



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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Volume XLIX

FIRST SESSION

Number 43

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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA*

Monday

September 14, 2020

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Reid):** Order, please!

Admit strangers.

(Inaudible due to technical difficulties.)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay, we'll try this again now.

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

**MR. J. DINN (St. John's Centre):** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, given the statements of various government ministers and the chief medical officer that the epidemiology of COVID-19 has changed, the presence of the virus in the community is low, that the rate of transmission is low and, most importantly, that one metre is an acceptable standard of physical distancing, I find the current seating arrangement to be an unnecessary restriction on our privileges as individual Members and ask that the seating arrangement be restored to what it was before we broke in March 2020.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Any further speakers to this point of privilege?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, to be honest with you, it doesn't really matter to me one way or the other, in a sense, but I'm just curious, I suppose, and the Member don't have to answer, but I'm just wondering, other than the fact of what the minister said and epidemiology, I get all that, but if we have room and we are separated more, which is even safer, then I don't understand why we would not want to maintain that. Anywhere you can have distance, why wouldn't you want to have distance.

I'm not crazy about being all warm and cuddly with everybody here anyway, but on a serious note, Mr. Speaker, I'm just trying to understand the rationale, other than the fact that I know they're not doing it in schools, and I disagree with all that too, but I don't know what the purpose would be. We have lots of space to do

it. It's fine as far as I'm concerned. Everyone wants to go back to normal, that's fine too, but I'm just curious as to the rationale, other than what other ministers said about other things, that's all.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Any further speakers?

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, will echo what my previous colleague had noted here. While I do understand that there seems to be a conflict in the agreement on what would be a safe distance, the reality is we've all pushed, over the last six months, to try to get back to some sense of normality, as much as possible, while at the same time ensuring that people stay safe in our province. No doubt, there are challenges around how you do that within the school system, and we've all had our views on whether or not everything that is in play will be beneficial to be able to do that, but I think we all agreed we had to start the process somewhere to benefit our education system, to ensure that we got back to some sense of doing it.

While there are some challenges and I myself and I know Members of our caucus do have some concerns, the reality is that we have to look at the safest way we can still get back to normality and provide the services that we need to have. Education and health care are two key ones that we can only delay for a certain period of time while doing it at a minimal risk to people.

The House of Assembly, fortunate enough, we do have the ability to space it and follow as many of the recommended policies as possible. The difference as I see it here, because we represent all different corners of this great province of ours, if indeed something did happen, an outbreak in the House, then that could affect all this province more quickly than it would in one isolated particular school or classroom as such. Neither one of them would be acceptable, and you want to do everything possible to mitigate any chance that there would be a spread of the virus here. In this House, we have to do everything possible because governance has to continue. You want to ensure people are as safe as possible.

The essence here is that we have the ability to do it; let's take advantage of that. The biggest risk we have that if there is a breakout here, then that stops government almost immediately, to a certain degree, and the fear that we would bring it back to our respective corners of this province. We've been fortunate enough that a lot of this province wasn't overly affected by the direct health issue when it came to the spread of the disease because of their isolation or their ability to deal it. I would say we would do everything possible, particularly in the House of Assembly, as you would anywhere else. Certain things you can do better than other places, but you would try to mitigate any contact there.

While I understand my hon. colleague's concern, and I do agree with the issues around the school system being a challenge and why there are other resources and that put in play to try to make that happen, I think we still have to be cognizant of being able to keep the electorate ready to function as much as possible and prevent us from being the cause of spreading the virus any more than we would have to in this province.

While I understand my colleague's concern, I think at the end of the day, due diligence in this situation is what we can deal with immediately. I think doing that is the right thing now to protect that the governance of this province continues to go forward on as normal process as possible to ensure that we deal with things from interim financing to our budget, which ensures proper funding for education, health care, infrastructure and all the amenities that people deserve and need in our province.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly won't belabour the point.

I agree with the Member opposite. This is an issue and it's very important when it comes to safety throughout our province for everybody that we do everything we can. Mr. Speaker, this is a collective-we decision. This is not a decision of the governing party or the Opposition Party, or the Third Party or the independents in the Chamber; this is a we, because, Mr. Speaker, you are the boss or you are the leader in this

House when it comes to House management and we'll certainly defer to you, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Any further speakers?

I'm going to take a short recess to consult and examine the merits of this point of privilege. I'll take a short recess to do that.

### Recess

**MR. SPEAKER:** Are the House Leaders ready?

Is the Government House Leader ready?

**MR. CROCKER:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. SPEAKER:** You're ready?

Is the Opposition House Leader ready?

Opposition House Leader – the Third Party is ready.

Okay, we're going to resume the broadcast now.

I've examined the matters in relation to if there's a prima facie point of privilege and determined that there is no prima facie point of privilege in this respect.

(Inaudible due to technical difficulties.)

**MR. SPEAKER:** We're back? Okay, good.

Before we start this session of the House, I would like to remind Members of the guidelines developed in consultation with the latest public health measures and the advice of the chief medical officer.

In terms of the Chamber, we have again revised the configuration of the House. The chief medical officer recommends the use of non-medical masks by Members and House officials when moving about the Chamber. They are not required while Members are sitting in the Chamber or while they are speaking in the Chamber, only when they are moving about the Chamber.

We must encourage MHAs to keep their volume at a normal conversational level and use their microphones as much as possible. Shouting can cause droplets to travel further.

I also recommend staying seated to speak if possible. Members will need to first stand to be recognized and once recognized, immediately sit down and speak while sitting down.

In order to minimize the number of people physically present, we don't have any Pages on duty today. Bottled water is provided, and should you require more water or other things, you can indicate to the Sergeant-at-Arms.

To reduce the contact points in the House, the door to the Chamber across from the Government Members' Caucus room will be left open while Members are sitting. If you require someone to drop something off to get to you in the House, please bring it to the Clerk's office and the Clerk's office will arrange to get the material into the House.

