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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.

Before we begin, in the public gallery I'd like to welcome Kearney O'Keefe, who will be recognized this afternoon in a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also visiting the public gallery for a Member's statement, welcome Gerard Penney, Deputy Fire Chief of the Holyrood Fire Department, and his daughter, Carla. As well as Evan Woodford, Fire Chief of Holyrood Fire Department.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Humber - Bay of Islands, Torngat Mountains, Lake Melville, Harbour Main and with leave, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune and also with leave, Waterford Valley.

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I rise to recognize a person who has gone above and beyond for the beautiful people throughout the District of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

Brenda Wootton is the constituency assistant for my district, and what she has accomplished in the past 4½ years is nothing short of extraordinary. Despite the challenges of losing her father, Kevin, this

past year, Brenda has given everything she has to ensure our constituents are warm, fed and safe.

She doesn't know what a 40-hour workweek is, as she works tirelessly, ignoring set hours, to get the job done. She often meets with families and seniors across the district inside their homes, at our office or anywhere else in the community to listen to their needs and help any way she can.

Growing up in Grand Falls-Windsor, Brenda Wootton has had the heart and strength to give – simply give, often ignoring her own struggles as she has always put others before herself. That's Brenda.

As MHAs know all too well, there are a group of unsung heroes behind the scenes that are the soul of our mission to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians: your constituency assistants, like the amazing and beautiful Brenda Wootton.

Thank you, Sir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure today of recognizing a true hero – a person who wears her heart on her sleeve and is always ready to step up and help her community.

Michelle Payne, owner of Fox's General Store in Curling, was recently awarded the Community Impact Award during the Greater Corner Brook Board of Trade Business Excellence Awards Gala. These awards acknowledge some of the many achievements within the local business community.

Michelle is always there to sponsor events such as the school supplies drive for those in need, winter coats drive, Ronald McDonald walks, SPCA, the cuddle beds

fundraiser for the palliative care unit so loved ones can with their families during trying times and many other fundraising event

If there's an event that will support the less fortunate or the community, Michelle and Fox's General Store will be there.

Michelle is a true hero without a cape, and she is such a kind and generous person, who gives from the heart.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Michelle on receiving this much-deserved award and for outstanding contributions to her community.

Congratulations, Michelle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Nympha Byrne: soft-spoken, Innu, with much inner strength and courage. I attended her 21-day treatment program graduation, delivered for the first time at the Labrador Correctional Centre, previously delivered in Natuashish and in the bush.

Her experience, many years of counselling people, Nympha realized great need existed for a program that dealt at the heart of Innu issues. A dedicated social worker and counsellor at Mushuau Innu Healing Lodge, she used her knowledge to develop this revolutionary program, which she delivers with the support of mental health therapist Sean Allen.

Her first words to me: "I am so proud that everyone completed because we went really deep." Everyone participated and fully completed. That was their way of showing respect to Nympha, to themselves and to their family.

At graduation, I was blown away; all 10 graduates received their diploma and then turned to the audience and spoke about how this program helped them. Deep, dark emotions that they learned to identify and the knowledge to change, skills to help them become the people they wanted to be, for themselves and for their families. Changing is not easy but they clearly see paths ahead and have the skills now to navigate.

Nympha, you inspire us.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

I am pleased to advise this House of Assembly of the excitement around Maci Battcock, a star dancer at Valley Danceworks Inc. in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Maci has been dancing since she was in Grade 1 and six years of age. While small in stature, Maci possesses a powerful stage presence.

She is a well-known, exciting competitor now representing our province on much larger stages. I am pleased to announce that at a national competition in British Columbia, this summer, Maci won the junior national title for the second year in a row. Maci is the first dancer to ever win this title twice – a national record. After all of this, it is hard to believe she is only 11 years old.

Her mother, Christina, recently said: Maci has great talent, especially coming from such a remote location with extremely limited access to training. She has me in awe with her commitment and maturity to the things she loves. Her spirit is wild and free and I love every bit of who she is.

I ask all MHAs in this 50th General Assembly to watch out for Maci Battcock,

already a provincial star and a national champion.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I rise in this hon. House to recognize a volunteer firefighter from Holyrood in the District of Harbour Main. Gerard Penney joined the Holyrood Volunteer Fire Department in August 1978, an incredible 45 years of dedicated service –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – as a volunteer firefighter and community hero.

Gerard assumed a leadership role within the fire department for many years. Twelve years as fire chief and currently deputy fire chief for the last 26 years. Gerard describes his experience as a firefighter as incredibly rewarding, especially when you know that you're helping someone in need.

Gerard comes from a family of volunteers. His father, John, was the first fire chief named to the Holyrood department in 1969. He was joined by five of his sons, who all served alongside their father and continued with the fire department long after his death in 1983.

At the same time Gerard's father became involved so did his mother, Josie, who was instrumental in forming a lady's auxiliary group called the Firettes and raised funds to purchase the department's first jaws of life.

I ask all Members to please join me in thanking Gerard Penney and his family for their collective over 200 years of service and dedication to their community.

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.

Speaker, volunteers in communities are special people whether they are firefighters, councillors or those that spend time ensuring history is remembered.

Doug Wells of Harbour Breton is a true example. With a 30-year teaching career, he received a Teaching Excellence Award, the Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee medal and Citizen of the Year. He was loved by his students and staff.

Since retirement, he has spent a lot of time researching, reflecting and presenting history like the landslide in Harbour Breton to various schools in the Coast of Bays and Central region, Remembrance and recognition ceremonies such as the No Stone Left Alone, Private John Loveless and the Newfoundland Ranger Force, that really now is the RCMP. His passion for veterans and the war memorial has instilled a desire to write a book and once completed, I will be the first to purchase a copy.

Recently, he visited schools telling local Halloween ghost stories like the legend of Deadman's Cove, the Hermitage bride story and the Bristol Hope story. It was enjoyed by all.

Please join me in saying thank you to Doug Wells for his years of volunteering for your community and keeping history alive.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley with leave.

AN HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am absolutely delighted to extend congratulations to Kearney O'Keefe in obtaining her Level V designation and for being the first female umpire in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, as the first female umpire in Newfoundland and Labrador to receive the Level V designation, Kearney has had a long history playing softball and has achieved many awards along the way, playing a sport that she loves. She grew up playing softball in Shea Heights, on Cabot Street and then the Labatt Women's League. Kearney went on to play ball in North Carolina and after graduating high school, played for Louisburg College.

In 2012, Kearney's umpire journey began when she completed the umpire course and started officiating games in St. John's.

Mr. Speaker, in 2014, she earned her Softball Level III Umpire Certification and in 2017, her full Level IV certification. Finally, it was in 2022, when Softball Canada Board of Directors approved Kearney's nomination for Level V Fastpitch Umpire Certification.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in paying tribute to Kearney O'Keefe for making history as the first female umpire in Newfoundland and Labrador to obtain Level V umpire designation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to share a story of loss and remembrance, a shared history between our province and the Republic of Türkiye.

One year ago, the Premier stood alongside Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, federal government representatives and Republic of Türkiye officials in Gallipoli for the official unveiling of the Gallipoli Newfoundland Memorial.

This historic and meaningful unveiling completed the Trail of the Caribou, a series of six permanent monuments across France, Belgium and Türkiye to mark the critical battles fought by the Royal Newfoundland Regiment during the First World War.

The tremendous loss of life in Gallipoli created a bond between our two nations. This bond has survived the passing of time and the vast distance between us. On September 28, we unveiled a monument to honour Turkish soldiers on the shores of Quidi Vidi Lake.

The task of establishing reciprocal memorials in Newfoundland and Türkiye took years of planning and it would not have been possible without the commitment of many people and organizations, including the MHA for Lake Melville and the Royal Newfoundland Regimental Advisory Council.

As we approach Remembrance Day, this is a poignant example of how the memories of our veterans live on. Young people on both sides of the ocean made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom, but lives were lost,

hearts were broken and families and friends grieved for those who never came home.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in a moment of silence to remember and honour our veterans.

Lest we forget.

SPEAKER: All Members rise for a moment of silence.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Lest we forget.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. As a veteran, it gives me great honour to respond to this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We here in the Official Opposition recognize the historical and significant sacrifice of brave young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at the Battle of Gallipoli in horrendous conditions. The establishment of the sixth and final monument in Turkey completes the Trail of the Caribou and the battles of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment during World War I. The establishment of reciprocal memorials in Newfoundland and Labrador and Turkey is an acknowledgement of the bond we share through the sacrifices of our countrymen. A thank you to all of those involved in any way, who played any role to ensure its completion.

Let us, during this time of remembrance, take time to reflect on the horrors of war and the veterans who carry those memories with them every day. These young men never came home to their families, friends and careers. Families' hearts were broken, yet

windows shone brightly, lighting a path for those who never returned.

Lest we forget. Lest we forget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

To remember and honour veterans, the national Poppy Campaign slogan is: Lest we forget. I find myself on days leading up to Remembrance Day, thinking about those in my district, in my own personal life and my wife's biological father, who was a veteran, a peacekeeper in Bosnia in the early '90s.

