



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FORTY-NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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Volume XLIX

FIRST SESSION

Number 55

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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA*

Wednesday

October 21, 2020

The House met at 10 a.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Reid):** Are the House Leaders ready?

Government House Leader?

Opposition House Leader?

Third Party?

Independents?

Order, please!

Admit visitors and begin the broadcast.

### Orders of the Day

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 15.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Motion 15 has been moved and seconded.

**MR. CROCKER:** Oh, sorry, Mr. Speaker.

I move Motion 15, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion has been moved and seconded.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that the Estimates of the Legislature and the Estimates of the Executive Council be referred to Committee of the Whole on Supply.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that the House be resolved into a Committee of the Whole.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (P. Parsons):** Order, please!

Before we begin proceedings in Committee of the Whole, Members will note that the Chamber has been reconfigured to accommodate the new configuration of the Chamber precipitated by the eminent swearing-in of the Member-elect for Humber - Gros Morne, and in adherence to COVID-19 restrictions on social distancing, a section of the Table has been removed and as a result the Committee will be chaired from the Speaker's chair.

I ask that all Members should note that as we are now in Committee, remarks should be addressed to the Chair.

We are now considering the Estimates of the Legislature.

The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Clerk has – go ahead.

**CLERK (Barnes):** Subhead 1.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** Subhead 1.1.02 through 7.1.01.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.02 through 7.1.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.02 to 7.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** Total for the Legislature.

**CHAIR:** Shall the totals for the Legislature carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Legislature, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Now we will consider Executive Council.

**CLERK:** 1.1.01.

**CHAIR:** 1.1.01.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subhead 1.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** 2.1.01 through 4.1.05.

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.1.01 through 4.1.05 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Just an opportunity to ask some questions, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Absolutely.

The Chair recognizes the Opposition Leader.

**MR. CROSBIE:** I'm looking at Premier's Office, 2.1.01 and beyond that. It's page 24 in the pagination that I have.

I would ask: Could a list be provided of the positions in the Premier's Office?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Just by way of clarification for those that may be listening, we are in Estimates of Executive Council; a little different of a format than what we've seen. This is Committee of the Whole. As Deputy Premier, I'll be answering a lot of the Executive Council questions, Cabinet Secretariat. Just for those that are listening, Cabinet Secretariat supports the Premier and, of course, the work of the Cabinet and its Committees, as well as the effective operation of departments and agencies.

Within that branch, of course, we also have Communications and Public Engagement, Intergovernmental Affairs and, of course, I can tell you that there are other divisions like Treasury Board that I know the House Leader will be answering questions on. The Deputy Government House Leader will be answering questions on Indigenous Affairs and my colleague the Minister of Digital Government will be answering questions of the Office of the Chief Information Officer. OCIO, as we like to call it, internal, which is a technology division of government.

To answer the Member opposite's question, completely: Yes, I'm happy to have a list provided. Of course, the details would have been in Budget Estimates books in any event but I'll endeavour to get a copy for you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Thank you.

Could you tell the Committee how many positions were in the Premier's Office, under the former premier, and has there been a change?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

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

I understand in general sense there are 17 positions in a normal course of business in the Premier's Office. I'm not sure that they have all been filled as we now have a new Premier, but I can endeavour to find that out for you. There may be one or two less but I can't confirm that but I'll get that for you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** So, as I understand the answer, Madam Chair, until recently, there were 17 positions and that will continue more or less the same?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Yes, Madam Chair, there are 17 positions and I understand there will be no change.

If I may just add some information there. You will have noted the budget for 2019-20 was \$1,505,500 and there is a slight increase in the 2020-21 budget of \$1,563,400 and that reflects the 27th pay period. Of course, you'll see that throughout and I'm sure you've heard that throughout the Estimates, that there is a 27th pay period in this coming –

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** So, just to be clear on that, what was budgeted – I'm looking at line item 2.1.01 – was \$1,505,500 and there's been an increase in that by about \$57,000. Does that help to explain that?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Yes, the 27th pay period is a value of \$57,900 that is the difference.

You'll see that scattered throughout and I will try and draw your attention to that throughout the book as well.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Looking at Executive Support, Professional Services, this went over budget by \$17,601. Can you please explain why?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Are you looking at Professional or Purchased Services under the same heading 2.1.01? Just for clarity, I want to make sure I'm answering the question.

**MR. CROSBIE:** 2.2.01, Executive Support, 01 has Salaries and Operating Accounts.

**MS. COADY:** Sorry, you've moved to 2.2.01, Executive Support?

**MR. CROSBIE:** Yes.

**MS. COADY:** Okay, my apologies, I was still back in 2.1.01.

2.2.01 and you're asking for the salary line again?

**MR. CROSBIE:** Well, the estimate was \$12,400 and it went to \$30,000. I'm just wondering why.

**MS. COADY:** \$12,400 and it went to \$30,000.

I'm sorry, Madam Chair, I just want to make sure I'm answering the question. We're in 2.2.01, titled Executive Support and you're asking about the salary line?

**MR. CROSBIE:** I'm sorry. To be clear, it's Professional Services. It's under the heading 01, Salaries, but Professional Services is a specific line item and you can see there was an increase from what was budgeted. I'm wondering why.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you.

So you're talking about the \$12,400 normally budgeted, it went to \$30,000 and then normalized at \$12,500. There was a Professional Services consultant review for the Clerk of Executive Council and the consolidated review of executive policy; a normal review of executive policies within government.

They put that there, but I will take note that Executive Council was still actually under budget. They've used money within another vote and just transferred it as per normal.

Yes, under that particular heading of Professional Services, it was up to \$30,000 from a budget amount of \$12,400. That was for that review of executive policy; however, overall it was still under budget by about \$40,000.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Opposition Leader.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Thank you.

Just for clarity, are these Professional Services contracted outside of government?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Generally, they're for outside expertise.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Thank you.

I'm turning the page now, Office of Executive Council. I'm looking at Communications and Public Engagement, Communications Branch. This is the heading 2.3.01 and 01, Salaries, the column there for Professional Services, Purchased Services and there were obviously savings over what was budgeted in significant amounts, in the hundreds of thousands of dollars in those two items.

Could you please provide some context?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you.

Under 2.3.01, Communications Branch, under Professional Services, this is not an unusual change. I can say that this was for lowest cost for marketing and professional services that might've been required, and it might've been just that departments and others didn't require that work during that particular period of time, but we have to budget for it. We have to have an appropriation for it in case it's required. I'll use an example, such as the flu campaign. There would be something coming up now for the flu campaign this fall and they'll be using some of the monies from that department.

When the money is not spent it is a dropped balance, as you can see, dropped balances, and redeployed either within the division or redeployed within government.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Thank you, very much. It's encouraging to see money saved.

Now on page 26, Office of the Executive Council. The item is 2.3.03, Policy, Planning and Coordination. We have under Salaries, item 10, Grants and Subsidies. There's also under Salaries, Professional Services. Last year Professional Services went over budget by \$72,600. Could there be an explanation given?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

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

Under 2.3.03, Policy, Planning and Coordination, Professional Services. It was increased last year and that was because of a review for shared services. The Member opposite would remember that there's a big evaluation of options in order to do some efficiency and savings under a shared services. For example, instead of having two or three or four different payroll systems we're looking to move if we can consolidate those into one. I'm using that as an example only.