If you require any further information, you should talk to the Clerk of the House. I just want to remind Members of these things before we start today's session.

Another announcement before we start today. After a long career with the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador, Elizabeth Murphy, our Clerk Assistant, recently retired.

Elizabeth was appointed Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees in 1980 and she has served in that capacity since that time.

From the 38th General Assembly through to the current 49th General Assembly, Elizabeth has worked with more than 250 Members, 13 Speakers and four Clerks.

She has been a tireless professional, wise advisor, helpful co-worker and good friend to the many who have been part of this Legislature. She has also been a respected colleague, mentor and friend to many Clerks in provincial and territorial legislatures, the House of Commons and the Senate as well as other Commonwealth jurisdictions.

To say that we will miss her is an understatement.

I am sure you all join with me in recognizing Elizabeth for her exemplary service, thanking her for her wonderful friendship and wishing her every happiness in her retirement.

I would also like to welcome Ms. Kim Hammond who will be assisting with Table duties. Kim is the Director of Information Management for the Legislature but as many of you know, has been assisting with Committees and at the Table over the past 10 years.

With those comments, we're going to move to Orders of the Day.

First of all, Members' statements.

### **Statements by Members**

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we'll hear Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Torngat Mountains, Exploits, St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, Burin - Grand Bank and Mount Pearl - Southlands.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I rise to pay tribute to Thomas Edmunds, a community icon of Postville, Nunatsiavut. Born in Tishialuk 91 years ago, he passed away on Sunday, September 6, 2020.

A life lived best sums up his life. He witnessed great change in his 91 years, spending a large part of his younger life travelling by Kamutik and husky dogs, proceeding to snowmobile and ATV. At 91 he was still very active, driving himself around town on his machine as he affectionately called his ATV.

He and his wife Silpa Edmunds had 14 children, 26 grandchildren and 51 great-grandchildren. He appreciated every moment of his life with his friends and his family. If you're on social media you would see photos of him out in boat or off on the land with his family, with his walker close by.

His legacy is one of an ordinary man with an extraordinary spirit; a legacy in which his laugh is passed on to his sons, his smile on to his daughters; a legacy of love for his wife that lived on in death: "Forever, my love, forever," his words to her.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. FORSEY:** Mr. Speaker, just a few weeks ago on September 2, Ms. Beth Lane, an 18-year-old recent graduate of Leo Burke Academy in Bishop's Falls, was announced first place winner in the MusicNL NewFound Talent Contest.

Beth has been involved in music since the age of three, starting with singing in her local church. Her passion and talent for music led her to proficiency with a variety of instruments including piano, guitar, drums and, notably, her vocals. Beth's musical versatility extends into various styles of genres of music.

Mr. Speaker, Beth has participated in and won various awards in the Kiwanis Music Festivals and is planning to complete a bachelor of music degree and hopes to pursue a career as a professional singer and musician.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members in the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Ms. Beth Lane of Bishop's Falls on winning first place in the NewFound Talent Contest and wish her all the success in future endeavours.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows.

**MR. MITCHELMORE:** Mr. Speaker, today I recognize Mr. Harrison White of Sandy Cove, a retired teacher who is to be applauded for a lifetime contribution for making his community and region a better place.

As MHA, I got to know Harrison through his various volunteer work as a Lion's member, president of the Harbour Authority, devoted

church member, part of the Strait of Belle Isle Health Committee and organizer and fundraiser for the annual Janeway snowmobile ride.

All around Sandy Cove his impact can be felt from support for ATV trail development, upgrades to the church, improvements to Harbour Authority buildings, removal of old stages and sheds, harbour dredging and recent expansion of the local cemetery. Harrison commits endless hours of his time because he cares.

His biggest challenge was to see the former fish plant and cold storage removed. As president of the Harbour Authority, along with members George Coles, Barry White, Tom White and Abe Whalen, they started their saga in 2011 and never gave up until the property was finally removed in 2019 – a partnership between the province and the federal government.

Mr. White's defining qualities are persistence and partnership. Over the last nine years I've spent many hours talking with him – and I say many. He is a tireless advocate and a community leader, and I thank him for his contributions and friendship.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

**MS. HALEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt the past six months have presented more than its fair share of challenges. Yet it seems whenever we are presented with challenges, there is always someone to step up to make the best of a bad situation.

In this case, Chris and Dallas Emberley, along with Chantel Clarke of Grand Bank, decided the people of the area deserved much-needed activity to lighten everyone's mood.

They came up with a contest involving the youth of the area, and later one that was open to adults. Both required participants all practising COVID-19 protocols to carry out a variety of fun

activities, including one where they had to construct a papier mâché mask to resemble the Minister of Health and Community Services.

They solicited the help of business owner and individuals who donated substantially to the contest and the real winners were all those who participated. At a time when social activities were practically non-existent, these amazing individuals once again demonstrated how contagious community spirit can be.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in thanking Chris, Dallas and Chantel for their resolve in raising the spirits of their fellow residents during what have been challenging times.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's my privilege to sit in this hon. House to recognize the tremendous success which was the 38th annual Frosty Festival in the City of Mount Pearl. One again, this year's festival included various activities for citizens of all ages and interests, including JAM'Min Through the Decades featuring the Women of Rock & Friends; Pedestrian Parade of Lights; two community breakfasts; Frosty's Birthday Party; a lip sync contest; a concert and dance featuring The Masterless Men, The Fables and Celtic Connection; an Irish Pub Night; a seniors' bingo; a Jiggs' dinner and variety show; Battle of the Brains trivia night; and a dinner theatre, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you can appreciate, any festival of this magnitude would not be possible if it were not for the hard work and co-operation of a number of community partners. I would therefore ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating the City of Mount Pearl, the Frosty Festival Board of Directors, the various community groups and organizations, the corporate sponsors and all the community-minded volunteers who contributed to the great success story which was Frosty Festival 2020.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

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

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

Today I extend congratulations to Ms. Elaine Johnson-Chafe, recipient of the 2020 Council of the Federation Literacy Award for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Premier Furey presented the award to Ms. Johnson-Chafe last Tuesday on International Literacy Day.

