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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Wednesday

March 6, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Government Business

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance that notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, March 6, 2024, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of Government Business, and that if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall then adjourn the House at midnight.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that this House not

adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday March 7, 2024.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: From the Order Paper, Order 3.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, that An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act, Bill 57, be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It has been moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act. (Bill 57)

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

On motion, a bill, “An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 57)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4, Bill 36, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 36, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4.” (Bill 36)

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I think this is a very important bill this morning in advance of budget 2024-25. As Members of the House will remember, last year we lowered the tax on gasoline and diesel as a continuation and we are now continuing that for another year.

Today, we’re introducing amendments to the *Revenue Administration Act* to extend the tax reduction on gasoline and diesel of seven cents per litre for the next year, until March 31, 2025.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: It’s a good day.

This maintains a lower price at the pump by 8.05 cents per litre, which includes HST – the lowest provincial tax on gasoline among all provinces.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: The tax reduction for gasoline and diesel was initially set until January 1, 2023. It was later extended until March 31, 2023, and then, in last year’s budget, until March of 2024. Further extending the tax reduction until March 31, 2025, is an initiative of budget 2024 at the estimated cost of \$62.3 million for ’24-’25. So it’s substantive support and investment back to the people of the province. It puts money back in people’s pockets, and that’s very, very important.

Speaker, you’ll remember that we introduced this initiative when the cost of living became very high and inflation was really, really high. Now we’re maintaining this because interest rates are high and it’s impacting affordability. So, we are really making sure that we are responsive to the people of the province. This extended gasoline tax reduction is one of many, many measures the provincial government has put in place to address affordability for its residents, families and businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has announced more than half a billion dollars in targeted short- and long-term measures to help residents with affordability since March of 2022, including increases in the Income Supplement and the Seniors’ Benefit, eliminating retail sales tax on personal property insurance, reducing the cost of registering vehicles, providing free driver medicals for the people of the province 75 years of age and over. These are just some of the initiatives that we’ve put in place.

We recognize that affordability remains a concern for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Our province currently has

the lowest provincial tax on gasoline among all Canadian provinces. Allow me to share what some other provinces have. Speaker, I think it would be interesting for the people of the province to know.

Here in Newfoundland and Labrador, our gasoline tax is 7.5 cents per litre. In – I'll use Quebec. In Quebec, it's 19.2 cents per litre. In Saskatchewan, it's 15 cents per litre. In Manitoba, it's 14 cents per litre. In Ontario, it's nine cents per litre. So you can see that we're substantively below the rest of the country. Alberta is nine cents per litre. Here in Newfoundland and Labrador it's 7.5 cents per litre.

In *Budget 2022* we maintained this measure, that we introduced first in 2022, as one of the many, many ways we're using to help the people of the province put money in their pockets, reduce their expenses, and budget 2024 will continue to build on measures focused on building a stronger, smarter, self-sufficient and sustainable Newfoundland and Labrador through prudent fiscal management.

Speaker, I'm very pleased to ask for the support of the House for us to continue with this initiative. I think it's important to the people of the province, it puts money back in people's pockets, and that's what is important today when we're concerned about affordability.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak on this particular item. It was back in January when we issued a release asking that this gas tax relief be extended for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Finally, the

Liberal Party opposite has listened to us and extended the gas tax relief.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So I'm glad to see that they listen.

Unfortunately, their Liberal partners have imposed an increase in their carbon tax, which will see another additional four cents a litre, almost, added to the price of gasoline and other products as of April 1. This Liberal partnership, of course, was the partnership that brought us the carbon tax originally, when it was voted, not once, but twice, here in the House of Assembly by the Liberal Members opposite.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I don't want Members shouting back and forth. It's hard enough to hear the Member.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: So, again, Speaker, as I said, the Liberal partnership between Ottawa and Newfoundland and Labrador brought us the carbon tax, brought us an increase in the carbon tax and, as a result of that now, we've seen our own gasoline tax being dropped, which is good. But we're also seeing another increase brought on again by this carbon tax, which keeps on giving and giving to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and just keeps increasing and increasing the cost, not only gasoline, but the cost of goods delivered to this province. That is something that has to be eliminated and needs to be eliminated.

While I am standing and talking about taxes, and taxes that have no benefit to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and continue to hurt the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, let us not forget their own

version of the sugar tax, which, again, continues to take people out.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'll ask the Member to stay relevant to the particular bill.

T. WAKEHAM: I will certainly stay relevant and talk about taxation. I won't mention the fact that \$12 million is being collected from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador on behalf of another tax.

Again, this is a problem here with the fact that we still have carbon tax being imposed by the Liberal partnership on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, Speaker, if it's relevant, I'd like to talk about the fact that we're still continuing to pay five cents a litre because of the PUB – the ruling by the Public Utilities Board.

I understand that the Public Utilities Board is reviewing their role, but I would ask for an update on when they are going to release that and at what time can we see the elimination of that 5 cents a litre that the Public Utilities Board is still continuing to pay, which was originally put on the wholesale price as a result of the closing of the Come By Chance Refinery.

So, I think it's time to get an answer on that and how long more does the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have to wait to hear that.

But, again, we're glad to see that the Liberal government opposite listened to the PC Party and they extended the 8 cents a litre tax break.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I don't know, it's nice to see that there's some concern for the cost of living in this province, but I don't think this goes far enough, obviously. We've been asking over here consistently about removing our portion of the HST from home heating, from both residential electricity and fuel oil, as a way to put more money back into even more people's pockets.

Yes, this helps a certain broad spectrum of people, but when it comes to home heating, that's where we really need to start focusing, because there has been (inaudible). So removing the province's HST from the home heating would probably put more money back in the pocket.

My next question on this has to be: So it's been three years –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

One second.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

SPEAKER: I can't hear the Member speak, he's back far, so I ask the Members not to be shouting back and forth. If you want to take your discussions outside, you're more than welcome.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's been three years now since this has been implemented, and every year we come back and see it, but if this has been three years now, why don't we just see the permanent removal of these taxes? It's been three years. So just reduce the tax permanently to this, if this is what you think is going to help people of the province, instead of a surprise in, say, March next year. If you don't review it, then the price will spike again. If this is something you want to

actually do to help people, just remove it altogether.

The second thing is, remove HST from home heating fuel; remove HST from residential electricity, now that you see a lot of people converting from oil to electricity, you want to help those people out, remove the province's portion of HST from that to help people out.

So, you know, we're doing things, you're close, but you're just not there. You come close to helping people, but you don't really cross the line to actually put something back in the people's pockets and actually help people in this.

So, yes, this is a small measure to help people, but you're not going far enough. Look at the cost of groceries, look at the cost of heating, look at the cost of everything that's going on here, this is just a small drop in the bucket.

The minister talked about removing the provincial sales tax from home insurance. That's a very finite amount of people to help there. What about renters? Renters didn't get a break on their insurance. There's a group of people that you're completely missing out when it comes to this cost-of-living stuff that you announced last year that you kind of continue on this year, by the sounds of it. There's a whole massive group of people that you missed out and this is what we're worried about.

So, maybe go back to the table and actually look at how you actually can help people instead of these little dribs and drabs that only helps a little finite amount of people here, a little finite amount of people there. Look at the bigger picture, actually help people. You're close, but you're not quite there.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm just going to take a moment just to speak to the bill. I'm sure there's nobody in this House that's not going to vote for this, of course. We are all hearing from our constituents, I would say on a regular basis, down to every Member, around the cost of – well, there are two main issues: health care and cost of living. Those are the two big ones. There are other issues but those are the two big ones I would suggest.

So, any time we can do something to help people with the cost of living, that we can reasonably do, I think we should. I'm also cognizant, though. I think we all need to be cognizant of, you know, we can say you can go farther. This is not enough and so on. I understand that, but at the end of the day, services do cost money and government – whoever's in government – they still have to provide those services and that takes money and the money got to come from somewhere.

So, I'm certainly supporting this. I know that there are people struggling and I will support it 100 per cent. But we just can't lose focus on the fact that government still has to run and so on, and there are going to be certain things that are going to be necessary in order to pay for doctors and nurses and health care and so on. So, it is a balancing act and I just want to acknowledge that because it's easy for us all to just beat up on the government on everything, quite frankly. There's nothing we can't beat you up on if we wanted to, I suppose, but we do have to be cognizant of that.

Now, with that said, on the specifics of this bill, I just want to point out – and I could be wrong and the minister can correct me if I am wrong – but while we are going to cut seven cents, it says here, gasoline costs by seven cents, unless I'm mistaken, as the

carbon tax rises, so does the provincial HST because there's a tax on a tax. Again, I stand to be corrected, but while we are giving seven cents here, come April, when the carbon tax goes up by four cents, then the province is going to charge a tax on the tax. So, part of that seven cents is going right back into the coffers come April 1.

The carbon tax is supposed to go up quite substantially, I believe, over time. Every time the carbon tax increases, so does the province's share because they're going to tax the tax. That's an important point, I think, that we need to all remember as well. That's perhaps what gives government the flexibility to say we're giving you back seven cents because they know that, as the carbon tax goes up, they're going to get some of that seven cents back by taxing the carbon tax – taxing the tax.

It's not necessarily as big of a return to the motoring public as one might think, but at least they're doing something, as the Member said, and I will certainly support it.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers if the Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board speaks now, he will close debate.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I want to acknowledge again – I know I've done this yesterday and I'll do it again today, and I know Members opposite want to acknowledge the very hard-working people in the Department of Finance. I can tell you, they are seized with the budget, seized with trying to make everything work. We have a \$10-billion budget, and we have incredibly hard-working professional people that are doing a lot of the heavy lift, so I want to thank them for that and thank them for their support and for their efforts.

I also want to say to the Member opposite, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands – just wanted to make sure I had the right terminology – I appreciate him recognizing that this is balancing. This is over a \$62-million impact to the coffers of the province and we do have expenses in this province.

We have put an additional almost billion dollars into health care over the last four years. We have done a tremendous amount in social services and housing, so all of that takes additional revenues from the provinces and we do want to get back to a balanced budget because we do want to drive down the cost of borrowing. These are very important. I know that Members opposite would support me in that and so thank you for recognizing this is a balance and as we move towards budget and moving towards that, we have to make sure that we're being very prudent and responsible.

To the point on the HST, the Member opposite knows that we are part of a harmonized sales tax. It is harmonized with the rest of the country. I'm going to say that it is a common tax base that is set by the federal government. I can't make a decree as to what contains HST and what doesn't. It's harmonized across provinces and, therefore, we acknowledge the fact that HST is on the carbon tax. But, remember, that the carbon tax is set to raise, I think, it's three cents in April. So we collect, what, 0.004 cents or something. It is a minor amount. But notwithstanding that, it is an amount that we do collect on the carbon tax. It is a minor amount, but it is an amount. So, I wanted to acknowledge that.

I think this is a very important move for the people of the province. We are in a period of high interest rates. Hopefully, later this year, as inflation continues to lower, Newfoundland and Labrador is getting relatively low inflation now – relatively low, below the 3 per cent mark – we'd like to bring that down to below the 2 per cent mark. Of course, as monetary policy is

being set by the Bank of Canada, we're anxiously awaiting today to see what they do, but we can expect, sometime later this year, if not today, then sometime later this year for interest rates to start to come down as well. That will help with the affordability for the people of the province.

So, thank you, everyone in the House for supporting this initiative to continue with the reduction in the provincial portion of tax on gasoline.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 36 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4. (Bill 36)

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

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

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, No. 4," read a second time, ordered referred to a

Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 36)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 36, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4.

SPEAKER: And a seconder to that motion, please?

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by the Government House Leader.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

It's moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 36.

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 (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 36, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4." (Bill 36)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

Seeing no speakers, shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: That was short and sweet, Chair.

CHAIR: It was.

L. DEMPSTER: I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 36 without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 36.

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 Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Deputy Speaker.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and directed me to report Bill 36 carried without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have

considered the matters to them referred and direct that Bill 36 be carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: 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 move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider business of Supply, a resolution respecting the granting of Interim Supply to His Majesty and related Bill 63.

SPEAKER: The motion is that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to discuss the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

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 (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 63, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2025, and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

Resolution

"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2025, the sum of \$3,286,755,700."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

Congratulations on being appointed Deputy Speaker – very exciting. We certainly need more women in leadership roles in our House, so congratulations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I am very pleased to talk about the budget and Interim Supply today.

I guess I'd start out with a big announcement in my district recently, which is the new high school in Paradise which is very exciting.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So, my journey started for the new high school in Paradise when we announced the

new school in Kenmount Terrace two years ago, Madam Chair. Mayor Bobbett, the mayor of Paradise, called me and I thought he was going to congratulate me but instead he told me off nicely. He said: What about the Paradise high school?

That was the beginning of my journey to the Paradise high school, I learned a lot about it. I worked very closely with the parents' group and they put together a very comprehensive package of data. They did a lot of work with other parents and parents of other schools. They were just really respectful. We had a lovely meeting with Minister of Education where they presented all the information. I know they also had meetings with the town council of Paradise. So, I just want to say that was a huge win, I think for the parent group, and I know my colleague, Minister Hutton, and I also advocated strongly on the government side for that big initiative. We are so excited for that.

Paradise, they don't have a high school. Paradise is bigger than Mount Pearl now. There are over 26,000 residents in Paradise and the students in Paradise go to high school all over in many different communities. Some of them have hour-long bus rides to get to school, some of the children. So we really heard from families about how they're in this, kind of, weird situation where there is not really a Paradise community spirit partly because there is no high school and the kids go to high school in Mount Pearl or in other communities. So, I really think, and I'm so pleased, that the government announced a new high school in Paradise and that will really help the sense of community. That's such a great announcement.

I also want to talk about the Kenmount Terrace school. Kenmount Terrace now is bigger than Deer Lake; an area in the North part of St. John's, it's just booming. Every time I go up there, there are new streets, new houses coming up and they certainly need a school.

They need more amenities. I look forward to working with the new councillor for Ward 4 for the City of St. John's to bring more services to Kenmount Terrace, Madam Chair. I've been working very closely with the Minister of Education, trying to advocate for that school to include more grades. Because I know every family wants to have their children, if they're coming up through the school system, go to a new school. That is an ongoing discussion and I believe there'll be some public engagement any day now on the makeup of the new school in Kenmount Terrace.

The other big thing I want to talk about, Madam Chair, is the 1.6 busing rule that we announced last year, which will fully roll out this coming September. I think that is a huge win.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: I know, it's a huge win for parents in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially in a populated area such as metro St. John's and will significantly impact, positively impact many, many families in my district.

Last year, we rolled out, I think, up to 50 per cent of schools because we were limited by the number of buses on the Island. With the elimination of the 1.6 busing rule it means that the buses will pick all the kids up and it means that there is no – the kiss and ride is much smaller. I know that's significant at some schools. Elizabeth Park Elementary, for example, there's a significant kiss and ride because most of Elizabeth Park is within the 1.6 rule. Most of the families in Elizabeth Park in Paradise don't get busing. The rule change here will significantly benefit hundreds and hundreds of families across our province, even thousands of families, Madam Chair.

I'm so excited about the 1.6 rule. Within the five schools in my district, we were very lucky that St. Andrew's Elementary was included in the 1.6 rule this past September.

In that catchment area for St. Andrew's Elementary, there are a lot of low-income families. Those low-income families live around Crosbie Road. They live in apartment buildings, a lot of newcomers.

Before that change, we heard from so many families that they had such a hard time going the 1.6 kilometres. I have hundreds of families in apartments on Crosbie Road near Swilers. It's actually 1.6 kilometres for them to go from there to St. Andrew's Elementary. We were expecting – which is why I was significantly advocating for this change – parents to bring five-year-olds down from Crosbie Road, across Freshwater Road, a very busy metro roads, Madam Chair. Now, with the bus, these parents don't have to make that trek.

I actually heard from the school council previously to that, that they had families whose children did not come to school because there was no one available to help the kids come to school, especially when it was snowing and raining. A lot of families who aren't used to a Newfoundland and Labrador winter are not really comfortable. It is scary having to walk on busy metro streets without sidewalk clearing to get to school, 1.6 kilometres, for young children. I'm so, so pleased about the 1.6 rule, Madam Chair.

This September, September 2024, the rest of the schools in the province will be included in the 1.6.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: I know, it's so exciting.

In my district, I have Larkhall, Leary's Brook, Elizabeth Park Elementary and PWC. So, buses will pick up all the students. I think we could be doing a lot better job of celebrating that, because that is a significant impact on so many families' lives.

After that announcement, I had peers and friends and people I knew reach out to me

and said they were expecting to have to bring their kid to school, around the metro area, but now they don't have to. It's going to save them a lot of time and money, and that's fewer cars on the roads. It's amazing. It saves a huge amount of time and effort and money and hassle for families across the province.

I'm so excited, Madam Chair, about our elimination of the 1.6-busing rule. As part of the budget we made – that is requiring a significant budget investment and that will roll out to the remainder of the schools September 2024, so this coming September.

Speaking of which, I have to register my little guy for kinderstart soon, so I'm waiting to see when the kinderstart date comes out but that is so exciting.

Then, Madam Chair, with my few minutes left, I just want to talk a bit about red tape, because that is a discussion that comes up often. I know Newfoundland and Labrador has not done very well. We always gets an F – I'm not afraid to say that – in red tape. I just want to go into that in a bit more detail.

I just want to start by saying, I'm the minister responsible for most regulatory affairs, all the permits and licensing and a lot of ways that businesses interact with the government. Every time I meet with the Construction Association, any of these types of industries who have to work with my department, I always ask them, how are we doing? Are you able to get things done? There's always room for improvement, obviously.

But they always tell me that it's pretty good. We try and have a pretty quick turnaround. I know there are instances where things fall through the cracks or something is missed, but generally people tell me they're very happy with the way our department is handling their business affairs from permits and licensing and we're moving more and

more things online, which makes it easier for everyone. So, I just want to mention that.

Also, when we consider the F grade that we got for red tape, Madam Chair, part of that is they look at, do we have a department that is focused on counting on our rules and reporting on our rules? No, we don't, Madam Chair, and personally I struggle with the idea of doing that. They want us to make government bigger so that we can better report on our red tape.