There was a review of shared services and funding was budgeted, but then transferred into here, because of course it was under that professional heading of Policy, Planning and Coordination that it was required. As you can see, it's normalized for this year because that piece of work has been done.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Yes, thank you.

The line item I'm looking at now is Grants and Subsidies, \$3 million-plus. Could the minister and Deputy Premier outline or give a list of the grants awarded and to whom they were awarded?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

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

I'm going to break this down, probably in categories, because I think some are standard, normal year to year.

The Community Youth Networks, for example, is basically the same year over year, it's \$2,562,200. I'll say that again, \$2,562,200. Then there's the core operating grant of \$206,000 to the Community Sector Council. So the operations of the Community Sector Council receives \$206,000. Then there's an application-based Grants to Youth Organizations and I'm happy that is worth \$451,000.

I would be happy to run through those if you wish me to get to that granular level, and I'll just use these as an example: Thrive in St. John's received \$23,000; Green Bay Youth Centre

received \$96,000; Harbour Breton Community Youth, \$24,500; Southern Labrador/Strait of Belle Isle received a grant of \$73,000; the Youth 2000 Centre (Y2C) Corporation received a grant of \$22,500; St. Lawrence Community Youth centre received a grant of \$25,000; BAYNet, Bonavista Area Youth Network received a grant of \$11,000; P4 Youth Centre received a grant of \$25,000; Community Youth Network, Nain, Inuit community is \$7,000. I'm just quickly going through some of these for you.

**MR. CROSBIE:** I think at this point we can thank you.

**MS. COADY:** Okay.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Obviously, the spending is flat here, so that's satisfactory.

Thank you.

Now, I'm looking at the Office of the Executive Council, or still looking. Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariats, that's 2.5.01, Executive Support. We can see there that Salaries have taken a bump up of about \$95,000.

Could you explain whose salaries are included here and what accounts for the increase?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

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

Executive Support is a deputy minister, an assistant deputy minister and two support persons. Basically, there is some reprofiled money. We're trying to balance it; we're trying to rightsize across different – it's reprofiled from the operating budget from Communications. We're moving positions, but not increasing cost. It's just a reprofiling of money. Also, there's \$15,000 for the 27th pay period requirement.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Opposition Leader.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Do I understand this is partly accounted for by moving executive-level personnel around within government?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you.

No, it's just fully funding a position that existed. Now we're just moving the monies to that fully funded executive position. That's all. It's not moving personnel.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Under Grants and Subsidies, can the minister outline where the \$35,000 goes and why was \$1,400 not given out last year?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you.

The Grants and Subsidies is \$35,000, and as you can see it was flatlined from budget last year. We actually only spent \$33,600. It's for the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat. It's for funding of the Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat. This is Newfoundland and Labrador's share of those expenses.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Does the minister know why the \$1,400 was left in the bank?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** I'm glad to always continue, as Minister of Finance, to see lower costs.

I would think it's just divvied up across the intergovernmental affairs network within Canada and it was just lower than what we anticipated.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Now I'm moving on to Financial Administration office of the Executive Council. Then, actually, Intergovernmental and

Indigenous Affairs Secretariats. Executive Support, that's where I want to ask a question.

Salaries: Could the minister please outline whose salaries are included here and what accounts for the increase?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

**MS. COADY:** Just for clarity, because Financial Administration is a vote, 2.4.01, do you want to go there first or do you want to go to Indigenous Affairs?

**MR. CROSBIE:** We can go past that and go directly to 2.5.01, Executive Support.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you.

I will ask my colleague, the Deputy Government House Leader, responsible for Indigenous Affairs to answer the question.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

I do believe he's asked a question about 2.5.01, because Intergovernmental and Indigenous seems to be together, but I actually break in at 2.5.03.

If the Member is looking for some detailed information around the salary numbers, we can certainly get that.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** I have up to 2.5.02, so I'm turning to my colleague; I think he's looking for 2.5.03.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** I'm looking at page 27, Intergovernmental and Indigenous Affairs Secretariats, 2.5.01, Executive Support, 01 Salaries and there was \$95,000 increase.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

**MS. COADY:** I can speak to the confusion –

**MR. CROSBIE:** I have a duplicated page, my apologies.

**MS. COADY:** I can speak to the confusion now. I had assumed you had moved on from in that section, I had already answered that question. We were just having a little parley now as to moving on to the next subheading.

Thank you.

**MR. CROSBIE:** (Inaudible) increases as I thought.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition, and a reminder for those viewing at home, we are going through the Estimates process.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Sometimes slightly confusing but we prevail in the end.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

We're now on Intergovernmental Affairs, 2.5.02, Grants and Subsidies. My question is what is the \$5,900 allocated for and why was it unspent last year?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

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

It's Newfoundland's contribution to the Internal Trade Secretariat of \$5,900. It was just savings as the expenditure was charged to Executive Support. It was just savings in that area, but we have to do an appropriation for the Internal Trade Secretariat of \$5,900.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Thank you.

Moving on to 2.5.03, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, item 10, Grants and Subsidies. The line item is being increased to \$689,800.

Could the minister please outline what the extra funding is for?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance.

No, we're going to go now to the – like musical chairs. I am going to recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** We're going to keep you on your toes this morning.

The Member is right, there's a \$200,000 difference in the budget this year. We were one of the offices to get some extra funds. What I will say is the \$200,000 is going to go toward Indigenous projects. I have already reached out to the Indigenous leadership around the province, and we're looking at a number of different ideas, but they will be carried out in close consultation with the wishes of the Indigenous leadership.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** Would the minister be able to give us some idea of what types of projects or events or whatever the case may be are anticipated to be funded by the extra \$200,000?

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will say, since I came into this portfolio the 19th of August, I've been really pleased and excited with the three portfolios and the various intersectionalities that cross over. In that short time frame, I've probably sat down with all 13 Indigenous groups around this province, from the West Coast of the Island right up to Nain, building upon a relationship that we already had established, which is very important.

I know the Member would like some further detail, but we're moving forward in close consultation with the leadership, and they will come forward. We're working with folks like Chief Joe, folks like the groups in Northern Labrador and Qalipu. We're looking at a number



of different ideas and all of that will be very public in due time once the decisions are made around the grants and subsidies piece of the \$200,000, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**MR. CROSBIE:** If I could be somewhat more specific, is any of this increase in funding expected to support the anticipated apology to Newfoundland and Labrador residential school survivors, and is there a timeline for this?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

That's a very important question. No, that money will not come from that. We're looking at things like the remains of Nonosabasut and Damasduit. We're working closely with the Indigenous leadership to see what will be the wishes for an example of a project and where their final resting place will be.

What I will say about the apology is our government is very committed to the apology. The former premier worked closely with leadership and due to COVID-19 it was not able to happen. There's a cap on the numbers that can assemble.