The Council of the Federation Literacy Award recognizes the valuable contributions made by Canadians in the field of literacy, as well as adult learners who demonstrate exceptional commitment to literacy.

In 2019, Ms. Johnson-Chafe made the life-changing decision to obtain her high school diploma. Her positive attitude, passion for learning, hard work and determination to succeed have allowed her to improve her literacy skills and progress through the Adult Basic Education program at a rapid pace. Ms. Johnson-Chafe is close to achieving her high school diploma and plans to enroll in a post-secondary education program.

Our government recognizes the importance of supporting literacy and essential skills development in Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, we want to support all people in reaching their potential.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Ms. Johnson-Chafe on her hard work and achievements. She has shown exceptional commitment to literacy, and is truly deserving of this recognition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

The Council of the Federation Literacy Award directly describes the qualities of Elaine Johnson-Chafe. Mr. Speaker, Ms. Johnson-Chafe is working tirelessly towards a goal that many struggle to obtain; obtaining a high school diploma is an incredible feat driven by a passion for learning and having a go-getter attitude. As a former school administrator, I understand first hand the challenges Ms. Johnson-Chafe had to overcome to achieve this goal.

Mr. Speaker, myself and all my Opposition colleagues join the minister in congratulating Ms. Johnson-Chafe on her dedication, hard work and achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I join him in congratulating Elaine Johnson-Chafe on her receipt of the 2020 Council of the Federation Literacy Award.

Malala Yousafzai said: One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world. Ms. Johnson-Chafe's progress in gaining literary skills, completing the ABE program and pursuing post-secondary education speaks volumes to her commitment to change her life and the world around her.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further ministers' statements?

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

**MS. STOODLEY:** Mr. Speaker, since the onset of the pandemic, we have seen first-hand the

importance of having online services available for the residents of our province. We have witnessed services such as vehicle registrations increase by 75 per cent from the same period last year, with more than 98 per cent now completed online. Since March, accounts on MyGovNL have grown by approximately 1,400 per cent – from 7,500 to more than 114,000.

These online service options have been useful in complementing traditional services during this difficult time, and the COVID Alert app we recently launched is the next step in our digital government response to the public health emergency.

The app does not share a person's name, address or telephone contacts. It does not collect or store any personal health information, or track a user's particular geographic location. Our government consulted with the Information and Privacy Commissioner to ensure the highest standards of privacy are in place.

Mr. Speaker, if a person has the app and tests positive for COVID-19, they will receive a one-time key from Public Health. With this key, COVID Alert notifies other app users who may have come in close contact with that person in the last 14 days. These users will be asked to contact Public Health for advice and further guidance. Use of the app, however, does not mean that a person should refrain from following current public health measures such as physical distancing and regular handwashing.

The app is a wonderful example of how we can utilize technology as another means of helping protect the people of our province against the spread of COVID-19. We recommend that everyone download the app.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The increased use in online services during the pandemic referenced by the minister was, of course, largely created by the pandemic. There are individuals throughout the province who for various reasons, including lack of Internet access and capabilities, are limited to traditional service options. I certainly hope that the minister will continue to remember these individuals.

The COVID app, as the minister says, is indeed another tool in the fight against COVID-19, but, again, its effectiveness will be limited by access and also people's willingness to download the app. As the chief medical officer of Health stated, this app is not going to replace contact tracing and traditional expertise from public health but it is another tool and we certainly hope it proves successful in limiting the spread of COVID-19.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. BROWN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. This app is a great tool in the toolkit for an individual to use in their everyday lives as they live with the risk of COVID-19 in their lives. This app will be a huge help with contact tracing if another case does arise.

I also echo the minister's message to follow all public health guidelines as these are also important tools in the toolkit as we navigate COVID-19.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

**MR. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I sit in this hon. House to recognize a Mi'kmaw artist from our province, whose work has been selected by one of the most prestigious institutions in the United States.

Nelson White's oil painting *Veteran Elder*, depicting an Indigenous veteran saluting, will soon be on display at the Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian. This museum is home to one of the most expansive collections of Indigenous artifacts, including objects, photographs, archives and media coverings of the entire Western Hemisphere.

A member of the Flat Bay First Nations Band, Nelson White's work has been exhibited throughout Canada and the United States in both group and solo shows. A long-time artist and illustrator, he became The Rooms first Indigenous artist in residence in January 2019, creating a series of paintings that examine the theme of identity throughout Indigenous culture.

Mr. Speaker, Nelson White's *Veteran Elder* has been sent to the Smithsonian National Museum for the American Indian and will be unveiled to the public in the coming months.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Mr. White on this fabulous recognition, and for his continued voice around Indigenous identity in our province and country,

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. TIBBS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the entire Official Opposition caucus, I join with the minister in congratulating and recognizing Mr. Nelson White on his remarkable accolade.

The Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian is a part of the world's largest museum complex. It holds the world's most precious and expensive collection of artwork, artifacts and knowledge; thus, it is suitable and incredible that the *Veteran Elder* will be featured in this collection.



Mr. White has captured a true individual and a true story in this oil painting. He tells the story of Ellsworth Oakley, a Wampanoag elder and American veteran who joined the forces at the age of 17.

I thank Mr. White for using his talent and I congratulate him on this achievement.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. BROWN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I would like to send congratulations to Mr. White of the Flat Bay Mi'kmaw First Nation, along with my colleagues here. This is a great honour to have your art sent to such a prestigious institution, as the Smithsonian. It is great to see that this province's Indigenous artists are being recognized on this extreme level.