Just to go off script here just a quick second. She never got to have her dad, unfortunately, in the way that most daughters would have their fathers because of his service; it was something that they lost.

As we wear a poppy to commemorate the tragedies of armed conflict, the greatest honour we have is to remember those we've lost in the war and stand strong in the pursuit of finding peace in this world.

Thank you to all the veterans in our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, Dr. Farrell of the Medical Association says they have been left in the dark when it comes to this new virtual physician contract for services that has been awarded to an American company.

I ask the minister: How could this happen?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure if that's exactly what Dr. Farrell said, but the NLMA were invited to oversee the process. They sat in and observed as proponents were being evaluated, so they were part of the evaluation process.

I met with them several times, Mr. Speaker. They put forward their concerns. I addressed those concerns with the Health Authority to be considered as part of the RFP.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Clearly, Speaker, either their concerns weren't brought forward or the Medical Association still has many concerns.

One of their major concerns is about pay. Are we about to set-up another two-tiered pay system just like we did for travel nurses? We know the millions of dollars that that has cost our health care system.

Again, I ask the minister: Why would the Liberal government allow this to happen again?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, again, the Leader of the Opposition who hopes to someday become premier, continues to act without all of the information. One of the things that I learned when I was in Opposition is know the details before you ask the question.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is on May 16, 2023 – and I'll be happy to table this – I did write the Health Authority asking that compensation for physicians align with the current memorandum of agreement with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association. Further, that physicians would be licensed in accordance with the College of Physicians of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, we also ensured that they would be members of the NLMA.

Mr. Speaker, the Member opposite has no idea what he's talking about. I'm happy to table this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I am quite familiar with our health care system and the many challenges that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have in accessing a family physician.

Let's just talk about the hundreds of thousands of people who do not have access to a family physician. That's what we're talking about here: How do people get primary health care in this province?

Let me ask you this: Dr. Farrell again asked and has a fear wondering if physicians are actually going to leave their practice because of all the paperwork that they currently have to do in their current positions. Will they, in turn, leave their own

practices and sign on with this American company?

I ask the minister: What's being done to make sure that doesn't happen?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, first of all, I will say that we've added in, and I've indicated to the Member opposite just a couple of days ago, that the company cannot poach from Newfoundland and Labrador doctors. That is part of the RFP.

But I will also say, if the Member is truly concerned about access to primary care, there were a number of initiatives, Mr. Speaker, when he was the head of the Labrador-Grenfell Health authority, reducing access to clinics in Sheshatshiu, reducing ambulance service, removing the nurse from Black Tickle.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

T. OSBORNE: – for one minute, based on his track record, what he would actually do and what he's telling the public he would do if he ever became premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: It is truly amazing. Liberal government comes to power; Liberal government cuts health care. As simple as that.

As a matter of fact, let me tell you a story about a certain minister who sits in the government right now in a previous role who called me on a Friday afternoon at 3 and told me I had to lay off seven people and I had to have it done by Tuesday. You tell me that's improving health care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, on a serious note, on a serious concern, the Medical Association has pointed out that not everything can be done via a phone call.

I ask the minister: Who will do the follow-up with the patients for such things as cancerous tumours?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am delighted to say, first of all, we have a meeting lined up with the NLMA. I was a little disappointed that prior to the meeting, to be fully briefed on what is in the contract, Mr. Speaker, that the concerns were raised. I can assure you they were part of the evaluation process. We met with them. Their concerns were addressed as I laid out in my letter of May 16.

Now only that, we did ensure, as well, that there will be pathways for follow up, in-person care as a result of the virtual consultation with physicians.

Mr. Speaker, in the couple of seconds since the Member asked his questions, I had a chance to write down some of the ways we are increasing access to primary care: Family Care Teams, mobile primary care, virtual primary care, enhanced scope of practice for a number of – Mr. Speaker, it's a long list. I'll read some more off.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I would ask the minister to tell that to the thousands of people who are still waiting for access to a primary health care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Tell that to the thousands of people who are still paying to see a nurse practitioner. That's what we're talking about.

Speaker, given the trouble this Liberal government has with numbers, can the minister of Housing confirm that we are actually building 850 new affordable homes or 850 new housing options? Which is it?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I have to address the preamble.

Talking about increasing access –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Talking about increasing access to primary health care: we increased the denture rates; we reduced the cost of driver medicals; the virtual emergency department; ambulance integration; the surgical task force to reduce wait times for surgeries; travelling orthopedic surgeons to ensure that people get their orthopedic surgeries; Heart Force One; increased cataract allowances throughout the province; the Cardiovascular and Stroke Institute, which we've announced; personal care home and long-term care home review; the Stepped Care model for mental health –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me ask again, the Liberal government has had trouble with numbers.

Can the minister responsible for Housing confirm: Are we building 850 new affordable homes or 850 new housing options?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance.

S. COADY: I refer the Member opposite, in case he didn't hear it in the House of Assembly, in case he didn't read it, to the Budget Speech, page 15: "This considerable investment includes: A new, provincial, three year, \$70 million Affordable Housing Program that will help construct over 850 affordable homes, with a focus on seniors."

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, that's the same minister that turned around and said they were building 750 new housing options –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: – and then in a video said they were building 750 new homes. That's why the confusion.

Speaker, I ask the minister of Housing: Will he table a full list of the 850 new homes, where they are to be built in the province?

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

P. PIKE: Thank you for the question.

I was listening and waiting for the opportunity to answer. Right now, we are about to announce phase one of the 850 houses that will be built and where they're going to be built. They'll be built all over the province. We are quite pleased; we had a

great uptake when we put out the RFP. Over 100 different companies and communities looking to build houses in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Most of these houses, Speaker, will be used for seniors, which will again have that domino effect we're looking for to free up other homes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I think I have the answer to my next question, but I'm going to ask it anyway just to confirm.

Given that we are halfway through the fiscal year, that 850 new homes being built was announced in the budget back in April, how many of the 850 homes are actually built and occupied? Sounds like zero.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: As I just said –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

P. PIKE: Excuse me.

SPEAKER: Are you guys ready?

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

P. PIKE: Mr. Speaker, as I just said, these homes are being built all over the province. We do have all of the applications put forward, all of the proposals put in. We have gone through those proposals. We've been talking to some builders who have proposals in, wondering when we're going to be able to – because they want to get shovels in the ground now.

That's why we're going to be announcing this within the next few days. By the end of next week, Mr. Speaker, we'll have those announced. It takes time to go through that many applications. How did we know we were going to get over 100 applications? We had no idea. But we're so glad we did.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Zero plus 11 still equals 11.

Speaker, this year's offshore land sale drew zero bids. That's right, zero bids.

Will the minister admit the Liberal government anti-oil agenda has finally driven exploration out of the province?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Certainly we anticipated this question and yes, obviously we're disappointed with the call for bids yesterday. Who wouldn't be? But I think to use the term "anti-oil agenda" is a bit of a stretch given if you just go back in the last three years, I can reference an offshore exploration initiative; I can reference the money that we put into Terra Nova, which is going back into production; I could mention the OGIRA Fund and \$320 million that we put into that; I could mention the natural gas study that we're doing now; I could mention the great work that is going on in Placentia on West White Rose; and I could also mention what is going on at Come By Chance.

The reality is that, look, while it is a disappointment, there is a lot still happening. We have on the books, actually, \$2.1 billion in exploration bids coming up so there is a lot left to look forward to. And like

we always do, we will get past this and we still see a bright future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: It is great that they take all the credit for Terra Nova – the money came from the federal government and the work was all done over in Spain.

Speaker, the price of oil is up, world demand is as strong as ever, yet companies are pulling out of Newfoundland and Labrador. In fact, Woodside paid a \$193 million penalty rather than try to do business in this province. Norway is booming with wells and exploration, while the Liberals are happy to manage decline.

What is the minister going to do to turn it around?

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

A. PARSONS: Oh, Mr. Speaker, how times have changed. It wasn't that long ago that the Members opposite, including the Member, stood up and applauded the work we did when it came to Terra Nova.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: Now, I will point out the reality is that when we talk about that federal money – and again, I am very proud that they're onside with the federal government; it is the first time I have heard that in a while.

What I will point out is if you remember correctly, they had that money spent four times over on every project you could think of, they had that money spent. The reality is we have to deal with the situation as we find it, but I will point out 17 exploration licences

awarded offshore; \$2.1 billion in exploration bids coming. I will also point out that Equinor just hired a program manager here in St. John's.

We still see a bright future – and, by the way, most of that work that was done in Spain was done by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, the Liberals cancelled the seismic program, the Liberals dismantled the geoscience division of Oil and Gas Co, and now they seem surprised companies have taken the hint.

A veteran oil official told me recently: Newfoundland is not a good place to do business anymore.

Can the minister see the damage this Liberal government is doing to our oil and gas industry?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you.