As the Opposition Leader will know, there was a joint press release that went out saying that they understood because of the pandemic that we were in, it could not happen right now. It's a very active file in my office. Conversations are happening. There's ongoing dialogue. As we work with the Indigenous leadership, that will happen when the climate allows and all parties agree that the time is right to do so.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Any further speakers?

The Chair will recognize the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think the Leader of the Official Opposition may have addressed many of my questions but one more of a nebulous question here. I note even with the 27th pay period that most of the Salaries seem pretty consistent here with the exception of the Office for the Status of Women and the Policy, Planning and Coordination Office, both of which seem to have a drop in Salaries.

I'm wondering has there been an attrition target, was that target met and did it come out of the Women's Policy Office and the policy and planning office.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

I'm just going to call some order to just keep our conversations down. When Members want to speak would you please stand and then sit down, because it is hard to see you guys when you're waving your hands or whatnot.

The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** I'll take the global question on attrition and then I'll ask my colleague, the Deputy Government House Leader, to speak to the specific of the Office for the Status of Women.

Yes, there are attrition targets across the entire civil service, as you're well aware. Because there are very few people, I guess, in this whole division, it is a small salary target, a small target. I think there's one person in HRS and maybe one in OCIO or one position that is through attrition, so it's a very small amount. I think the total is less than \$120,000 in attrition savings across all the various divisions. It's a very small amount.

I'll ask the Deputy Government House Leader to speak specifically to the Status of Women.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I think we're completely off base; we're not on line items, but I'm happy to answer the question.

In Indigenous Affairs, we have a complement of 11 permanent positions. That has not changed. Last year we had 11 and this year we have 11.

In Labrador Affairs we have eight positions.

Madam Chair, in the Status of Women, as the Member just asked about, we did have two vacancies. COVID and everything around that delayed us filling them a little bit, but we're actively going through that process and expect them to be filled in short order.

There has been no reduction across the three offices in staff.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

2.3.03, Grants and Subsidies; I know the Leader of the Official Opposition had asked about a list of those. Can I have the set of criteria associated with those Grants and Subsidies? You don't need to provide them right now. In light of the time constraints, perhaps you can just hand them over.

If we wanted to flip over to Labrador Affairs, I note that Grants and Subsidies, 2.6.02 on page 29, have declined. Is there an explanation for that? By quite a substantial amount, about \$500,000.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** With the noise around me and behind me, I couldn't hear the Member. Can she repeat that again?

**CHAIR:** Yes, I agree.

Again, can we kindly ask everyone to keep their conversations at a respectful level, or you can kindly take them outside? We are going through an important process right now.

I will call on the Leader of the Third Party to repeat her question.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm referring to 2.6.02, Labrador Affairs, subsection 10. I note that Grants and Subsidies have decreased rather substantially by about \$450,000, \$500,000. Can she explain why that's the case?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** I'm not seeing that, where she is.

**MS. COFFIN:** Page 29.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Yes.

**MS. COFFIN:** 2.6.02, section 10, Grants and Subsidies. I do believe it's supposed to be for Labrador Winter Trails and the Combined Councils. The total in the budget was \$1,800,000, Actuals were \$1,619,779, and the Estimates are now \$1,351,000.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

That reflects a decrease due to the removal of one-time funding to purchase a groomer that was \$449,000, and snowmobiles and drags for the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy. Last year we had a new groomer go on the North Coast. I think there was one in Cartwright, and we actually purchased a couple of snowmobiles and drags. Very well needed because while we talk about getting the highway done in here, that is the highway when you're in remote northern communities. I was really pleased to see that our government invested into those areas.

I hope that satisfies the explanation.

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm happy to hear that the trails are groomed (inaudible) to Labrador West.

I do have another question.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** I'm not sure exactly what the line number is, but as I've said before, the budget is a manifestation of policy. If we don't

ask the policy questions then we can't really justify the expenditures.

A question I have here is: Where might the implementation of the recommendations for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission come in?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Madam Chair, the Truth and Reconciliation led by the federal government, there are a number of departments involved here in the provincial government. There's Justice and there's our department, the Indigenous Affairs and Status of Women, and we're working closely in consultation to ensure that those TRs are carried out.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

If I could just add to that. From the Justice perspective, any time we deal with – and I think it's the same thing for another inquiry as well. When you deal with FPT tables on inquiries, it's very difficult actually but we are getting towards those results. When you deal with 10 other provinces and three territories on recommendations and on coming to a common ground, it's very difficult but it's something we work very hard towards.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I look forward to finding out where each of those departments are spending the money to meet their commitments under the provincial recommendations.

I do believe that's all the questions I have on this section for now.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to make more of an observation – perhaps it's a question, although the Deputy Premier can respond if she so desires. Of course, this being Committee of the Whole, I believe we do have the flexibility to do this. So it doesn't have to be a question and answer back and forth, necessarily.

I do want to take this opportunity to make what I think is an important point anyway, and others can agree or disagree. I think it does tie in to the policy of the government and of the Cabinet, who are primarily the individuals that initiate at least the budgetary process. It's certainly the ministers that would be feeding in to the budget. It's the Cabinet that would approve the budget.

Madam Chair, I understand that we have a long-standing process in terms of how the budget is done, how the budget is laid out from a documentation point of view, how the budget is debated in the House of Assembly, whether it be through the Estimates process and the other processes that are involved in it. The observation I want to make – and I've raised this in a couple of Estimates, but I want to raise it again just for the public record. I'm going to use an example here. I'm not knocking this, by the way, but I'm just going to use it as an example.

The Leader of the Official Opposition in asking some of his questions, one of the questions he asked – and it was a fair question, I have no issue with the question – but he talked about 2.5.01, Executive Support, and a line there for Grants and Subsidies. Last year it was budgeted \$35,000, and the actual was \$33,600. He questioned how come we didn't spend the \$1,400. Now, I have no problem with that question. It's a fair question; it's the people's money.

We often heard the expression: Take care of the pennies; the dollars take care of themselves. I'm not knocking that, but I want to make this point. That at the same time we're talking about, in this case \$1,400, when we go through the budgetary

process, Madam Chair – and I'll just use Health as an example.

We went through Estimates in the Department of Health; we were doing the same kind of thing, line-by-line scrutiny. Some amounts were large amounts in salaries; some were very small amounts. It could have been office supplies, it could have been a difference that we didn't do as much photocopying as we did last year and so on. All those things are important, but at the same time that we were doing that, we had one line in the budget – I'm not going to take the time to try to dig it out here but there was one line – grants and subsidies to the regional health care authorities, \$2.9 billion, I believe it was. I think it was \$2.9 billion with a B.

One line, grants and subsidies to the health care authorities. You can look at the health care authorities. You can look at the millions of dollars that go into Memorial University. You can look at the millions of dollars that go into the College of the North Atlantic. You can look at the public money that's being expended and earned at the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation, as an example. We can look at Nalcor, OilCo, these are all public entities. These are entities that are spending literally billions of dollars – way more money being spent in those entities than has ever been expended in this document here.

