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*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

In the public gallery today, I would like to welcome Sullivan Ryan who will be recognized in a Member's statement this afternoon. He is the great-grandson of Bill Hogan, former Member for Placentia and minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs. Sullivan will be joined by Andrew Ryan, Tim Hogan, Kaley Hogan and Marilyn Power.

Welcome.

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

**SPEAKER:** Also, I'd like to welcome a new Page in the Chamber today, Gina Okai. Gina is from Ghana and has a degree in political science. She is currently enrolled in the political science master's program at Memorial University.

Welcome.

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

**SPEAKER:** Before we begin, I'd just like to remind people in the public gallery that the use of phones, recording devices is not permitted and also members are not permitted to participate either in favour or against any debate of the House. I appreciate your order here today.

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Placentia West - Bellevue, Terra Nova, Topsail - Paradise, St. John's Centre and Bonavista.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

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

Today, I stand in this hon. House to pay tribute to my good friend, Mr. Henry Brenton of Norman's Cove-Long Cove formerly of Burin, who passed away on November 22, 2023.

For a number of years, up until his passing, Henry served as a former councillor and mayor of Norman's Cove-Long Cove. He was actively involved in the communities he lived in. He served as president of the Federation of Labour on the Burin Peninsula, chairperson of the South Coast District Council and was a member of the Marystown and Norman's Cove-Long Cove volunteer fire departments and a member of the Green Mountain Lodge Committee.

Anyone who was fortunate enough to meet Henry was instantly drawn to his positive outlook, wit, stories, jokes and his love for a good chocolate bar, especially the Oh Henry!

I would like to extend my deepest condolences to Henry's wife Effie, their four children and the rest of the extended family who meant so much to him.

I ask all hon. Members to please join me in recognizing the late Henry Brenton for his service within his communities. He leaves behind a huge impact that will be recognized for many years to come.

Thank you, My Friend, for your contributions.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I stand today to congratulate Ann Lundrigan on 31 years of teaching music in Newfoundland and Labrador. Ann graduated from Memorial and set out for Churchill Falls, Labrador to begin her memorable career. During her journey, Ann

touched many individuals, students and community members through her love of music.

In 2023, Ann was awarded the Builder Award for music education. This award recognizes those who advance music education in Canada through building community and establishing significant collaborative efforts.

Some of her career highlights were: She formed the Clarenville Youth Choir, which travelled to Ottawa for Canada Day on Parliament Hill representing Newfoundland and Labrador at the Unisong Festival; she received the Newfoundland and Labrador Arts Educator award; her women's choir performed at the 2010 Olympic Torch Relay; the Heritage Collegiate band travelled to Florida as part of Disney Magic Music Program; the Clarenville High School Choir sang in New York City at the WorldStrides heritage festival receiving a gold standard and the spirit award; her choirs have also performed with Alan Doyle and Kenny Rogers.

I ask that all Members join me in recognizing Ann for her contribution to music and education for students in this province.

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

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

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

Our youth are our leaders, our future leaders and seven-year-old, Topsail - Paradise resident, Sully Ryan is a true example of what a leader is.

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

**P. DINN:** Three years ago, while skating, Sully's pinky finger was severed when someone skated over it, slicing through his winter gloves. The skate hit a growth plate

in his finger and as a result his pinky is unable to grow.

Despite his circumstances, Sully plays hockey; he plays in Paradise and he remains very positive. After watching a commercial on TV, Sully chose to fundraise for War Amps to help those like him but those who are worse off and are in need of limbs.

This past January, Sully hosted the first Tim Hortons trading card event at the Paradise Double Ice Complex to raise money and promote skating safely.

I had the pleasure of attending the night and it was a night of celebration with a wonderful turnout. There was a photo booth, games, snacks and a visit from the Newfoundland Growlers.

Sully hopes to make this an annual event. I want to congratulate him on his amazing efforts and say that our future is in great hands.

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

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

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

I rise in this House to celebrate the life of theatre artist and community advocate, Rick Boland, who is also a constituent and a friend.

From a very young age, Rick lived as if all my life's a stage. As a teenager, Rick was part of the Corner Brook improv theatre scene where he fine-tuned the chemistry of making people laugh and feeling accepted. Moving to St. John's presented Rick with a bigger stage for his artistic depth to flourish as well as his engagement in social justice issues, gay rights advocacy and other community issues.