We are all looking forward to the unveiling of the *Veteran Elder* piece in the coming months.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, the CEO of Noia has predicted that the economic devastation caused by the crisis on our offshore will equal that caused by the cod moratorium.

How can the government be at the table for five months with so little to show for it?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We certainly have been at the table for quite some time with the federal government. We've been working very closely with industry over the last five or six months.

Mr. Speaker, we've outlined in multiple letters to the minister, as well as to the government, plans to ensure the success of the offshore here in Newfoundland and Labrador; vitally important, not just to Newfoundland and Labrador in terms of our royalties, benefits, but jobs, but also to Canada. I would dare to say, Mr. Speaker, even the globe because, of course, we have very low carbon oil.

I'm glad the Leader of the Opposition is now starting to speak with a voice and join us in the chorus for assistance in our offshore. I haven't seen any letters he's sent to the minister or heard of any conversation he's had, but it certainly is important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we all continue to fight for offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. Member's time has expired.

The Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** These are fine rhetorical flourishes, Mr. Speaker, but action speak louder than words.

In view of the failure of our federal Cabinet representative to defend offshore jobs, will the government join with the PC Opposition in calling for a new minister who will champion jobs on the offshore?

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

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

**MS. COADY:** I find it unusual that the Leader of the Opposition will speak about rhetorical flourishes. Late last week, he put together a few little pages where he talked about some of the supports that are needed. We've been speaking

about them for six months, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad he's finally joined the chorus of calls for support for offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is incredibly important, not only to the people of the province, but to Canada and, indeed, the globe, because of our low-carbon oil offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

We call for more supports for offshore Newfoundland and Labrador. We've been working with many of the operators and many of the people that come in to do exploration offshore. We need growth development and continued success offshore Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, it's very timely that the Deputy Premier should raise the question of a few pages she said we released. It's called the *PC Action Plan: Jobs And Growth For Our Offshore*, and I happen to have a copy of it right here, which I would now ask for the House's consent to table in the House. May I have that consent?

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** (Inaudible) consent.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Yes.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Consent.

To finish the question: Will the Liberal government of Premier Furey immediately table its jobs plan for the offshore?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour to sit here and answer a question as it relates to this very important department. What I would say is I did have an opportunity to see the proposal that was put forward by the Leader of the PCs. What I would suggest if he

was doing a school project he would've got called out for plagiarism, because most of it was a rehashing of everything that the previous minister of Natural Resources had already done.

But maybe what I can do to reiterate what we've done here is I would like to table *The Way Forward on Oil and Gas: Advance 2030*.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, the Muskrat report called the behaviour of Charles Bown inexcusable. Why is the government, led by Premier Furey, excusing the inexcusable by giving Bown a big salary to do a small job, while people doing big jobs on the offshore are losing theirs?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, echo that there are a lot of concerns that are raised in the Muskrat Falls report, and I look forward to having the opportunity to debate it here in this House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, Charles Bown was hired originally back in 1987 by the former PC premier, Brian Peckford. He raised to the executive level of the public service by PC leader, Danny Williams. And he became a deputy minister under PC leader, Dunderdale.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that it's not our contract; however, we have to ensure that we honour it. We've weighed all the options with care, we've spoken to the clerk of the Executive Council and we've made the most responsible choice for the taxpayers of this province.

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

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

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

The Finance Minister said the province cannot afford to help us by investing in the West White Rose project. I suggest to the minister that the people of the province cannot afford for this project to be cancelled.

Have you lobbied the federal government for financial investment in the West White Rose? Simple answer, Minister, yes or no.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I said earlier, absolutely, we've been speaking to the federal government. We've been working with all the operators in offshore Newfoundland and Labrador and continue to do, Mr. Speaker, to ensure success in the offshore.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's good to see *The Way Forward* is working.

While the West White Rose project has been suspended, Husky has to make a go or no-go decision on the project as early as October, this fall. Time is running out. We have heard for months now the support is coming.

Does the minister understand that time is running out for the West White Rose project and the thousands of jobs in the province, or are they going to still go by their outdated policy book from four years ago? We know where that got us.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, we all understand the timeliness of this. It's unfortunate that I'm hearing laughter from the other side when we do have an industry that's facing peril due to many factors that are

outside of our control, such as COVID. Again, I think that's quite unfortunate.

What I would say is that I echo the concerns that are expressed by the Member opposite. We all know how serious this is and we are trying everything we can as a government, as a province to make this feasible. What I will say though is that the ask that has been made so far, to use the words of the Deputy Premier, was tremendous. Again, we have talked to the federal government; we've spoken to them. I know I've spoken to them as recently as this weekend to let them know that time is of the essence, and we will continue to do so.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Minister, with all due respect, silence is deafening and your actions have to match your words. The industry is in dire need and they need help.

The importance of the West White Rose project cannot be understated, as it extends to the life of the White Rose oilfield, including jobs on the SeaRose FPSO. Without the West White Rose, over 500 jobs on SeaRose are also in trouble.

Does the minister understand the importance of the West White Rose project for the future of our province?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I could give a glib answer and just say yes. Obviously, I understand that and I can say that and I can say that since August 19, when I was placed in this role, it's obviously the number-one priority that's been placed on us due to the situation that we find ourselves in. We obviously understand that.

Again, we are doing what we can as a province, but I would put to the Member that obviously he realizes the fiscal situation that we are in. It's one thing to ask for some – and there's a difference between willingness and ability. Right now, our ability to do some of the things that have been asked is just not there but, again, we understand this; we are doing what we can. Just because you cannot see everything does not mean that there's nothing happening.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I caution the minister of the fiscal situation we're going to be in if this fails.