What I will point out there, again, you only have to look around various places this week when we talk about people wanting to do business in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: The reality is Equinor is adding people here because they still see a future here. We talk about the billions in exploration and, by the way, there was a pause in seismic. Do you know what happened? Private money came in and did that work.

But the good news is, for too long we were relying solely on oil and gas. We had ups and downs but right now not only do we support oil and gas, we are creating a brand new industry in wind and hydrogen. And, by the way, mining is at all-time high.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: No bids, Speaker, no bids. The proof is in the pudding. A record land sale did not receive a penny's worth of interest – a shocking condemnation of the business climate government has towards the industry in this province.

Is the minister surprised that Equinor walked away?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Given the expertise that the Member opposite has, I think he knows the difference between what he's saying here and what he knows outside. The reality is that Equinor, like any of these companies, have to cut costs. They have to preserve as well. In fact, in referencing Norway, there was actually a shutdown in one of their projects in Norway.

But what I will say is this: Their partner is BP. They're not going to invest millions upon millions in exploration next summer if they don't see a future. Equinor is not going to hire a project manager here in St. John's, Newfoundland, which I will point out we argued for.

Again, they can see the glass as half full. They can continue to put the negativity out there, which I hope they're not doing when they go to these events down in the Delta.

We're going to continue to talk about the great business environment that is here. We're going to talk about the great opportunities that are here.

I haven't even got into the *National Post* article today talking about how we are (inaudible) –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, again and again, advocates have called for the rewriting of the Liberal governments failed attempt at pay equity legislation.

This spring, 10 Status of Women's groups across our province call for change to this inadequate legislation.

I ask the minister: Will changes to the legislation come in this sitting of the House? Yes or no.

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm finally happy to get a question this fall sitting, and I thank the hon. Member, of course, for her question, for her interest in the topic.

I'm happy to say, Speaker, that it's this government that actually passed pay equity legislation in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: In the past year, we have passed the *Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act*, appointed a pay equity officer, updated the job evaluation systems for core government to ensure that the pay equity is compliant and launched a consultation process to inform the regulations of the act. I'm also happy to say that teams of officials across multiple government departments are now working on those regulations.

So the work keeps coming and, again, I always invite the hon. Member to come and be a part of the solution.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, this government needs to do the right thing. Listen to these stakeholder groups and let them help you rewrite the legislation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The minister is ignoring the repeated calls from those she claims to have consulted with. The Liberal government's version of pay equity is more about reinforcing the status quo than any meaningful action.

Why is the minister ignoring the need for change to this legislation?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I say the Liberal government's pay equity legislation is far better than the PC

government's pay equity legislation, because there wasn't one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: There wasn't one. We have one now in the history of our province.

Those consultations, of course, with the multiple stakeholders across Newfoundland and Labrador have been complete. As I've said, a team of officials are currently working to inform those regulations so we can bring forward the next steps to this very important legislation.

I might add, Speaker, that pay equity is only one tool in our toolbox for the many, many initiatives that this government is bringing in for women and gender diverse here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Consultation is what we need.

Speaker, I ask the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL: How many highway enforcement officer positions are vacant in her department?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

This is an excellent opportunity to thank our highway enforcement officers for all the important work that they do across Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: I recently had the opportunity to accompany two of our

highway enforcement officers on school bus inspections, and it was extremely informative and I feel very confident and safe that the school buses operating on our roads have passed multiple inspections, one by our official inspection station and also one in person by a highway enforcement officer.

So I just want to thank our highway enforcement officers who work across Newfoundland and Labrador, keeping our highways safe.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Again, I guess there's no sense in asking if you're not going to get an answer to it, so I'll move on to the next question.

Speaker, our office has been told that the annual school bus inspections are not being done because of a shortage of staff and others are being redirected to the weigh scales on the highway.

Is the minister jeopardizing student safety?

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

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, I'm shocked by the accusation.

School bus inspections are the top priority of our highway enforcement officers –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: – I can assure this House and I can assure the public. One hundred per cent of buses are inspected by official inspection stations before September of each year and then our inspectors inspect

100 per cent of buses again and another 30 per cent in April of every year.

All school buses undergo at least two inspections and many undergo three inspections. The highway enforcement officers that I spoke with recently were trying to increase that, Speaker.

They're our top priority and I thank our highway enforcement officers for keeping children on school buses safe.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

Maybe they'll be more shocked by the next question.

Speaker, what I do know is the minister's department hasn't published any school bus inspections since last May. All buses were supposed to be inspected in August, before the school year started. We recall the incident in March in Mount Pearl where an axle almost completely came off a bus.

Why is the minister failing school bus safety?

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

S. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, the accident that occurred with the axle is very shocking and there's an investigation underway with highway enforcement officers and law enforcement. That is underway. I spoke with highway enforcement officers recently about that inspection.

I have full faith in our highway enforcement officers and the inspections that they do of our school buses. I will certainly ask and

find out when we'll publish the results of those inspections.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: But I assure this House and members of the public that we are fully up to date with all of our school bus inspections.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I heard from a single mother of three on a fixed income, spending \$140 a week on tutoring because their child is receiving less time with their instructional resource teachers this year than they were allocated.

I ask the minister: Why should a parent pay out of pocket because the approved and allocated resources are not available?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the Member for the question.

It allows me the opportunity to talk about a very important issue that we are addressing in our department. We are working closely with the NLTA, working on a plan of recruitment and retention for all qualified educators in the province. We want to continue to build on an incredible resource that we already have here in Newfoundland and Labrador, but we want to make sure that we have a plan that's responsive, that meets the needs and that identifies the priority challenges that the teachers may have in the classrooms.

So we'll continue that good work with the NLTA and work towards a greater resource base for students here in the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The NLTA recently quoted an IRT teacher as saying – quote – teacher shortages have made it impossible to maintain consistency. Students need consistency and support in order to achieve their goals.

I ask the minister: What have you done to help students who are falling behind?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

As I said, we'll continue to work on a recruitment and retention plan for teachers here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This year, we've had a great uptake in teachers in some of our hard-to-fill positions, with initiatives that we've undertaken as part of our plan to fill some of the harder-to-fill positions. We've learned lessons from that process and we'll continue to build that into our plan as we move forward with our partners in developing the recruitment and retention plan for the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Time allocation for student assistants and specialized teachers is determined in the spring. New teachers or students with emerging needs must wait a year before

new resources are available. The NLTA president actually said it's calling for a complete overhaul of how resources are allocated.

I ask the minister: Why are students left to wait for support?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

As the Member referenced, there are some timelines and deadlines in terms of releasing allocations, and that's something that has been brought to our attention. We were successful in addressing that issue for our teaching resources in the previous school year. It's something that we're going to continue to look at and figure out some of the juggling that needs to happen in terms of the deadlines for budgeting for resource allocation to make it a more streamlined process so we have a better picture and a better understanding of what resources are required and what resources can be allocated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, we have seen a drop in the unemployment rate but families cannot afford to make ends meet and are visiting food banks monthly. Demand on the food banks in the District of Bonavista is huge.

I would ask the minister: What do you tell the parents who are skipping meals so their children can eat?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

S. COADY: Thank you.

It's always difficult to hear of those that are vulnerable, those that are struggling.

Certainly, we've been able to provide a tremendous amount of cost-of-living supports, including some of the supports that I've already mentioned in this House, including the Income Supplement going up by 15 per cent, the Seniors' Benefit going up by 15 per cent. We've increased the allocation for income support; we've reduced the price of gasoline and removed a tremendous amount of our gasoline tax, Speaker.

I can say to the Member opposite, we'll certainly work with anybody in this province that is vulnerable. I encourage them to contact the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: The usual refrain from the minister is that we've added 15 per cent to the Income Supplement.

Josh Smee says it right that if you double the current Income Supplement with the 15 per cent, they are still significantly below the poverty line, those income recipients in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Two-income working families and seniors are going to food banks for the first time in their lives. With the increase in the cost of housing, increase in the cost of groceries and transportation, families cannot make ends meet.

I ask the minister: How many families are visiting the food bank on a monthly basis?

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

S. COADY: It's always challenging to hear of those that are challenged, that are vulnerable, that are having difficult times.

The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, while we're seeing record lower unemployment, while we're seeing growth in our economy, there are still people that are struggling. That's why we've been able to put over half a billion dollars towards the cost of living in this province, Speaker. That's why we've increased some of these allocations to try and help those that are in need.

If the Member opposite has people that are vulnerable and in need to contact CSSD Department, they'll be happy to work with them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

People are learning of the extent of harms caused by government's colonial practices such as residential schools and the forced relocation of the Northern Labrador Innu and Inuit. The resulting intergenerational trauma has left my communities, especially our elders, to struggle. For example, this winter they will not be able to afford the \$1,000 to \$2,000 per month stove oil costs to heat their homes.

I ask the Deputy Premier: Will she reconsider her government's exclusion of my people from the Oil to Electric Rebate Program?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. With our Department of Environment and Climate Change, we work very closely with our federal colleagues to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions, which is what the intent of the oil to electric program is.