Rick was an icon and a gift to the theatre community in Newfoundland and Labrador. His contributions made an impact, both on the stage and through written word in many of the plays and articles he produced. Some in this Legislature may have even been lucky enough to be the punchline in one of his countless revue sketches.

Rick believed that if you were part of a community, you ought to be engaged in the needs of the community. He was a compassionate and caring person to many who needed a friend and shelter. Rick's vibrant presence in our world will be sorely missed and oft-celebrated by his family and friends.

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

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

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

The District of Bonavista is very excited about the achievement of Lethbridge's Kate Peddle while participating in the Calgary Special Olympics from February 27 to March 2. Kate participated in the 400-metre snowshoeing event and she received a bronze medal on this national stage. She also participated in the Newfoundland and Labrador 4x100 metre relay team and secured a gold medal.

The magnitude of the event was truly realized when the athletes took part in the opening ceremonies on February 27 at the Stampede Park. With a sold-out crowd, Kate marched in with the Newfoundland and Labrador contingent to much applause and excitement.

Kate trained hard for the competition in Calgary and was pleased with her performances and the ceremonies, in what was described as: an experience of a lifetime. She thanks her head coach Rosie and assistant coaches Christina, Shawn and Gail.

Her Aunt Carol states in a post: You are brave, smart, beautiful and continue to prove that you are capable of doing anything.

I ask Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the performances of Miss Kate Peddle and all our provincial athletes who represented us so admirably.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Minister.

### **Statements by Ministers**

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

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

Speaker, today I rise to recognize tomorrow, March 8, as International Women's Day. This day serves as a reminder of the incredible strides made towards gender equality, while recognizing there is still work to do.

Today, I wish to honour the resilience, strength and determination of women in this province who have shattered class ceilings, challenged stereotypes and paved the way for future generations.

Our government places high priority on creating a society where women and girls can pursue their dreams and live freely from discrimination and violence.

This year's Canadian theme – Invest in Women: Accelerate Progress – as well as the global theme – Inspire Inclusion – underscore the critical need to prioritize investments in women's education, health, economic empowerment and leadership opportunities. When we invest in women, we not only enhance their individual well-being, but we also drive positive change within families, communities and societies.

Speaker, every woman, regardless of background or circumstance, should feel valued and supported.

Together, we can create a future where every woman and girl in Newfoundland and Labrador has the opportunity to live a life of dignity, respect and empowerment.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

On behalf of the entire PC Opposition, we recognize International Women's Day 2024 as an important day to honour the remarkable achievements of women and to thank the trailblazers who shine a light on the barriers and disparities that women still face today.

While we all strive for a world free of bias and stereotypes and one that is diverse and inclusive, it is imperative that our government lead by way of example to achieve gender equality.

Unfortunately, this government's record with pay equity legislation has been fraught with delays, inadequacies and disappointment.

We, therefore, implore our government to respond to the calls for action for effective legislation that will serve and advance the cause of gender equality in our province that just doesn't exist today.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

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

Yes, there is still work to do towards gender equality. Women across this province need pay equity legislation that doesn't fail them. Advocates are calling for true consultation. It is insulting to women and gender-diverse people to hear the minister boast about incredible strides, when the legislation that was tabled was accurately described as woefully inadequate. This must first be addressed for true gender equality.

Thank you.

**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.

We're here in day four of the House of Assembly and we still have no resolution for fishers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Rural Newfoundland and Labrador's survival depends on the fishery, but at the same time, we find out that the Premier is off to Washington for another photo op and the Minister of Fisheries has gone to Boston for a fish show.

I ask: How can fishers be reassured that their issues and their concerns are being addressed?

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

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

**S. COADY:** First of all, I want to recognize and welcome and again thank the

harvesters and the plant workers that are in the galleries again today. This is indeed, as the Member opposite did indicate, day four.

I understand, because my family has a deep history in the fishery, how incredibly important March is to harvesters. This is the time when you're preparing your vessels. This is a time when you're preparing to get on the water. I know that this is a critically important time for them to understand what the pricing mechanisms will be.

I can say to the harvesters that the price-setting mechanism is under, I guess, discussion at the present time. ASP and FFAW are meeting.