Mr. Speaker, while our offshore is on the brink of collapse, this government awards a contract for a new mental health facility to a company with strong Liberal ties that will take a year longer to build, cost \$40 million more and have a larger footprint in the flood plain.

Will the minister suspend the awarding of this contract until all documents are released publicly and properly reviewed?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It certainly seems to perplex me that the Member opposite seems to be supporting a Spanish company over a Newfoundland and Labrador company. I can tell you the fairness advisor, Optimus SBR, has observed and monitored everything to do with this contract and concluded it was done fairly and justly, with all parties treated consistently and well.

I can also say that as we get closer to financial close, Mr. Speaker, more information, if required and if appropriate, will become available. I certainly think that the Member opposite should be supportive of ensuring that we replace a 150-year-old hospital.

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

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

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

With all due respect I am very supportive; I sat on the All-Party Committee on Mental Health. What I'm not supportive of, Deputy Premier, is \$40 million extra in taxpayers' money when we're on our knees here financially. That's what I'm concerned about. Not about playing games with this company over that company.

There's a company here that had a common denominator back in the '90s. That's what I'm asking. I've asked it publicly; release it, delay it. It's only right. The public want to know this. It's \$40 million, Minister. Do the right thing and release the documents.

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

**MR. BRAGG:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I guess a correction; it's actually \$39 million. We might as well get right to the chase on that. There is a process in place. We had a technical briefing; everybody was invited to that technical briefing to understand the scope and how this was all unveiled and how the decision was finally made.

I would hope at that briefing everybody would have understood. Plus, should you want another briefing on how it all came down, how it all transpired, we're more than willing to give you another briefing there.

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

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, for the last five years, government has been told by the people of the province that they have an expenditure problem. Now, with a significant reduction in oil royalties and the potential loss of the West White Rose, there is now a revenue problem.

I'd ask the minister what her plan is to replace the billions of dollars in lost revenue so that critical services, such as health and education, will not be impacted.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Member opposite is quite right; COVID had had a tremendous impact not just on Newfoundland and Labrador but on the globe itself. Many other countries and many other provinces are faced with very serious challenges.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that under the former minister we were certainly making good progress and headway. I can tell you and I can tell the House, for example, we were able to keep spending just for health care alone down to a bare minimum; one of the lowest in the country, Mr. Speaker; didn't have very much expenditure growth at all in that area.

We've been keeping very strong and prudent analysis and work on our finances, Mr. Speaker. Yes, this year we have been advised that we will be about \$2 billion in deficit, Mr. Speaker, but I can tell you that's important to the people of the province as we move through COVID.

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

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, they may have held the expenditures stable but they had no way of reducing it. They did not have a plan despite the fact they said they had it in their fiscal forecast. It never happened.

I ask the minister: Does she believe that the federal government should make a financial investment in the West White Rose project? Yes or no.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much for the question.

Mr. Speaker, I will point out to the Member opposite expenditure growth under the former administration. It certainly is mind boggling to think of the tremendous growth over the length of the former administration. As a government we've been able to dampen that down. We're making good progress, moving to a balanced budget and then, of course, we had COVID happen to Newfoundland and Labrador.

I will say to the Member opposite, we are tabling a budget at the end of the month. We do have a plan to bring Newfoundland and Labrador out of the doldrums I will say. It certainly is important to continue support our offshore.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, I heard from a husband and wife from Conception Harbour, who worked in the offshore industry, who both now have lost their jobs and do not know where to turn. Mr. Speaker, this is one case of thousands in our province.

What do you say, Minister, to this disheartened family who do not want to leave their beloved province and yet feel forced to leave in pursuit of meaningful employment?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The first thing I'd say to this family is that I empathize with them and that I understand the pain they're going through. We are trying everything we can as elected officials to make this better.

The reality is that this whole world, this whole globe, has been turned upside down by the impacts of COVID and what's going on in the oil industry. Certainly, as a province that is heavily reliant on oil, we are facing it, perhaps more than others as it relates to our size.

What I can tell this couple, and what I would be happy to tell this couple, is that I go to bed every night thinking about this. I wake up every morning thinking about this, knowing that we are trying our best to make this better, but it's going to take more than just the provincial government. It's going to take us working together with everybody, including the federal government and the operators.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, these workers need answers. I heard from another highly skilled worker from Colliers who lost his job in the offshore industry and is now about to lose everything. He said his back is to the wall. This is one case of thousands in our province.

These workers want to know, Minister: What are you doing to get them back to work?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What we are doing is we are working with each and every operator, working on each and every different scenario, trying to figure out what we can do as a province to make this work. What I will say is that while we have invested – and we do have stakes; in fact, we have a stake in this project right now – what is being asked of us, as a province, is simply outside of what is fiscally capable and that is the bottom line on that. We have reached out to our federal counterparts and we have discussed other things we can do, but it's not just the provincial government here.

I heard the Leader of the PC saying earlier about the federal minister. It was only on September 6 that Pierre Poilievre was out saying that the federal government shouldn't invest in this and that it would be a loser if they did so.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In recent years, our province has led Atlantic regions in ATV and snowmobile facilities. Since 2017, your government has been saying it is reviewing the legislation.

It's been four years, Minister. Will related legislation – when will it be introduced in this sitting?

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

**MS. STOODLEY:** Thank you very much to the Member for the question.

Accidents around ATVs are extremely serious. We take road safety extremely seriously in Digital Government and Service NL.

We have committed to reviewing the act which is currently in progress and we anticipate presenting, subject to the approval processes. The legislation is nearly drafted and we anticipate going through the process and, hopefully, presenting to the House this fall.

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

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

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Hopefully it doesn't take as long as the four years and hopefully our oil and gas doesn't have to wait that long as well. We'd be in dire straits.

This year there's been nine ATV-related deaths. Four of those occurred in the past month alone.

What will the minister do to eliminate such tragedies in the future?