The other thing, in coming up with the F grade, they take the number of regulations and laws that we have and they divide it by the number of people, Madam Chair. So, actually, in Canada we have the third lowest number of regulations and laws that apply to businesses in Canada. We have the third lowest number. We have 33 per cent fewer rules than Alberta, because they divide the number of rules by the number of people, so we will never get ahead – we will never get an A because we have such few people.

We do need to regulate and I'm very proud of the fact that we have the third fewest rules – only New Brunswick and PEI have fewer rules than we do, but they take the number of rules and divide it by the number of people. That's how they come up with the F. I find it unfathomable, Madam Chair, and it's unfair. I completely disagree with the methodology. They want us to make government bigger so that we can report and we're already the third best in the country.

So, I'm all for red tape. It's something I think about every day. When I bring legislation to this House, I've looked at it through that lens. We, obviously, have room for improvement, Madam Chair, but I just wanted to add that to the discussion today.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you.

It's always a pleasure to be able to stand in the House representing the District of Stephenville - Port au Port, and today is no exception. It's about my district I want to start off my comments this morning because, right now, in my district there is a potential megaproject under way that has a potential to be a game changer to do with wind energy; however, there are still lots of questions and challenges with that particular proposal.

I know that the environmental assessment is still under review by the Department of Environment and the minister is reviewing that. His officials are reviewing that. We have experts reviewing. That review needs to be done thoroughly, it needs to be concise and, at the end of the day, this is about minimizing the impacts on the environment.

For anyone to say that there will be no impacts, they're mistaken. There will be impacts but it's how we manage those impacts, how we manage the impacts on the environment, how we manage the impacts on people. Ultimately, it has to be about the maximization of benefits, not only to the province, but to the people and the communities where these megaprojects take place because, ultimately, that's what we see at the end of the day.

For me, there are examples of Community Benefits Agreements in other provinces that should be looked at, should be reviewed as to what they do in Quebec and in Ontario. There are significant benefits that accrue to the communities where these megaprojects are. That's something that government has a responsibility to make sure they do, to make sure they review and let's get the best deals we can for the people of the province but also for the people in the communities where these projects are located.

Today, I also want to talk about one of the things that the company has said they're not responsible for and that is the roadwork. There is a significant challenge on the Port au Port Peninsula with our roads. Our roads are in deplorable condition and, right now, there is a potential for this project to have a major impact on travelling over our roads. And while the company has talked about moving the actual windmills across country, the construction period and the time that it will take is going to have a significant impact on those roads right now.

Those roads need to be repaired, they need to be resurfaced and, in some cases, they need to be widened. I want to find out from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure – we already know that they have a five-year plan and there were proposals sent out for people to review, but this is a project that, before the environmental assessment, has this potential to have that significant impact on our roads.

And, quite frankly, the people of the Port au Port Peninsula cannot wait for five years to have their roadwork done. They need to have those roads, as I said, repaired, resurfaced and, in some cases, widened, now, before this project, if it gets approved through the environmental process, starts. Because the condition of those roads right now are such that any kind of significant activity on those roads will have a significant impact and cause further deterioration.

So while I recognized that there is a five-year plan for roads in our province, I also recognize the fact that in this particular area of my district there is going to be significant impact on those roads now and we need to make sure that they are repaired now, and they are brought up to standard now.

I hope that in the budget, that will come sooner than later I suspect, that there will be some announcement about the roadwork that includes the Port au Port Peninsula, and the fact that this type of project will be

happening and, as this project moves along, that we will actually do something in advance instead of reacting to it because that's what needs to happen. We need to get our infrastructure in place and those roads need be repaired.

So, again, I look forward to chatting with the minister about that and find out exactly what the plan is to ensure that these roads are brought up to the standards that's going to be needed for the type of activity that could potentially take place on the Port au Port Peninsula over the next few years. So that's part of what I wanted to talk about today.

Of course, I wouldn't sit down if I didn't talk a little about governance and the idea that governance is about governing and governance has to be about helping people. Unfortunately, a lot of decisions that have been made in the past have actually brought in measures that have actually hurt people. We've seen that with the carbon tax, we've seen that with the sugar tax and we've seen the cost-of-living increase because of those taxes. That has a direct impact on people in our province who are on fixed incomes, seniors of our province and others who are on fixed incomes who can no longer afford the basic necessities of life, who are making decisions about whether or not they can afford to heat their homes or buy their groceries. We've all heard those stories.

So those are the types of things that government does when it implements policy that actually impacts people's lives. One of the fundamental questions, we as legislators should be asking ourselves before we approve any policy, is simply: How will this policy impact the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians now and into the future? Because, ultimately, that's what we're here to do. This Interim Supply is about the budget that's going to be brought down in this House for this next fiscal year. So included in that budget has to be policies that actually wind up reducing some of those tax burdens on the people of

Newfoundland and Labrador that we currently see: cost of living and taxation, two of the major issues.

Of course, we cannot stop unless we talk about health care and access to health care. Because every single one of us that are in this House of Assembly know that health care is one of the major concerns of people all over this province of ours, and while we talk about things that we have done, we continue to make announcements, we continue to hear lots of stories about people who have no access; we continue to hear stories about people who have to pay to see a nurse practitioner; we continue to hear stories about people who cannot afford to travel for their medical appointments or, in fact, find themselves having to go to GoFundMe pages in order to pay for transportation because they have to go somewhere to get a speciality procedure done.

These are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians now that I'm talking about. These are people in Newfoundland and Labrador who need their government to step up and help them. That's what we should be doing and that's why I will continue to say that if anyone in Newfoundland and Labrador has to travel for medical reasons, they should not have to worry about whether or not they can afford to get there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: That should be covered 100 per cent.

If we can't find that money in the \$10-billion budget, then we don't deserve to govern, because that's what it fundamentally is. The principle of looking after the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, right here, right now. Let's make this province a place where people can afford to live; where people want to come to, not come from; and where people want to live, not leave.

So, again, let's make sure at the end of the day that the policies that we put in as a government actually do that and people can continue to live here and support their families here. Because let's face it, nobody from Newfoundland and Labrador ever wants to leave Newfoundland and Labrador. They would all prefer to live here and stay here and raise their families here, so let's make sure that all the policies and all the things we do are geared towards that. Let's make that's the way it is, and when it comes to recruitment and retention, we start with our own.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

G. BYRNE: Thank you very much Madam Chair, and congratulations on the post. You serve us well.

I want to say on behalf of the proud people of Corner Brook how important it is for me to recognize the privilege to be able to represent them.

It may sound counterintuitive for a representative for the City of Corner Brook to talk in this House about the fundamental importance of the fishery to our province. Some may not suggest that Corner Brook is a direct beneficiary of the fishery, but that would be a fallacy. There is not a place in our province that does not thrive from the proceeds of the fishery. That would be true of Corner Brook, of Grand Falls, of Gander, of Clarenville, and it is very much so for St. John's and Goose Bay.

So with that said, Madam Chair, it really is important for us all to focus on the purity of the fact that when we talk about the fishery, we talk about Newfoundland and Labrador eternal; we talk about a sustainable future for our province, and something that drives

our economy as it has done for many, many decades, indeed, centuries.

Now, it is important for us not to simply provide a romantic view of the fishery and talk about days past and to talk about how our province was founded on the fishery, however true that would be, it's important for us to talk about the here and the now, where are we in growing our fishery and making sure that this sustainable resource is here for our collective enjoyment years, decades and indeed centuries to come because it is the sustainable industry of our province.

It is not lost on many that I have been an outspoken advocate and critic of the federal government in its recent decisions on redfish. Why? Well, the purity of the issue itself begs an analysis – a critical analysis of what the federal government did. So let me summarize. There was a fishery that was in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Unit 1 – it's now referred to as Unit 1 – that sustained many, many communities for a very long period of time and it was through the act of this management and overfishing that that resource closed in 1995 and remained shut for 30 consecutive years. Notwithstanding a small test fishery that has been embarked upon in most recent years, that has been a closed fishery.

But with that said now, in 2024, a decision was taken by the federal government to reopen that from a commercial standpoint and to allow that fishery to reopen. But under a particular quota key, which was challenging and quite frankly, wrong. The past is the past and the past should be reflected but it should not guide us in perpetuity into the future.

There was a decision that was taken by the federal government to mimic historic access as the quota key as the way that the quotas would be distributed in the 21st century. A 20th century solution should not be the 21st century solution.

We have to reflect on: Why did the fishery close? What was learned from it? How do we adjust it to the future? The fishery closed because of over capitalization of wet-fish trawlers and offshore trawlers in the pond – what I call the pond of the Gulf of St. Lawrence – that created an insatiable appetite for the resource that caused its collapse.

Now, today, because of the stewardship that has been provided by fisheries on the West Coast, Southwest Coast, Southern Labrador, and in other parts of the Atlantic and other parts of the Gulf, the fishery has been able to reopen. But it has done so on the premise that those who destroyed the fishery in the past should be the principal owners of the fishery into the future. That is the very fundamental principle the federal government has offered. It is wrong.

I have called it and will say it again on the floor of this House, the decisions of the federal government have been intellectually and morally bankrupt. I say that very deliberately because, from an intellectual point of view, the federal government has refused to acknowledge that capacity exists to be able to harvest this resource without the introduction of new capacity, which is a fundamental principle in resource stewardship and conservation.

The federal government has refused to acknowledge that plants already exist for the prosecution of this resource without the creation of new capacity. The federal government has refused to acknowledge that a workforce exists for the prosecution of this resource without the requirement of the introduction of temporary foreign workers to be able to prosecute this fishery. Where does that capacity exist? It exists on the West Coast, Southwest Coast, Northern Peninsula and Southern Labrador of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So, the federal government took a decision to allocate the vast bulk of the fishery to companies that did not have boats to be

able to prosecute the fishery, did not have plants to be able to extract benefit from the fishery and did not have workers to be able to work in those plants. They did so to the absolute exclusion of those who exist that can prosecute it without the requirement of any new capacity being built.

That is why, Madam Chair, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans decision in this regard was intellectually bankrupt. They knew not what they did. They did not learn any lessons from the collapse of the groundfish in the 1990s. They simply repeated exactly – almost to rhyme and verse – what happened to cause the collapse of the groundfish in the 1990s. They did so in repetition on redfish.

So, Madam Chair, I say this from the point of view, not just parochially from the interests of my riding, because Corner Brook – if I were to go into a boardroom or a ballroom in Corner Brook and make the announcement: Friends, ladies and gentlemen, I am here today to announce a \$200-million-a-year industry that will employ 700-plus people, create great capitalization and will be in place for decades to come. That's the announcement on redfish. That's what that resources means to my community and to the communities that are adjacent to mine throughout the West Coast.

It cannot be made because why? The federal government chose to preferentially choose those who destroy the resource as now in the 21st century as the first beneficiary of the resource. And they chose to do so by ignoring Indigenous engagement and involvement in the fishery.

We, in the Bay of Islands, have several boats that are already there, that are basically starving, that could use access to this, that are mobile gear, that are otter trawl boats that should be able to have access to this resource. They were froze out. So the hypocrisy and contradiction of the federal government looms large in all of this.

Intellectually, they chose a path which will ultimately lead to the destruction of the resource on a conservation principle and on a moral basis, they chose to exclude those who have a genuine, adjacent right to the fishery and those who have a moral right to the fishery, our Indigenous people. They chose to ignore that. That's why they are morally and intellectually bankrupt in their decision.

So, Madam Chair, we have to nurture our fishery whenever we can. I say this from the point of view, that which can be done today on the West Coast, can be done on northern cod, can be done on all sorts of different resources, on our merging fisheries. That's why, as a province, we need to stand tall and with each other, united with each other to assert our expectation of Ottawa, to be smart, to be conservation minded, to act on Indigenous reconciliation and to ensure that their actions are consistent to those who are adjacent to the resource and who should be the primary beneficiaries of the resource.

So, Madam Chair, one of the things that we'll see this coming spring, which is really important – it's essential. Our government, hopefully supported by all Members of the House, will allow a collective-bargaining process, a price-setting process to unfold in the norms and conventions of a good, fair-minded, free-barraging environment. That has been what has been in place since the beginning of price setting and we feel very, very confident that will be the case again this year as we support our fishers and our fishery.

God bless, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

It was said before me a short time ago that the two pressing issues that we have faced among us, or here in the House that we deal with, we had stated, and nobody disagrees with that, is health care and cost of living. I would say, and the Member who spoke before me may agree, that the fishery ought to be included in our discussions in this House of Assembly.

We have stood numerous times on this side of the House and we wanted to challenge decisions or lack of decisions that were made by government, and we've done it since 2019. We've talked about it. I think government will agree, you've heard us talk about the fishery for quite a number of occasions on this side.

I was trying to think of the last time a Member on the government side stood up and talked on the fishery at length and said that we need to stand tall. We've said before that we ought to collectively go out on the steps of Confederation Building and collectively stand tall with each other to make sure that the federal government and provincial government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: – are in sync. This Member for Bonavista was the one that issued that challenge to the government: let's go out and stand tall, make some noise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: And we did that.

I would say let's do it soon. It's not only the redfish – and I stand with the Member from the West Coast. That's an issue. That's an issue that, if the federal government are intellectually and morally bankrupt, you could probably open the door to say there are other components of what's happening in the federal management scheme that fits with that narrative.

Let's look at provincially. Let's look at where our provincial government has jurisdiction. We control the processing side. We can tinker with our advertising and our marketing. We look at establishing, like I said, processing quotas or processing who enters the processing realm.

I often think back, I joined the House and came to the House in 2019, but I'll never forget the budget of 2022 when the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board stood up and read the value of what the fishery was. Boy, there was some serious banging on the desk over on this side. We had said don't get too excited with that because that was the free market, the price of snow crab was high, but wait until the price of snow crab drops and let's see where we are.

Well, there wasn't so much banging on the desk in the last couple of years; there may not be now. We've said on this side, and you can validate, the fishery comes in at about \$1.1 billion, \$1.2 billion – a tremendous resource. It's the lifeline of the Bonavista Peninsula. It's the lifeline of my district. It's the lifeline of the Chair's district, maybe a significant portion. In a lot of our districts, it is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We feel that it should be a \$5-billion industry, not \$1 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: When we look, we do want a sustainable fishery. That is key. We need a sustainable fishery but let me highlight a few things that we may have going on currently.

Probably a surprise to nobody that we've got another dispute, or we've got harvesters who are anxious about the price that they're going to hit the water on, and we know there are many factors. The only thing being is that once we heard the announcement last year, when the Premier stood with

excitement that we pretty well got it solved – not in those exact words, let Hansard note, but to paraphrase – only to find out that we are rolling back with, probably, the same situation this year.

I can guarantee you the harvesters that are sitting in the gallery are not here to hear us debate other issues because their interest is on the fishery and that is what they're here for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We have the northern cod. Fishers in Bonavista four years ago said: Member – they called me by name – there is lots of cod out there. There is lots of cod out there, I don't know why it's still in the critical range. But, nevertheless, now it is in the cautious because they tweaked the formula.

Some would say they're suspect about the way in which the quotas and what it reflects, what we've got in our waters. I can understand that because, only last year, we stood and we talked about the mackerel fishery, which there was a moratorium. And at the same time, in Norway, they were saying that they had plenty, bountiful, the highest catch rate they ever had. The US were pleased with the mackerel. Newfoundland and Labrador: moratorium.

The hon. Member spoke well about the redfish, I concur, and I go with that.

David Vardy was part of a Royal Commission to look at *New Arrangements for Fisheries Management in Newfoundland and Labrador*. This is dated. This is 2003. We are in 2024. It's dated but you tell me as to whether it still applies: "There is no mechanism to achieve policy coordination and to integrate decision-making affecting the processing and harvesting sectors."

We don't have it. We still don't have it. There are people questioning the value they're going to go on the water for, what it's

going to net them and what return they're going to get. There are processors out there who would find that the Licensing Board would have granted them an increase in processing. They recommended it, it goes to the government and the government do not. They don't understand that process. They don't understand the rationale why it isn't.

That is what David Vardy spoke to in this. He also said: "There is too much ministerial discretion at both levels" of government, he stated. That's another topic that we would have.

I'd go on and say the shrimp industry. I'll never forget in '21, I sat down with a group of people who had invested in the fishery and they talked about the redfish: We must let it mature. Let it mature in our ecosystem. The fillets are too small for the market. Let it mature.

They also said, at that point in time, they predicted 30 cents a pound. That was back in '21 – we know the markets. I drove in '21 and went down to Bonavista on the inner harbour when there was a fisherperson with nine gas cans out by his boat. I drove down because I didn't recognize the man. He was a fisherman from Quebec. He had his young boy on a bike that was riding and his wife was down in the longliner. I offered to give him a ride to get diesel – I did.

Not knowing what to engage this fisherperson on, I brought up redfish because I was just told about letting the redfish mature. Well, what did the Quebec fisherman tell me? We don't believe that in Quebec because once you have an imbalance in the ecosystem, you're going to lose some other species of which they predate on.

That makes sense. We've stood in this House and we've said seals, it went on since John Efford's time and before. Seals don't eat chicken; seals eat fish. There's an imbalance in the ecosystem. Well, he said,

they eat shrimp. And the Quebec fishermen were saying: The quicker we can get them out of the water, to find that balance, the better the fishery is going to be for those who depend and the livelihood on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I would say, we need to do a better job of governing our fishery. If we formed the government, we would have a stand-alone department for fishery –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: – because it's that important.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you.

Well, first of all, I just want to say that I'm extremely pleased to be able to stand up here again in this House in 2024. It's my first opportunity to speak to this session. I guess what I'm saying is it's good to see everybody back here and it's good to see colleagues on both sides of the floor. It's an opportunity for me to maybe talk about a little – I'm going to sort of shift from one resource into another, I guess, a different set of resources here.

But, again, I never forget that it's a privilege and an honour to be able to stand here in this House, to be able to represent the people of your district and the province. On that regard, I send a big thank you to everybody who I represent for allowing me to be here on their behalf.