I will also say I think it's critically important that the Premier and the minister are at the Boston seafood show ensuring we have markets for our important fish.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, we got nobody out on the water doing any fishing. We got no worries about trying to sell our fish in the United States.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Both the minister and the Premier went around the province this summer talking to harvesters, coming up and offering them solutions that they were going to do for them. At the same time, we're here now and wondering was that just another photo op.

Again I ask: What are you going to tell the fish harvesters? What are you going to tell them about fish processing capacity in this province?

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

**S. COADY:** First of all, Speaker, I will say that was a very pessimistic and negative outlook for what I hope will be a very important and good season for harvesters and fishermen in this province over this summer.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** I can say to you that I have more hope and I probably have more knowledge, too, about what happens in our fishery in this province. I know that it will be a very, very important season for the harvesters and plant workers and indeed for all the processors as well in this province.

We have made strides this year to ensure that FFAW and –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. Deputy Premier.

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

I can say to the harvesters this is seizing and of utmost importance. That's why the Premier has met with all groups. That's why the minister has met with those groups. That's why we're optimistic.

**SPEAKER:** The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, in 1949, a Liberal premier gave up management of our fisheries. Now, we have a Premier and a minister who are giving up on their responsibility for fishery in this province. They're not even here to answer questions or to listen to the concerns.

How is that any way to govern?

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

**S. COADY:** That is simply incorrect. The Premier and the minister went throughout the province, they brought together FFAW, they brought together ASP. They have created an opportunity to make –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Order, please!

If the chatter continues, Members will be named and lose speaking privileges.

The hon. the Deputy Premier, thirty seconds.

**S. COADY:** I think that the Premier and the minister have worked very hard to ensure that we don't have a repeat next year. We're optimistic that ASP and FFAW will come to an agreement, that fishers will be on the water very soon because, of course, we want a very vibrant and strong, growing fishery in this province.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I would simply say that actions speaks louder than words and they need action. We need action.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, while the Premier and the minister in our province continue to hide behind the details of this scandalous contract with travel nurses, the Auditor General in New Brunswick has been called in to do an investigation. The Premier of New Brunswick turned around and has called in the Auditor General to investigate travel nurse spending in their province.

So, again, I ask: Why doesn't the Premier bring in the Auditor General here?

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

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

As I'd indicated in the House, previously, the Comptroller General is independent, appointed by address through this Legislature; quite capable of carrying out a review as we'd seen with the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation. The review that was carried out there did lead to having Justice and Public Safety, law enforcement and the Auditor General involved.

Mr. Speaker, if the Auditor General needs to be brought in, the Auditor General will be brought in. I can guarantee that.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Auditor General does need to be brought in and let's not delay it. Let's just bring the Auditor General in and get to the bottom of this once and for all.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, this government seems to have lost control of our health care system. We've got this scandalous contract that was initiated in the Premier's office. We have unclaimed bodies stored in freezers outside of the Health Sciences Centre, people who can't afford to bury their own, and we have three people whose medical conditions have gotten worse because they can't get access to an MRI.

I say: How can the people of this province have faith in our health care system?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we understand there are challenges in the health care system. The Premier has indicated the health care system has struggled in this province and needs to be fixed. That is the reason the Premier had put in place the folks that wrote and put forward a 10-year transformational plan called the Newfoundland Health Accord, which has been lauded by people throughout the province, by medical professionals and many others.

Many of the recommendations that are in the Health Accord have already been announced and are being implemented, some of them fully implemented, some of them through implementation and we have many more to come.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, this morning we learned – and I quote – the credit lines for NL Health Services have increased to \$660 million from \$118 million in 2019.

Did the Minister of Finance know that the Minister of Health signed off and approved these lines of credit?

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

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

There is a concern, obviously, with the lines of credit. There have been many discussions between the health authority, my office and the Minister of Finance's office. That is a process that is being addressed, and I can assure the Member opposite will be addressed by this administration and the health authority working together.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, that's a 459 per cent increase – 459 per cent increase, and the interest rate on this credit line is 5.95 per cent, while the government can borrow at 4 per cent.

So again I ask: Why wasn't this addressed in provincial borrowing? Why is it that we signed off on these lines of credit?