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

**MS. STOODLEY:** I thank the Member for the question.

These are incredibly serious incidents and we certainly have full sympathy for the families impacted by these tragedies. I look forward to bringing legislation forward in the House this fall to better protect families and ATV users in the province.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**MR. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister this on the second week of classes: How many students are unable to get to school?

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

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

As you know, Mr. Speaker, on the 14th of August the rules on the numbers of students able to sit on school bus seating was changed. Instead of three per seat, it was reduced to two. That put some 6,100 students unable to get school bus transportation.

Last week, we had indicated we should be down to 3,800 as of today. We've actually surpassed the progress, we're down to 3,400 as of today that are affected. As 70 per cent of our schools now, Mr. Speaker, do not have any school bus issues for eligible riders. Each and every day we have additional buses being put in place. By next week we should be below 600, by Monday of next week, with all eligible students looked after before we turn the calendar page of this month.

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

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

**MR. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, we continue to hear stories of below-capacity buses passing children, contractors with buses parked who offered solutions and dangerous congestion at schools as parents drop off their children.

Who is going to be held accountable for what the minister has already referred to as a big mess?

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

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

Any time you have students who have to walk eight or 10 or 12 kilometres, I would say it is not an acceptable situation for those students. The individuals at the English School District have been working extremely hard to try to move this file along as quickly as possible and to help those affected as quickly as possible.

Mr. Speaker, the school buses that were passing by with empty seats – courtesy seats, as is the case each and every school year, are only resolved once the administrators at the school level are able to look at the availability of seating to ensure that there are no new transfers into the school or no unexpected students that have to be looked after. So as quickly as administrators can look after the courtesy seating, they will.

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

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

**MR. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Courtesy seating was stated in the government plan, that it was a no go for this year. I think that led to a lot of confusion in a lot of administrators that were out there.

Mr. Speaker, government was presented with a detailed and comprehensive plan, which they referred to as a task force, by NLESD on May 27 entitled: Reimagining Teaching and Learning.

When did the minister become aware of this task force report and why did the government wait months to act on it?

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

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

Let me correct, because I don't think it's fair to put language in anybody's mouth: a very detailed plan? No, Mr. Speaker, the cover letter of that report clearly articulated that it wasn't a plan.

Mr. Speaker, the head of the English School District has very clearly articulated that this contained a wide array of possible solutions.

We must keep in mind that we were in Level 4 at the time, that we had people still in hospital at the time, that we had several cases of COVID at the time. That we didn't anticipate when we'd be able to get to Level 1, or to have very low prevalence, no transmission in the community.

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

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

**MR. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, I think the minister may be playing semantics. It may not have been referred to as a plan, but it was a task force report of which the English School District took three months to compile to pass on to government, suggestions for their way forward, and then it didn't happen.

Mr. Speaker, the parents and the Teachers' Association continue to speak out about large class sizes and the inability to socially distance in those classrooms with over 30 children; 35 children in a classroom at Frank Roberts Junior High with one operative window, and Prince of Wales Collegiate as another example, to name several.

Why did the government wait six months to address these concerns?

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

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

When the report with a wide array of possible solutions that would lead to a plan, as was described by the English School District, was presented on May 27, the department, under the leadership of the former minister presented a plan in early July. Nobody could say that this wasn't acted on, because that's not true.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is the holdback units within schools, many of the teaching positions are put in place in the spring, as the Member would know, because he was an administrator. There are holdback positions every year that are not resolved until school starts, as he would know; he was an administrator. Many of the holdback positions are now in the process of being resolved between the English School District and individual schools.

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

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

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

In my district, I have over 4,000 students in and around the area and this busing mess, as referred to by the minister, has had a huge impact on families. I've heard from a lot of families, many single-parent homes; many who have given up their second job to get their kids to school; many who have suffered a lot of stress, anxiety and some panic attacks over busing.

I note one of the Members across the way talked about time is of the essence when talking about the oil and gas industry. Time was of the essence in this busing issue back in March.

I ask the minister why he thought it was fair that parents were told on the Friday before school opened that they couldn't get on the bus.

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

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

Unfortunately, I can't answer to why they were told the day prior. I can say that the English School District found out on August 14 – not in March, not in April, not in May, not in June, not in July – on August 14 that the number of students per seat was cut from three to two. That was about three weeks before school opened, Mr. Speaker. We worked very hard to get the extra resources put in place. Those extra resources are being put in place.



I agree, it's very unfortunate that students didn't have transportation the first day of school, but it is being resolved.

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

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

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier has repeatedly said everything is on the table when it comes to our current financial crises.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Are hospitals on the table? Are rural roads on the table? Are tuition increases on the table? Are public sector layoffs on the table? Are higher electricity rates on the table?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite knows, I've released the date of the budget, which would be September 30. I have said repeatedly publicly that there should be no surprises. Yes, we're in the middle of the pandemic and we do have a financial situation on our hands for sure. We're \$2.147 billion in deficit, Mr. Speaker, according to the latest update. There will be a lot of work that has to be done post-COVID to consider how we may ensure our financial stewardship and our financial success as a province is maintained and understood and we can get back to ensuring that we address our debt and our deficit.

Mr. Speaker, but now is not the time and I've already said that the budget will be presented September 30.

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

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

**MR. BROWN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology: Is the sale of NL Hydro assets on said table?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from my colleague.

What I can say is that is not a discussion that I've had since I've been in this role since August 19.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. BROWN:** Mr. Speaker, with many of the concerns surrounding how Muskrat Falls played out, I ask the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology: Are the department and Nalcor still trying to develop Gull Island and will the minister tell the public what is happening there?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I can say is that in the time that I've been here, obviously as you can tell by earlier in Question Period, most of the oxygen in the room has gone to the oil and gas sector. What I can say is I've had a number of meetings with Brendan Paddick and Mr. Marshall to discuss Muskrat Falls, Nalcor and I've met with OilCo, you name it.