As many would notice – and, again, this is my first day back – I missed the last two days, but I think I was gone for what I would consider a very good reason, attending what's called PDAC, or the Prospectors & Developers Convention in Toronto, which is basically the Super Bowl for mining for this

country and beyond. It's the world's largest mining show; 30,000 people there. It is a massive, massive endeavor.

But I have to say, it's pretty proud when you walk into this huge convention hall and you see hanging from the ceiling, very prominently, more prominently than just about any other province, a big Newfoundland and Labrador display, welcoming everybody to the floor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: I have to say this – and, again, obviously I'm bias but I also think I'm telling the truth – people are bypassing other provinces to come to the Newfoundland and Labrador booth. People want to see what we have to offer and I'm going to just take a few moments to talk about why they are bypassing other provinces to come to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Again, don't worry, I say to my colleague from the other side, I will get back to talk about the Labrador summit as well, because that's a big topic and sort of ties into this. My friend, the Deputy House Leader, is also very proud of what we talked about in Labrador last week.

So, PDAC: everybody that is involved in the mining world, when we talk about prospectors, we talk about those people who are on the land trying to sniff out the minerals throughout the world, the explorers, the junior companies, the miners; we talk about the supply and service side, right up to the global titans of mining throughout this world.

It's amazing, this is my third time being there. Newfoundland and Labrador has been attending for over 40 years now. So we have had a steady, solid supportive presence there.

But the one thing I've noticed a lot of in my three years there, I've even seen an

evolution in that short period of time, the number of governments and international representatives that are not waiting to hear from us but are reaching out to us to talk to us, just in these last two days, meeting with Japanese representatives, Saudi Arabia, UK, Brazil, the Government of India, it is absolutely fantastic to see these people coming. An aside from this, I think the biggest challenge sometimes that we have, just in the mining sector, is letting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians realize how important the sector is to the province and to the rest of the world.

I think one of the reasons is that a lot of what we do is outside of the capital city, it's outside and people don't get to see it. You talk about the Big Land, you talk about in Central, people don't see and unless you're there, unless you're on the ground, it just blows you away, the size, the magnitude and the importance of that. I say to my colleague from the Third Party, I mean he lives there. He's in there and seeing it every day and having worked there, but someone like myself, when I started visiting and seeing it, that's when it hits you.

So, again, when I'm out on behalf of the province at my first-time meeting with the Saudi Arabian ministry and the first thing that comes out of their mouth is: Tell us about Labrador. That's pretty amazing when they are asking about Labrador. When we're visiting with massive Japanese industries and they take our Critical Minerals Plan and slide it across the desk and say: Can we talk about what you've accomplished here? Can we talk about how we can be a part of what you're doing there? So, I say, it's an exciting time.

I said this in Labrador last week, I know we face challenges, but I got to tell you there's not a jurisdiction that doesn't face some of the social challenges that we have and the challenges that arise from economic prosperity. The more people moving into mining, the more workers, we need to find housing, we need to find health care; we get

that. But I have to tell you, we have the resources here that other jurisdictions do not have. I think the challenge is navigating it and finding the way that we are seeing the benefits 10, 20, 50 years from now. So it's not us sitting in this room, but it's our children and grandchildren that are going to see the benefits that come from the production, from the mining and the exporting of our material – when I say our material, I mean our processed material – to these jurisdictions that are looking for this when we talk about batteries, when we talk about solar panels, when we talk about windmills, we have the things, the building blocks for EVs. We have that right here.

Now, I would be remiss if I did not give a shout-out – and as I said at least three or four time in the last two days, speaking to people in Toronto, whether it's at a reception or a speaking engagement, I always make sure to recognize the women and men that work in the mining division. We have a steady contingent of about 12 people there – it's a big, sizeable contingent for this – and we need them there because these are the people that provide the critical experience, expertise, the technical know-how, people working with the geological survey and – no pun intended – they are the rock stars of the department in terms of getting that across.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

A. PARSONS: Oh, come on, come on, you know you liked that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: And I would be further remiss –

AN HON. MEMBER: You're a gem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: Thank you, thank you.

But I would be further remiss if I didn't take this opportunity in the House to recognize that we're missing an important person and that's the assistant deputy minister. His name is Alex Smith. The reason Alex couldn't be there is Alex is representing Newfoundland and Labrador at the Montana's Brier out in Saskatchewan.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: So, a pretty good reason to skip this event, which is not something he does, but he is out there representing –

AN HON. MEMBER: Another rock.

A. PARSONS: The fellow is out throwing rocks instead of digging them, yes.

But it is pretty cool because Alex actually did represent the province once before, 35 years ago, and it is the longest spread of time between your first time and your next time. He is out there now and he's having a great time. His family is there. So, I have to throw this shout-out to Alex about why he couldn't be there, but we're wishing him the best.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. PARSONS: And picked up his first win yesterday, so we're rooting for him.

Coming back to the conference though, there are a couple different things I want to talk about when we talk about the minerals themselves. The first one, the sort of hot topic right now, is critical minerals; everybody is looking to find them. So they know that we have them, we have the lithium finds, we have copper.

Obviously, one of the new critical minerals for us, that's a Newfoundland and Labrador critical mineral that we were the first jurisdiction in the world to recognize it, is iron ore – high grade, low impurity iron ore. Again, there are lots of people in this House

that know the importance of it. We recognized it in our plan.

Certainly, I don't think I truly recognized the significance, but it has been a speaking point everywhere I have gone since, when these companies are coming and saying: This is what we want to see. In fact, you know it's good because Quebec followed along right behind us. This is a good move; they recognized it now. Now, we continue to work with our federal representatives to have it made known as a federal critical mineral.

But this is a big deal and it's a big deal to these jurisdictions and it helps across a number of fronts, including financing, which is always something that is important to this. Mining is not an inexpensive venture and you need capital investments, especially at a time when it's always fluctuating. Commodities can always be volatile, but, right now, it is going through a difficult time.

So, we talk about all these critical minerals that we have. We talk about the rare earths in Labrador, but the iron ore, recognizing that and what we have there, whether it's our producing mines; whether it's the fact that we have huge deposits there ready to put out there. I'll be talking more about that in the next couple of weeks. We've got a very exciting possibility when we talk about Julianne Lake and what that has to offer. That's a big conversation when we go and people want to see that.

The other thing that's been really – I think we're getting known, again, not just nationally, but internationally, and this speaks to the Members from the Central region, is gold. Gold, right now, is again doing well. The amount of gold representation that we have there; whether it's Matador; whether it's Marathon/now it's Calibre; whether it's New Found; whether it's Exploits, they are all up there. They are all talking. There's a lot going on, on that front, and they've been super steady. We do what we can to support them.

I would toss out that the other thing that they appreciate – and I had a chance to speak to some people about it, though – it's one thing to have the resource, we have all the other ancillary things that you need when we talk about ports; when you talk about land; when you talk about stable government; when you talk about an accessible and a regulatory system that we know and can predict, because I think we take it for granted, but they rave about the workforce. They rave about the workforce and I'm hearing about people down in the Carolinas and they might get 28 metres on a drill. They bring down the crowd from Newfoundland and Labrador, they're hitting 100.

So that just goes to speak to the decades upon decades of experience that our workers have. They are in hot demand here and they are in hot demand all throughout the world.

I can't believe my time is done, Chair, but if anybody wants me to get up again, I'd love to keep talking. I'm only on mining. I haven't talked about the rest of the resources.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Glad to have the opportunity to speak again. Madam Chair, the first thing I just want to speak about and, as I alluded to earlier, two key issues that we hear about all the time is the cost of living and health care.

I just want to focus on health care, just for a moment. I know there were a number of questions asked by my colleagues in the Official Opposition to the minister yesterday about MRIs. I do appreciate the answers that the minister did give, that he is aware of the situation, I guess – I would say dire

situation – and he did allude to the fact that, at some point in time, hopefully, in the not-too-distant future, there will be an MRI up and running on the West Coast and that should, hopefully, I think he said, take care of 20 per cent. I don't want to start quoting numbers now but I think that's what he said, 20 per cent of the wait-list. Of course, he's looking at extending some hours and I think he's indicated that he's gone to the health authority to say, do we need another MRI machine?

I'm not going to pre-judge what the health authority is going to say; I'm just going by anecdotal evidence from all the people who have contacted me and some of the stories I'm hearing. I would suggest that we definitely need them.

One that I just want to bring to the minister's attention if he's not already aware – and he can see it in *The Telegram* today. This is just absolutely shocking. The headline says basically there's a gentleman and he said he's scared to death because he needs to find out if his cancer has returned. Just think about this for a second. He needs to find out if his cancer has returned and he needs an MRI.

Guess when the MRI is scheduled for? January 2026. I'm only going by what's in *The Telegram*; it's right there in the headline. Now, I'll admit I don't have the actual paper, so I didn't read all the story. I don't know all the details. I'm going by the headline and the little subhead under it there. But the gentleman is quoted as saying I'm frightened to death that my cancer has returned, I need an MRI and I'm on the wait-list for January 2026.

Now, if that wouldn't make the hairs on your arms stand up, nothing would. There's nobody – nobody can tell me that that's anywhere close to acceptable. Not even close to acceptable. I mean, it's absolutely scandalous.

I don't know if the minister has read that article, is aware of that situation. I know he can't comment on specific cases. But I would say to the Minister of Health – because I do see he's over there listening intently, nodding his head. I say to him: Please, Minister, just have a look at that in *The Telegram* there today, a gentleman, like I said, frightened to death that cancer has returned and having to wait until January 2026 to get his MRI. If there's something that can be done to review that particular case, I would certainly ask, Minister, that you would do that. I'm sure you will do it, because I find you very accommodating in that way, I have to say. Give credit where it's due.

The other thing I want to talk about – because I got a few odds and ends here – I had somebody message me this morning and this one here goes to the Minister of Housing, the new minister. This is an individual who I've had some dealings with over the last few months as it relates to Tent City and she's an advocate and has been, I guess, engaged in the Tent City situation and other situations around housing over the last number of months. I met with her and took a look at some of the situations in the Carter's Hill area and so on there a while back. But she's also been engaged with Tent City as an advocate. She wanted me to bring this up to the Minister of Housing today because of the urgency of the situation, if the minister is not aware, if his staff is not aware.

What she basically says here is that currently as it sits at the Tent City right now, she says, we've gone from four residents to 13 residents. So there are 13 people apparently that are there right now as we speak. She says we don't have enough tents or heaters for them to ride out the incoming storm. We know that there's predicted to be 65 centimetres, up to 65 – it could be more than that, who knows, but a big storm on the way. She's saying we've gone from four and there are now 13 people there with inadequate shelter, heat and

she's afraid for their safety that this storm is coming.

She's asking – she's actually begging that I would bring this up and that perhaps the minister could speak to his officials, if there isn't somebody down there already, to get somebody down there, to talk to these people and to make sure that they are protected during the storm. She's suggesting that they should be going to the Comfort Inn, if there's a way to get them at the Comfort Inn because other people, I saw in the paper, or on the news somewhere that there are people already at the Comfort Inn. These people could also perhaps be put there, Minister. But this is a dire situation. This is not politicking. This is not talking in theory. This is talking about, according to her, 13 people as we speak who are there in those tents, inadequately sheltered, no heat, with a storm on the way.

So I would ask, Minister, please get your staff, get someone to go down and talk to those people today, if you can, and make sure that we don't end up with some kind of a tragedy, somebody freezing to death there when this storm arrives.

She also wanted me to point out or ask about, the former minister, she says – and I do recall this – had promised that there would be a document that would be released outlining shelter standards, and she hasn't seen that yet. She wanted me to bring that up and ask, when are we going to see these shelter standards? When will that be released? The former minister said it would be done – if it's been done, it hasn't been released. She's wondering when that's going to happen and they'd like to see that sooner rather than later. But the main point are these people that are there right now and their safety. So, on her behalf, on behalf of those people, Minister, if you can get down there and have someone look at that situation, it would be much appreciated.

Now, I've only got a couple of minutes left. There are so many things I could talk about,

but I want to bring up procurement. I know we're going from all different topics here now, but I want to bring up procurement. We had a new procurement legislation that was brought through this House of Assembly, as Members would recall. Members on this side of the House of Assembly, I believe we voted against it. I'm pretty sure I voted against it, at the time, because everything was left in the regulations. It was so broad and all the details, all the important points that one would want to make sure we're taking care of in terms of procurement, all left to the minister, all left to the regulations. Of course, that does not come before the House. There's no debate. There's no vote. There's no nothing.

I've had a business owner in Donovan's who reached out to me and he's reached out to the minister as well. Didn't obviously get the results he was hoping for in terms of that conversation. But the issue that he raises – and it's a good one. I think it's important that government pay attention to this because the minister a while back, not that long ago, was talking about things you were going to do to try to make sure that local businesses got government work and so on. There was some announcement made a few months back about you were going to put in these, I don't know if it was incentives or changes to the regulations or something to ensure that local business benefited from government procurement.

The issue that this gentleman raises is the fact that there's – again, he's telling me and he showed me one specific example. He says there are lots of them out there, but where the department, the procurement agency are putting out tenders and looking for quotes and so on, on products and then they'll have a clause in there: no substitute. So, in other words, if I'm looking for cleaning supplies for a hospital, for argument's sake – that's just a random example – I'm naming it. I'm saying it must be this brand and no substitutes.

That means if there is only one supplier for that particular product, there might be four suppliers that all got comparable products, but you're naming a product and you're saying no substitutes. So in other words, you're writing the tenders to allow for one bidder to win it.

He likened it to the fact that if you're going to be putting up cars and you're doing procurement on cars and you says: Must be a Chev; Ford need not bid; Dodge need not bid. It must be a Chev.

CHAIR: The hon. Member's time is up.

P. LANE: It's not right and it's certainly harming local small businesses.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair, so much.

It's certainly a great opportunity to get up and speak again to represent the District of Ferryland. Today, I'm going to touch on the fishery a little bit and certainly a big, big consensus in my area for sure is the fishery.

Some of the issues that had been going on last year, continue to happen this year with regard to pricing. I know that the government is not in control of that, but last year they were the heroes. They had all the formula worked out and they're back going. We're right back now, it's now March 6 or March 7, and we still have no formula in place and nothing ready to go.

It's imperative that the government get at this. Last year, I had calls from fishermen that couldn't go out. There are certain days they couldn't go out.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: You'll get your turn. You'll get your turn.

There are certain days that we'll get out there. The fishermen call me, they couldn't go out to go fishing. They were told when they could go. The same thing happened in the cod fishery; they're told when they could go.

The minister that is over there now is in charge of issuing processing licences and doesn't seem to keen to be giving any out. You haven't since November. Why don't you get them out? There are people waiting to go fishing now and they got licences that they have to fill and crab they have to catch and they got no where to process it – they got no where to process it.

These licences should be issued. That's where they should be. They're waiting on them and they're since November sitting on a desk waiting. People are waiting to get ready to process them. People are waiting to get processing. This don't happen.

When the crab opens and the price gets determined, the crab fishery don't start tomorrow. These people got to get ready. If they're going to invest in a building and they got to get ready for it, then they got to have licences and they're waiting.

Since I came in here, there are none. I've asked the previous minister twice in my speeches when I speak about issuing processing licences. They said, well, there are not enough people; there's not enough this. That's up to the person that's getting the licence to determine to that, not you or any other minister.

If they want to get the licence, then let them process it. If they can't process it, if you do give a licence, don't let it turn around and sell it to another big conglomerate that can take it and run it all, it's all under one umbrella. Everybody should have a chance. If they can't process the crab, then take the licence back and give it to somebody else who can. Don't let the big guys buy it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Not everybody is going to be in control, two or three companies in control of everything. And I'm not against those companies, they provide a lot of work.

AN HON. MEMBER: You said you were.

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, I want people to have a fair chance. They want a fair chance to process; not for you to determine if they got people that can process it. It's up to them if they want to have the processing. If they can't provide the people, then that's too bad. Then they get their licence and hand it back, not take it and sell it.

That's the issue that's been going on far too long in here, far too long. We have people that are interested in processing and their licence is sitting there. There is nothing done since I got here – nothing done.

I see people going out last year and they called me. They're going out and they had cod quotas and they couldn't sell their cod; none of the plants were buying them. So what an opportunity for somebody to be able to come in and buy the cod to process. I don't want it to go off this Island. I don't think it's going off the Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member for Ferryland is speaking.

Order, please!

L. O'DRISCOLL: They had an opportunity last year to go catch cod and they couldn't go out and catch it, while we're sitting on our hands wondering why they can't sell it. That's the issues they have. These are some of the issues that they have. I'm hearing it every day. I'm hearing it every single day.

We come in here, we talk about that, we don't bring up the fishery enough. We had one-third of a page in a budget when I first

came in here, I think one-third of a page on the fishery on this Island and what we were built on.

It's incredible that they can't go out – they can go out and catch fish, but when they bring it in, what are they going to do, fillet it themselves, salt it themselves? They can't sell it. You have to give them the opportunity to sell it, that's the problem. Somebody will buy it, but they're not allowed.

When I was in the car dealership and somebody wanted to go to Nova Scotia and buy a car, guess what? They could go and buy it; it didn't help us. It didn't stay here but they got an opportunity, they got a choice. They don't have a choice. They have to sell it here. That's the issue we have. That's the issue. That's the issue we have here, they can't sell it here.

Now, you're going to double the quotas or get more quota – you're not doubling it, the federal government is doubling it. But we have the problem of hanging them up of being able to process it. That's the issue they have, being able to process it and sell it.

You can tell them what day they're going to go and go catch their fish. Beautiful day today, not a beautiful day tomorrow, but they have to go out tomorrow when it's windy and their lives are at risk when they're going out some days – determining when they can catch the crab. It don't be fine every day, so they have an opportunity to get out.

I would say this: There are crab fishermen that catches 700,000 and 800,000 pounds of crab, but the fellow that got to catch 30,000 pounds of crab, he has to go out in good weather. He has a smaller boat. He should be able to go out and now he's limited to when he can go out. They're going to tell you you're going to go out next Friday. That's not right. That is not right and

everybody in this House knows that's not right.