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

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

The Member opposite well knows, he spent time in Health, he spent time in Finance, that these were used for operational purposes, cash-flow purposes, these lines of credit. Over the last number of years and through COVID, of course, they increased because spending was really rampant during those times. I can tell the Member opposite, and he knows from Estimates, that we put in about a billion dollars more a year – a billion dollars more – in Health in the last number of years, and he knows that.

So we are addressing the lines of credit. I can assure the Member opposite they are already included in our total debt, so there's no concerns in that side of things. But whether and how we utilize and move towards improving these lines of credit is something that is under active discussion.

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

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

**T. WISEMAN:** Speaker, that 459 per cent increase, a half a billion dollars; they say they put a billion dollars in and, obviously, they haven't funded a half a billion of it



because it is on a line of credit at a much higher interest rate.

Minister, you said you did not know about the scandalous contract until *The Globe and Mail* provided the article. You said you did not know about the bodies being stored in containers outside the Health Sciences until you read it in a CBC article.

So I ask the minister: Who is overseeing our health care system, your department or the media?

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

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, let's set the record straight. I have been talking about agency nursing in this province for months and months and months. I obviously knew about the contract. Let's not twist words, I say to the Leader of the Opposition, which is something the Opposition is very good at.

What I didn't know was that there was \$1.6 million paid to the agency for meals, which was never passed on to the agency nurses. That's something that we did not know about. We didn't know about the air fryer or Walmart furniture.

Mr. Speaker, those are concerns –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**T. OSBORNE:** Those are concerns, obviously, that we don't know if they were built into the contract, because the contracts were written between the health authority and the agency, or whether they weren't. If they weren't in the contract, there are major concerns, and that's what we've asked the Comptroller General to look into.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** One quick question, Mr. Speaker.

How can you approve a contract to be signed if you don't know what's in it?

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

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, what is approved, as the Member knows, he was CEO of a health authority, is the ability to spend beyond the budgeted amount and the purpose to spend beyond the budgeted amount.

The minister doesn't write the contract and the former CEO of Lab-Grenfell fully knows that. These contracts are written between the health authority and the agency. The minister simply signs off on the fact that they are going to spend beyond the budgeted amount and the reason for that.

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

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

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

So the minister signed off on the contract. Thanks for clarifying that.

Speaker, while the Minister of Health has stated he only became aware of issues with the morgue at the Health Sciences complex after a CBC report, I would like to remind the minister of a scathing 2017 report from the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner that identified space and infrastructure as critical deficiencies.

Would the minister like to correct his answer?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I became aware of the situation – and I will give credit to the Member for St. John’s Centre, who wrote government and copied my department, I think, on the 23rd or 24th of February. Officials were dealing with that letter, but I became aware of this through a CBC report.

The reality is there needs to be improvements to ensure that the number of remains that the health authority have to deal with come into play, but there also has to be a more dignified way of having the remains at the health authority while we address the issues that have led to the high numbers.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Amazing, you know, Speaker, another report collecting dust. The government of reports. All we hear is report after report after report and they never take no action.

Speaker, the third bullet of the report by the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner in 2017 says unequivocal: Office of Chief Medical Examiner’s “current facilities are inadequate.” It’s recommended an expansion for purpose-built facility.

Speaker, after seven years and the disgraceful treatment of human remains nothing has been done. Why?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, the health authority is putting in place a longer term solution for respectful storage of remains at the health authority. That may have come out of that report, Mr. Speaker.

I will remind the Member that in 2017 I was sitting in the Speaker’s Chair, I don’t believe I read that report; however, the reality is the health authority is dealing with a more respectful way of maintaining the remains. That is something that the health authority have been proactive on, Mr. Speaker.

The sites of these storage units outside were disturbing. They were disturbing to me. I would say they were disturbing to anybody and everybody who has seen them.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** So just to get this clear, did your officials know and neglect telling you? Is that what you’re saying? Because you’re saying that you didn’t know but your officials ought to have known. But to be honest, your name is over the door, you ought to have known as well.

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

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

**T. OSBORNE:** So, I guess, Mr. Speaker, what the Member is saying, I need to go back and do decades worth of reading for every report that was ever written to the Department of Health.