I understand that the hon. Member is not in that situation where they're on the grid. We're working towards solutions to find options for those. I've talked to the Minister of Labrador Affairs on a number of occasions on this thing. We're working through that. We want to make sure we can have a program that will include everybody in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Federal colleagues, the MP for Labrador, a Liberal, said that she's fighting hard at the table with the provincial government to make sure that our Northern and Southern Labrador communities are included in this Oil to Electric Rebate.

Speaker, through an information note, we learned that there was no evaluation done to look at the gender wage gaps in the public service. The note advises government should advise caution when undertaking further and more in-depth research because if it is found that the province is not equity compliant, it may be required to pay out –

SPEAKER: Move to your question, please.

L. EVANS: – present and former employees –

SPEAKER: Move to your question. Your time is running up.

L. EVANS: – retroactive, citing amounts paid out in New Brunswick in the federal public service.

So I ask the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality: Why is she

tolerating this type of advice? Is this the advice –?

SPEAKER: The Member's time is expired.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I think the Member opposite was referring to the civil service and, certainly, we have the four key pillars of pay equity within the civil service that make sure that gender does not enter into the job evaluation system. We also have a pay equity officer now that will evaluate and make sure that we are fully compliant.

I would say to the Member opposite, I think the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, on behalf of the civil service, has made sure that we have a good, solid job evaluation system that has the four pillars required for pay equity and we have oversight of that system.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology released a Critical Minerals Plan but as we're well aware, in order to mine in this province, we're going to need more power supply.

I ask the minister: Where is the plan to add electrical capacity to make it possible to mine in this province in this current time?

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

A. PARSONS: Speaker, I thank the Member for that question. I'm excited to get

up here and talk about critical minerals and the excitement that was generated yesterday with the release of our plan that I would say met with fairly unanimous support –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: I know the Member opposite – and I say this in seriousness – is also supportive. Including the fact that we included Labrador high-purity ore from the Labrador Trough in that as well.

While I would say to the Member is we know that we have to generate more power when it comes to mining opportunities. There are active conversations with multiple parties, and thankfully we have the assets to discuss but, again, it's going to require multiple conversations. We will keep the Member informed because I know it impacts him.

Again, there is so much opportunity when it comes to mining in this province.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

If this government is talking about critical minerals and taking them out of the ground, I ask the minister: What's his government plan to have secondary processing as part of the contract and obligations to make sure minerals are processed secondarily in this province and not raw minerals shipped out of this province?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, we recognize the impact of processing when it comes to this province and the opportunities that it brings. That is

also an active part of the conversation. I know when you look at just *Mining the Future 2030* – which certainly I don't take any credit for it; I give it to the previous minister, for which most of the goals have actually been met.

We are also discussing processing; we want to see it remain here. Again, we work with partners. But what I will point out to everybody watching if you were at the Delta this week checking out the mineral resource review, I don't know if you've ever seen more excitement in this province when it comes to mining, whether it is ore, critical minerals, you name it. Right now it is looking good and these are good challenges to have.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to present this motion that will be our private Members' resolution for Wednesday, November 15. It is moved by myself, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, and seconded by the Member for Terra Nova.

WHEREAS targeted relief solutions are needed that lift people from crisis, keep their homes warm, ensure their families are fed and healthy; and

WHEREAS many people in Newfoundland and Labrador are struggling to survive soaring food costs, skyrocketing housing costs, gas prices through the roof and a carbon tax on top of all their other taxes and fees; and

WHEREAS we have seniors sharing medication, or cutting their pills in half, because they can't afford the cost of the medicines they need. Many seniors are living below the poverty line, too poor to stay healthy;

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the government to: order a complete review of all taxes and fees, cutting or adjusting those that are hurting people; lead the charge to end the carbon tax for good; eliminate the sugar tax; continue the provincial gas tax relief; order a complete review of the Income Support Program and an evaluation of all programs and services intended to support vulnerable populations to ensure they deliver; index the Seniors' Benefit programs to inflation; and deliver a new poverty reduction strategy.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

The resolution, as read by the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port, will be presented on November 15.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Are there any further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move that notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, November

15, 2023, but shall continue to sit to conduct Government Business and if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

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, November 16, 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 Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today again on this petition:

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor.

The prayer is: The above-mentioned legislative changes should be retroactive and apply regardless of the expiry of the previous limitation period.

I stand again, Mr. Speaker, to present this petition on behalf of the youth that were abused and had no voice. As I said earlier, many times in this House, we are the voice of the people who don't have a voice. We should be raising the bar for any abuse for children at that age.

Again, I urge the government to reconsider and I heard the minister say, on several occasions, that if something is before the court, some cases are before the court, he can't comment. But if it's possible and then if the minister – if this is what's before court, trying to reverse the statute of limitations, is there any way that once it's done or take away the court case and say we'll do it; or wait until it's over and make a commitment that if it's not done, if a court don't agree with it, that they will do it? There's always a process that can be done.

When you're 16, 17 years old, you've been beaten and there's no way to turn, it affects you in a lot of ways, physically and mentally. It's hard to be normal after that; it's really hard. One of things that you really need is closure. Closure with this here is to be recognized, yes, it did happen. Yes, we want to recognize the hardship that you went through and we want to help you for your life that's ahead of you. Without that, it's hard to get closure.

As I mentioned, the Premier is up now apologizing in Labrador, which he should be. I commend the Premier for that, for all the abuse in residential schools. The abuse that we're talking about here was in a government institution. So I feel that this abuse should be recognized also. We should definitely look at it.

We should definitely make it retroactive of the claim. If we're going to do it in Labrador, which we should do, absolutely no doubt, I give the Premier kudos for being in Labrador doing what he's doing, we should also recognize the abuse that was done in a government institution, sponsored by government, paid for by government who abused the youth who had no voice, who is suffering today emotionally and physically because of what happened in a government institution.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

With the release of the Atlantic Seal Science Task Team in April of last year and the significance of the commercial harvest to fishers and plant workers in the District of Bonavista, we feel that the seal population is far greater than the ecosystem can sustain. As a result, a large population of seals is certainly negatively impacting the rebuilding of our valuable ground fish stock and negatively affecting the significant landed value of our commercial harvest.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to address the seal population by taking proactive measures on fulfilling our current provincial quota of seals and enhancing the markets of seal products within our province and other jurisdictions. Action is long overdue.

I had the pleasure and the delight of asking the question on seals, yesterday, in Question Period. The minister says we're working with the federal government in response to that question. This might be an opportunity after I sit down with the petition that he might stand, I'm sure our House Leader will grant him leave to explain fully what actions and what we've done with the federal government to address this issue.

We know that ecosystems need to be kept in balance. Once they go awry and we have a significant imbalance in our ecosystems, we lose species. What we're doing now is losing a lot of our species of which we get a significant commercial return on our harvesters. Our quotas are low.

We mentioned mackerel: zero metric tons, while other countries are catching high amounts. I would say DFO says it right when they say what the diet of our current herd would be. They state 7.6 million harp seals in our province – 7.6 million harp

seals. How much of the other species do they consume? According to DFO science – ready – 9,154,000 metric tons of other commercial species that we don't land.

So we are eager on this side to hear what the minister's been working on with the federal government and we will certainly grant leave to hear what actions we've taken.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, it's an important topic, no doubt. But I'm not going to give a history lesson like the Member opposite likes to do. I'd be happy, if he's willing to go to Ottawa, too, I'll go with you. Absolutely. But have you been? No, you have not.

So I say to the Member, it's not my ultimate decision to deal and make the decision on seals. He knows that; they know that. But I believe it's important that all levels of government need to come together because you have to work with industry, there's the marketing piece. So if we're going to be serious about it, be serious about it and the serious conversations will be had because it is serious.

We went across the province, the Premier and I did as well, and it was very important to our research process, everybody in the industry. No doubt about it. But I don't think it should be the responsibility or the anticipated responsibility that it's the Minister of FFA for Newfoundland and Labrador's ultimate decision on this. It is not. People of the province understand that. I say to the Member when he's talking about that, don't leave that impression that it's just my responsibility to make that decision on seals.

I believe we will get to the point where we need to get in terms of making a good decision on what we will do with seals. It's an ongoing conversations that's being had. It will be a conversation. As I told you yesterday, it will be the top of my agenda when I meet with the federal minister the next time. When I do have that meeting, I'll be happy to report what the discussion was all about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Witless Bay Line is a significant piece of infrastructure; and

WHEREAS many commute outside the Avalon on a daily basis for work, as well as for commercial, residential, and tourism growth in our region has increased the volume of traffic on the highway.

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

Speaker, I've certainly done this petition a number of times for sure and will continue to pursue it for sure. This highway is used by people with campers, motorhomes and motorcycles. We have people in the House of Assembly driving across Witless Bay Line zigzagging like they're in a race to try to get around the holes on it.

So we need to get this piece of infrastructure done. There are people who are travelling this highway to go to Placentia, to go down to Long Harbour, to go to Bull Arm. When you're driving in here,

you see in the mornings, the traffic on the end of Witless Bay Line where they carpool to go the rest of the way. It's a very important piece of infrastructure.