Now, no doubt about it, it's a convoluted issue and sometimes we're on the outside of it, but we're not on the outside of processing licences. We're in total control of them and we should be able to fill these licences or give people an opportunity, not our buddies and not whoever else they are who are in the line waiting.

There's a crab plant in these area that are not even processing crab and got a licence. They're sitting there. Issue the licences, let them determine if they're going to process it. That's the problem. That is the problem.

I get so worked up about it because it's frustrating. You take so many calls from frustrated fishermen that are trying to get out and catch their fish or catch the crab and they're not getting the opportunity because they have to go on this day or the next day. It's not right.

We listen to it every day. It's not easy to go out on that step, either side, to speak to it because sometimes it's on the outside of us, I understand that, but we are in control of processing licenses in this province, we definitely are. I had people ask me to get a cod licence a couple of years ago: no. It was in Petty Harbour.

I can list the fish plants when I grew up, and I know nothing about fishery, other than my father was a fisherman and I did fish when I was young, but there were two fish plants in Petty Harbour. There was one in Bay Bulls. There was one in Witless Bay. There was one in Tors Cove. There was one in Cape Broyle. There was one in Calvert. There was one in Ferryland. There's one now in Aquaforte. There was one in Fermeuse and I'm not sure of Renew's after that. They all had fish plants. Now, we're down to two fish plants on the Southern Shore – sorry, three, there's one in Petty Harbour that don't process crab. They wouldn't give them a

licence but they want to. They have a co-op down there.

The Member for Bonavista was with me when we went down and met with them. They'd love to be able to come in and be able to sell their crab but they're tied to where they have to go and when they can go.

It's not correct. It's not right. We are in charge of that. That's the thing that you can control. We can only ask, but you're in control of that. It's something that we should be looking at, in this province, to be able to get more plants, more processing. They have asked for that. I probably didn't ask you, I asked the previous minister, but you cannot say that you haven't had a request for more processing licences.

I realize that you can't give them to everybody, but there's crab out there that's waiting to be processed, somebody else can do it, give them a chance. If they don't do it, you're still in power to take the licence back if they don't process it.

I think that makes pretty much common sense to me. Maybe I'm wrong and it's way deeper than that, but if you're on the fishermen side, they're looking to get it processed. They're looking to be able to get out and go get it. That's what they want. That's what they're fighting for.

We come in here and we talk, the fishery don't come up at all and unless we're going to be up here fighting about it. Really, we got to get on it. You're in charge of it. You're in charge of putting out licences.

The previous minister was, not only you; it's the previous minister. So it's time for us to get down and get looking at this and solve one problem at a time. If that don't work, then it's not your fault. If you give out a licence and they didn't process it, take it back, but right now you're in charge of it, give them an opportunity to do it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Her, hear!

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you for the opportunity to speak again.

Again, I didn't realize – I was thinking it was 20 minutes. When I stopped there, I didn't feel like I had an opportunity to talk about all the extremely positive things that are going on in the province. Again, no doubt that we face challenges when we talk about the challenges across the social sectors and challenges with the resources, but I do feel it's incumbent on me to talk about the positives that are happening as well, especially within this department.

As someone who, when they first came in, was dealing with an oil industry that had gone flat. Basically, did not have wind and hydrogen. Mining was taking a beating in terms of stock prices and then I think we look at where we are now. If there's one thing I've learned about commodities is that they will go up and go down. You need to brace yourself for that and be prepared. I'd also like to think that through the work of the policies that we're implementing, the conversations that we are having, the programs that we're putting in place, I think we will be able to weather some of these storms that will come again undoubtedly into the future.

Now, one thing I want to mention is that the Leader of the Official Opposition mentioned wind and hydrogen. That's certainly a conversation that is topical and I'll address one point that he mentioned which is not solely related to wind and hydrogen, it's related to megaprojects in that is the infrastructure that services getting equipment from point A to point B. What I will say is that, certainly, that's a conversation that we have had over here, that I've had over here.

One community in particular, Cape Ray, when the Maritime Link was being built, their road was decimated by the trucks going back and forth to the point where, many years later, almost a decade later, I'm dealing with constant complaints from citizens who have to drive that road.

What I would say to the Member opposite is that actually is a conversation that goes on in the environmental assessment. It's a conversation that I've had with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. I do think it's a conversation we should have with all players of major projects to ensure that the communities are not left off worse than what they were before and, in fact, it's incumbent on everybody working together to make sure it's at least the same or better.

So, I appreciate the comment from the Member opposite.

Now, one thing, I'm starting to feel a –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

A. PARSONS: – little bit like that movie *Anchorman* here: Loud noises, loud noises.

Now, it's awfully windy in here, Chair. It's awfully windy in here.

I want to come back to last week. So, this week, I had to attend a PDAC. Last week, along with many Members from all sides of the House but including the Premier, the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair – which is her most proud title – as well as the minister and Deputy House Leader, as well as the Minister of CSSD were all there and Members from the other side as well.

And I have to say that the summit was not just based on economic opportunities, it is based on the challenges being faced. But I was really proud to hear some of the business leadership that talked; when we talk about Mike McCann, when we talk

about Joe Broking, when we talk about Jennifer Williams with Hydro.

As I said in most of my mining conversations, including in the last couple of days, I'm not so much discussing mining in Labrador as we're discussing power in Labrador. Power is the driving factor behind future development and future opportunity, but I will point out to everybody that it is a cost and burden that will be borne by everybody. It is not meant to be borne by just ratepayers, taxpayers, provincial government; industry have to be a part of it and, again, we need to find a way. It is going to cost more than what it costs now. There is a recognition and a realization that the costs have gone up and it is going to cost more. But when you look at the price that they're paying in Lab West, I think it is pretty, pretty good. To take some language from Larry David: It is pretty, pretty good when we talk about the cost of power in Lab West.

So hopefully, very soon, we will have that facility study. Again, I am paraphrasing from Jennifer Williams, the CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro: We need to know who wants in, who is willing to pony up, who is willing to pay to be a part of this and what are we discussing. But one important factor here, we are talking to jurisdictions throughout Canada and the world and they're trying to get off coal, they're trying to reduce diesel, they're trying to move forward and they're having a difficult time.

We actually have multiple opportunities for clean power development in this province. The question is: What do we do; when do we do it; what is the cost; and how does that structure go? Now, as I said to Paddy Daly yesterday, I'm not going to come in here and make some big pronouncements here today to make anybody believe that we're ahead of ourselves here. But I'm just speaking about the fact that other places look to us with envy when we talk about that we have the best undeveloped power

project in North America sitting in Labrador. But it is the conversation that has to happen with Indigenous leaders and everybody else. You don't just plow ahead with development without making sure everybody is a partner.

But one point I always give forward here, there are wins to be had by everybody. This is unlike departments or issues where it's a right and a wrong, a win and a loss. In this department and in these opportunities, there's a win for absolutely everybody. There's a win for the province, there's a win for the community, there's a win for our Indigenous leaders, there's a win for industry and everybody needs to feel that they're getting a win out of this.

One of the things that makes me excited, so we're here talking hydroelectricity, we're here talking mining, we're here talking about the fact that wind and hydrogen is going to bring money into this province, create jobs in this province that we never had before – we've talked about this word "diversification" so many times. Sometimes it doesn't feel like we did do the diversification. Certainly, the fact that there was a moratorium on wind for so many years, there wasn't diversification.

To calm anybody down, because sometimes the minute that you talk about renewables, the minute that you talk about green transition, people think that you've forgotten what has kept us here for the last 20 to 30 years. That is our offshore.

I can say to anybody, absolutely anybody, that our offshore is here and it's going to stay here. The point I make to everybody is this: That doesn't mean that we're not going to double down on our renewables. But why would we eliminate ourselves from this global equation? If we take ourselves out of that, do you know where they're going to go? They're going to go to Angola. They're going to go to somewhere else in Africa. They are going to go to South America.

I have to tell you, we have everything here, let alone the product, which is an amazing quality. It's multiple – it's exponentially better than the Alberta product, let alone the produce elsewhere. But when you look at the ESG standards, when the look at the stability within government and when you look at the fact I'm having conversations yesterday about mining operations, millions and billions being invested in governments that come in and say, nope, we're taking it over; we're nationalizing that. They don't worry about that here; they have stability here. They want to be here. I can mention the workforce and I can mention all these things that make it as good as it is.

We are not getting out of that game. What the big players, what the big producers are doing and what we're working with them on is we do have to work on emission reduction. Every player, whether it's an Equinor, whether it's an Exxon, they're all talking about emission reduction and we're going to work with them. Because it's the right thing to do. There is job creation that comes with it. As well as the fact that we talk about little things about improving offshore safety. When we talk about digitalization, digital twinning, electrification, all these things are positive. It's not a bad thing.

In fact, hopefully we're going to continue to talk about I still think there's a window for our offshore gas resources. We talk about that. Not enough has been done. I still think the window is open. I still think the opportunity is there. But we need to make sure that we have a resource here that's quantified and attractive to people that want to come and invest here. They want to come here. We have to do the work, though, to make sure that that's attractive.

No, we will not be pulling out of that space. In fact, I'd like to think that we put our money where our mouth is when it came to the offshore. We continue to invest and we continue to work with them.

Again, anybody who wonders, I had some people questioning, do people wonder about our direction? No, they do not. None of the producers here. None of the super majors. Nobody in that industry should worry about our direction.

Now, like everything in Newfoundland and Labrador, there are always going to be questions about the fact that it's shared jurisdiction. I don't care who's in Ottawa. We're always going to face that as Newfoundland and Labrador on any of our resources. So this is not about being partisan; this is just about recognizing that our job is to represent the province the best we can and we will continue to do that. We've always faced challenges when we talk about our shared jurisdictions.

Whether it's the fishery, whether it's oil and gas and depending on who's in Ottawa, we faced it. Whatever colour representation there, we have faced that. But what I would say now is I'm pretty happy every day with the work that's done here. I'm very happy with the work that is done by the men and women within the department and various departments, and we are going to continue to go out and sell Newfoundland and Labrador throughout the world. We have a lot to be excited about and every chance I get in here to talk about it, I'm going to do so and hopefully I will leave no stone unturned in letting everybody know, in this House and beyond, that there's a heck of a lot in this province to be happy about and it's a pretty good future along the way.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains.

AN HON. MEMBER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Always a pleasure to stand (inaudible) –

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Can I have my 10 seconds back? I need all the time. I ran out of time yesterday. I just wanted to finish off what I was talking about.

I spoke quite a bit about the Seniors' Advocate coming to my district and the value of that, of having somebody at that level come into my district, talk to our Elders, talk to them about their concerns, about their access to food, about their limited income and the high cost of living in Northern Labrador.

I also talked a little bit about the Food Basket. It's a Newfoundland and Labrador government document that really documents how much we pay over the rest of the areas in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The cost of our food is really, really impacting our household wellness for our kids, our adults and our seniors.

I also talked about the cost of heating our homes. If you don't have a warm place to live, it really impacts your quality of life. I talked about the cost of stove oil, to heat your homes. I talked about the cost of gasoline, to be able to go off and access wood to bring back to your community to heat your home; the cost of gas to actually go out hunting, summer or winter, to be able to feed your children.

I talked about the high cost of electricity in Northern Labrador. When Muskrat Falls was being built, the cost overruns were astronomical, in the billions of dollars and everybody was worried about what that was going to do to the price of electricity. The prices they were quoting, that they would be charged, that would freeze them out of their houses, was less than what we are paying in Northern Labrador.

In actual fact, we really have a lot of barriers. I quote myself yesterday, I said: "...

very little was done; we were easy targets.” And what I mean is Northern Labrador was out of sight, out of mind. When the province was doing their budgets, year after year, the finances, a lot of times Northern Labrador was overlooked. In actual fact, we didn’t realize what the rest of the province was getting. We didn’t know about the infrastructure, the upgrades and the maintenance.

When we look at the cost of living in Northern Labrador and the lack of resources and infrastructure, and really it was a failure, I think, on our part to adequately advocate. And we continued – I keep saying in the House of Assembly, Joey Smallwood no longer lives in Torngat Mountains. We’re not going to blindly vote for the Liberal Party, because we know the difference now. Joey Smallwood did not bring in the widowers’ allowance. Joey Smallwood wasn’t responsible for the family allowance.

We know now that was federal dollars, to be distributed amongst the entire province. When we were so glad to get that because before we joined Confederation, we were at risk of starving in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; a lot of times, families were broken apart if one of the parents died. But at the end of the day, the federal dollars that were given to the province to be administered was much more than that, but we never saw that.

It’s so important for us when you vote for an MHA, you have to make sure they’re not just a good person. Oh, what a good old fella. What a good woman. At the end of the day, you have to elect somebody that’s going to represent your district and want what’s best for you and the rest of the province. A lot of this partisan blindly voting really, really did us a disservice in Northern Labrador, and that’s why we’re so far behind. That’s why we have to struggle.

For me – and I keep saying at the end of the day – at the end of the day, there are so many reports out there now that document

the failure to help us. Not to help us, really – the failure that created the problems with struggle with so that we need help. If we were treated fairly when we joined Confederation, we wouldn’t be struggling. We wouldn’t have this intergenerational trauma; we wouldn’t have the addictions; we wouldn’t have the incarcerations –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I’m having difficulty hearing the Member.

L. EVANS: We wouldn’t have all the problems we struggle with. You know, the worst thing for me, as the MHA, is a lot of times, people in my district feel shame for what has happened to them. In actual fact, we need to take that shame and put it elsewhere. We need to put it with the government. That’s one of the reasons why I feel that petitions and Question Period is so important, because that’s the only time we really have the attention of government. At the end of the day, we can’t be silent. It’s so, so important.

Say, for example, the oil to electricity rebate. I listen to the minister and he’s right when he stands up in the House of Assembly to answer Opposition questions and brag that the rebate, the incentives to convert homes in Newfoundland and Labrador from oil to electricity, that incentive is enough to do the whole house so that the resident don’t have to pay, except in Northern Labrador and some places in Southern Labrador as well, because we’re stuck on diesel generating plants.

Now, when you look at it, when did governments know that we were going to have to transition off oil? When did governments know that basically the burning of fossil fuels was contributing to global warming and we were going to have to transition off? You could go back 30 years. So where was Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro? Where was the Crown

corporation in getting us off oil? So who's going to have to get us off the diesel generating stations? It's not Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. No, I talked to them, and I also talked to Nunatsiavut.

Nunatsiavut is a small self-government that doesn't have access to all the federal dollars for Northern Labrador. A lot of that money still goes to the province or from the federal government, but who's going to have to actually get us off these diesel generating stations? It's Nunatsiavut. How many people do they have working on that? Two maybe. When you look at Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, how many people do they have? Engineers, project managers and they've got buildings filled with professionals. But, no, that's downloaded on the backs of Nunatsiavut Government. That should not be a part of their mandate. That isn't a part of their mandate.

Another thing that really, really bothers me, too, is so somebody else has to develop the renewable energy infrastructure and gladly, they're going to net meter it back. But do you know what that is? That's a part of privatization, really. So, for me, we've been overlooked. When I come into the House of Assembly and I realize really how much of a farce this is, it's supposed to be government, really.

But what I found is it reminds me of the stories I read as a child that were fairy tales: *The Wizard of Oz*. Everybody who read *The Wizard of Oz* realizes that moment when you peak behind the curtain – I still remember reading that for the first time – there was no grand wizard. There was no higher power. There was just a little, tiny, little man behind the curtain pulling strings. That really reminds me of how government operates here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The biggest problem is they convince you that there's a grand wizard. They convince you. They get up and they quote union

groups, they quote women's advocates and take their words and put it back as if that's their words. In actual fact, they're doing nothing to help the betterment and the quality of life for people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Also, talking about us getting a pittance. Remember the quote from *Oliver Twist*? Please, Sir, can I have more? That's us, that's Northern Labrador, it's all of us. We've been starved out of things. Now we have to be shamed into asking for more. We're not asking for more. We're asking to try and get something that the rest of the province has been given for years.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, they didn't maintain the houses that were vacant, let alone look after the ones that people were living in that needed supports. For us, when we're looking at the cost of oil: How can you heat your house when you have to spend \$1,000 to \$2,000 in the coldest parts of the winter?

Don't get me started on the PUB. I remember having a conversation with the PUB on the phone and I said: You can keep your name. You can keep your acronym: PUB. But it's not Public Utilities Board, it should be private, private industry, private investment, private resources, partisan, private public utilities board. There's nothing at that Public Utilities Board that's really helping the people in my district access fair prices. No one can understand the way that they charge for oil.

Another thing that really bothers me is when I'm listening on the radio when we're in our price freeze and we're paying 30 to 50 cents more a litre and they're talking, about: Oh, the prices went up in Labrador; the prices went down in Labrador. It didn't go up in Labrador, it didn't go down in Labrador; it's over in Lab West where there was no price freeze.

For us, we struggle.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

CHAIR: You're welcome.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's and Deputy Speaker.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the Committee ask leave to sit again?

J. HOGAN: Presently.

SPEAKER: Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again presently, by leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now recess.

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

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin, I'd just like to welcome everyone in our public gallery again today.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Mount Pearl North, Placentia - St. Mary's, Placentia West - Bellevue, St. George's - Humber and Torngat Mountains.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

L. STOYLES: Speaker, the Mount Pearl-Paradise Chamber of Commerce was founded in 1985, with the goal of helping local businesses build strong and successful futures. For nearly 40 years, the chamber continues to provide its members

with the opportunity to connect with business leaders and other organizations.

The chamber is dedicated to the growth and success of local businesses. Through mentoring, education and advocacy, the chamber helps build networks and encourage peer support, enabling members to thrive and reach their full potential. The Mount Pearl-Paradise Chamber spans over 130 business categories, with 245 members.

They have a dedicated and passionate Board of Directors, under the leadership of President Colleen Glynn. Small and medium businesses are the backbone of our economy and the Chamber is there to support the growth of this sector.

The yearly highlight is the Best in Business Award. This year the event will take place on March 21. There are 48 businesses nominated for nine awards.

Speaker, I ask all Members of the House to join me in celebrating the great work of the Mount Pearl-Paradise Chamber of Commerce.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, Mr. Tom O'Keefe of Placentia, has done many things over his 89 years. He operated a radio/TV repair shop, was the town clerk in Placentia and president of the Star of the Sea Association.