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

**B. PETTEN:** My suggestion is if you’re going to do reports and not read them, don’t waste people’s money on these unnecessary reports. That’s the answer.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, while we are just months away from the Western Memorial Regional Hospital opening, questions have been raised about staffing for the new cancer centre.

Speaker, how many radiation therapists has government recruited for Corner Brook?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I will refer the Member to the Member for the Bay of Islands question yesterday, because I answered that question yesterday for the Member for Bay of Islands who asked the same question.

Mr. Speaker, recruitment goes on for a radiation oncologist for that unit. That process continues. The health authority is looking at other options. In the meantime, they are committed to that recruitment process.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, we understand 75 per cent of the required staff positions are not filled. There is still a significant gap in radiation therapists while other key positions, such as radiation oncologist and medical physicists, are also vacant.

Speaker, will the minister confirm the new cancer clinic in Corner Brook will not open in June?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** What I can commit, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that recruitment is a top priority for the health authority. There is a recruitment office set up at the health

authority. It's a top priority for government. We have a recruitment office set up in the department, Mr. Speaker. We have incentives – the best incentives in the country in terms of recruitment of health professionals to this province.

The Come Home Incentive, Mr. Speaker, has been the most successful incentive ever in the province for the recruitment of individuals to this province. That is something that we brought in to help address and to help incentivize individuals to come to this province.

Recruitment is a global challenge, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about a situation where every province, every country is competing for these, but we have been very successful in terms of recruitment when you look at other jurisdictions across the country.

**SPEAKER:** The minister's time has expired.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Now that the minister has confirmed the cancer centre will not open: Will this delay the opening of the long-promised PET scanner in Corner Brook?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, the issue of the PET scanner in Corner Brook is an issue that will be dealt with by the health professionals in Corner Brook. This government put \$2 million into trust with the health foundation in the Western region, Mr. Speaker. The advice on the PET scanner, the timing of the PET scanner, the need for a PET scanner is based on the health professionals in the area. That is something that has been publicly put out there in previous years. It's the same thing today.

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

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

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

I ask the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development: Did his department know about the bodies in storage at the Health Sciences complex?

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

**P. PIKE:** Mr. Speaker, I attended a meeting on February 16, I was involved in a meeting where I was told that there were bodies that were – by the way, this meeting was with a funeral services operator and we certainly were told at that point. That was February 16.

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

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

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

Yesterday, we learned that the cause of the body overflow situation at the Health Sciences is the rising cost of living, leaving less money in the wallets of people who are in charge of their loved one's funeral. The minister stated yesterday on the situation that he didn't know until the media reported the story. His previous answer was that he attended a meeting on February 15.

I ask the Minister of CSSD if he knew about the situation, why wasn't it addressed before this?

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

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

This is a very complex situation we have here. There are some people that have

issues, I know, with being able to fund funerals.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** For that, we do provide \$1 million. It is not completely exercised completely, at this point in time, so there's still money in that fund. If there is someone who's looking –

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

**SPEAKER:** You guys ready?

The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I am trying to give an answer. If the Member opposite would at least give me the courtesy of listening to my answer.

You talk about International Women's Day being tomorrow, Speaker. International Women's Day is tomorrow and this is what we have to put up with in the House of Assembly.

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

**S. COADY:** It's ridiculous; absolutely ridiculous.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

We can waste the rest of Question Period arguing back and forth if you want.

The minister's time has expired.

The hon. Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** I think the females in my personal family would be very disappointed that you used that card here in debate.

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

**C. PARDY:** That's wrong.

I ask the Minister of CSSD, how did he not act on the rates paid –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member for Bonavista.

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

I ask the Minister of CSSD, how did he not act on the rates paid to the families, realizing since his meeting on February 15 that they were insufficient and causing families to make this very difficult decision to abandon their loved one?

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

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

As Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance, I'm trying to answer a financial question. Allow me the opportunity to do so – that courtesy. I can say to the Member opposite, I'm disappointed that he doesn't realize that the courtesy should be to the Minister of Finance to answer a financial question.

I can tell the Member opposite there's a million dollars in the fund and it is not fully yet subscribed. This is a complex issue that is very important to families and to individuals that we should be really seriously considering how we can improve the situation. I can tell the Member opposite we have \$1 million that's not fully exercised as yet.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, the government offers up \$2,338 in assistance to help with the

cremation and burial costs of their loved ones – an amount that has not changed in 20 years. Yesterday, the minister said it only became an issue as of late. I think the media assumed that was on their report, but we now know it's February 15.