Last summer, again, there were so many safety issues with it in regard to potholes and big holes too, not just small holes. You drive that in the nighttime, like a night like last night, it was pouring rain and you can't see the potholes, next thing you know, bang. I drove there one time last year, a person with two flats. One side of the car, two tires, front and rear, flat.

It's not acceptable that this road is in this condition. Sometimes it does change over a period of time; they go in and fill the holes. With the weather that we have, with the rising frost and driving everything up, there's no doubt about it. It certainly a condition, but we'd love to see this done. We've had both ends of it done. As the minister said before, we have over 10 kilometres left to do and we'd certainly love to see that in the budget next year, if it all possible.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove the 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 limitation periods do not run during any time a defendant; (a) willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about essential

elements of the claim, i.e. the fact that an injury, loss or damage has occurred, that it 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 a proceeding as a means of remedying the injury, loss or damage.

The above-mentioned legislative changes should be retroactive and apply regardless of the expiry date of any previous limitation period.

Mr. Speaker, I can't say I'm happy to present this petition again, but I certainly believe it is something that definitely needs to be done and I certainly join my colleague, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. I know the Member for the Holyrood area has raised this and I know my colleagues in the NDP have as well on behalf of Mr. Whalen and his family.

As my colleague has said, we're seeing now in Labrador, as an example, I know it's on a much larger scale, the Premier is up apologizing for what happened in the residential schools as he said. We know we had the Mount Cashel inquiry. We know the horrific abuse that had occurred there.

When we talk about Mount Cashel, this situation with Mr. Whalen was in that same sort of time frame, where we didn't have all the checks and balances in place that we do now, where we didn't have that proper oversight, where things were swept under the rug.

The thing we have to remember is that had this abuse that occurred to Mr. Whalen, had there been any sexual element to it at all, he'd have a remedy. The fact is that because there was no sexual element, that he could've been beaten, tortured and abused and we're going to put our hands up in the air and do nothing about it.

I believe the only other province, it's either New Brunswick or Nova Scotia, that has this same problem we have, but the rest of the country have remedied this for minors who experienced physical abuse. It's just wrong that we have this in this province and we're not addressing it.

Again, I call upon the Minister of Justice and his colleagues in the Cabinet: Please take a look at this; let's get some legislation here to reverse this so this family can have justice.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I bring a petition: anti-temporary replacement worker legislation. These are the reasons for the petition:

Anti-temporary replacement worker laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and the federal government has committed to introduce such legislation by the end of 2023.

The use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community, the local economy and the well-being of residents.

Anti-temporary replacement worker legislation has shown to reduce the length and divisiveness of labour disputes.

Since 2015, the right to strike has been clearly protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* because it helps stabilize the power imbalance between workers and the employer.

And the use of temporary replacement workers undermines that right.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to enact legislation banning the

use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout.

I bring this petition to the House for the Minister Responsible for Labour. Once again, the minister and I have had discussions on this and I will continue to bring these petitions forward on behalf of the residents of Labrador West who want to see this.

They've watched the Vale strike, the D-J Composites strike and other incidents where such practices were used and it just dragged out the strike for quite a long time that was needless, to say.

Once again, I bring this petition. We have to make sure we maintain the balance. If a company brings in temporary replacement workers during a lockout or a strike, it tends to drag on the strike. We've seen it time and time again in this province. This is something the people of Labrador West would like to see brought forward by this government and I hope to see this legislation brought forward by the minister. Hopefully in a sitting sometime soon.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 9.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, Bill 60, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 60, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act." (Bill 60)

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

The amendments outlined in Bill 60 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, other than incorporating gender-neutral language, are brought forward at the direction of the House of Assembly Management Commission. In July 2023, the Commission, in accordance with its authority for the financial and administration oversight of the Legislature, approved an organizational restructuring for the House of Assembly service.

The new structure formalizes the structure that evolved in recent years to expand capacity in parliamentary procedural support and to strengthen in corporate knowledge management and was operationalized within existing budget appropriations for the Legislature. In approving the new structure, the Commission identified several amendments that are required to the act. In particular, to remove references to an abolished position and to specify the delegation of authority in the absence of the Clerk.

The new structure, as approved by the Management Commission, has been implemented. These amendments are required to make the structure consistent with governing legislation. In addition, this bill includes a proposed amendment to address an issue identified in the Audit Committee provisions of the act, as they do

not provide for an acting chair if the position of chair is vacant or the chair is unable to act.

This is particularly pertinent if these circumstances arise during those times when statutory deadlines are approaching related to the Audit Committee's responsibilities under the Legislature's stringent accountability framework. This bill includes an amendment that would allow Audit Committee members to appoint an acting chair in those circumstances so that the committee can continue to fulfill its statutory requirements.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll be very careful now not to be in breach of Standing Order 48(1): Relevancy. So I have to choose my words very carefully on speaking to this, but I am pleased –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: Precedence.

I'm pleased to speak – myself and my colleague for Conception Bay South are both honoured to serve on the Management Commission. This is just a restructuring, as the minister had stated, and he did state that we're probably the last jurisdiction in Canada, the 10th province now, in order to realign to do that – he may stand on a point of order now after I finish.

I can see he is preparing to stand on a point of order, but we may be the last. That's not uncommon in this House that the last of legislation across Canada that we may be the last to do so. When we had the retirement of the Clerk Assistant, Elizabeth Murphy, we didn't replace that position after. That one was held in a vacant position, with the idea from the Management Commission

that we would look at a realignment. This bill is doing that. It's looking at a realignment and eliminating the position of the Clerk Assistant.

The viewers in Bonavista are going to say now, well, that's going to put a whole lot of pressure on the remaining staff, and it does. We are fully aware because you retract one from this crackerjack team and it does put a lot more influence and demand on the existing officials. We're quite confident that they will be able to handle that. It incorporates gender-neutral language, which is what all new legislation would do.

This decision of the Management Commission occurred on July 23. The review had to be done within 120 days. I may stand to be corrected on that. Anyway, the review is complete and we have that in front of us now. Again, we will abolish the position of Clerk Assistant.

The minister did state that we had a situation, earlier, in one of our committees, in the Audit Committee, that we never had the power in the act to be able to appoint an alternate chair for the Audit Committee at that particular time. This bill will give the committee the ability to be able to appoint a chair when they do the important work that they do in the audit.

So we are in favour of this bill, speaking on behalf of the Opposition, and look forward to a couple of questions in Committee.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll be brief. We understand the rationale for this and understand that this is something that needs to be done to make adjustments, obviously. One of the considerations is making sure that the Audit Committee can have an alternate chair in certain situations.

So it's housekeeping things and also for understanding the realignment of the staff for the House of Assembly. I've been talking to my colleague who sits on Management Commission. She explained what's going on here to me.

Like I said, we here in the Third Party agree with these alignments and we're happy to see them come to the House.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Justice and Public Safety speaks now, we'll close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker, and thanks for everyone for agreeing to move this along quickly.

Thanks to all Members of the Management Committee and staff as well and to you, Speaker, as you sit at the head of the table there. I appreciate everyone's hard work.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 60 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 (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly

Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act. (Bill 60)

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

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

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 60)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I move that this House do now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 60.

SPEAKER: Seconder, please.

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by the Government House Leader.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 60.

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.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 60, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act" (Bill 60)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

I just have a couple of questions, Chair, for the minister.

Does the minister foresee any further changes occurring within the organizational structure in the near future?

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

J. HOGAN: I'm going to make a joke because he sits on the Management Commission as well, so he knows the answers before he asks them.

But no, nothing immediate in the near future in terms of the sitting of this House, that's for sure, this session I should say.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: I was aware of the answer but I just thought that the viewers would like to hear it.

Earlier you indicated that there were no additional costs involved, but will we see new positions up for reclassification?

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

J. HOGAN: Yes, we will. These costs will be operationalized within existing budget appropriations for the Legislature and there will be a review of positions going forward.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: That's all the questions I have, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Further questions?

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 40 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 40 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 40 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, the title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 60 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 60.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

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

B. WARR: Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 60 without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed that Bill 60 be carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 7, second reading of Bill 54.

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, I'm honoured to rise and bring the concerns of the District of Placentia West - Bellevue to the floor of the House of Assembly. I just wanted to say thank you for that opportunity.

I sat in on the briefing for the municipalities and LSDs and a lot of it was housekeeping in nature. But there were some things there that I had some concerns with, I guess, because I have a lot of LSDs in my district and I wanted to talk about that first.

The thing with LSDs is that it's not like they're not contributing to the province. I'll take South East Bight for an example. South East Bight is an isolated community. It's not an island but they get there via boat. I've heard people complain about the fact that there's a boat that goes over there. But the enterprises that are fishing over there and their taxation are more than paying for that boat.

South East Bight is the only community, which is an LSD, in Newfoundland and Labrador that's 100 per cent employed, 100 per cent. But I can't get a bit of lumber from Active NL to do their footpath. It was put in by government, but now that's it's dilapidated we're not going to maintain it. I just don't get that.