He worked with MUN community extensions, travelling all over the Island, providing advice and assistance to community groups and organizations. He worked as the coordinator with the Western Newfoundland modern forest and the coordinator with the Random North

Development Association in Shoal Harbour. He operated a consulting business in Clarenville.

After his retirement, he joined the Placentia Area Historical Society. He guided the Historical Society in its efforts to fulfill its mandate, became president and succeeded in assisting them grow.

While in July 2023, due to illness he stepped down, he is still very active as a director, serving as a mentor and advisor for the committee. In 2023, Tom was awarded the Placentia Area Historical Society Heritage Award.

Tom presently resides at Beachside Manor. He recently told me that his heart is now in top-notch shape, but he needed some other body parts to go with it.

Please join me as I thank Mr. Tom O'Keefe for his many contributions to community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I stand in this hon. House to recognize the Marystown Mariners U15 female division that represented Team Canada at the Global Girls' hockey game that took place in Marystown in the beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue.

On February 17, the IIHF Global Girls' Game brought girls around the world together to play one game. In Canada, about 440 girls laced up their skates from coast to coast to coast to represent our country. This aimed to unite girls around the world by allowing them to play on the same team on the same day.

This was a big event for Marystown Minor Hockey and it allows them to showcase the huge strides they have made in building the

Girls' Game. I want to send a huge congratulations and appreciation to all the organizers who worked so hard to put this event together, especially Ms. Corinna Warren.

I ask all hon. Members to please join me in congratulating the U15 female division and the Marystown Minor Hockey Association on such a great accomplishment in bringing the love of hockey to girls across the globe.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. REID: Mr. Speaker, I don't need to tell anyone that winter is a hard season in this province. It's cold, it's windy, it's dark, it's slippery, and don't look at the forecast because we're going to have more snow in our driveway tomorrow.

So what do people in this province do to deal with this season? They decide to have a big party, a winter carnival, or a winter festival. We decide to have fun in the harshest of seasons: winter. We enjoy outdoor games and activities and we come together for food and entertainment with friends and family. It is an act of defiance. It's like poking Old Man Winter right in the eye. So maybe it's also an act of survival where people come together and help shake off the winter blahs.

In closing, I want to acknowledge and thank the many carnival committees, the volunteers and the sponsors who make winter carnivals possible in the District of St. George's - Humber and throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Today I rise in the House of Assembly to pay tribute to William Flowers: athlete, coach, technical director of minor sports, head coach of Nain Minor Hockey program.

Watching William work with kids is truly amazing – encouraging them, building their self-esteem.

William, spouse Rose, and sons Samuel and Nathan lost their daughter, their sister, Grace, tragically at age seven on Advent Sunday, 2015. They struggled with Gracie's passing. William said the only way he could let her go was to honour her somehow. Gracie's love of hockey led to an annual hockey tournament in her memory. It would bring closure, be fun for kids and families, and keep Gracie's memory alive.

March 2017, the Annual Gracie began. Gracie's classmates sang the national anthem; RCMP stood at attention; family did the puck drop; "Look into my eyes," a song Gracie and her dad William danced to every day after school was played.

Gracie's tournament celebrates a beautiful little girl who walked amongst us not long ago.

Each year, William spends hours at the rink, getting kids hyped up ready for Gracie's tournament. William and Rose fundraise and are very thankful for donations from businesses and community residents.

This is the last Gracie tournament, the seventh tournament. Gracie was 7 years old. Gracie's family says the tournament's healing is allowing them to move on.

So please join me in celebrating the life of Gracie Iris Mariam Jararuse-Flowers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize Pharmacy Appreciation Month and the more than 1,000 pharmacy professionals who work every day to meet the health care needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Pharmacy professionals continue to play a significant role in our health care system. Often the first point of contact for health services, pharmacists are trusted members of our communities and core to our clinical teams and hospitals. They ensure that patients get the most appropriate medication; manage drug interactions; assess and prescribe for many common conditions; provide knowledge of over-the-counter products; train patients on medical devices; and administer many vaccines.

Our government is proud to have worked with the Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board and the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador last year to give pharmacists a greater scope of practice and more autonomy than ever before.

By expanding the scope of practice, pharmacists can now extend prescriptions for patients to a maximum of 12 months and can assess for and prescribe hormonal contraception as well as assess and prescribe for a total of 33 common ailments.

Our pharmacy professionals provide accessible health care across the province and are an integral part of our health care system.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking our pharmacy professionals.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Pharmacy professionals, indeed, play a critical role in the delivery of health care in Newfoundland and Labrador. While I'm glad to see the minister working hard to expand the scope of practice for pharmacists, we can always do more to support them in the delivery of health care.

This month we encourage all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to join us in celebrating the valuable contributions of pharmacists to health care. Let's recognize their dedication and expertise while also advocating for expanding their scope of practice to better serve patients and communities. Together, let's empower pharmacists to play an even more integral role in health care delivery.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Pharmacists serve a critical role in delivering health care to our residents. We applaud government for answering our call to expand the role of pharmacists. We, therefore, call on government to build on this, to support the rollout of the NDP pharmacare framework so contraceptives and diabetes medications can be made available, free, to our residents and supported by our pharmacists.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

P. PIKE: Speaker, today I rise to acknowledge National Social Work Month and recognize the invaluable contribution of social workers in our province.

Social workers in Newfoundland and Labrador work in diverse areas of practice, including child protection, foster care and adoptions, health care, housing, senior care, addictions, mental health and income support.

This year, the focus of National Social Work Month is Seven Points of Unity: Many Possibilities, which celebrates the seven core units of the recently revised Code of Ethics that guides the ethical, inclusive and empowering practice of social workers in Newfoundland and Labrador and across Canada.

In my own department, I witnessed passion, professionalism and commitment of social workers who dedicate themselves daily to improving the health, safety and well-being of individuals and families.

Speaker, I would like, at this moment, to recognize a member of my department, Deanne O'Brien, who is the recipient of the 2024 Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers Pride in the Profession Award for her outstanding contribution to the social work profession.

I also extend appreciation to those who work alongside social workers and support them in their work.

Speaker, I encourage hon. Members to join me in celebrating social workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista

C. PARDY: Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

It is an honour to rise in this House today to acknowledge National Social Work Month and to celebrate the extraordinary work of social workers in this province.

I've also seen the high calibre of our MUN social work students yesterday while attending The Empathy Project: A simulation exercise of being homeless. Thanks to Doug Pawson of End Homelessness for organizing this.

The Official Opposition extends its congratulations to Deanne O'Brien for her accomplishment of the 2024 Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers Pride in the Profession Award.

The role of social workers is critical to assure the social welfare of residents in this province, particularly some of the most vulnerable in our province.

The Official Opposition implores the department to improve conditions for its employees and ramp up both its recruitment and retention efforts. This would improve the conditions for social workers and, by extension through the great work they do, better assist those we serve.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Social workers provide the vital support that so many of our children, seniors and adults rely upon to live a meaningful, fulfilling life. However, sadly, we see that so many social work positions go unfilled because far too often the profession is called upon to provide services to too many of our residents without enough resources.

We, therefore, call upon the government to invest in recruiting and retaining the professionals that take care of the vulnerable, support our well-being and prevent homelessness.

Thank you, Speaker.

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: Thank you, Speaker.

Rural Newfoundland and Labrador's survival depends on the fishery. Premier, you said last year that you cared when harvesters were on the steps of Confederation Building.

I ask the Premier: Do you care enough to make sure that this doesn't happen again this year?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad the Member mentioned rural Newfoundland because I'm from rural Newfoundland and I have great concern about what goes on in the fishery. Yes, we're always concerned if there are any protesters, no matter if it's harvesters, that are outside of this building.

I fully respect those who are in the gallery here today and their families. I have friends here today. My son played hockey with their friends. You think I'm not concerned about their families? I am absolutely worried about them as well, but I have a responsibility as minister.

As I say, I fully respect them, but – and here goes to the crux of the problem here, the urgency is pressing upon ASP and FFAW to strike a deal, get a deal done so we can get boats back on the water, fish plant workers working, families earning incomes, but not only that, Mr. Speaker, if I can, I've heard from harvesters, too. A formula is not just –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, these harvesters have travelled in from all corners of our province. They are begging to be able to get back to work in their boats.

I ask the Premier: Can you reassure them today that their issues will be addressed and that you will make it a top priority?

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

E. LOVELESS: Yes, they will be addressed and that's why the Premier and I started in August of last year, going across the province and listening to the harvesters in this province. There are harvesters spread

all about this province. Yes, we are listening to them.

As I was trying to end off my last answer to the question, because we're listening and harvesters have said, the formula is very important, but there are other issues in the fishery that needs to be addressed. I'm listening to that. Those issues are on the table and I'm going to have the discussions, but the paramount thing today is for ASP and FFAW, get the job done so those harvesters can get on the water and earn a living.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, harvesters are tired of being told when to fish and how much to catch. We need to maximize this renewable megaproject.

Premier, what are you going to do again to ensure that we get maximum value for our fishing industry?

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

E. LOVELESS: Well, the maximum value, Mr. Speaker, is to get a formula; to get a formula is most important –

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

The members in the gallery are not permitted to speak.

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

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

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Any more comments and we'll clear the galleries.

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I understand it is a difficult time and they wouldn't be in the gallery, they wouldn't be protesting, if their backs weren't against the wall. We fully understand that, but, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the fishing industry, we do have harvesters, we do have processors, we do have fish plant workers, we do have graders that are on the wharf; it's the fishing industry. I am trying to listen to all that, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and I, we're taking all that into consideration to make a responsible decision for the betterment of the fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I ask the Premier, I ask the minister: When are you going to make the decisions on the processing licence request that has been sitting on your desk for months?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: That's a fair question, Mr. Speaker. I'm doing due diligence around those requests that are before me right now. Those decisions will be coming.

In terms of those issues around issuing additional licences –

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. LOVELESS: Thank you for the protection, I say to my colleague next to me.

But the decision will be coming on those processing licences.

The Member for Ferryland would like me to give out all kinds of licences. That's irrational; that's not responsible. I'm responsible; you're not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, yesterday in the House the minister said he became aware of the \$1.6 million that had not been paid out to the nurses but had been paid out to the company for meal allowances. Accord to him, he found out in *The Globe and Mail* article.

I ask the Premier: The reality is the government has mismanaged these contracts. How could this happen?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, government provides authority to the health authorities to enter into contracts. We don't write the contracts. We don't have the ability to ensure that the contracts are followed to the letter of the law. That is the responsibility of the health authorities. It is an operational issue.

When issues like this arise, these questions raise concerns with everybody, with the Opposition, with the media, with the general public, with government. This is the reason we've asked the Comptroller General to do a review to ensure or to determine whether or not the contracts were followed to the letter of the contract.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I would suggest that these contracts and this type of expenditure was an extraordinary expenditure and needed to have full control and the government should have had full information and be monitoring this on a full-time basis. That didn't happen.

On January 12, 2022, three senior staff in the Premier's office, Peter Miles, Melissa Royle-Critch and Ken Carter were all included in an email from the head of the Canadian Health Labs.

I ask the Premier: Were you aware that your senior staff were communicating directly with this company?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding of this email is no different –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I've heard the question. Now I want to hear the response.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My understanding of these emails are no different than ministers, deputy ministers, the CEOs, MHAs probably get suggestions from the general public, regularly. The email was forwarded on because it may have been a potential solution. It may not have been. It was forwarded on to individuals who could determine whether or not it was a

potential solution. If they didn't forward the email on, Mr. Speaker, the question would be: You had a potential solution, why didn't you follow through?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, we know that this contract all started with a call from a Liberal lobbyist to one of the Premier's staff in his office. So how do we follow the trail? That's why we're talking about needing the RCMP. That's why we're talking about bringing the AG's department because we're trying to follow the trail of the contract. This isn't about the travel nurses themselves.

Records also show that correspondence between Liberal lobbyist Jordan O'Brien, the CEO of Canadian Health Labs and the Premier's own office, dates back over two years.

Premier: Did they tell you they were communicating with this company for over two years?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure there was communication back and forth. My understanding was, there was a suggestion made, there was a potential solution to a nursing shortage, which was being faced in every province of Canada and every province in Canada were dealing with agency nurses to try to fill the gaps. Most of the gaps were still not filled. We still had diversions of emergency departments and lack of services.

But, Mr. Speaker, the email was forwarded on to individuals so that they could determine whether or not it was a solution. There was no direction given. There was no direction given to sign a contract. There was no suggestion that this was a viable

solution. It was forwarded on as a potential solution for others to figure out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Again, Speaker, from other emails – and I quote – once we have approval from the department, we hopefully can get the contract signed. So, clearly, the department was involved. Anyone who has worked in health care for the last 20 years, including the current Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, would know that no contract such as this would ever get signed by a health authority unless the Department of Health and the executives of the department actually approved it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I ask the Premier again: Did the current or former minister of Health in your government meet with Liberal lobbyist Jordan O'Brien and/or the CEO of Canadian Health Labs?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, whenever there is a proposal from a health authority, they determine whether or not they need agency nurses. They go to the department to have the department have their due diligence, which is done by officials. Officials make a recommendation to the minister on whether or not to approve the expenditures for anything.

The briefing notes that date back to prior to my arrival, the briefing notes that were there during my term would be recommendations from officials in the department who are unbiased, non-political, work in the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and make a recommendation to government, to the minister, on whether or

not to approve an expenditure by the health authority. That's what happened.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: We didn't get an answer, Speaker, to our question, so we'll certainly want to hear did they meet with the head of the Canadian Health Labs? Yes or no.

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I can speak for myself and I can say that I did not meet with any lobbyist around any agency. I did receive a request from –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

T. OSBORNE: – Canadian Health Labs to talk about some plan 4.0 or something like that. We did not approve that, Mr. Speaker. In fact, not only did we not approve it, I have stated to that individual, to the media, to the public, to my federal and provincial counterparts, we want out of agency nursing.

We did not move or go forward with their 4.0 plan or whatever it was they pitched. We didn't move forward with it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, a private company directly lobbies the Premier's office, the top political office in this province in government, and ends up with an incredible, lucrative contract with questionable expenditures. The Premier refuses to have a wider investigation. No wonder when the Premier won't ask the AG or the RCMP to

come in and investigate, you can understand why people believe the Premier is hiding something.

Again, I ask the Premier: Are you hiding something?

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

T. OSBORNE: There is absolutely nothing to be hidden, Mr. Speaker. But if the Member opposite, if the Leader of the Opposition is hiding something, if he has some proof that there was something untoward, please give it to me and we will call the RCMP or we will call the Auditor General. But until then, Mr. Speaker, if the RCMP need to be called, I guarantee you they will be. If the Auditor General needs to be called, I guarantee you she will be.

Mr. Speaker, just as I did when I was minister of Finance and received similar concerns with the NLC, we engaged the Comptroller General to determine whether or not the RCMP need to be called or the Auditor General needs to be called. I can guarantee you, 100 per cent, if they need to be brought into this, they will be brought into this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Comptroller General's office, I believe this needs further investigation and that the Auditor General could certainly provide that.

To my last question, I'll direct this one to the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs: Did you meet with the CEO of Canadian Health Labs in your time as minister of Health?

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

J. HAGGIE: Happy to rise in the House and answer a question, albeit not in my current portfolio. No.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I think one question we all should ask ourselves after listening to the last exchange: Who is the minister of Health? Where is the minister of Health? Who is responsible for contracts? Because this crowd are not, so I guess we've got to go back to the drawing board. We've got to find out who is responsible for things in the province. Who is responsible for a \$9-billion budget? Obviously, they are not.

Speaker, we've now heard three stories in the last week regarding poor access to MRIs in this province. The latest just highlights a cancer patient who must wait until January 26, next year, to get an MRI.

Can the minister tell us when the recommendations of the task force will be implemented?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have to address the preamble because it is important. Mr. Speaker, we've heard time and time and time again from Members opposite when they felt we interfered with a contract. How dare you interfere with a contract? It must be a Liberal friend. You must be doing patronage to your Liberal buddies.

Mr. Speaker, they're now asking us to be involved with and interfere with contracts. We don't do that. That is an operational issue through the provincial health authority. They design the contracts and might I say

they should design them. I believe they would have and should have with their legal folks at the health authority and, through the proper process, to ensure that the contract was in the best interests of the people of the province.

If that is not the case, the Comptroller General, who is independent, who was put in place by this House of Assembly I may add, who can do the same work as the Auditor General – but the Auditor General with her authority, if she needs to be called, I guarantee you she will be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The minister is right; they got a terrible track record with contracts and the pattern continues. Announcing a task force – and it's a trend of this government – instead of fixing problems.

The minister said in the media that the delay in MRIs is because people haven't showed up to appointments. Only specialists can order MRIs in this province, unlike other provinces in Canada which allow GPs to order them. With the stroke of a pen, the minister can remove a significant part of delay to the patients.

Why has this not happened in our province, Minister?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, one thing I'm not a fan of is twisting the truth, so I will address that in this question.

Mr. Speaker, nobody said the reason there's a delay is because of no-shows. We've said it is a contributing factor. There's a 5 per cent no-show rate.

I actually said that it is government's responsibility and the health authority's responsibility to do a better job of communicating to individuals the cost of no-shows. That is only one factor, 5 per cent, but compounded month over month, year over year, it does add up. That's what I said in the media.

Mr. Speaker, we have, in months past, put in place a surgical task force, the wait-time task force, which deals with surgeries, but the recommendations can be used on a broad basis, including MRI.

We are considering having physicians. That is a discussion between the health authority, the department and the NLMA.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Here we go again, it was task force, then it was patients' missed appointments. Minister, that's not what people want. People want answers, people want to get their MRIs so we don't listen to these other cases that I'm listing off one after another. It's very stressful on the families.

Another case – rather than blaming patients, why don't you work on a solution? Speaker, we learned that the 79-year-old man at the Health Sciences Centre was left with two black eyes and a broken nose. Nobody knows what happened to him and his family are looking for answers.