Why didn't the minister consider the emotional and financial burden placed on the families due to the lack of sufficient assistance for funeral assistance long before now?

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

**P. PIKE:** I'd just like to say it was February 16 that I met with the funeral operator.

With regard to the statement yesterday, the question was – and you can check this out; we already have, of course, and we're looking at making – the correction is already made. The question was asked to me and the Minister of Health and Community Services: When were you made aware of the temporary morgue being located near a dumpster? That was the question.

The question had nothing to do with when we knew. That was the question we were asked by the media and I responded by: I saw it on *CBC News*. That's the correct answer and you can –

**SPEAKER:** The minister's time has expired.

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

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

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

As another winter storm bears down on the province, the minister continues to refuse to provide 24-hour snow clearing which was eliminated by this government in 2016.

Speaker, why does the minister continue to put money before road safety?

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

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

First and foremost, I want to commend and thank our highway crews that will be out over the next 24 or 48 hours to keep our roads open and safe for all of us here –

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

**J. ABBOTT:** – and in terms of the question that the Member asked, and he knows we never did have 24-hour snow clearing, other than on 14 routes in the province. We continue to provide 24-hour service on those routes, when needed – and that’s the operative thing: when needed.

Our crews are ready. We have availability of all our equipment. Normally we’re at 80 per cent. As of today, we’re at 86 per cent and we will continue to stay focused on keeping those roads open for the next 48 hours.

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

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

**L. O’DRISCOLL:** Speaker, in the budget in 2016, there was 24-hour snow clearing and you eliminated it. It’s right there in black and white.

Speaker, we have health care workers, refinery workers and other shift workers on our highways all hours of the night. Yet, the minister still thinks the snow only falls from 9 to 5, Monday to Friday.

When is he going to take action to protect the motoring public?

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Again, Speaker, thanks for the opportunity to respond.

When it comes to snow clearing, any time of the winter, we certainly make sure that our shifts start between 4:30 a.m. and 5 a.m. They will run until as late as 10 at night, if needed. We have the essential routes that are up to 24 hours snow clearing. If there are any emergencies, there is a protocol –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. ABBOTT:** – that requires our crews to go out and support any of our health care ambulances and others to get to the scene and back to the hospital, and the different hospitals also have supports in place to make sure their workers get to and from the hospital during a storm.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Well, Speaker, it’s confusing here today.

If I understand it, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development met and was aware of this issue on February 16. I wrote the minister on February 23 about this issue. I received a response to that letter yesterday. The Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development admitted in a media interview that he had been in conversation with the funeral home directors. We know that the funeral home directors have been in the conversation since 2021.

So, if the minister has known, why have they failed to act?

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

**P. PIKE:** Again, the first time I was made aware was February 16. This particular

matter falls under multiple government departments, as you know: the Department of Justice and Public Safety, Department of Health and Community Services and CSSD. So, we're all working together to come up with solutions.

That's why it took a longer period of time to get back to you, but you did send me a letter on February 23 and the response was given yesterday, which we think was in a good amount of time given, because of the fact that we had to go across multiple departments to get you your answers.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Will the minister admit that the problem is not storage capacity but inadequate financial supports for families, a complicated application process and inadequate protocols and policies for the respectful disposition of bodies.

And will the minister commit to tying financial assistance to inflation, simplifying the application process and reviewing protocols and policies before the end of this spring sitting?

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

**P. PIKE:** Mr. Speaker, my department is certainly here to support families who are receiving income support and low-income families.

When a family, a friend or a trustee advises our department of the passing of a person with no financial means to pay, we work with them. If you simply call 877-729-8777, you will get an answer there and people will help. We have an application process that's there, but we'll get it done in a timely fashion.

With regard to any other issues around funeral homes and so on, I'm also pleased to say here today that we have no arrears with any funeral homes in the province right now.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Speaker, if it was a timely process, it wouldn't have been in the news yesterday.

Speaker, last December the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure committed to having people out of tents and out of the cold by Christmas eve. In the gallery we have about a dozen people who still call Tent City, outside the Colonial Building, home.