We're doing a line-by-line core department, deep dive but at the same time there are no opportunities for 40 elected Members of the House of Assembly to really dig in and question how money is being spent at the agencies, boards and commissions and so on. I think that's flawed. I understand they are arm's length. I understand they have a board of directors and so on. I'm not questioning the competency of the people who may be on those boards of directors, but those people weren't elected. Those people weren't elected to represent the public and to manage the public purse and to question how our money is being spent. The vast majority of the money captured in this document is being managed and scrutinized by unelected people, and we have no idea how the money is being spent – not a clue.

Now, I know you can ask in Health, for example, and you ask a couple of questions

about the regional health authorities, the minister does the best he can to answer a question on this or that but the bottom line is there are billions of dollars and there's no line by line. There's no scrutiny and so on. Whether it be part of this process or whether it be a separate process, maybe A, B, Cs should be brought in on a rotational basis.

Maybe each year we're going to pick on a rotational basis. Maybe OilCo and Nalcor get their turn for scrutiny this year. Then the following year it's going to be NLHC and the following year we're going to have the regional health authorities and have Mr. Diamond and whoever the other people are in the House of Assembly, and their staff, so we can do a deep dive and start scrutinizing how they're spending the public money. I really think that's something that needs to happen. I really do.

We're talking about accountability and transparency and public funds. That's where we need to go, in some form. I don't have all the answers. I'm not suggesting this is the way it's going to be done or whatever, but if there was ever something that we need to do to have true accountability and transparency about how public money is being spent, we need to go down that road.

We look at the example of what happened with the school board just as an example, about that person that was renting a wheelbarrow or something for thousands of dollars and all this stuff that came out in the AG's report. It's absolutely ridiculous the stuff that was going on. I'm not saying we would have picked up on that necessarily, but how much stuff is not being scrutinized enough? How much is just being left out there and is not being dealt with by this House of Assembly?

That was the point I wanted to raise here again this morning for the public record. I'm not saying it to be critical. It has nothing to do with this government, not a thing. I'm not being critical of this government. I'm saying this sincerely to the minister, to the Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance, to the Cabinet, to all Members of this House. It doesn't matter what political stripe it is. It makes no difference. I'm not saying you've done anything wrong. This is the way it's always been done, but just because

it's the way it's always been done doesn't mean it has to continue to be done that way.

I put that out there as a suggestion of something we can do in the future to have more accountability with the public purse so that all Members have an opportunity to scrutinize what's going on and how billions – literally billions – of taxpayers' money is being spent in this province.

I look under Policy, Planning and Coordination, 2.3.03, and it talks about the responsibility, really, of the Cabinet when it comes to transparency and accountability legislation. I will take this as another opportunity just to plug, when we talk about accountability legislation, access to information and the fact that Nalcor and OilCo are still exempted. They're still exempted.

ATIPPA may apply to some of the day-to-day runnings, but they have an out. That out has been used prior to the Muskrat Falls inquiry, during the Muskrat Falls inquiry and since the Muskrat Falls inquiry. Even the former premier himself was going to get information out about the contractors. What would they call them? It wasn't independent, it was some other word they were using but, anyway, they were independent contractors. Mr. Marshall – not Mr. Martin – said, no, you can't have it. That was to the premier of the province: you can't have it.

There's something wrong with that system, that Nalcor and OilCo can just simply deny information outright. It doesn't matter. They don't have to give any explanation as to why they're doing it. There's no opportunity to challenge it. They can just say, no, you can't have it. There's a problem with that.

Let the Privacy Commissioner decide. There's a process in place for everything else. If it's commercially sensitive, the Privacy Commissioner will say it's commercially sensitive, but let's remove the ability of these people to do whatever they want and hide whatever they want from the public. It's our money. It's our company.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** The Member's time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the Deputy Premier.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I thank the Member for that impassioned plea. I listened intently because I think what he's talking about is further scrutiny of agencies, boards and commissions.

For the people of the province, I will say they do have – and I know the Member recognizes – a board of directors. They also have the Auditor General and they also have the scrutiny of Treasury Board. But I take it as a very valid point and I think I've said this to the Member before. I'm certainly going to take it under advisement of how or what kind of process that might look like.

As to the access to information, it is currently under review. I encourage the Member opposite; I encourage everyone in the province to weigh in on that review. I'm sure the Member will certainly have that. It is a statutory review that is now underway.

I know there were discussions that were held coming out of the inquiry into Muskrat Falls. I know the Member has petitioned this previously and I'm sure he'll make good presentation to the Commissioner.

Thank you for your interventions.

**CHAIR:** Any further speakers?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains.

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just going back now to section 2.5.03, the Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation section there, looking at the Grants and Subsidies. Just looking at the extra budget there for \$200,000, I know the minister had actually responded to my leader's question there, but I found her answer to be very vague when he asked –

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just to make the point that I recognize the Deputy Government House Leader is trying to answer these questions but, again, the noise in the Chamber this morning is higher and it is really hard to hear. One of the challenges I know the Deputy Government House Leader has is where her seat is actually moved, the audio system is not the same as you would find in a regular configuration of the Chamber.

**CHAIR:** It is and I agree. I'm having trouble hearing myself. So, again, for the third time, can we keep our noise levels to a respectful level or, again, take the conversations outside the Chamber.

Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains.

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Getting back to 2.5.03, Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and going down to the line for Grants and Subsidies. The Leader of the Opposition had asked about the increase of \$200,000 there for Grants and Subsidies. I found the answer to be very vague coming back from the minister going out to Indigenous projects and looking at a number of different ideas.

I was wondering: What's the consultation process to make sure all Indigenous groups are aware of the extra \$200,000 and to make sure that it is properly allocated?

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

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Certainly, that is why I did not give a detailed answer because I cannot speak for the Indigenous groups. They are all aware. The Member may not have heard me because of some of the chatter in the House that's still happening.

I actually have sat down with the Indigenous leaders very early weeks in my term in this

office, and I've actually written each of the groups on the projects. To date, we have received feedback from some and some we have still not yet received feedback.

The groups that the Member asked about is a very important question. If we're going to do something, there has to be a consultation. Certainly, I think the Member can take heart that we have written the groups, we've sat down with them. The Premier and myself have sat down, I think, with most of the groups, as well, by now. Those decisions that we make will be made in collaboration with the Indigenous leadership in the province.

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

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Thank you for your answer, Minister. The Leader of the Third Party had actually asked about some monies there and the answer came back for a groomer for the North Coast and snowmobiles and drags. I was just wondering if any of those snowmobiles were purchased for the North Coast in my district and any of the drags, because I know the former MHA for my district had campaigned on these drags and snowmobiles.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** I will tell my hon. colleague that my former colleague did carry through on his promise, if that's what he campaigned on. The breakdown, under the funding for the Labrador Transportation Grooming Subsidy, Madam Chair, we had increased the budget to \$471,000.

The investments from that included funding for the Nain and Hopedale Inuit Community Governments for the purchase of new snowmobiles and drags; one was my district, Cartwright, Black Tickle. There was a snowmobile and a drag for Norman Bay and there was some funding for the Town of North West River to support safety improvements to the trail system.