Minister, how can you allow our province's seniors to be in danger?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, again, have to address the preamble. The task force was put in place over a year ago because we recognized there are problems with wait times in the province, to provide recommendations on how we can shorten them. That is proactive.

Adding a sixth machine, a 20 per cent increase in capacity in the province is proactive. That has been funded. It has been announced. It is going in the Western Memorial Regional Hospital, the new building. The health authority, having increased numbers of hours of operation on MRI machines, is proactive.

Those things happened before these cases. What has happened since the case – and before the case, we had talked about an automated reminder system to reduce missed appointments because it is a contributing factor. Nobody is placing blame. We need to do a better job of informing the public of the cost, but we have also asked whether or not another MRI machine is feasible.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Minister, a task force don't help access; action helps access. That's what we need: action. We are looking for action.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, the man's daughter was assured that her father would be safe there, but all the information they were given was that her father became disoriented overnight, wandered outside and fell. No one can tell this daughter anything and the man barely remembers.

How could you let this happen under your watch, Minister?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll take a brief moment to respond to the preamble. We are taking actions. I just listed them off. In this particular case that he just mentioned about the gentleman, I can't talk about specific cases, but I will talk in generalities.

When a situation happens which should not happen, Mr. Speaker, because patient safety and patient care is the top priority of the health authority and, of course, of government, but when situations happen, there is a comprehensive review that takes place to find out what went wrong and what can be done to prevent it from happening again, what measures can be put in place.

I understand that that's happening. When unfortunate situations happen, which nobody wants or desires, measures are taken to try to prevent it from happening again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure stated in debate on Monday that he is committed to the safest roads that we possibly can have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Does the minister still stand by this specific commitment and priority.

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

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

Somebody was suggesting should I have changed my mind, but I don't think so. What I said in debate is what I stand for as Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

We have roughly 10,000 kilometres of highway in this province. It is incumbent upon our team, with the department, to make sure we keep those roads open and safe all year-round. That's what we are all committed to. The Minister of Finance has provided us with a significant amount of money for the next five years to upgrade these roads. We are committed to doing that and working with all Members to ensure that we have the safest highways in the country.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I'm reassured to hear that the minister is still committed to the safest roads that we possibly can have. The minister drove through the entire District of Harbour Main with me, and I appreciate that. Therefore, he saw first-hand the deplorable conditions of many of our roads. In particular he drove over Route 60, between the Town of Holyrood and Upper Gullies in CBS.

Having driven over this unsafe and dangerous portion of Route 60, does the minister believe that Route 60 is safe?

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

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

It's unfortunate that the Member is describing Route 60 in the way she is doing, because it is safe and it is open to the public year-round and we are ensuring that. Now, she may have a different view of our meeting and our trip through the district, but I committed to working with her, the town council of Holyrood and other town councils to make sure the roads are up to –

AN HON. MEMBER: She's going to vote for the budget.

J. ABBOTT: Good – up to standard and we will ensure that. But there is a role for our municipalities as well and I'll be working with them to make sure that the standard that the communities are looking for, we will attain that as well.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, the people who drive over this road in the Holyrood and Upper Gullies and Seal Cove have a far different view of the safety of these roads.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: It is not just me, as their representative. I hear this from my constituents almost on a daily basis.

Budget day is fast approaching. Of the \$698 million allocated to Transportation and Infrastructure from the Interim Supply Bill and the \$1.4 billion from the five-year budget plan announced last year, will the minister now, finally, commit to allocating a small portion of this money to finally address the deplorable conditions of Route 60?

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

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

And I won't respond.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, in October of 2023, the Fish Price-Setting Review Team's report recommended that an independent fisheries management structure be implemented. Like Vardy did in a report or the Royal Commission in 2003, Cashin in 2005, they recommend that our government seek an arrangement with the federal government for a coordinated joint management of both harvesting and processing.

Will the government act upon this recommendation, yes or no?

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

E. LOVELESS: I think he said something about joint management as a recommendation. I'd be happy any time to join forces with the federal government to make better decisions for this fishery, because if we did, there would be better decisions made for the livelihoods of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality stated yesterday: "... it's very important to get this legislation right. Not to rush it, not to go back to the drawing board." Yet, in the last sitting of the House of Assembly this

government brought in the hastily prepared pay equity legislation.

Our caucus was forced to vote against it because advocacy groups and unions expressed deep concerns with the lack of consultation done for this pay equity legislation. We listen, Speaker. It's clear the government does not.

I ask the minister: When will she live up to her ministerial duties for women and gender equality?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I thank the hon. Member for her interest. It was disappointing that she talks about delaying of the legislation. Unfortunately, she's tried to block the legislation from passing here in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: So we've very disappointed in that. I mean it's one thing to stand up on your soapbox. But I will say that's only one solution, one tool in our tool box for legislation for pay equity.

What about the real concrete initiatives and commitments that this government is making to women and gender-diverse people in Newfoundland and Labrador? Let me name a few. For example, an investment of over \$500,000 in funding for the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs; an amazing organization called NLOWE doing great work. We're helping empower them, empower women.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: Over \$900,000 in Women in Resource Development Corporation Mr.

Speaker; over \$600,000 in the funding of the Office to Advance Women Apprentices. I think –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It horrifies me to hear that rather than showing compassion, so families struggling to ends meet can gain closure and bury their loved ones, this government brought in freezer trucks because they were more focused on cost savings than on basic human dignity. Government has denied these families choices and closure. This government has failed to make sure support programs are properly funded and tied to inflation.

I ask the Premier: Why is your government nickel and diming families when they are at their most vulnerable, instead of making changes to help them?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can say from a provincial health authority point of view, they are looking at putting in place a more permanent storage unit.

These are complex issues because if a person's remains remain unclaimed, there is a process, which takes a considerable amount of time, to go through to identify next of kin. If there is no next of kin to identify somebody who may be able to lay claim to the remains, a loved one or a relative, if that doesn't happen then there is another process that they would go through

to ensure that the – what's the name of – I'm asking the Minister of Justice.

J. HOGAN: The Office of the Chief Medical Examiner.

T. OSBORNE: The chief medical examiner and then the Public Trustee –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Minister's time is expired.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the new Western Memorial Regional Hospital will be operational in the near future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: The main topic being asked is concerning the availability of the radiation unit.

Minister, in Question Period in the spring sitting of the House of Assembly, you stated that you anticipated that the radiation unit will be operational when the new hospital is open.

Can you confirm that the radiation unit will be fully staffed and operational when the new Western Memorial Regional Hospital is open?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Government and the provincial health authority are committed to the radiation unit. I know that the radiation oncologist position has not yet been recruited. That remains a challenge. They have worked hard to try

and recruit a radiation oncologist position. They have engaged with recruitment firms as well as the recruitment office at the health authority to identify that position. They continue to do that.

The facility should be open by July 1 is my understanding. So they continue to try and recruit for that position. They are looking at additional options.

So we do hope that it is open and operational when the facility opens. It does require the human resources to do that, but every effort is being made to recruit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, media reports show a wait time for individuals who need MRI testing. This procedure is a matter of life and death in many cases. People in Western Newfoundland have expressed concerns about the wait time. This is very critical for the people on the West Coast and an MRI will help reduce wait times across the province.

You stated in the media that an MRI machine would be ready for use in the Corner Brook area when the new hospital is opened.

Can you confirm that this is the case and the new MRI machine will be available and operational when the new health care facility is open in Corner Brook?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There is currently one MRI machine in Corner Brook at the old Western Memorial. The new Western Memorial will have two MRI machines and they will be operational when the facility opens.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Petitions

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Tabling of Documents.

Again, a petition I have presented many times here in this House.

Notices of Motion.

Approximately 100,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador live with mental illness. Only about 40 per cent of people affected by mental illness and addictions seek help. Seventy per cent of mental illness is developed during childhood and adolescence, and most go undiagnosed. And less than 20 per cent actually receive appropriate treatment. Emergency and short-term care isn't enough and it is essential that more long-term treatment options are readily available.

Notices of Motion

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 Monday, March 11, 2024.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide access to long-term mental health care that ensures continuity of care, beginning with psychiatric and neuropsychological assessments being more accessible to the public so that they can access proper mental health treatment and supports on regular and continuous basis.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 12, 2024.

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, March 14, 2024.

As I said, I have risen in this House many times on this petition. I've asked questions. I've done quite a lot on this. But not as much as some of our advocates are doing. We are well familiar with Kristi Allen who has been 170 Mondays now, 170 weeks, in silent protest in front of this building every Monday.

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, March 13, 2024, but shall continue to sit to conduct Government Business and, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

SPEAKER: Are there any further notices of motions?

We hear from the people out there with lived experiences; we hear what they need. We hear that they need the right care, at the right time, in the right place.

Answer to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

We hear from the psychologists of Newfoundland and Labrador who talk about

the current system and say how it provides great, quick, early access, but it does not provide intensive, long-term, evidence-based therapies that are needed by many.

We hear about the lack of child psychologists in schools. We hear in reports where people say: I can't get the treatment because – and I quote – I don't have the right kind of crazy.

That is what we hear out there from people who are in need, people with lived experiences; people who will tell you that mental illness and addictions do not do well on wait lists. When you're in a critical mental health issue and challenge, you don't need to be referred or put on a wait-list. You need action right away; you need action that will be long-term, continuity of care so that these people can get the real help they need.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition, as follows:

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

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

Victims of child abuse may take many years to process, come to terms with their trauma,

and find the courage to report it. Victims may be reluctant to bring claims because of misplaced shame, guilt, fear of coming forward, or simply the desire to avoid thinking about and confronting the horrendous pain. Those who have experienced child abuse may not discover their claim right away, especially where the abuse was committed in a climate of secrecy and/or where the abuse provided severe physical, emotional and psychological damage. The damage from child abuse may be lifelong. It may present itself fully later in life.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, my colleague here from Bay of Islands has certainly presented this in the past. I've presented it in the past on behalf of Mr. Jack Whalen. We've all heard his story from when he was just a young person and the abuse that he claims to have endured, while under the protection, I might add, and in the custody of the provincial government of the day and authorities within the provincial government.

Had there been sexual abuse, the perpetrators could be held accountable, but we do have a *Limitations Act*, because it's

not sexual abuse, but it's actual physical abuse, that he can't have any redress.

So, he's asking that the legislation be changed to come in line with other provinces so that he can receive redress.

Thank you.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, this is a petition, a call to introduce legislation recognizing housing as a human right.

Reason for the petition: Concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador urge our leaders to take action to address the issue of homelessness throughout the province. Growing numbers are ending up in for-profit emergency shelters, which are costing taxpayers millions of dollars out of desperation.

In 2019, the Parliament of Canada passed the *National Housing Strategy Act*, which declared housing as a human right. More recently, the federal housing advocate, Marie-Josée Houle, stated in her report, *Upholding dignity and human rights*, that the human right to adequate housing is an obligation affirmed in international human rights law, including in treaties that Canada has signed and ratified as well as the human rights declarations and other applicable international norms and standards and has called upon all levels of government, provincial and territorial, to adopt a human rights approach to the housing crisis.

Therefore, we the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce legislation recognizing housing as a human right.

Speaker, yesterday, in response to that question, a simple question: Does the Minister of Housing recognize housing as a fundamental human right? The Minister of Justice and Public Safety took it upon himself to deliver, I guess, a lesson in which he said: It's not just the right to a structure. Well, tell that, Speaker, to the people who are currently living in the tents outside the Colonial Building or who've been bouncing around from emergency shelter to emergency shelter for the last months or years.

He read from the document, which said that the right to adequate housing covers measures that are needed to prevent homelessness, prohibit forced evictions, address discrimination and focus on the most vulnerable.

That's what we have been bringing forward in this House; yet, this government has steadfastly refused to consider such a thing as rent control, vacancy control, the elimination of no-fault evictions or meaningful and not-for-profit housing – refused.

They are very proud of the position this government has taken, and I can only say that they've obviously set the bar very low for themselves for that to happen.

A stand-alone portfolio is touted as the reason for that commitment. It means nothing if the minister is unwilling to even attest that housing is a basic, fundamental human right; that this government is willing to do what it can not to do that.

We're calling upon the government to at least admit that it is a fundamental human right and then enshrine it in legislation.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

WHEREAS in Canada one in three – 31 per cent – of victimizations are reported to police, but only one in five – 20 per cent – of sexual assaults are reported to police; and

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

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

THEREFORE, we the undersigned petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: Acknowledge that the status quo is failing survivors of sexual assault; undertake a review of K-to-12 curriculum to identify gaps in education about consent, healthy relationships and gender-based violence; implement an alternate justice option, such as transformative justice, restorative justice practices and other options rooted in Indigenous legal traditions and practices in response to gender-based violence throughout the province; have the Minister of Justice ask the Chief Justice of the Provincial Court to consider a practice directive which would prohibit opposing counsel from approaching the witnesses and which would prohibit counsel from yelling at witnesses; introduce mandatory training for provincial judges on trauma, PTSD and consent modelled on the federal requirements; and consult key community stakeholders to identify and appropriately fund new initiatives to prevent and address all forms of gender-based violence.

Now, Speaker, this is a very complete petition. If this petition was followed and enacted, we wouldn't have the problems we face with sexual assaults and sexual violence.

The importance of this petition is we need to move sexual assault, a crime against people, out into the open, out into the light. We really got to do a better job. We need to remove the burden of wrongfully placed blame on the victims.

When somebody is shot, you don't accuse the person of bringing on them being shot. It's so important for us to understand sexual assault is a crime against a person. In actual fact, we need to remove the stigma attached with sexual assault and put the blame where it's supposed to be and allow victims to have their day in court.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

SPEAKER: Are you responding?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I have heard this petition a few times and there are some points in there that I just want to address.

First of all, I believe it was last year there was an announcement that the chief judge has implemented, through discussions with the Department of Justice and Public Safety, sexual assault training for judges. That's a very big step for the Provincial Court to take and I applauded him and the Member for Harbour Main, actually, reached out and applauded that as well. I'm not sure if the Member for Torngat Mountains has heard that or not, but, certainly, when the petition, if it's presented again, if they can remove that part of the petition because that's certainly been satisfied.

I just want to address a couple of comments that I've heard as well about conduct of lawyers and people in court. It's just not true what they're saying. It's not how court works. There's no ability for a lawyer in Provincial Court or Supreme Court to approach a witness. They're behind a bar. They stand in one spot, whether the trial is an hour, a month or a year. They're in the same spot ever day as they present their cases. They ask questions to a witness who is in the witness box. There's no approaching of a witness.

So, I don't want anyone in this House to mislead what's happening in court here with regards to sexual assault victims. It's a very serious issue and the lawyers in this province are not retraumatizing sexual assault victims, whether it's a Crown or a legal aid or a private lawyer in this province. It's not the way it works. It's actually impossible for it to happen.

As for individual's lawyers yelling at witnesses. I'm sure that can happen. We can't control a lawyer's temper or their conduct or how they act, but the judges have an inherent jurisdiction to control their own courtroom. I am sure, and I've seen it, if a lawyer does get a little bit hot and a little bit red and a little bit angry and acts inappropriately, the judge certainly has the authority to rein that in.

I just want to make sure that everyone is aware of that. Just because those allegations are in a petition, Speaker, doesn't mean they're accurate or true.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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 continue the business of Supply and consider Bill 63, a resolution respecting the granting of Interim Supply to His Majesty.

SPEAKER: And a seconder, please.

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

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 (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We are now considering the related resolution and Bill 63, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2025 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

Resolution

"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public

service for the financial year ending March 31, 2025 the sum of \$3,286,755,700.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Chair.

Again, it is an honour to stand up in the House of Assembly and talk about Interim Supply. We know we certainly need Interim Supply to keep our public service going and for the great work that they do. But it also gives us a chance, Chair, to get up and talk about things in our district and I did stand up the other day and I did have a chance to speak on a couple of things in my district. But I did hear the minister this morning talk about the industry and I was listening to him when he mentioned our districts and he mentioned the mining.

Mining, yes, it is a great service to our district, no doubt about it. Mining has certainly put a bit of life back into the district. It's good to see it happening. It's good to see our resources being used and being able to be a benefit to the people of the area, people of our province. I'm sure we need the industry, no doubt about it, and we need industry in the province.

While we're speaking of mining, mining is certainly a good thing. The fishery, again, is another big part of my district. Not a big part, but in the lower part of my district, in my hometown of Leading Tickles, actually, the fishery is very, very important. That's part of the industry that needs to be active in my area to develop that area because all the parts of the Exploits District, especially Grand Falls-Windsor, is probably the hub for everything, Botwood is another hub, you know, boat engines and that sort of stuff, hardware stores, they rely a lot on the fishery as well.

But to see that every year constituents in that area have to wait and wonder why this is happening every year, that there's always

a problem with the fishery. All they want to do – they're hard-working people. They're up early in the mornings. They make an honest living and they're hard workers and they're good family members and they want to prepare for their families and provide for them.

All they want to do is get up and let's go fishing. Whatever it starts with, whatever is ready to go, let's go fishing. They don't need tie-ups; they don't need to be delayed in the fishery. Their EI certainly depends on it. If they're late going or if something happens, then they can't get their EI for the rest of the year. There are always problems that way. So the fishery needs to be streamlined in a way that when it's time to go fishing, let's go fishing. Let's get on the water. Let's make that living.

Forestry should be another big industry in the Central region. It is, to a point, but it's taken away from the Central region. There's no secondary industry. There always was a secondary industry. Yes, there are secondary industries in other parts of the province, relying on our resource in Central Newfoundland. They come into Central Newfoundland, especially in areas 10, 11, 12 – and I spoke about this the other day, three big players. It's almost something like the fishery, I heard there are three big players there and there are some big players in the forest products. They're getting tied up in the forest products and there's no secondary industry there for the Central region.

Our mining is doing well. It is doing well. If we had our fishery going when we need it to go, it certainly would boost the economy there. Forestry, if we certainly had a secondary industry in forestry, it would be a blessing to the Central area. We need it. We had it there before but when people see our lumber, our logs, our fibre is being shipped across the province, taken away – there was 280,000 cubic metres unlocked from the old Abitibi permits back, I think, it was 2018. All that disappeared. All the permits

disappeared to the bigger players and no smaller players could get in and create another industry in the Central region, which is a shame. We need secondary industry in the Central region and forestry is certainly a great way that can be done.