What I would say at this point is that all the emphasis and focus has been on completing Muskrat Falls, getting that over the finish line and that's where all my attention has been paid so far.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the current confusion surrounding school bus transportation was not necessary. Government had the NLESD school reopening report on May 27. Plenty of time to develop a viable plan. Failing to do so has caused enormous disruption and anxiety for parents, teachers and staff. Come with me to the schools I've visited and I'll show you.

I ask the Minister of Education and early childhood development: Will he apologize to the parents, teachers and students for the anxiety his government's foot-dragging has caused them?

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

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

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

As I've indicated in a previous answer, Mr. Speaker, the report, which did contain a large number of possible solutions – I could read through some of the solutions, Mr. Speaker, that the Member certainly wouldn't agree with because they were possible solutions. That report was done at a time when we were in Level 4 with cases and people in hospital.

When the plan came out, Mr. Speaker, in July, a month and a little bit more – because when the report was presented to the department, they immediately went to work doing what was asked of them on the cover letter of the report to consult with stakeholders, the chief medical officer of Health and to put a plan together which was presented in July. That plan contained three scenarios which we are prepared to go into at any given time.

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

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

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll take that as a no to the apology.

Mr. Speaker, I ask the Minister of Finance: When do we need to borrow money again and how much?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We did borrowing in the spring of this year. There was a successful placement of about \$2 billion. Mr. Speaker, as we move through the budget process we will be getting back to the borrowing tables and likely as soon as the budget is passed, so sometime hopefully later this fall.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

**Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees**

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to present a report of the Standing Orders Committee. I want to thank the Committee for their diligence and hard work. They're a Committee of the Legislature that continues to look at our Standing Orders to ensure that they are both modernized as well as addressing the concerns that we would have in the Legislature. I'm happy to table the report for discussion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. BRAGG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As Chair of the Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, I am pleased today to present our report on the premature distribution of a report of an Officer of the House of Assembly. I also would like to thank the

Committee for their hard work in producing this document, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further presenting of reports by Standing and Select Committees?

Tabling of Documents.

### Tabling of Documents

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

For the understanding of the House, I have completed some contingency analysis to advise how much has been spent out of the \$200 million contingency that this Legislature did pass this spring. I wanted to table that document for the information of the House.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

**MR. TRIMPER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS this government is aggressively investing and partnering with farmers, harvesters and food producers; and

WHEREAS traditional industries, such as agriculture, are important economic drivers and help to diversify the economy; and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic has further identified the importance of local gardens, country food and the agricultural sector in Newfoundland and Labrador;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Assembly supports the continued growth of the agricultural sector and supports the initiatives of government to meet the goal of

increasing provincial food self-sufficiency to 20 per cent by 2022.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to Standing Orders 63(3), the private Member's resolution entered by the Member for Lake Melville shall be the one to be debated this Wednesday.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider a resolution for the granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty, Bill 40.

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

**MS. STOODLEY:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Insurance Contracts Act, Bill 41.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will move the following motion: that the House of Assembly concur in the report of the Standing Orders Committee dated September 14, 2020.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**MR. BRAGG:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: that the House of Assembly

concur in the report of the Standing Orders Committee on Privileges and Elections on the premature distribution of a report of an officer of the House of Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, under Standing Order 11(1), I give notice that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, September 15 and Thursday, September 17, 2020.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice, and by leave, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, move the following motion: that notwithstanding any Standing Orders to the contrary, a Member shall stand to be recognized by the Speaker but shall speak in debate from a seated position in accordance with the recommendations of the chief medical officer of Health.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice and by leave move, seconded by the Leader of the Official Opposition, that the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave be appointed as Deputy Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Congratulations.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for Which Notice Has Been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, the maintenance and upkeep of the roadway through the community of Cold Brook is the responsibility of the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. Sections of the roadway have been in deplorable condition for the last five years and need repairs and resurfacing. Children are required to ride school buses twice daily over roadways where sections of the paved road are missing. There have been a number of close calls where vehicles have to swerve in order to avoid driving over a section of roadway where the pavement is totally missing. The residents of Cold Brook deserve better.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to consider repairing, upgrading and maintaining the paved road through the community of Cold Brook in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, this road has been on a list for the last five years. They continue to pave the road around it while the equipment is out there, but this particular section of road, little more than a kilometre, has not been done. This year, the employees of Transportation and Works actually went out and painted a yellow line on the road and were embarrassed to do so because half of the road wasn't even there.

I ask the minister to please take a look and get this done.

Thank you.

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

**MR. BRAGG:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member should know by his travels throughout this province, we have over 7,000 kilometres of road in this province, so we have quite a number of roads we need to get to. As you guys know from the past, I guess since Confederation, keeping up with the roads has been a challenge.

We look forward to doing the maintenance that we can, but at this time, Mr. Speaker, there's no point in me being premature and making a commitment to that road because there's a status and there's a roads plan that's actually going to be unveiled again this year.

So I encourage everyone to get on to EngageNL to do your part, and the members of Cold Brook to do their part to talk about how bad the road is or how good the road is in their area, Mr. Speaker, because it's vitally important that we have decent roads in our province.

For that, Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for bringing this petition forward and I encourage him to bring many more petitions forward.

Thank you.

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

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just presenting a petition on a request for fairer electricity rates for Labrador Indigenous communities in my district. The petition goes:

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure that fairer electricity rates be provided to Torngat Mountains residents of Northern Labrador Indigenous communities of Nain, Natuashish, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville and Rigolet.

The rates charged to Northern Labrador residents are very cost-prohibitive to using electric heat; therefore, the rates are cost-prohibitive to adequately heating their homes. The rationale for this petition is to bring electricity rates more in line with that of our neighbouring residents of Lake Melville region pay.