As the Member would know, that highway that leaves North West usually heads up to the North Coast. Very important funding that we allocate there, Madam Chair, to maintain snowmobile trails to remote Labrador communities that do not have a year-round road connection to service centres. Once again I was pleased to see just under \$500,000 that we invested last year into those road links.

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

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for her answer. I just needed clarification if it was just the Nain Community Government only.

Also, the Leader of the Opposition asked about the work being done to support an apology for residential school survivors. I find your answer to be very sincere there on your work that's being done, especially I know you reached out to Nunatsiavut Government and you've also reached out to Mi'kmaq on the Island portion of the province.

I was wondering if there was any work being done relating to the Innu because the Innu have said repeatedly there will be no apology accepted without work being done for reconciliation on their social issues.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's my understanding, since I've come into the portfolio – and we've actually been working on the file as well – that each Indigenous group will be putting together parameters and a framework around how they each want their apology to be. For example, the Nunatsiavut Government may have some different stipulations than how NunatuKavut Community Council would want that apology to look like.

I will remind the Member that I believe we are building on very positive relationships with our Indigenous groups in this province. Our former administration, there were a number of things that we implemented that had never been done before – a premier's Indigenous roundtable that

happened annually. Premier Furey has committed that together we will sit down and we will continue to hold an annual Indigenous Leaders Roundtable.

We work closely with the Innu as well. The Innu have been in, they've sat down with myself and the new Premier. We'll continue to work with each of the groups to ensure that at the end of the day when the apology is carried out, that all parties are satisfied and that it was what they wanted. That is as it should be because it's been a long time coming.

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

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the minister for her answer.

I think that's actually a really good answer. I thank you very much for the individualizing of the different Indigenous groups, the recognition that there are different issues.

I was looking back at the Estimates last year, and also the previous for 2018 and 2017, and I asked a question last year regarding the mandate of Indigenous Affairs. Is there a role there for actually advocating for different departments for support services and allocations of services? The answer has always come back, yes, Indigenous Affairs also advocates within different departments like Education, CSSD and AES on behalf of Indigenous people.

I was just wondering, is there any effort there, looking at the budgets, to help Innu with their access to ABE? To me it's pretty alarming when Indigenous groups, such as the Innu, who actually have English as a second language have a large portion of their adult population who slipped through the cracks of the education system. I was just wondering is there any effort being made to help the Innu secure ABE, which is critical for their adults to be able to access jobs and employment opportunities?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the Member for the question.

What I will say, in response to her preamble, is Labrador Affairs Secretariat, the office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation and the Office for the Status of Women are three offices that work very closely across government – whether it's the gender-based analysis lens in Status of Women; whether it's policy input recognizing the unique and geographical challenges of Labrador; or whether it's the Indigenous lens, ensuring that is on each file across departments. We do that, Madam Chair. That is ongoing. I work closely with all of my colleagues. Sometimes I think they get tired of hearing from me, but that's important work that we do.

Around the Indigenous communities, I don't have the information right in front of me. As the Deputy Premier went through the budget, she broke out a lot of the funding that went to Indigenous groups around the ABE portion. I did receive a letter; I referred it, Madam Chair, to my colleague responsible for ISL now, the former Advanced Education, Skills and Labour. I don't have the details to give her at this time, but I'll defer to the minister for that department to answer this question in a few minutes.

Thank you.

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

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

In actual fact, the fact that we have a separate Indigenous Affairs portion that is also now tied to reconciliation, it shows the importance of the Indigenous populations and the fact that they have different social, educational and economic issues that face them.

That ties into my next question here out of the budget for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation. Is the department also working with CSSD? As we've noticed, we've had a lot of CSSD support workers actually leave and go to other agencies, so I was wondering is that something that Indigenous Affairs is working to actually try and resolve the issue, to address that issue.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Yes, as a former minister of CSSD, as someone who was the minister in that very large social department for three years, when I was there I worked closely with Indigenous Affairs and often Labrador Affairs, just like I am now working closely with my colleague.

Actually, Madam Chair, the current Minister of CSSD and myself have just been to Labrador, as the Member opposite would know. We had meetings together in Goose Bay. We actually travelled to the Inuit community of Nain where we sat down with Nunatsiavut, Martin Martin Group Home and the Inuit Nain Community Government.

Madam Chair, the Member raises issues around children in care that are very, very complex, and not easy to solve. I would say to the Member that we work beyond Indigenous Affairs and CSSD to address – some of those issues are connected in Health as we work around mental health and addictions issues and sometimes we were challenged to keep children in the community.

I want to say to this House here while I have an opportunity, while we're not where we need to be, we have made tremendous progress. We brought a new *Children, Youth and Families Act* into this House. There's a very big focus on prevention, Madam Chair. We have actually partnered, for example, with Family Connections under NG. Our social workers may not have been aware of a certain placement for a child, but by having that local knowledge there maybe an auntie or a grandma or a significant other that could take the child.

There's some very positive work, Madam Chair, that is happening around the issue of children in care and most importantly, paramount, we're working very closely with the Indigenous leadership and consulting with them as we move forward on the best interests of their children.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Any further speakers?

Seeing no further speakers shall 2.1.01 through 4.1.05 inclusive carry?



All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

On motion, subheads 2.1.01 through 4.1.05 carried.

**CLERK:** The totals.

**CHAIR:** Shall the totals carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Executive Council, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Madam Chair, I move that we rise the Committee and report the Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the House to rise the Committee to report totals carried?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

The House is now in recess.

**Recess**

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Sorry for the confusion, anybody at home trying to follow us this morning.

Madam Chair, with consent, we will continue in Committee and do the subheads for the Office for the Status of Women, Treasury Board and OCIO.

**CHAIR:** Is this the pleasure of the House?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** 2.7.01 through 2.7.03.

**CHAIR:** Shall 2.7.01 through 2.7.03 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

First of all, I would like to say I am so pleased to participate in this Estimates process in relation to the budget allocation for the Office for the Status of Women. Obviously, this is a very important function that needs to occur because it gives us the opportunity to ask important questions which will provide transparency and accountability on these issues.

Before I address the specific heading, Madam Chair, I would like to ask a few general

questions first. With respect to last year in Estimates, the previous minister spoke about taking a women's leadership conference to Labrador. Could the current minister please provide an update on this?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you for saying that correctly, Madam Chair, because today I've heard several people calling it women's policy office. It is actually the Office for the Status of Women. It's important for us to – as we had heard already in this House early this week, language matters.

We are indeed committed to taking the leadership conference, I say to the hon. Member, to Labrador, but right now we are in these very different times with the pandemic and folks are being advised to only travel when it is necessary, but we are committed to that. The funding is allocated for it and we will see what happens in the remaining months. We take our direction primarily from the province's chief medical officer of Health as it relates to some of those initiatives and we follow her guidance.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister.

I'm glad to hear it's still on track and that funding has been allocated, and that it will take place when the opportunity arises.

With respect to the Intimate Partner Violence prevention program, could the minister please provide an update on this?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm happy to say that on Friday morning I had what has probably been one of the most important meetings that I've had since I've been in the portfolio. I had an opportunity to sit down

with Constable Lindsay Dillon – I'm looking to my colleague, the former Justice minister ...