When it comes to industry in our province, yes, industry is very, very important and we need creative ways of making industry work in our province. So mining, fishery and forestry in our area certainly would be a great way to sustain the Central region. We need a good management plan in forestry in the Central region so that we can tap into it. There are probably some people in the other industries. There was supposed to be a plot left there in the Central region that anybody ever wanted, especially after the old Abitibi went down, there was supposed to be a piece, a plot there that if a new industry wanted to come there, there would be allowance for new industry to come there but those permits are gone as well. So, we need to certainly look at a new industry for Central Newfoundland in the forest industry.

Those are three industries that could be working well. I know now that the government has made some allocations for land for wind nominations, and there's a current proponent in that area who's making bids on that area. While we encourage new development, we do encourage industry, while this is happening, there's something we need to do and we certainly need to protect our environment in that industry.

We certainly need to protect our environment. We need to ensure a thorough environmental assessment to protect our environment. We need to make sure that that's done. We need to make sure that there's good community benefits agreements in place with the communities, what we can get out of that. So all these things need to come into play while we're encouraging new development and entertaining those developments. Making sure, again, that Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians are the main beneficiaries of our resources.

As long as we provide those assurances that we are the main beneficiaries, the community benefits are in place – decommissioning fees I guess is another one in the wind that need to be in place. I mean, say if something happens, like previous industries I guess, went down, we need to make sure that that's part of cleaning up our environment. If something happens, we need to be able to clean up our environment.

We need good decommissioning fees in there, a proper plan in place that if anything happens that our environment is still looked after one way or the other, and we need to be able to have access to our land. That's part of that industry. So we certainly need a good, thorough environmental assessment done to make sure everything is done right, is above board, and we are the main beneficiaries of our industries.

A couple of small industries that I will – they're not small. They're very important to the Central region. That is Superior Glove. I certainly would like to put a shout-out to Superior Glove in Central Newfoundland. They employ 150 people down there, 24 hours, and they ship all their product – a lot of their product, they export their product to different places across the world. They're a great little company that's doing great things, and anybody got a chance to get down there during the summer or whatever, it would be a great spot to visit and see what they do and the number of people they've got employed. So, hats off to Superior Glove.

Another industry in my – a couple of more, I suppose, quick ones. In Bishop's Falls, there's Newfoundland Styro, of course. Then we have Hi-Point Industries. Hi-Point Industries is another export company and they're growing.

Government can get in there and probably there are some help and aids that we can provide. Especially land fees and that sort of stuff that we can get involved, I don't know what, but anything that we can do to help grow that industry.

There's lots of industry in Central Newfoundland, but it needs to be streamlined and it needs to be developed so that we are the beneficiaries in our industries. We need to make sure that we are the beneficiaries in our industries and Central Newfoundland is a great place to have industry.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Great to get up and have a little run round Interim Supply. I'd like to start off with a couple of district items, really, just to acknowledge the highly successful Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games, which concluded in Gander in this last weekend.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: It was a great partnership between ourselves and SportNL and significant funding from government.

The town really rose to the challenge. They managed to generate 497 volunteers, which is not a small number. We had collaboration from Glovertown and Lewisporte for some extra ice time. It really went extremely well.

I have to say that being involved in the opening and closing ceremonies was probably one of the most fun things you get to do as an MHA or as a representative of government. It beats a lot of the other things

you have to do. The energy in the room was amazing. I think Tara and Geoff, who were the two co-chairs in Gander, need a shout-out. I look forward to seeing my colleague, the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, as the town there, Bay Roberts, receives the torch for the Summer Games. I hope she can have as much fun with the opening and closing ceremonies as I did.

I think another group in the community that need a shout-out is what's called the Citizens Health Action Group. Sam, Shauna and the other Sam, who have for the last three winters campaigned to have obstetric delivery services restored to the Town of Gander and James Paton. I'm pleased to say after their lobbying efforts and significant help from the Department of Health with recruitment incentives and the like, we now have three obstetricians, three midwives out of four, a full complement of trained nurses and as of 8 o'clock on the 18th of March, which is an interesting anniversary all of itself, they will resume obstetric deliveries and services there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: I'd also like to give a shout-out to the Town of Gander on another issue, which is that of housing and homelessness. This council particularly have been very energetically involved with an increasing problem, not peculiar to St. John's or just Gander, but certainly more prevalent in Gander than it has been in many a year.

We have a housing committee called the Hub, which involves a whole variety of stakeholders, including provincial government, municipal government, RCMP, mental health and addictions services and that kind of thing. I'd like to give a shout-out to three ministers who have each held the portfolio responsible for Housing: the current Minister of Transportation, the current Minister of CSSD and also, laterally, I've been giving earaches to the new Minister of Housing.

There is progress. We have some more shelter accommodation which we didn't have before. As the commercial interest in apartment blocks have now kind of put up shelters and barriers for people who have housing challenges in a way that we haven't seen before, these facilities become more and more important.

So from the point of view of a ministerial portfolio, this will be my first budget as the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, having taken over just after last year's budget, following on from my predecessor, who is now successful not only in Municipal and Provincial Affairs, but is successful in Education with some of the initiatives she was talking about yesterday.

The groundwork was laid. There was a major piece of legislation there which was brought to the House. We had a very energetic Committee stage here, which lasted all Wednesday morning, I think, on one of the days just before we adjourned last. It is a mammoth piece of legislation, which is really no less than a constitution between two levels of government and it describes the relationship between municipal and provincial governance.

People have an idea that somehow this is hierarchical, that the feds tell the provinces what to do and the provinces tell the municipalities what to do. Nothing can be further from the truth. This is shared or sole areas of jurisdiction. We'll each have our sandbox. The feds have theirs with exclusive jurisdiction such as defence and global affairs. They have shared jurisdiction in things like health and they have areas where they have no jurisdiction at all, which is solely provincial, such as education, for example.

Similarly, we, in provincial government here, through the Municipalities Act and now through the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*, have described a sandbox for municipalities and a sandbox for the provincial government. There are areas that

are shared but there are also areas that are solely municipal jurisdiction. We have no statutory or legislative authority to interfere.

So, part of the work of the department, the correspondence that we receive in the department is around how citizens expect us to somehow govern the towns, but in actual fact, if you go back, it started again with my predecessor with the *Municipal Conduct Act*, which sets a tone for the way councillors relate to each other, they relate to their staff and the onus is upon them to be open and transparent as well as responsible.

That was a bit of a culture change. I have to give a shout-out now to my own staff, Director Chris Stamp and previous ADM, Bren, who really made a sterling effort to educate and provide training. We trained 98 per cent of councillors in 11 months. There are 287 councils to do it. That's 3,000 people. It went from group meetings face to face, to webinars, to one-on-one coaching on the phone. We're still doing that as by-elections naturally happens and towns are challenged with quorum. We make every effort to get new councillors trained in a timely way.

That is now the template for how we do our training around the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*. The regulations will be ready in the very near future and, once they are, the act will be proclaimed, but with a date likely coming into force some point in the future, which will allow us to train up and provide training for those municipalities who are challenged, and indeed all of them. We work very closely with MNL and PMA who are two great organizations, which make my job a lot easier, quite frankly.

So just on a theme from my colleague in Digital Government and Service NL, the red tape reduction in that act, the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*, we actually removed 11 ministerial permissions. We decided that if you have a council that functions well, they should be able to take

care of these decisions, we just stipulate to the two-thirds majority for those kinds of decisions, rather than coming to the minister to get them to sign off in some kind of permissive way. We're trying to make local government at the town level autonomous so it has its own sandbox it can play in.

The next challenge, quite frankly, will be to look up four of the other pieces of legislation that my department has also governing the way the provincial government and municipal government relate to each other.

Land use planning: so the Urban and Rural Planning Act, much favoured by the honorary mayor, Jimmy Kimmel, who actually referenced it on live TV in the States –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: – with photographs of the legislation and a diatribe about how he was going use it to beat his alleged opponent. It was really quite amusing. It's out there on YouTube if anyone is really interested in an unusual mix of provincial politics, governance and popular TV. It actually works quite well.

So, again, our challenge with the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act* remains will be to write the regulations for LSDs, which are actually new and don't currently exist. So, again, that gives them much more leeway. It allows them to, for example, take on recreation as a legitimate thing for which they can charge a fee. That kind of recognizes the fact that a lot of the larger LSDs are quite competent and could do that kind of thing and that gives them just that little bit more leeway.

I see the clock is winding down and five minutes early is always better, but I'll take 15 seconds. I'll take my seat and thank you for the opportunity to speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Madam Chair, the news today about the hospital in Corner Brook not having radiation available when it's open is sad. I understand the recruitment process, I understand sometimes that it's going to be tough, but I just want to tell a little story, put it on the record here in the House.

I'm going back now, it might be a year, probably, at least eight or nine months, there is a doctor who was working in the cancer clinic here in St. John's who wanted to go to Corner Brook and start setting up the new hospital, the radiation unit, start the recruitment on it, because he would know a lot of people across Canada, and he couldn't get leave from the government to go out and start the process.

I have the text messages. He couldn't get leave to go out and start. Could he have made a difference? We will never know, but I can guarantee you one thing, we would have had a lot better effort to have a radiation oncologist in Corner Brook.

So, it's sad news. I don't put the blame all on the minister, himself, because it is tough recruiting, but I've got to say that it has been now six, going on eight years, since we knew the hospital was going to open with a radiation unit in Corner Brook – eight years, going on eight years that we knew this.

I knew this person, personally, I know his family and he wanted to move out and start the recruitment and start the process of setting up the whole clinic and he was refused.

That, Madam Chair, is something that is concerning. Now the minister, in the spring – and this is no reflection on – said he was anticipating to have it open. Now he is saying that we have a problem with the recruitment. Now he's saying, he's hoping, with the improvement that we still may be able to have the radiation services

available. A lot of people were anticipating, because of the length of the time that we started to recruit, going back seven or eight years now, and now there's a possibly of no radiation treatment for the people in Western Newfoundland and Labrador at the new hospital. It's a sad day.

I see a lot of people who are always touting the hospital but I don't see them passing on this news here because it's all: let's let it ride, let's let it slide, hopefully the people won't ask. But the people are asking me to get answers for them. This answer, today – and I say, again – it's going to be a disappointment for a lot of people.

To be fair, for the recruitment, there has been some recruitment done in the cancer care clinic in Corner Brook, there has been some but the big one that the minister announced today is saying, no, there's no person there.

So, I urge the government to continue on with the recruitment process because it's going to be causing a lot of stress on a lot of people if we don't get the radiation unit open, up and running and have a proper service for Western Newfoundland.

I just hope it happens and I still won't give up asking questions in this House. I won't give up raising the concerns of the people of Western Newfoundland and Labrador who asked me to raise these concerns for them.

I will say that seven years is a long while and I've got the text messages on my phone where this person wanted to go out to Corner Brook and start setting up. He wanted to start setting up the whole unit, recruitment included. He was going to start and he was not given permission or leave to go out and do it. So the government has to take some responsibility for that. The government has to take some responsibility for it, absolutely they have.

And now that person may even move on. The last text I had from him is that he may

even just move on outside Newfoundland and Labrador. It is sad; it is actually sad.

Madan Chair, I got a note, again, in health care, when it came out about the nursing contract with the \$36 million. I got a note, I won't say his name, but I got a note from a doctor who was talking about the nurses. His biggest beef, who works with them on a daily basis, who is with them on a daily basis, his biggest concern was lack of respect from the government, lack of respect for the local nurses; how they have been treated over the last number of years; how, right now, there is nothing in place to make it better in a workplace for the nurses.

This is a doctor who is working with them on a daily basis, who is with them in the stressful times, with visiting the number of patients and the patient care. That's a concern for the Department of Health: How do you improve relationships with our hospital staff? How do you do it? That's a big concern. When you get the notes from the doctors, themselves, who are working with them. I can read out his letter that he wrote me. His concern is a lack of respect. That's a big concern.

I wrote the minister on this, I actually wrote him; I haven't got a reply yet, but I wrote him. Back years ago, I coached basketball at Sacred Heart, four or five of the young ones wanted to go into nursing. I signed recommendations for them. Right now, only one of them was offered a job – can't get a job; can't get it.

I brought up last year where a person in Marystown wanted to work in Grand Bank. Two guys graduated, wanted a job: Nope, we're not hiring full time. That was on a Friday when they got the letter; Saturday they phoned up Halifax; Sunday they were on a plane; Monday they started working in Halifax.

So, these are human experiences. I know these people. They're talking to me. I knew them since they were that high. So, I say to

the minister, look at the recruitment of the nurses, please. I know for a fact, I know the people, personally – personally, I know them – they want to stay. They want to be in Corner Brook. They want to be close to their family. So I ask the minister to look at that.

Another bit of good news I heard today, I heard the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure in a question here today talking about his goal is to keep the roads safe. Well, I say to the minister who is very attentive over there, that's great news because as you met with the – and I thank you for that again to meet with the Town of York Harbour-Lake Harbour – the roads going out towards – especially the gabion baskets are unsafe. I have no doubt what you say, you really believe that your goal is to keep the roads safe.

So I will not miss an opportunity, Minister, again – and I know you met with the mayors and they were very grateful, very cordial, great meeting – with that statement today, I am more confident than ever that those gabion baskets and the road going out to Little Port will be fixed because it is dangerous.

When you can't get the school buses to go over, it's dangerous. You were told that by the people. So, I just want to, again, bring that up to the minister, he met with them, he knows the concerns and when I heard that statement today, I say: Well, that's good, at least we know now there's going to be safety on those roads instead of the rocks coming down –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Well, that's between you and your colleague. I was elected by the people –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: I'm the Member for Humber-Bay of Islands and I always said that –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Pardon me?

You want me to think provincial? I'll think provincial for a second. Before he became minister – and I was being nice here – there was \$30 million spent in the Premier's district – \$30 million. I have it in access to information.

Do you know how much was spent in Humber - Bay of Islands? Four hundred and fifty thousand dollars which was all patching. You want me to think provincial? That's before you took over.

So, I hope that you're going to – as you said – fix that. I'll show you the access to information, I'll show you the work that was done, I'll show you the information that I have, that don't include the park money.

I'll send you a copy. You want me to be provincial; I was being cordial.

AN HON. MEMBER: I liked you the former way.

E. JOYCE: You liked me the former way. I like working with people. I like getting things done for the people, that's what we're all here for. That's what we're here for, to work together to get things done.

So I will work with the minister. I am confident that you understand the concerns that the people in York Harbour-Lark Harbour face.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I already know: How am I going to cut this down to 10 minutes? But I'll do my best and then when the clock is up, I'll sit.

It's always a privilege to stand here in this House of Assembly, to be the voice for the beautiful District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. I've been tremendously privileged, Chair, to represent the people of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair for more than a decade now, over four elections. It's hard to believe how fast time goes.

When I come back at the start of a sitting, I always think about the changes that have happened around us from one sitting to the next. Really and truly, the only thing constant is change. From the last sitting to this sitting, it's already been mentioned, and I would be remiss in my first time on my feet speaking, if I didn't mention my colleague, Minister Bragg. You know, I can't say his seat is empty because the Housing Minister is sitting in it, but we can certainly say that he is missed and he is close to our thoughts and prayers.

I had to go back to my phone, Chair. You talk about the uncertainty of life, we're still not up to 10 months ago since he sent me a text and said: Cancel my Estimates for tonight because I just got devastating news about my health.

So, all Members on all sides of the House, we need to think about the uncertainty of life. While we all advocate strongly for our districts and that's what we have to do, at the end of the day, we need to think about our families and the sacrifices that we make despite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: – the privilege that it is for each of us to serve, it comes with a cost as well.

We just unveiled the road down to Greenspond and we called it Derrick Bragg Way. I think all of us need to be mindful of

Bragg's way, because he had the family, work-life balance figured out better than a lot of us. I think about that since his early home calling. Even, I, myself need to do better and you, Chair, and the rest of us because we give a lot and life is uncertain and we never really know what's around the corner.

J. ABBOTT: Slow down when you drive then.

L. DEMPSTER: Slow down when I'm driving. Yes, I do need to be reminded. I do think I am doing better. That might have been at a cost of a few points and a few tickets, but I am definitely doing better on the road as well.

It's always a hard call: Am I going to talk about my district? Am I going to talk about Labrador? There are a lot of wonderful things happening across the Big Land.

Today, Chair, we are on Interim Supply, which is basically we need his counsel, we need to grant Interim Supply so that our civil servants can continue to be paid until the official budget is brought down.

You know, I think, about the nurses, the teachers, in particular the highway workers, in the area that I represent and across Labrador. Labrador is a large, vast land, six per cent of the provincial population spread over such a large landmass. We're all caught up in Cain's Quest right now. That's a world away from this House.

As I was sitting at home last night, I was watching the very first team roll into Nain. The excitement around Nain as those two, Team 99 – veterans, this is their seventh time – were coming up Ten Mile Bay. I just stopped at the end of that and I thought what a different world than where we are. That's how large our province is. That's how diverse it is. That's why we have challenges oftentimes in coming up with sufficient funds to provide the services that are needed to our, what is it? Four-hundred communities, I

believe, around the province. We know that half of the province's population is here on the Avalon, but some of the beautiful parts are certainly spread out as well.

I want to say Cain's Quest is exciting. Myself and my colleague from the Third Party, the MHA for Lab West, if all goes well, will be there on Sunday for the awards ceremony. We know that of the 32 teams that started, 11 have already scratched, but just to cross the finish line after 3,500 kilometres is really a badge of honour. There've been some injuries and we've thought about those folks.

Chair, I think about the District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and I look back to June of 2013 when I was elected. It's a very different looking district today. I want to thank all colleagues and all departments. I know that sometimes they want to put the padlock on and lock the door when they see me coming. There were a lot of issues, a lot of challenges. We had 40-year old pavement in the Labrador Straits; we were driving on a gravel road when you went north of Red Bay.