I really am wondering why the act is brought in to make some administrative changes but

they're not necessarily helping the LSDs to thrive. If you're going to say there's a discretionary business tax for an incorporated community, then why not do it for an LSD? I don't understand the difference. Why would they need to be incorporated? If they go with this, they get to name their own mill rate and everything, but I understand that they're getting phased out over the next three years. They have no access to their government services other than – it kind of makes me bewildered to be honest.

I don't even know really the approach to take on it, because if you're paying taxes in South East Bight, what's the difference in paying taxes in St. John's? It's all the same tax rate. We increased the income tax rate here in the province, the province's contribution, and raised another \$500 million. We have to pat ourselves on the back because we're doling that out. We're not doling it out to all people.

Rock Harbour, it's just off from Marystown, in Spanish Room, they need roadwork. I've had requests in for three or four years now, but because they're LSDs, they don't really get to attach themselves to MCWs and stuff. Municipal Capital Works is so important; I think there should be some way, somehow, that an LSD can attach themselves to some Municipal Capital Works. If they want them to do the taxation and they want to bring them in that they're going to eliminate the chairs and the boards, then why don't we give them some incentive as to why they're coming in?

The LSDs are moving into the act from the regulations, which I think is positive. That's a positive thing, there's no doubt about it because they're opened up. I'm not sure, in an LSD, that elections every four years would work because sometimes the difficult piece is to get people to sign on for the two years and to have that commitment because in a lot of our LSDs, you have to understand, we have rotational workers and we have people that have to leave their

community because there is no big industry in their community. They might have to travel to Bull Arm to work, we'll say, or they might have to go to Marystown to work or Vale, which are all in my district, but the thing is we have to have some incentive. We have to realize that they're paying taxes the same as everybody else and they deserve to have some government services like the upkeep of their town.

Like I said, I've got a footbridge over there – Miss Ward. Am I allowed to say her name? My constituent, Loretta Ward in South East Bight, wonderful woman, excellent community-minded person. Her and I have been trying to work with this now for about two or three years. There is a little B & B there and this little footpath would be perfect. The footpath, I don't think it would wrap around inside the House of Assembly. We're not talking like a big implementation or piece of infrastructure. It's rotten and the seniors in the community, that's where they go for a walk. It's around Foxes Pond and this is a safety issue.

So what I tried to do, I knew that we didn't have any opportunity to get into MCWs and all that kind of stuff but I had talked to the Minister of Tourism saying that I would like to be able to get them some money from Active NL because this is a piece of infrastructure that we put in – not in my time, not in the last four years, but now that it's getting a little bit dilapidated, I think why would we not fix it up. Loretta Ward has convinced the people of the community, they offered that they would do the labour for free, they just wanted the material. We still couldn't do it. I thought they would be able to get \$999 as an LSD but because they're not incorporated, they don't.

They're 100 per cent employed so I don't understand how we're not able to give back to these communities that give so much. We have to partner with them. These LSDs want to be our partners.

You take Monkstown and Davis Cove, well if Monkstown and Davis Cove were able to avail of the discretionary business tax, then maybe they will be able to garner some revenue from Grieg for the operations that they're doing, tearing up a 26 km dirt road.

I've had motorcyclists, when I first came into office, tell me that the road to Monkstown, 26.5 km, was more comfortable to drive on than some sections of the Burin Peninsula Highway, which is paved. Monkstown road is getting some grading and stuff like that, but because there's so much more activity with much heavier and larger trucks, that it's deteriorating on a regular basis.

Like I said, it would be a great idea if we could get some community benefits agreements from those businesses, whether that's through taxation or through a stipend that they receive as community benefits. They deserve it, too, because we are pushing on top of them in their own community but there's no benefit in it for them. So there's a lot to be said about that.

Mandatory waste collection, I agree with that wholeheartedly because here in the Official Opposition we do believe in the green future, but we know that it's going to take a transition. One of the really base things that we can do is waste management. We don't want people burning their garbage or doing illegal dumping or anything like that, but when you start shutting down facilities like in Sunnyside, there's less opportunity for those LSDs to get rid of their garbage because they have to go further to drop off their garbage.

I know that our waste management team on the Burin Peninsula and the Jean de Baie, I'll give them a shout-out because I think they do tremendous work. I really think they do tremendous work. Right now, with Sunnyside's bulk piece coming out, and we have to use Clarendville and Whitbourne, it would be Jean de Baie that's the only waste facility in our district. I'll give a big shout-out to the guy that runs the show, a good buddy

of mine, Joe Pittman, and he deserves it. He puts in a lot of effort to quality assurance and making sure that things are running smooth. We're doing a good job with our waste management.

It was actually Mr. Pittman that helped me go out in South East Bight and now we have a program in place where we send a dumpster over there and it sits on the wharf, everybody brings their waste, then the boat takes it back across. We put a new empty dumpster on there and when the boat goes back, it lays it back on the wharf. They have waste management and they're getting rid of their waste every week, same as everybody else.

They are paying the same price as everybody else too, I will add. So they're not like they're getting this for free, but they are only too glad to have it because prior to that I think there was some garbage being burnt on the beach, which they wanted to get away from. I was so happy to work with them on it and to work with Mr. Pittman. We went over and visited a couple a times, but it had to be the volition of the LSD.

The whole thing about what I'm saying here is that I listen to my LSDs, I know what their needs are. I just don't know if the other side understands that they need help, too.

Whether it's regionalization or bringing in shared services and stuff like that, then it's very unfortunate, I think, that LSDs are not given a little bit more respect and given a little bit more opportunity to apply for, whether it's roadwork or it's grading or it's a footpath or it's a walking trail or whatever, they should be able to attach to their government services. too. Because guess what? People in LSDs pay taxes, too. Guess what? The government can do two things, spend or save and we're not doing either one of them properly.

Any assets that they have must be insured. For an LSD up in the list point, they weren't necessarily allowed to own assets. It was

stuff that was in the community. Again, I'll go back to South East Bight, they have a school over there and we want to make sure that the community and the children in that community are able to use the gym afterhours in the school and stuff like that. That's why we were working with the NLESD to make sure that the principals were on board and the board was on board. But now that that's going into core government, I kind of wonder how that's all going to work as well.

The one thing I was really happy that was coming into the fold with this municipalities and LSD upgrade to the act was the fact that they can now establish and run physical fitness facilities or recreation facilities. That gives them a great opportunity, but the problem is that if they want to do that, where is the money coming from upfront to have those costs that are going to be significant for a smaller town?

I have LSDs that go from eight leviers a year to probably 75 or 80. We have a lot of our LSDs and stuff that are off long branches, yet we're not necessarily maintaining those roads the way we're maintaining others. They don't have any impetus or any ability to apply, all we can do is ask. If it happens, to me, it's probably because the depot has a soft spot in their heart.

But you take Fair Haven, 12 kilometres from the Trans-Canada Highway, there's not really a lot of business ability there, and the community is aging. They have a volunteer fire department. God bless our volunteer firefighters because without them a lot of our communities just don't exist and I'm being quite honest in this. But, like I said, when Fair Haven needs roadwork or anything like that, then they're kind of over a barrel, really crossing their fingers that they're going to get something.

So I think, in the legislation, we could have done a little bit more to include them to apply. I mean, we have lots of communities

and towns and municipalities that apply for MCW or apply for Active NL or anything like that, that get denied because of their application. I just want them to have the same opportunity to apply. I think that's only fair. I think it's a great opportunity to really bring them into the fold of being with our other communities and having that ability.

When we tossed around the idea of regionalization, I think when it came to the floor, for a lot of us that had many communities and LSDs and unincorporated areas in their districts, we wanted to weigh in on that because I didn't think it was fulsome enough. Consequently, it went back and they kind of held it so we could explore it a bit more. But then we get an upgrade to the act, the Municipalities Act, and now all of a sudden it's including the LSDs.

So are we doing regionalization through the back door? Is that what we're trying to do here? I really don't understand. Why would we not treat them the same? Like, we're making an act. We're still keeping them different but we want to make sure that they're contributing to – I don't know if it's MNL or if it's to the municipalities taxation regime, but that's what I'm saying. That piece is just not clear.

The one common sense thing that I think was already in place and through integrity and respect and conflict of interest, I guess, the fact that your LSD chair cannot be the fire chief. That just makes sense to me. I can fully agree with that. That gives an opportunity to know that not everything is laid at the feet of one person because our volunteers are the heartbeat of our province. There are no two ways about that. I cannot do my job without volunteers.

I have one paid fire chief and 16 fire departments. Everybody else is a volunteer. I think they're amazing, what they do for our communities, but we need to support them. We need to make sure that we're rolling out our FES, Fire and Emergency Services, allocations in a more timely manner. Like I

said, I've got Baine Harbour there that they're like a regional service, yet they're driving an emergency truck to the scene with 450,000 kilometres on it. I don't understand how they're keeping it together.

But because of our volunteer firefighters and their abilities and we've got people that own enterprises that are on the volunteer fire department, these fellows are pretty mechanically inclined. So I think that is the reason why we're able to get away with it. It is not the fact that Fire and Emergency Services are coming out and fixing that truck. They are fixing the truck.