**MR. A. PARSONS:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Pardon me?

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Malin Enström.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Malin Enström – he knew exactly the next question I was going to ask – the crime analyst with the RNC and they're doing some very, very valuable work. It is my understanding that both in the partnership work we do with the RNC and the RCMP, that the vacancies are all filled. There's a full complement of staff and some very important work being carried out. I look forward to building upon the meeting we had last Friday morning.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister.

I'm glad to hear there are meetings ongoing and I look forward to hearing about some positive and productive outcomes from these meetings.

With respect to the Intimate Partner Violence prevention program, can the minister please advise if there has been an increase in activity since COVID-19?

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I believe those units are busy ongoing all the time. It was not part of our discussion on Friday morning. What I can say to the hon. Member is there's been a huge increase since COVID. I actually believe there may have been a slight decrease in the amount of work since COVID, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister.

If you could provide confirmation of that, that would be appreciated.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm certainly happy to provide some confirmation on whether the numbers are up or the numbers are down. I don't want to speak to something without having some degree of certainty. As the Member would know, normal Estimates process you have the staff in your department around you but I'm here just going on the knowledge that I've accumulated for the two months since I've been there. So I may not have everything readily available for her but we will certainly get that information.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Minister.

We would appreciate that.

With respect to the Indigenous Women's conference, can you provide an update on that as well?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

That is another conference we're certainly committed to. Again, during this time of COVID, most folks have been avoiding larger gatherings of people that may be outside your bubble. We've actually had some dialogue around the merits of possibly doing something through a virtual means.

We have been finding our way through this pandemic since March, and many things have

been delayed and put on hold. I think initially we had thought for a temporary time, but as time goes on we will have to look at finding new ways to have folks gather for conferences and perhaps virtual may be one of those means. The commitment to hold that Indigenous gathering is there.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you.

Minister, could you please provide an update on pay equity legislation?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

What I understand is there has been an interdepartmental working group predating my time. Since I've gotten there, I have learned that much of the research around that has been done and it's moving through. It's an active file. Conversations are happening.

The interdepartmental committee on pay equity have been exploring the feasibility of pay equity within this province. They have now completed significant research exploring pay equity-related initiatives, both in the province and across Canada. The committee is currently in the process of coordinating a meeting between ministers to discuss the findings of that research.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, last year in Estimates I asked a question of the minister in regard to the pay equity legislation and we were advised that there was a need to bring in more expertise. There was an indication that your department would be reaching out to others in government who could come to the table.

Is that what you're referencing when you say the interdepartmental committee? Can you please expand on that?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll just speak briefly from my Treasury Board role because there's actually a role there as well where Treasury Board Secretariat, former HRS, would be a part of that interdepartmental committee. I guess even referencing back to the Member's remarks about last year's Estimates, it is very complex. Because if you look at core government itself, I would think and I would hope that we've achieved pay equity in the core of government as we hire.

In my briefings, as I move into the HRS side of this department, the challenges when you look at pay equity as you go outside of government – we have a very strong control over what we do inside our organization, but as you go out it becomes more challenging.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you.

With respect to heading 2.7.02, Office for the Status of Women, Professional Services, Madam Chair, '19-'20, \$294,000 was budgeted but only \$160,000 was used. Could the minister please give some information on this, including an outline of how the \$160,000 was spent?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Madam Chair, can I just ask the Member, what was the heading again?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Okay, Professional Services.

2.7.02, I don't see that. I'm not sure if I'm in the right place here, Madam Chair, but the \$134,248

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**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you.

No, under 2.7.02, Office for the Status of Women, under 01, Salaries, and specifically Professional Services, you'll note that in 2019 to 2020 there was \$294,900 budgeted but only \$160,652 actually was used. I'm asking if you could provide some information and an outline of how that money was spent.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** I have three offices on the go here; I apologize.

Under those Professional Services, \$134,248 reflects savings due to some vacancies and staff changes. As I had mentioned earlier, we're in the process of going through getting both of those filled now.

Also, some of the savings have resulted from a postponement of leadership initiatives due to COVID, as I also alluded to earlier, and \$24,900 reflects a decrease due to redistribution of funds related to gender-based analysis, leadership initiatives and violence prevention initiatives.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you.

Under Grants and Subsidies, which is under 2.7.02, Office for the Status of Women, Minister, could you please provide some information about where this grant funding is awarded? I'm specifically interested to hear how the increase to \$3.2 million will be utilized.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** I'm sorry, Madam Chair, I missed the first part of her question. I ask her to bear with me and repeat it again.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** That would be under the heading Office for the Status of Women, 2.7.02, under Grants and Subsidies. It says subsection 10. Could you please provide some information about where this grant funding is awarded? What I'm interested in is the increase went to \$3.2 million and how that will be utilized.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm happy to speak to the Grants and Subsidies and the overall increase in the budget in the Office for the Status of Women, because our current Premier, during his leadership talked about he would work to elevate the profile of the Office for the Status of Women. He would be supportive of placing additional resources there to carry out the very important work of women in this province. He's certainly done that. Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation and the Office for the Status of Women, I believe, were the only two areas during this budget that saw an increase.

Under the Grants and Subsidies, some of the places where we spend money right now, I say to the hon. Member, Madam Chair, is we fund women's centres across the province. We fund, I believe it's nine or 11 violence prevention organizations across the province and groups like the St. John's Status of Women Council, the Gender Status of Women, Corner Brook. I'm happy to provide her with all of these details.

The Member asked about the additional \$425,000 in this year's budget. One of the priorities, it was very important for me in my earliest days in the office to try and determine where the greatest needs are. There are many needs and you want to ensure that the funding is going to meet those needs.

One of the things that I had heard in feedback was the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners Program that is here on the Avalon is working very well. I think most here would understand the details around that program. Some of the extra funding we would be looking at expanding that to the West Coast. Our long-term view is to

go into Labrador and do that very important work as well.

There are a number of initiatives that we are looking at. There may be one other staffing complement that will also come from that, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Minister, with respect to the \$3.2 million and how it will be utilized, you identify that there are women's centres, violence prevention initiatives; however, you speak mostly in generalities and you did indicate that you could give us some specific details. It would be appreciated if that could be done.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** I have a full breakdown, obviously, of the people's purse and where those grants and subsidies and amounts are going. We'd be happy to provide that for the Member.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Main.

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

That concludes my questions.

**CHAIR:** The Chair now recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

A couple of follow-up questions. What has been done to ensure that the Domestic Violence Help Line number comes to the top of all search engines?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and I thank the Member for her question.

It's a very important one. The domestic line was put in this spring during a time of COVID, recognizing that not every female or every individual who is subject to violence would be able to use a telephone; sometimes texting is the safer route. I was happy to see my predecessor ensure that was carried out. There's some work happening right now to ensure that when you go into Google search that number will be at the top of the line.