What does the minister have to say to these people for failing to live up to that commitment?

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

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

Earlier today, I went down to the encampment along with my colleague, the Minister of Housing, to talk to the folks that were there this morning. Again, to ask them how they're doing, what are their needs and how can we support them, and we had a good discussion.

That aside, we make sure that through our Department of CSSD, NLHC, End Homelessness St. John's that we are on site on a daily basis to talk to the individuals to find out what their needs are and to address those.

I know, with certainty, that we have placed quite a number of individuals right through

the fall and through the winter. We will continue to do that. We are expanding our affordable housing, we are expanding our social housing, we're expanding our –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. minister's time is up.

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

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

Time for one quick question. No preamble, please.

**J. DINN:** No problem.

Speaker, the lack of a mandate letter seems to have left the Minister of Housing hesitant and adrift as to his role, so much so that he's unable to or unwilling to declare housing as a fundamental human right. We are concerned.

**SPEAKER:** Get to your question.

**J. DINN:** So, with that in mind, we have actually written a mandate letter for him.

I ask the minister will he introduce legislation in this session declaring housing a fundamental human right? A simple thing.

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

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the people in the gallery you are not allowed to participate.

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Housing.

**F. HUTTON:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question, and I welcome folks who are here today in our galleries.

We've spent this entire week focusing on making sure that everybody has somewhere to stay each and every night. The minister said we visited the tent encampment today; we were there to talk to people.

We talked to two gentlemen who arrived three days ago; they just got there. We offered supports to them; we have supports available. We put out notices letting people know that the warming shelters are open. We are there to help.

And if I could just very briefly read the number, it's 1-833-724-2444. Nobody needs to sleep outdoors or in a tent tonight.

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

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**SPEAKER:** I ask to have the person removed, please.

The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### **Tabling of Documents**

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

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

I'd like to table the budget report from 2016 that shows that the government eliminated 24-hour snow clearing.

Thank you.



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

**SPEAKER:** Does the Member have leave to present the document?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**SPEAKER:** Twenty-hour snow clearing.

Leave granted.

Any further tabling of documents?

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

**J. DINN:** Speaker, I'd like to table two letters. The first is my letter of February 23 to Minister Pike and also our letter to Minister Hutton as to first steps toward resolving the housing crisis.

**SPEAKER:** Use the department names, please.

Does the Member have leave to present those documents?

**J. HOGAN:** No, Speaker, no leave until he (inaudible).

**SPEAKER:** Okay.

Leave is not granted.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Did you want to speak on it?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**J. HOGAN:** I'm happy to grant leave, but I would appreciate if the Member respect the rules of the House and not use Members names in the House. They have titles; they have districts. So there are rules of the House; we're supposed to follow the rules of the House.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I do remind all Members that when talking about Members on either side, we name them either by their position or their district.

I'll ask again, is leave granted to present the document?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Yes, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** All good?

Leave is granted.

Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motions.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS there are no current operations at the Bull Arm Fabrication Site; and

WHEREAS the site is a world-class facility with potential to rejuvenate the local economy; and

WHEREAS the residents of the area are troubled with the lack of employment in today's economy; and

WHEREAS the operation of this facility will encourage employment for the area and create economic spinoffs for local business; and

WHEREAS the site is an asset to the province, built to benefit the province and a

long-term tenant for this site would attract gainful business opportunities; and

WHEREAS the continued idling of this site is not in the best interest of the province;

THEREFORE, we, the residents of the area near the Bull Arm Fabrication Site, petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to expedite the process to get the Bull Arm Fabrication Site back in operation. We request that the process include a vision for a long-term viable plan that is beneficial to all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

FURTHERMORE, we request that government place an emphasis on all supply, maintenance, fabrication and offshore workover for existing offshore platforms, as well as new construction of any future platforms, be they GBS or FPSO in nature.

I've been presenting this petition since 2019. Our position hasn't changed in that area. The people are willing to work. It's the area where the refinery is. There's a lot of industry in our district, but the Bull Arm Fabrication Site, it is imperative that we get somebody in there.

I know that the minister has currently put out an RFP and I would request that the minister respond to our petition to find out what's going on currently with the Bull Arm site.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology for a response.