For the first 1,000 kilowatt hours, Torngat Mountains residents are charged the same as neighbouring residents of Lake Melville region. However, above that ceiling of 1,000 kilowatt hours, Torngat Mountains residents pay six times the rate of Lake Melville residents, jumping up to 18.5 cents a kilowatt hour, probably the highest in the province. The 1,000 kilowatt ceiling prevents many residents from being able to afford to heat their homes with electric heat. Low-income families and households that don't have the manpower to haul wood are the greatest impacted.

Poorly heated houses often result in damage, creating expensive repairs, frozen pipes, moisture damage and mould. Poorly heated houses also create social and mental health issues that are long lasting. We strongly believe that changes to electricity rates are needed to be made for northern residents of Torngat Mountains.

Therefore we 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 increase the life block to 3,500 kilowatt hours when applying the Northern Strategic Plan subsidy to electric bills of Northern Labrador residents of Torngat Mountains.

So, Mr. Speaker, why is this petition important? That's what I always go back to. Why a petition?

The life block for the first 1,000 kilowatt hours, we get charged the same rate as my friend and fellow MHA for Lake Melville. After that, it increases six times. So why is this important?

In my petition I talked about the manpower to haul wood. What's that saying to our seniors,

what's that saying to our single mothers? Basically, we're depending on manpower, which is men. On the North Coast my people are discriminated against.

I talked to a senior widower. She uses all her pension to pay for her stove oil, as she calls it, her furnace. I said: what about your family? Can they help? She said: they help me, Lela, but the problem is they still have to chop it up and bring it in. I'm an old woman and I'm independent. The thing about it is I struggle to put it in the stove. I have to get up at 3 in the morning to put more wood in.

She says: it's easier for me to spend my whole pension on stove oil, which I have to point out costs \$100 more for a drum of stove oil on the North Coast than it does in my fellow MHA's. The thing about it is my greatest hope now is that this new Premier, who has a history of helping Third World countries, will come to my district and help my district with our Third World conditions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

**MR. LESTER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the economy-killing and program-slashing budget of 2016, Advanced Education and Skills changed their policy to specify that in order to qualify for a bus pass, people need to have a minimum of eight specified medical appointments a month. This creates a barrier for low-income and vulnerable people to obtain basic necessities like food, essential medical services and travel back and forth to work. The requirement of eight doctor's appointments in a month ignores the needs of those living with chronic illnesses and disabilities who may not need to see the doctor, but often have no ability to travel by their own means.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call on the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to allow bus passes to all income support

recipients, all seniors who receive the Income Supplement and all low-income recipients who are in receipt of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program.

Mr. Speaker, this is my sixth time presenting this petition. While I do acknowledge that the previous administration had plans to put in a bus pass test case for people on income support, it neglected to include those who we have realized are essential workers; many of those workers who are on limited or modest incomes that work in jobs that we have found to be just as essential as some of the highest paying jobs in our society.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a handout, this is a hand up and that is how we change society. We do not change society or the state of a person's lifestyle by giving them a handout. They need a hand up to enable themselves to attain a better quality of lifestyle.

Thank you.

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

**MR. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition. The background to this petition is as follows: The Public Utilities Board has approved a licence for an ambulance owner to operate in the area from Bay Bulls to Bauline. This area is one of the fastest growing areas of the province. There have been many concerns from residents, municipalities, councils and emergency responders regarding response times.

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 support the position of this service provider and ensure the residents of Bay Bulls to Bauline met national standards for response times.

Mr. Speaker, we've had some issues over the year with some service from ambulances. The area that I live in, from Bay Bulls to Bauline, gets service from St. John's. The area, guaranteed, is going to be a half hour to 45

minutes to get a response once you make the call. It's too long.

We have a resident that's looking to have ambulance service in the area. We have the other area from Cape Broyle, I'm going to say up, have some ambulances and Trepassey as well, but that area is certainly well needed. We have some older homes in the area and if they can get the response time down to 10 to 15 minutes, that could be critical or lifesaving for residents of the area.

It's certainly imperative that we get all over this and be able to pass and get another ambulance service area in the District of Ferryland.

Thank you very much.

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

**MR. DWYER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The background to my petition is:

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

WHEREAS it is a world-class facility with potential to rejuvenate the provincial economy;

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

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

WHEREAS the site is an asset of the province, built to benefit the province and a long-term tenant for the site would attract gainful business opportunities;

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 this 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 work over for existing offshore platforms as well as new construction of any platforms, be they GBS or FPSO in nature.

This is of grave concern to the people in my district, Mr. Speaker, and to the province as well. We have many sunken costs into this facility already and it's starting to deteriorate to the point where it may not be usable going forward. If we don't do something with it soon then, obviously, we are just throwing good money out the window that was a good investment at the time; world-class facility with world-class workers working right out of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The reason why I would really like to present this petition today is because there's a sale of the refinery right across the road that's still pending with the competition committee. I would like to know if the government has approached Irving about becoming a full-service oil and gas business in that they could have a footprint in both Trinity Bay and Placentia Bay.

I think it's a dire point now for this facility to get back up, be rejuvenated. If we're talking oil and gas, let's start talking about our assets in oil and gas that we have already sunken money into that we are not using right now as an asset but as an albatross around our neck.

So I ask the minister responsible to please do his due diligence and make sure that all of our facilities are being utilized to the biggest and best of their potential for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further petitions?

Seeing none, Orders of the Day.

### Orders of the Day

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, I seek consent of the House to proceed to debate on Bill 40, the Interim Supply Act, 2020 No. 4.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Does the minister have leave to proceed?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** No.

**MR. SPEAKER:** No leave.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and Deputy Premier, that this House do now adjourn.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It's been moved and seconded that this House does now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Carried.

The House is now adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

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