What I will say to the Member is we are seeing increased uptake on that line, which is encouraging with respect to the fact that it shows that people are aware of that. I understand that groups like PANL, when folks call there, this information, the phone number is readily available.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I've pulled up two search engines and I get a news release there, so we may want to check on that one. With respect to the statistics, let's go specifically to the Violence Prevention action plan, but if you want to speak to it a little more broadly, I would be delighted to hear that as well. Can you provide us with updated prevalence statistics?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** I think, Madam Chair, the hon. Member is not on a certain line item now; she's asking a general question. I don't have that information here, but I'm certainly happy to get it and get back to her.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, it is a policy that (inaudible) the budget, so that's why I ask these larger questions.

Under Grants and Subsidies, 2.7.02 – we were talking a little bit about Grants and Subsidies earlier. Can you give me a list of which

organizations now receive multi-year core funding?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The list of groups that we fund right now: Newfoundland Aboriginal women, \$203,000 – if the Member wants me to go through I'm happy to – Corner Brook Status of Women, just under \$202,000; the Gander Status of Women, just under \$143,000; St. John's Status of Women, that is just under \$143,000; Status of Women Central, same. Most of these are \$142,625: Labrador West Status of Women Council, the Gateway Status of Women Council, Multicultural Women's Organization and Bay St. George Status of Women.

Then we move into a different amount, \$135,000 to the Newfoundland and Labrador Sexual Assault Crisis; NorPen Status of Women, \$108,065. I say to the Member that one is a little less just because it was a new office, I believe, that we opened up. I'm looking to the MHA for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows who was an advocate for that. It was not a full year, so those figures reflect that.

Then we have a number of organizations. They are: Violence Prevention Labrador, \$100,000; an extra \$20,000 recognizing some of the geographical barriers and extra costs of travel there. Then the remaining violence prevention groups would be Violence Prevention Southwest, Violence Prevention Avalon East, Communities Against Violence, Violence Prevention Northern Peninsula, Western Regional Coalition and Violence Prevention South and Central.

There's still a continued long list here, I'll keep going, Madam Chair – Burin Peninsula violence against women. Then we move down to a different amount. The First Light, St. John's Friendship Centre, \$71,000 went for a provincial Indigenous women's gathering; Thrive, \$60,000; and Northern Peninsula Mi'kmaq was \$24,100. That was an Indigenous violence prevention grant.

I'm into grants now. The Member asked about core funding and it's all combined on my note sheet here, the subsidies and the grants. I also will say, while it's in my mind, Madam Chair, that this government was the first government to give core funding to friendship centres. We now have three friendship centres receiving core funding of \$30,000 annually coming out of our most recent budget. We're very pleased to see that additional support.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and I look forward to that multi-year core funding being continued for many more years.

Madam Chair, can the minister give me a list of the data that is collected by their office. If they're not collecting any, that's fine. I assume that perhaps some of the other agencies are.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Obviously, I will have to follow up, but just for clarity for the record and for my officials that may be watching today, the Member is asking for data around –

**MS. COFFIN:** All data on women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** All data.

**MS. COFFIN:** (Inaudible) what does the office collect.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** We'll get that information for her. There's a report that I recently saw that has a lot of statistics and data in it. What we have, we're certainly happy to share.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, with respect to gender-inclusive policies, I understand that the Status of Women office was developing an equity profile for the Status of Women in this province as part of developing gender-inclusive policies, legislation, programs and service. Is that profile available?

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Madam Chair, I think I missed the first part.

I'll respond to gender-based analysis. Is that your question?

**MS. COFFIN:** Equity profiles?

**MS. DEMPSTER:** I would have to get that information and get back to her.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you very much.

Now we'll talk about gender-based analysis. I know that there has been an initiative to ensure that all government departments, and I would like to think – I hope, maybe you can confirm this for me – all of our Crown corporations as well have been expected to undertake gender-based analysis training.

Can you give me a list of those that have not received that training yet?

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

There has been some very good work happening around gender-based analysis. I can start with in-house, Madam Chair.

Each Cabinet paper, as it works its way through the system, we work hard to ensure – and it's a

given, my colleagues know that it has to go to the Status of Women office – it has to have a gender lens applied and then their feedback is incorporated. When we look back to, I think it was 2019, Madam Chair, it was the former premier that announced an enhanced mandate for the Status of Women, one that would include a greater focus on gender-based analysis. We've been using GBA+ regularly in all of our work.

I'm looking for some numbers here because I do have them. To date, Madam Chair, the Office of the Status of Women has held 35 training sessions with 513 participants in total ranging from – that would be deputy ministers; that would be executive-level staff to communications professionals. I think important to note here, Madam Chair, the first people being trained are those who are directly involved in the development of programs, services, legislation, policies and budgets.

So the Member asked about ABCs moving a little further out. Once our in-house work is completed, we will begin training for the general public service as well as our agencies, boards and commissions. But in prioritizing those folks that were hands on with the development, it was certainly paramount that we get those done first.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm not sure if there are any government departments missing or not. I understand that a great many people have been trained in this analysis, but I don't think it was answered that any of them have it. I know ABCs will be rolled out eventually.

The minister did allude to the fact that Cabinet papers are being viewed under a gender-based analysis, plus training. Can you confirm if all policies undergo that since gender-based analysis was initiated?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll go back to clarify, the Member was asking if all departments had been done. It's my understanding – getting some information here – that there was a couple that were outstanding to be done that were scheduled, and it was during the time of COVID. So work is underway to ensure that the remaining two departments are done.

To the current question, Madam Chair, that's on the floor, what I will tell the hon. Member is that we are mandated; and my mandate letter from the Premier is posted online and it's the same across all departments and all of my ministerial colleagues understand that we are mandated to do a Gender-Based Plus Analysis on all papers that go through the system, on everything.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

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

That is refreshing to hear that everything is undergoing a gender-based analysis.

Madam Speaker, I understand that there are some concerns about the costs associated with pay equity legislation.

Does the minister have even a rough estimate of what it would approximately cost to include such a thing?

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair Recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

As I had mentioned earlier with a question from the Opposition, an interdepartmental committee on pay equity have done some preliminary work exploring the feasibility of pay equity in this province. We are currently in the process of coordinating a meeting between ministers to discuss the findings of that research. That meeting has not occurred yet, so I'm not able to answer the specific question around what a potential cost might be.



Madam Chair, the Member opposite would know, this is very complex and how you measure and put a dollar figure around that is probably a very challenging thing to do. We've been looking at other jurisdictions and what's been happening there and it's rolled out a number of different ways.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I do recognize the complexity of this; this is why I asked the questions.

Madam Chair, I'm very interested in the Gender Equity and Diversity Plans and Women's Employment Plans for major projects. It will be really interesting to see what employers have been worked with and given the nature of our economic and social circumstances right now, as we attempt to reinvigorate our economy, it would be good to see who we've been working with to improve gender equity and diversity as well as women's employment plans.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

We're actually pretty excited as a government with our Gender Equity and Diversity Plans. I mentioned – maybe it was in Question Period earlier – I attended a FPT with the three Atlantic provinces around status of women and the launch of the Gender Equity and Diversity Plans that was led by Newfoundland and Labrador. Recognizing, I guess, that this province historically was heavily resource based and lots of male-dominated work happening. Since that time we have been significantly progressing along.