Now, they raise a lot of money and all that kind of stuff, the communities around there – and I will give a shout-out to Rushoon, Parkers Cove, Boat Harbour, Brookside, Petite Fort because they support the Baine Harbour fire department like nothing else.

I can't wait to go there on November 11 for their firefighter's banquet because the people in the room – I mean, you're talking 200 to 300 people coming to this banquet. That's how much support they get from all these smaller LSDs and incorporated areas and stuff like that.

But they also look after Route 210, the new Don Jamieson Highway. I want to give a shout-out to Mr. Jamieson because I think he deserved to get that highway named after him, I'll be quite honest. He's from Swift Current, so a shout-out to him, and the family. I know the family is very impressed that they went forward with naming it the Don Jamieson Highway and I would have liked to have been a part of that ceremony, because while the family kind of thing is not necessarily the same stripe as what I wear, I respect them and they're doing great things in the Swift Current area and they always have. They're community leaders.

But if we're going to put in that municipalities can have a discretionary business tax, I think it would be only fair that LSDs would be able to do that same thing; I

don't think that is a big stretch. I think that when we look at the tourism tax of adding 4 per cent to a bill, whether it is Airbnb or hotel or anything like that, I think that should be offered to LSDs as well.

Why do we stop short of doing the right thing all the time? That is what I wonder. I've said that many times here in this House and many of my colleagues have said the same thing. You know, it is like we're patting ourselves out on a senior supplement of 5 per cent when, at the time, the inflationary rate was at 5.2 per cent. It is just not enough sometimes.

I think that is what I am trying to say with this legislation, Speaker, because it is about working with people. It is about trying to – much water raises all boats. So why don't we just raise all those boats? But when you have, like I said, a town in your district, like Southeast Bight, that are 100 per cent employed, I don't think there is any reason for us not to be able to support them through Municipal Capital works or FES allocations or anything like that. We should be able to help them no different than a municipality, especially the fact that we're moving them in now and we're going to get rid of the poll tax, we're going to ask them to do a mill rate – and that's all set by the LSD themselves, so it's not like we're coming out and telling them every house is going to be taxed 20 per cent or anything like that. That's not how it works.

It's going to be phased out over three years, so we have time to get to the right point to make it all happen and make sure it's going well. They look at a base plus a percentage, so I think that would be lucrative. But, again, that's for municipalities, not necessarily the LSDs. Like I said, I think this is an interesting piece of legislation. We just need to make it more robust and a little bit more fulsome so that we include everybody, as opposed to excluding anybody.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Warr): Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Just looking at this amendment, Bill 54, I wasn't going to speak on this bill; 146 pages, it's a large document. My colleague from Labrador West spoke on it and he raised practically all the points the Third Party wanted to raise, but I think I'm going to lend my voice to this amendment.

As I said, 146-page document being introduced, and I listened to my colleagues over on this side of the House. What was consistently said from this side of the House was how quickly this came about, and the fact that as MHAs in the House of Assembly, part of our responsibility is to make sure legislation that comes before the House of Assembly is reviewed, that we look at the big picture for the province and we make that legislation that's brought forward is properly debated.

Speaker, what I heard was concerns, and my fellow colleague from Labrador West raised it as well: How can you debate legislation when you don't have time to review it? How can you ensure that aspects of this legislation meet the needs of the people, if you don't have time to review it? My colleague from Harbour Main, I listened to her yesterday and the concerns that she raised. Because at the end of the day, Speaker, I know her as a very dedicated MHA. She wants to make sure that she's doing her best to represent not only her people from her district, but the entire province.

I've listened to everybody over on this side and they have that same challenge: we want to make sure that the legislation that comes forward is properly debated. But in actual fact, it was brought to us Monday;

first reading, Monday. Then on Tuesday, in the morning, we were given a technical briefing and then we were expected to debate it in the House of Assembly Wednesday morning. That was second reading.

For me, what's important is, it was only on second reading, could I share this document, could I share this legislation. So Wednesday morning, I took this legislation and put it out to my Inuit Community Governments and to Nunatsiavut Government. I brought it to the Finance Minister of Nunatsiavut and said this is actually now, we're actually debating it, it's in second reading. Will this impact the Inuit community governments? Because the Nunatsiavut legislation that guides them to run their municipalities, the Inuit Community Governments, is tied to the legislation, this provincial legislation.

Speaker, I asked and I didn't have time to get an answer back: Were you consulted? But in actual fact, I was speaking to AngajukKâk Barry Andersen in Makkovik and he said if there was any consultation, it was very, very little. Now, what they've done is they've gone back to legal to get legal advice and say how does this impact us and do we have to change our own legislation?

That's how my district is impacted. I could say for every single person on this side in their districts, their municipalities are impacted. We have to challenge were they consulted? Because, again, what we're seeing is very little consultation of the important stakeholders that are going to be impacted by legislation.

Speaker, if I believed in magic and somebody brought a genie in a bottle to me and the genie popped out and asked me three wishes. I tell you, in my district, I would like to be able to help my people, but one of the things I'd like to do for this entire province is I'd use one of those wishes and I would say: Genie, my wish is that this government and future governments will

bring forward legislation that's been duly consulted by the people and the stakeholders that would be impacted.

For example, I would say to the genie: Bill 54, an Act Respecting Towns and Local Service Districts, that's a prime example of where stakeholders weren't properly consulted. Where the MHAs have a responsibility to debate legislation, make recommendations and challenge the government where they see gaps in the intent. The intent is to improve services, to improve the quality of life for people in the province, Speaker.

I would use one of my badly needed wishes to actually get something done about the way this government brings in legislation and also to hold future governments accountable because, not only have we seen this, we've seen this is past legislation. I might be going out the bounds of relevance, but in actual fact, I look at the off-road vehicles legislation.

I want to show how that legislation and how it was dealt with is relevant to this decision.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm going to give the Member as much leeway as I can, but I'm asking you to bring it back in.

Thank you.

L. EVANS: So I challenge this government: What consultation was done with the government of Nunatsiavut and its Inuit Community Governments to make sure they weren't caught off guard with things like poll tax?

Poll tax is going to be gone when we adopt this legislation. There are Inuit Community Governments in my district that are actually collecting poll tax. They are quite shocked to learn that poll tax is gone now. Then they are saying we have to change it, but can we

change it? We'd have to change our legislation.

Just the same as the off-road vehicle legislation that came in. In a technical briefing, I was told that my Inuit Community Governments were consulted: Oh don't worry, they were consulted. But in actual fact, when I talked to the actual Inuit Community Governments, they weren't duly consulted. They have a lot of problems with this legislation.

One of the flippant replies from this government is: Oh, they can bring in their own legislation. They can always opt out of it, for example, the helmets and a lot of that criteria.

In actual fact, the Inuit Community Governments are very, very small. They don't have a lot of resources. They don't have a lot of staff. If they opt out of legislation, they have to enforce the legislation that they are bringing in. This is really, really challenging to the functioning of our Inuit Community Governments. So consultation is a must – a 146-page document, Speaker.

You know, I'm at a loss. I'm shocked when legislation is brought forward and we're going to try to debate it in a hasty matter. Then it looks like it's thrown together.

In actual fact, Speaker, there is a need for this legislation. The municipalities have been asking for changes. People in the province understand that this legislation has to be changed. It has to be done in a manner that doesn't create hardships for the stakeholders, for the municipalities. For us, trying to live up to our responsibilities as MHAs, it is a struggle, Speaker. Like I said, I'm at a loss.

There are many things. Talk about the lack of consultation. I'll go back to my colleague for Harbour Main because I know her. She talked about what the expectations for debate were. Do you know something? I

reinforce what she says. The expectations for debate are that you will have the information, the tools and the time to actually go through this, to be able to actually have an intelligent debate.

What's happening is we're rushed into this with things out of our control, to force us to try and debate on the fly. That is not good legislation; that is not good debate.

Do you know something? I don't think anywhere else would it be tolerated. It shouldn't be tolerated here in this House of Assembly. It really shouldn't be tolerated.

It's sad because it takes away from the good intent of bringing in this legislation. The independent for –

AN HON. MEMBER: Mount Pearl - Southlands.

L. EVANS: – Mount Pearl - Southlands, he talked about it's good legislation, the intent of this legislation is good. It enables municipalities to enforce things that they basically have failed to be able to do, things that would improve their municipalities. At the end of the day, we really can't see what's good and what could be considered bad pitfalls, gaps in this legislation because it's all rushed.

The rush is only on the end. The rush is the rush us, not the rush over on that side. They have all the time in the world to prepare this legislation. They have all the time in the world.

It's not just this legislation. We look at the provincial health authorities. We look at gender pay equity. We look at the off-road vehicle legislation. The thing about it is, there's something that stinks when things this important are rushed and it tries to catch us off guard. It tries to not allow us the time to process it, to read through it, to get advice.