We have come so far in terms of a beautiful paved highway now. It's all been redone in the Labrador Straits, those 76k from the border down to the World Heritage UNESCO site of Red Bay. Then when you leave Red Bay, we have a new paved road that goes – really it goes border to border. That's completed. We say the road isn't finished yet; we're looking at the road to the north, the pre-feasibility study is wrapped up.

In addition to that, we've done so much good work around fire equipment that was lacking in every single community for safety, fire halls, fire vehicles, whether it's pumper trucks or rescue units, depending on the size of the population and what was needed. After we moved into the infrastructure that was needed, then we were fortunate to secure funding working

with leadership – always working with leadership on the ground.

I have to toss the biggest bouquet to the leadership because we couldn't do our jobs, as MHAs for the district, if we didn't have those people doing the tough slog, stepping up, volunteering the time, submitting the applications.

We have cell coverage within six communities. Just recently, after two years of waiting for broadband, we are now hard wired into most of our homes in the district that have signed up with Bell. So that is tremendous progress, not just for the people that live there, but whether the truckers are coming providing the goods, the tourists that are coming down through the region. They now want to be in contact with home in real time. You don't need to now pull into a community and go into a local store and make a call. You've got all that now in your hand, thanks to the progress that has been made.

On tourism, I want to say we haven't begun to turn the corner. We have tremendous potential to build upon tourism. Last summer, I was on the *Qajaq* in the Labrador Straits and I met an individual from Ontario that I knew, a family member, and I said: What are you doing coming this way? He said, early April his wife tried to book a crossing in the Gulf and couldn't get a crossing for either day – confirmed reservation in July or August. He said: We left Ontario, we drove in, we came in through Quebec, beautiful highway. This is the way we're coming back next year.

So this is why now we're working with small businesses, we're working on bringing our accommodations up to standard, working with local employers in the area. We've made tremendous progress in that region and we're going to continue to build.

Just read a lovely article in allNewfoundland, the owners of the Letto family, who's has been in the

accommodations business for 50 years, just celebrated in December. They have now bought an extra hotel in Forteau.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: So we're going to continue to work with them.

In our communities, seniors, we're now working with a lot of the leadership to help our communities become more age friendly. The focus initially was on getting the infrastructure, getting where we need to be with a lot of these facilities that were lacking community centres that are the gathering place. Now we have a real focus on – we partnered with, actually work with, IPGS and we work with the local Southern Labrador Development Association, we have staff there on the ground doing wonderful work bringing seniors out and welcoming newcomers to communities.

Because when we're trying to entice a doctor or other professionals to come to our region: What's there for their wife? What's there for their kids? So it's taking more of a holistic view. I see that my time is almost gone.

I want to mention Search and Rescue. We're about 10 to 12 years – 10 years, maybe for sure, maybe it was just 11 years, since the Burton Winters inquiry. A report was compiled and came back with recommendations and we have, as a province – I think there were 17 recommendations under our responsibility – made tremendous investment over the last two years into Search and Rescue across Labrador.

In my District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, we have three teams, volunteers – commendable – that stepped up and we have three teams in Search and Rescue. We've given them the money to do the job, working closely with the Search and

Rescue, Harry Blackmore and his team, that I have all the time in the world for. People on the ground making a difference every single day, they have my respect. My hat is off to them.

I think I'll probably close with transportation because we live in the North, weather conditions are very challenging and some of these supervisors that are on the road, they're making the best decisions they can with the information they got at the time. Sometimes they're making a call to close the road, that means folks are missing appointments, whether they're going north or catching a ferry and they're frustrated if the weather is not as bad as it called for. Sometimes they leave it open and they're probably hauling a car out of the ditch when they start at 4 or 5 in the morning.

But they do incredible work for this government and that's why we've got – and for the people of this province, not just government, that was a misspeak. But I want to say hats off to them and that's why we've got to get Interim Supply passed in the House.

Thank you for your time, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I wasn't going to speak again, but I did after I heard the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology talk about Lab West and mining and the summit we just had. I want to get up and just talk about that for a second.

So, the residents of Labrador West and the Chamber of Commerce got together and they wanted to hold a summit. We knew we should do mine acts; we always talk about development and that, but they wanted to do something a little different. They decided to do a talk about the socio-economic

issues that come with the mining industry and how we can work all together to develop a way to work as partnerships, as a way to help with housing, but, also, at the same time, to encourage development and to encourage health care and try to find partnerships and stuff on the way to get things done. Because we haven't built a new house in Lab West since 2014 but we have people constantly looking for rentals, constantly looking for housing, so we realize that it's time that we actually had to move forward.

So, it was a fantastic way of getting everyone together. I'm actually glad that the minister responsible for mining came up; the Minister of Labrador Affairs; at the time, was the minister responsible for Housing actually did come up and sat on panels and we had quite frank discussions on how to move forward. It's not without the help of the provincial government. They have to be a partner in this. They have to be at the table as we try to move forward because we have great potentials now.

All the mining companies in Labrador right now have requests gone in looking for additional electricity. All the mining companies are doing work now to find out how much more production they can make.

So, it's a time of great interest in the sense that all these companies want to move forward and produce more and open up more, but we can't do it unless we have housing. We can't do it unless we have health care. We can't do it unless we have more energy. We can't do it if not all the pieces of the puzzle are in place.

We had an economist come up and actually talk about what would it mean for the region, what would it mean for the province if all these things fell into place and we did see all this. He talked about how it could increase the GDP of the province, just Labrador West alone could increase the GDP of the province by 1.7 per cent. So that's about \$1.8 billion going back into the

province every year, year over year. So, this was, obviously, fantastic news but all the pieces have to fall back into the puzzle.

We talk about the mining industry. They want to move forward but they're going to need people. They're going to need places to put people and in order to attract them to come and work in the mining industry, we're going to need housing.

Well, that requires some investment from all levels of government and industry to get that off the ground, but we can't get housing unless we have health care. We can't have health care without having housing. So, you know, we get caught in this vicious cycle. Somewhere along the way we have to break the cycle and find out ways to encourage development into the region and kind of bring down some of the costs.

We've heard from developers. We've heard from different stakeholders that the cost of building in the North is quite expensive and there are some barriers there. I alluded to it earlier when we talked about the fact that we really need to look at ways that we can get some money into the hands of municipalities so they can help with infrastructure.

So, helping municipalities who know that they're going to grow and know that they have potential there, help them put in roads, water, sewer, sidewalks, those kinds of things; help them move forward. We know Lab West is going to grow. We know that the potential is there. We've had the CEO, basically, look us in the eye and say: I'm going to expand my mine. I'm going to do X, Y and Z. I've got requests gone in for electricity. I've got requests gone on this. We know that this is coming. This is solid plans that they have made for themselves.

So, with that, there is reassurance that we should have for the province that investing in the municipality to help grow so we don't have homelessness, we don't have lost

revenue, lost potential and delay of potential projects.

This coming as a region, we also look at health care workers. The majority of health care workers, they're not making mining industry salaries. They're not making that. So a lot of these people that want to come up and work in Labrador West, they just can't afford the housing. If you don't work inside the mining industry, for the most part, you can't afford the rent in Labrador West; you can't afford the mortgages in Labrador West.

This is something that we need to look forward on, is how to make housing in Labrador West affordable and houses that are affordable to those who are working in industries that are not the mining industry. The salaries in the mining industry, we all know, they're quite substantial. We know that, for the most part, salaries right now in health care and stuff can't compete with that. So we need to make sure whatever we build in Lab West is affordable, because if we don't have affordable housing in Lab West, we can't attract these people to come work in Lab West.

That goes for health care workers, but it also goes for other industries and stuff, too. There's a shortage of Sherriff's Officers in Labrador West. There's a shortage of OHS officers in Labrador West. There's a shortage of other government jobs in Lab West. There are roles that constantly are posted that just keep going unfilled. It's just that these positions just don't keep up with the mining industry wages. They don't keep up with that, so obviously the housing market in Lab West is quite substantial that they can't get housing or they can't find housing or they can't find affordable rent.

Once again, every day we see rent is just not affordable in Lab West. If you can find something to rent, that's rare and far between because right now there is not a single commercial unit available. There's nothing on the market right now. You have

to go on a wait-list and some of the larger REITs there have substantial wait lists for housing.

We look at recruitment and retention, this also goes back into it, it's recruitment and retention of workers between health care and other professions that are non-mining, even sometimes into the mining industry, recruitment and retention is an issue, but it goes back to housing again. The thing that we kept hearing at the summit is: I don't have people applying for these jobs and when I do, the first thing they ask me is I need to find a unit. There's just nothing available to them.

So, we need encouragement, but we also need to look back at IET. We look at Municipal Affairs. We look at these departments to come to the table and help us find paths forward to make sure that we can encourage development of affordable housing. Also, we look back at the minister responsible for Housing when it comes to the other side of things, the social side of housing, to make sure that there are units available there as well so that we can slowly getting working towards the end game, which is that we have substantial growth and continue mining.

I can't be remiss to say this, so this June or end of June, July, Labrador West will be celebrating 70 years of continuous mining. We have not stopped mining iron ore for 70 straight years in Labrador West. So this is a big anniversary coming up for us. Not many mining districts get to say that they get to celebrate 70 years of continuous mining. That's a big thing for Lab West, so I can't be remiss in talking about that.

But to keep that flow going, to keep that going, we need people and stakeholders and municipalities and the provincial government and the federal government and all that to come to the table and actually help us get through some of these social and economic issues that are stumbling

blocks when it moves forward to get to that nice prize at the end of the road.

We want to see our mines thrive. We want to see the development. We want to see all that happen, but without adequate and affordable housing, we can't get to that point. So I really hope to see the takeaways from the summit, that the takeaways from all that in the last weeks are actually followed upon. I'll keep pushing. I'll keep pushing to make sure that we have stakeholders at the table to have affordable housing, to make sure that when we get affordable housing and stuff, it can be used as a recruitment and retention tool for health care workers and also a recruitment and retention tool for other positions that we need filled in the region.

We have to thank our newcomers that came in over the years, who has helped fill a lot of gaps over the years. We want to thank the people that stuck around, even seniors in Lab West are working well past their retirement just to help keep things going. I have an uncle who retired years ago; he still gets calls to go back to work. So, we thank these people who continue to work past retirement just to make sure that there's someone in that role, that it's filled, and our newcomers come and fill in a lot of the roles that are there.

So we're at a plateau; we're topped out. This is where I want to see – we talk about Interim Supply and we talk about that right now, but even with the budget and everything, there are things I want to see, that some of these initiatives are available to help municipalities, to help places like Labrador West and other places that want to move forward when it comes to affordable housing, but also a plan to go forward.

We have a great opportunity, we're happy to say – I've been saying it for five years – that Lab West is one of the best places, but also one of the fastest growing places when it comes to mining in Canada. We have a

product that's fantastic. The minister did say it's added to the provincial list of critical minerals, high-grade iron ore. Quebec followed suit, obviously, because the Labrador Trough is a great place to mine, but it also is important that the federal government also take that initiative as well.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

J. BROWN: Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Chair.

I'm glad to have an opportunity to speak again. Before I move on to something else here, I brought this up this morning and I guess just in good conscience, I just have to say these three letters, I know it has been said a few times: MRI.

I'm still hearing from people and they're very concerned about the lengthy wait times, unacceptable wait times. I know I've seen the minister come out and said, I believe, they're going to increase MRIs to 15 hours a day now. I'm not sure what it was prior to now but it says up to 15, so I guess it was less than that.

I would say to the minister, I understand it is not just an equipment issue, I'm fully cognizant of the fact that it would obviously be a human resource issue as well because you have people to actually operate the MRIs. I know there is limited staff, there are collective agreements, there's everything else associated with it. It's not just snap your fingers; I totally get it.

But I would say to the minister: If there is a way to have those MRI machines operating 24-7, even if it is for the next two months, three months, six months, whatever it takes to get that wait-list down to a reasonable level so that people who have had cancer

diagnosis and everything else are not being told: You need an MRI and your appointment is a year and a half or two years from now. Hopefully, whatever is going on in your head isn't going to grow or spread between now and then. That is just horrendous. It is horrendous that's actually happening.

So, again, I say to the minister, 15 hours sounds good, any increase is a good increase, I'm not knocking it, but if there is a way possible that you can find the human resources or whatever you need to do to have MRIs running 24-7 for the next period of time to get the emergency cases taken care of and get that wait-list down to a reasonable wait time, then, Minister, do it – do it.

Now, I also wanted to make a quick mention, I can remember back when – not this administration, it was a Liberal administration, but Dwight Ball was the leader at the time, I can remember the slogan: We're going to take the politics out of appointments. Bill 1 of that administration, which I was a part of at the time, was the Independent Appointments Commission.

Now, when that bill came forward and I and other Members had raised concerns at the time – and I will maintain those same concerns with the Independent Appointments Commission – that even though the process itself may seem independent, once those three names are handed over to the minister from the IAC, the minister can take those three names and run them right through the shredder and hire whoever the minister wants for that job. That's allowed under the current legislation.

There was a review done of the legislation within the last year or so. The gentleman who did it, I can't think of his name, but I did have a conversation with him. I had pointed it out to him and he did a report. I don't have the report in front of me, but in the report that this administration got this guy to do the

review, he has recommended that in the event that three names are brought forward to a minister for a job, if the minister chooses not to go with any of those names and picks someone of his or her own choosing, then that must be disclosed publicly so that this House of Assembly and the general public know that you went through an independent process: three names came forward and you didn't want any of them, you appointed whoever you felt like. Now, the minister is going to have to justify it in public as to why that was done. That's the recommendation that just came out a few months ago.

It's not Question Period, I can't really ask the minister, but I will put it across there to the minister: I hope that we're going to see a piece of legislation come forward that's going to amend the *Independent Appointments Commission Act* and follow the recommendation brought forward by the consultant, that we're truly going to have an independent process because right now, it's a joke.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: That brings me a little over halfway through my time.

I want to go back to something that I've brought up in this House numerous times but it still hasn't happened, so I'm going to keep bringing it up.

I was listening to the Leader of the Official Opposition, actually, on *Open Line*, and obviously he was listening to what I had to say because he brought it up himself and I was glad to hear that, and that's the whole process that we currently do not have of holding agencies, boards and commissions accountable. We do not have that accountability mechanism that we should have.

We've just seen what the Auditor General uncovered at Memorial University because we left them to their devices and you can

see what happened. I wonder, when it comes to other ABCs, what might be happening.

I've given this example numerous times in this House, I'm going to continue to give it because it's an example that would strike home, I think, to a lot of people and that's the fact that we will go through a budget process in this House of Assembly, which we're going to go through now in the next couple of weeks or whatever, assuming we don't drop a budget and go to an election, who knows. It is what it is, but assuming we go through the budget process, part of that is going to be Estimates. On this side of the House, there are going to be Members in the Opposition and on that side of the House, there is going to be a minister and all departmental staff. We're going to be able to ask questions, line by line, of the budget for all the various departments.

Using the example of the Department of Health, we're going to be asking the minister: Minister, last year, you budgeted \$5,000 on photocopying, but you spent \$8,000. How come you spent \$3,000 over budget on photocopying? Can you please explain? The minister will give some rationale.

At the same time, we're going to move on down through the budget and, at some point in time, there's going to be a transfer of \$3 billion, \$4 billion – sorry, it can't be \$3 billion or \$4 billion. What is it? It's about \$4 billion in health, so probably \$3 billion of that \$4 billion, or more, transferred to the health authorities. We're just going to pass on over that line: done.

So we're going to be counting pieces of paper on the photocopier at the minister's office and we're going to take billions of dollars and just transfer to the health authority, no questions asked. No process to ask them questions. No opportunity to have – Mr. Diamond is still there right now, I guess he's going to be replaced at some point. But if it's Mr. Diamond or if it's

someone else and all of his other directors or CEOs, whatever they're called that they have – COOs I think they call them – they should all be sat across and we should be questioning their budgets and where they're spending all that money, because that's where the money is.

It's not just Health. The same thing with the Liquor Corporation. Yes, Liquor Corporation, great, we'll talk about it. Yes, Liquor Corporation, they made money. They brought revenue into the province. That's a good thing, not knocking it. But that doesn't mean they're operating efficiently, that doesn't mean they couldn't be bringing in more money or that doesn't mean that they're not wasting lots of money on the expenditure side. We don't know. All we'll hear is: Well, they brought in X-amount of dollars. Good, all sounds good but we have no idea how they're operating, if it's efficient or what's going on there. We have no idea.

There are other ABCs and so on, the same thing, College of the North Atlantic and OilCo. I'd love to know what's going on at OilCo. I'd love to get my hands on that one and NL Hydro, but we don't have a process.

I've brought it up year after year and three years ago now, the Minister of Finance stood in the House of Assembly when she was delivering the budget and said the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands is going to be very pleased to hear this, we're going to implement a process where we can start scrutinizing the budgets of all the ABCs, like he's been talking about for the last number of years. It never happened; three years ago, still haven't happened – nothing – crickets.

So I'm going to call upon the government once again. Like I said, I'm glad to see the Leader of the Official Opposition totally agrees with me. He said it on Paddy Daly, he brought up the same issue. He's on board I'm glad to hear it. I'm sure every Member should be on board, that we're going to find a way that we're going to start

scrutinizing the budgets and the operations of all these ABCs because that's where the money is.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2025 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service." (Bill 63)

CLERK (Hawley George): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 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 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Schedule 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: WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the Public Service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2025 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2025 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, that the Committee rise and report Bill 63.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 63 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's and Deputy Speaker.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed her to report the Committee have adopted a certain resolution and recommend a bill to be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier, that the resolution be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: *"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2025 the sum of \$3,286,755,700."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier, that the resolution be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution 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: *"Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:*

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2025 the sum of \$3,286,755,700."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier, for leave to introduce the Interim Supply bill, Bill 63, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and second that the Deputy Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 63, the Interim Supply bill and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, "An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2025 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service," carried. (Bill 63)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2025 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 63)

On motion, Bill 63 read a first time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and second that the said 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 Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2025 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 63)

On motion, Bill 63 read a second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a third time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and second that the bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2025 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 63)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2025 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 63)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Mount Pearl North, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

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