, the devil will be in the details when it comes to the regulations in terms of all the finite details of how this is going to be managed. Again, I would say, anything that we can do to ensure that we have less escapes, that we're not going to have, hopefully, as much issues of disease and sea lice and all those types of things, putting strong standards in place for operators to protect, not just that industry and ensure that that industry is viable but, again, also to protect our wild fishery as well – if we can do things like that, then I would certainly support it and I support the legislation.

It was interesting. Again, I reference my colleague from St. John's Centre; he talked about, I think he called it a donut. I think that's what he called it, a donut. Basically, more of a fully contained unit that could go in the bays that would prevent, according to him – I don't know what research he has done. I haven't done that research so I'm thankful that he brought it forward but if that can prevent sea lice, if that can prevent escapes or at least minimize escapes and minimize sea lice, then I think that's something worth exploring. I don't know the details around it. I am no expert in aquaculture.

I would certainly encourage the minister that, as he is having discussions with his staff that would have expertise in aquaculture and talking to the companies, this is an idea that could at least be floated to see if that's something that we could be introducing to make it even, you know, stronger legislation and to have mechanisms in place to protect our wild fish stocks better than what we're able to do currently. It's an idea that came out of here. Lots of good ideas come out of here, despite what some people think. If that's one idea that's at least worth exploring, I would encourage the minister to do that.

With that said, Mr. Speaker, I will support the legislation because I do believe that aquaculture has been a great – I don't want to say replacement, but it has certainly enhanced opportunities particularly in rural parts of our province that were devastated by the fishing collapse of the wild fishery and so on.

If our small communities are doing well, we're all doing well. I think one thing we have to be cognizant of in this House of Assembly is it's not just about the area that you represent, personally. It's not urban versus rural. It's about all parts of the province doing well and if everybody is doing well – when something good is happening on the West Coast, that's good for people on the East Coast and vice versa. If something is happening in Central Newfoundland, that's good for us all. If it's happening in a small town, if it's happening in a large town or if it's happening in a city, if it's positive for one, it's positive for all.

Aquaculture is certainly very positive, in particular to the rural parts of our province, which need that boost in many cases. Also the overall picture: it's beneficial to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and that's all of us.

With that said, I'll support the legislation. I thank the minister for bringing it forward.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: See no other speakers, if the hon. Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture speaks now he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Members opposite for their contributions in second reading and my colleague for Baie Verte - Green Bay. I'll be interested in Committee for questions that will be asked as well.

We have different perspectives, no doubt, but what's not talked enough about is the supply side, is the economic development side that the Member for Exploits talked about. Just as an example, Newfoundland Styro, it's bringing a lot of benefits to Central Newfoundland and Labrador.

In my district, without aquaculture we will have a major problem. It's an industry that has grown, developed, and growing fish in open pens responsibly.

I encourage the Member for St. John's Centre and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, if you want to come down to see it where it's happening, I encourage you to do it because it's important, very important to see how they're acting responsibly since the last three or four where we had that die-off.

It's been a struggle for the industry, no doubt, but the industry has come a long way. I would like for it to be discussed a little bit more about the economic side of it and what it's doing for this province.

We are here every day talking about increasing employment and stuff. Well I'm telling you, these companies are increasing employment in rural parts of the province.

What's good for rural parts of the province is good for all of Newfoundland and Labrador, even Mount Pearl, because there are companies in Mount Pearl that were down at the NAIA conference that are employing people.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. LOVELESS: You like to stress your point, but I'm stressing the point about the employment side. I know you don't want to hear it because it's good news.

The Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay talks about his part of the industry, that's mussels, and doing it responsibly, but his message is to do it responsibly. The Member for Exploits also talked about a balanced approach, I agree with it 100 per cent.

I was in Norway, I was in one of those donuts and the land base and all of that stuff. We're not saying that we would not entertain these ideas – very expensive ideas, no doubt. But I'm going to tell you what's happening over in Norway is responsible open-pen cages. They're doing it there; we're doing it here. The industry is going to continue. We're going to support it because it makes sense to do so from a lot of levels.

I'll look forward, when we get to Committee stage, for more direct questions and hopefully I can provide some information that will help people who have questions around what's going on in the industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 17 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province. (Bill 17)

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

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

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 17)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

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.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

SPEAKER: Motion carried.

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

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