**A. PARSONS:** Yes, thank you for the petition.

Certainly, it's a matter that the Member and I have discussed a number of times,

probably most recently at a teleconference or Zoom meeting with the Isthmus alliance.

What I would say is the RFP is out there. It is due back March 15. At that point, we should have an idea of what the interest is. We think it's a world-class facility, the Member thinks it's a world-class facility and we certainly know that it's capable of more work than what has been there before.

I will point out, the challenge has been, along with many government assets, that they have value, but sometimes the value that is being requested from outside buyers is far less than what it is. So you have to be mindful of the fact that we cannot just give the asset away. We cannot let people just take it and we lose that value that has been invested by citizens and governments over the last number of decades.

At the same time, we have to be flexible and work with proponents to be adjacent to the work that is happening and I would say, in that area, there is a lot of opportunity. There is a lot of possibility. I think the residents of that area see that. Again, we would like to see nothing more than people going in and out of that facility far more than they have been.

So, hopefully, we can fast-forward another week or so, see where we are, and I'm sure there will be questions and more opportunity to talk about where we are on that basis.

Thank you.

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

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

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

This is a petition, again, that I've offered many times.

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest rates of diabetes in the country; and

WHEREAS currently there is no coverage for continuous glucose monitoring systems used to monitor blood glucose on a continuous basis by insulin requiring people with diabetes; and

WHEREAS reducing major complications such as strokes, heart attacks, blindness, kidney failure and amputations would result in net savings for our health care system and have a huge impact on those living with diabetes;

THEREFORE, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide a funding program for those who need the continuous glucose monitoring systems as a proactive approach to allow better management of diabetes and a more stable, healthier outcome for those.

I have been pushing this for so long. In the last budget, there was a small amount of money, I think about \$800,000, that was put towards a pilot program in paediatrics, I believe, towards this. But this is a bigger, bigger issue for those in the province who are living with diabetes.

We know that 30 per cent of strokes, 40 per cent of heart attacks, 50 per cent of kidney failure requiring dialysis, 70 per cent of non-traumatic amputations and it's the leading cause of blindness – these are all due to poor management of diabetes. An investment in these devices could reduce those figures immensely.

The Canadian diabetes association said that Newfoundland and Labrador, by introducing these devices, could save upwards of \$80 million per year. In speaking with the Paramedic Association it would reduce 911 calls in the thousands.

It's indisputable that these devices make a difference. Think about young children who are in school dealing with diabetes, what the parents would feel, what comfort they would have, knowing that they can monitor their own kids and know that.

This will save us money; this will actually put more money in the coffers and we need to come out in this budget with a more expansive and broader continuous glucose monitoring program for this province.

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

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

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

Fire departments in Central Newfoundland may get the call from 911 to respond to calls outside of their service municipal catchment area. Many of these fire departments, through their residents' contributions, are struggling to maintain their services. There is a nominal financial eligibility for some types of calls outside their boundary, but not for fires in cabin areas, forest fires, medical calls and mutual aid responses.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to revise its eligibility criteria to provide fire departments financial assistance for 911 calls that take them outside their boundary for cabin fires, forest fires, medical calls and mutual aid responses.

Speaker, we've debated in this House several times and we confirmed our support for the fire departments and the great work they do out in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We've been in this House now for the fourth day and we've talked about many matters. We've linked it to cost of living and we realize how tough it is out in our province for the residents and those committees and organizations out there.

The fire departments are an entity which is a valuable asset for rural Newfoundland. They're finding it tough. They will get 911 calls that will bring them outside of their municipal boundary to respond to a call. We know that there is a policy that we have and a regulation in place that would say that if in the instance for vehicle rescue, hazardous materials response, fires, removing people from vehicle, that's covered. But anything outside that is not. The fire departments are finding that, quite often, they're getting more calls that would bring them outside of their catchment area.

As stated in the petition, we would know that it is the community and, often, a community with declining population struggling under the cost of living that we're all suffering from, then I would say they are struggling to do that.

So, this petition asks the government to review those regulations they have and make some amendments to allow for these cabin fires, forest fires, medical calls and mutual aid responses.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

### Orders of the Day

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 2.

**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 third time.

**SPEAKER:** 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.'

The motion is carried.

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

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 36)

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

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

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker. I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, March 11, 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:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that this House do now adjourn.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

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