For example, here in the Third Party we always go out, when legislation is coming down the pipe to us and we've got the technical briefing, and we're basically trying to read through things. What we do – and one of the most important things that we do, Speaker – is we consult. We reach out. If it's about jobs, we reach out to unions. If it's about cuts, we reach out to the businesses and the stakeholders and the local advocate groups to find out how this is going to impact you.

If we, in our little, small Third Party can do that, a government with the whole system behind them should be able to do that. Also, they should be able to extend a courtesy to us so that we can do the job that our constituents, the residents of the Province of Newfoundland, elected us to do. They elected us. They elected us to make sure legislation is thoroughly vetted and that it doesn't have negative impacts and it serves the positive purpose that is put forward in government. The reason why government brings forward legislation is to make sure the province is properly run.

At the end of the day, Speaker, it's discouraging and I've got to tell you, I don't know how much more over on this side we can be discouraged. I wonder if the general public knows what's going on, they, too, must be discouraged with this government. It's unacceptable. Everybody over here has talked about how it's unacceptable. The groups and the people of the province is impacted by bad legislation, by legislation that wasn't allowed to be properly debated, about solutions that wasn't allowed to be put forward because of this rush. It's doing a disservice.

How many times do we stand here – the Official Opposition, the Third Party, the independents – stand on this side and raise these points over and over again. These are not my points. I wasn't even going to speak on this bill. These points are from what I heard here, the people that have spoken here, the MHAs that have spoken here. We

can't allow this to continue, Speaker. So a lack of consultation is really, really what's harming us.

Just looking at this, so when we're rushed we can't actually thoroughly ask our questions. We can't even find out what questions we should be asking because of the timelines imposed on us. It's almost like a game. How do you win this game? Well, you catch them off guard. Anyone that plays games when you're growing up, how do you win the game? Catch your opponent off guard. How do you catch your opponent off guard? If that's the type of strategy that's going on in this House of Assembly, then it's shameful strategy. We're supposed to be better. Honestly, how can we have respect for this legislation, for the process?

I have to say it's not the staff and it's not the departments who work so hard. A lot of them are short staffed, overworked. This is not about the civil servants that help prepare such legislation. It's not about stakeholders and advocates not doing their job. At the end of the day, how can you do your job when you're not even consulted or if it's all rushed? To me, it's really difficult.

Speaker, that's the reason why I'm speaking on this bill. I just had to put that out there. I just want it to go in *Hansard* that this is just another example of legislation where they're trying to catch us off guard and not allowing us our due diligence, not allowing us to fulfill our responsibilities as MHAs and that's a failure and it's a sad reflection of this government.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs speaks now, he will close the debate.

I'm recognizing the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

Always a pleasure to stand. I'd like to acknowledge the contributions from the Members opposite. I'd also like to acknowledge the three MHAs from the opposite side who actually attended our briefing prior to second reading.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: I think, a long time ago now, the Law Clerk of the day here pointed out to me that the purpose of second reading was to establish the need for the bill and general agreement of the House on the overarching principles behind the bill on offer. What I have heard over the last two days is clear support for, (a), a need for the bill and, (b), the overarching principles of the bill.

From the point of view of going down into the clauses and that kind of thing, that is the role of the Committee stage. I really look forward to maybe two or three days after the break of Committee stage. I have extensive information to be able to supply to the House.

From the point of view of consultations, I'll comment on that and there are a couple of things kind of down in the weeds which are errors or facts that have been raised and keep being repeated, and I think they need to be dealt with at this stage.

Consultations on this bill began in 2018. There is the *What We Heard* document. It's been on the website since 2018 and describes a three-phase process that began at the end of 2018. That has continued since. It was interrupted by COVID and the process was hived off into a parallel path for a short period, a year or so ago, when my predecessor introduced the *Municipal Conduct Act* which had, originally, been part and parcel of this bill, and that was done separately and has proved to be a foundational piece and is up and running.

In actual fact, this piece of legislation, in its inception, already began nearly 18 months to two years ago. So that is the process. The consultations have been extensive and with regard to Indigenous communities, the act here, the bill here is proposed and indeed our discussions, through Indigenous Affairs, clearly state the supremacy of the *Labrador Inuit Land Claims Agreement Act*.

Unless they choose to vary it, provincial legislation holds. If they wish to continue with the poll tax, they have three years, Speaker, to bring that in and do it the way they would like to. Indeed, they can throw this out completely and keep the Municipalities Act if they are so inclined to do. They can go beyond this if they choose to; that is entirely down to them. We received no negative feedback at all from the AngajukKâk or the communities in LILCA and in Innu Nation.

So from the point of view of consultation, I have had, personally, regular meetings with MNL, with PMA, I've had encounters and formal conversations with LSDs over the course of my short time and my predecessor had several round-province trips over the course of her tenure and this is all incorporated in this. What we would like and what you got, it's here.

The third piece, I think, really needs clarifying: the role of LSDs. LSDs are valued and valuable part of the governance structure of municipalities in general. There are high-functioning LSDs, as colleagues on the opposite side of the House have pointed out, and there are towns that function very badly. It is not a function of prejudice or some kind of dislike of one form of governance over another. We have left the options open for LSDs to be formed. We have left a pathway for high-functioning LSDs to change their governance model, if they so wish.

LSDs can apply for Municipal Capital Works. They can apply for community grants. They charge fees. They have no

legislative authority to levy taxes at all – no legislative authority to levy taxes at all. There are no LSDs levying taxes. That misinformation needs to be quashed here and now. That will not change under the proposed wording of this bill.

It is the view of some – and MNL is part of it – that if there is a high-functioning LSD that would like to have a taxation scheme, there is a route open to them. It's called becoming a town. That's essentially the difference between the two.

Yes, there are some perks. There's a lot of autonomy if you become a town, which you don't get as an LSD. It's also a balance, and that balance is important, because regardless of whether it's municipal taxes or provincial grants, that money comes from the same group of people. It comes from the taxpayers of this province.

The more you can spend, the more autonomy you can spend, the more transparency and the more accountability you must have to show what you are doing with your public's money. That's why we have all the mechanisms we do: the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*; the *Financial Administration Act*; the *Revenue Administration Act*; the whole Public Accounts process is around holding our feet to the fire about how we spend money. We need parallel mechanisms, proportionate mechanisms, for levels of governance. Towns have an onus, LSDs may be asked to provide that information and there's now certain documents that they will have to have available for their own residents to look at, should they wish to question decisions or be informed about decisions of their communities.

I'm not going to belabour these more granular and more operational clause-by-clause things. This is not the place. Second reading is not the place to do that. Second reading is about: Was there a need for the bill? There was. The old one is out of date,

the language is archaic, and I would take great issue with comments I heard yesterday about changing gender-neutral language, including gender-diverse language, as being simply superficial. That is insulting to the diversity and inclusion segments of our population. I take issue with that. You can find it in *Hansard*, Sir.

From my point of view, I commend the support from the opposite side of the House for the need for this bill and for the general direction of the overarching themes. I really look forward to a long and protracted discussion in Committee.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that this bill be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Towns and Local Service Districts. (Bill 54)

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

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

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Towns and Local Service Districts," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 54)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to move the following resolution:

WHEREAS subsection 16(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* requires that an independent Committee called the Members' Compensation Review Committee, be appointed at least once during each General Assembly; and

WHEREAS in accordance with subsection 16(2) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, the Speaker has consulted with the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and the Third Party on the appointment to the said Committee; and

WHEREAS the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and Third Party have agreed with the introduction of this resolution; and

WHEREAS under subsection 16(4) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, a Members' Compensation Review Committee appointed under this resolution must report to the Speaker on its recommendations within 120 days of its appointment;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED (1) That Heather Jacobs, KC, is appointed to the Members' Compensation Review Committee with the appointment to be

effective on December 1, 2023; (2) That in accordance with section 16 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, the Members' Compensation Review Committee shall inquire into and prepare a report respecting the salaries, allowances, severance and pensions to be paid to the Members of the House of Assembly; and (3) That in particular, the Committee shall: (a) recommend the annual salary for Members of the House of Assembly; (b) review and make recommendations regarding additional salary provisions for positions identified in subsection 12(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*; (c) recommend a formula or means for making annual salary adjustments for salary amounts referenced in clauses (a) and (b) above; (d) review and make any recommendations regarding the current severance pay policy for Members of the House of Assembly; (e) review the current provisions for Members pensions and provide any recommendations for adjustments.

AND THAT as part of its inquiries, the Committee may consult with appropriate persons who can assist the Committee with respect to its required duties and shall consult with the current Members of the House of Assembly and House of Assembly Service regarding any issues identified in the current regime, as well as any administrative, legislative or other impacts of proposed recommendations;

AND THAT the House of Assembly shall conclude any contractual arrangements required to carry out the intent of this resolution;

AND THAT the Members' Compensation Review Committee deliver its report to the Speaker on or before April 1, 2024.

SPEAKER: Any speakers to the motion?

If not, all those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against the motion, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, that the 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.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until Wednesday, November 15, at 10 a.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, November 15, 2023, at 10 a.m.