I look to my colleague the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and the former minister, there were targets I believe that was built into P3s work that happens, and I'm going

to let my colleague expand on that a little on the work we're doing, if he so wishes.

But it's certainly a priority for us that any of the work that we're involved with there are targets because we want to ensure more women in every workplace and we're working hard to achieve that, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The sex trade is predominantly female, I'm wondering if any capacity has been afforded in the Office for the Status of Women for addressing the women in that particular industry. I do recognize that crosses genders as well, but I think that's a very important thing that we do not address nearly enough. I'm just wondering if there has been any capacity afforded to the Office for the Status of Women for addressing this very important issue.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Member asked about individuals who have chosen the sex trade industry. What I will say is that as a government we are concerned about the safety of all people who work in our province.

During COVID, Madam Chair, recognizing that some of those people who work in this area would not have fallen under other programs, we did find in the Status of Women money – \$60,000, as she will see here in the Estimates – to support some of those women who would not have been a part of any other system. There would have been the Safe Harbour Outreach Project under the St. John's Status of Women. That's a group that does supportive work for women in the sex trade, Madam Chair.

Also, funds went to CASEY, which is where we work with a broad cross-section of organizations to support youth that are being sexually exploited.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Madam Chair, I look forward to that core funding becoming multi-year – well, I look forward to it becoming core funding and multi-year funding because I will guarantee you that the sex trade will not go away.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair, that's all my questions in this section.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

**MS. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just for the purpose of correcting the record, I remind the Member that what I said was during COVID when many programs were being rolled out, this was a group of workers that were not covered under other programs. It was one-time funding.

I recognize the important work, but I would not want this hon. House to misconstrue my words. It was a one-time funding that went to SHOP and to CASEY during COVID. Of course, all of these things are always being evaluated as we go forward.

**CHAIR:** Seeing no further speakers.

Seeing no further speakers.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes – I ask Members to stand because it is hard to notice if you want to actually speak.

**CLERK:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** First, we will carry these totals.

You're moving on to a different topic, I take it?

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Right.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

Shall 2.7.01 through 2.7.03 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 2.7.01 through 2.7.03 carried.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Subhead 3.1.01, Office of the President of Treasury Board, I have a couple of general questions. The first one has to do with Dame Moya Greene. From the Budget Speech, she's being brought in to review expenditures across government, analyze our fiscal capacity and reimagine government service delivery. There's also a no layoff clause in our current collective agreements. How are these two items going to work together, or are they going to conflict with each other?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. From the Treasury Board perspective we constantly look for efficiencies, and from the HR perspective we respect our collective agreements. We will continue to respect our collective agreements.

I know the work being done by Dame Moya Greene will take place in the coming months. I guess we'll have to wait and see that report but, again, we are bound by our collective agreements.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** The same topic: What is the current attrition plan which government is now following?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Currently, to the hon. Member's question, this year I think the attrition plan will achieve about \$1.4 million in core of government; 2021-22 would also achieve about \$1.4 million in government. The outside entities, I guess ABCs, would achieve in 2020-21, \$2.7 million; and in '21-'22, \$2.7 million in attrition targets.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Is it possible that these government-wide targets would be broken down, and can you provide information on them?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** I certainly will get as detailed information as I can for the Member opposite.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Subhead 3.1.02, Executive Support, Professional Services; last year there was \$939,000 spent, there was no budget. I just wonder what that expenditure was for.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

The \$939,000 was spent last year on the shared services initiative. As we work for overall savings in government there are going to be obviously expenditures to help get us there, and that's what that would have been for last year.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Can we get a breakdown of what exactly it was spent on?

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will certainly provide whatever detailed information we can get there for the Member opposite.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** 3.2.01, Professional Services; last year there was a budget of \$200,000 and only \$82,000 was actually spent. I'm just wondering why the savings and, again, this year's budget seems to be approximately the same amount.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** That was Professional Services?

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Yes.

**MR. CROCKER:** That reflects savings due to lower actuary costs than anticipated. This year we would go back to where we were for use of actuaries.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Similarly, 3.3.01 under Pensions Administration; Professional Services are expected to go up to \$172,000.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** My apologies, Madam Chair, but it's like the speed round here.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** It is when the clock is going.

**MR. CROCKER:** I know. I'm sorry.

My apologies, 3.3.01?

**MR. WAKEHAM:** 3.3.01 under Professional Services.

**MR. CROCKER:** That's the increase. There was an increase due to requirements funded

within Treasury Board for required systems maintenance.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Now I go down to 3.3.02.01, Salaries. There's \$57 million budgeted in Salaries that wasn't there before. Is this related to the NLMA negotiations or something else?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, it reflects an increase as appropriate for block funding allocations to provide for compensation and contractual adjustments that are anticipated to incur in the 2020-2021 year.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** The NLMA would be part of that, I assume.

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, that would reflect any adjustments in this fiscal year.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Okay. Thank you very much.

Let's go again now over to 3.4.01.

**MR. CROCKER:** Payroll and Benefits.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** I'll give you a chance to flick over the pages there.

**MR. CROCKER:** No, I got there. I think I did.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** This is under the Payroll and Benefits section. This again is more to do with the direction as opposed to a direct question on the amounts. That has to do with the consolidation of payroll systems within all of the government agencies, whether it be RHAs, the colleges, the housing, Nalcor.

Right now, we all know they all have their own separate systems. They all have separate payrolls. I guess from my time on the shared services model again, I was asking about opportunities for consolidation within the government system and where this is and any

work done, any estimate of savings, that type of thing.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** I can certainly look into that deeper and get back to the hon. Member. Just to speak to his point, and I won't take much time, but it's a very good point, because as we look at changes around government, the idea of everybody working on separate systems is something that we're constantly in review with the co-operation with, obviously, the Department of Finance and OCIO and others, just to find these efficiencies that, in some cases, I would hope are low-hanging fruit.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Again, on a similar theme, 3.4.02, it's the same type of concept. We have multiple payment systems and the same thing in terms of our financial systems and how we're set up. I'm just looking for any thoughts that you have on where we might be heading with that.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Yeah, it would be a very similar answer, and an equally as important point, because these are things that we have to achieve. There has been a lot of work done, but I guess when you deal with systems and when you start expanding those systems, it's very easy for us to control inside of core government. When you try and start putting those systems into other organizations who are working totally different in lots of ways, it becomes more challenging, but certainly something that, again, is a place we are headed, but there's still some work to do.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** I have no more questions on this particular one.

**CHAIR:** Any further speakers?

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Curious here, Pensions Administration, 3.3.01. We're spending twice as much this year as we did last?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** On Professional Services?

**MS. COFFIN:** Yes.

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, I already answered this question, but it's a system maintenance issue.

**MS. COFFIN:** Okay. Let's move over to Financial Assistance, 3.3.03. There's \$24 million that was budgeted; \$9 million was spent. Can I have a list of the criteria and organizations that received that money?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This is not Grants and Subsidies that would fall outside of government. I can give you some examples, and I'll certainly get you the best I can for a list, but this would be things like AESL's Public Post-Secondary Education Review. There was some work done with HRS for actuarial services. It's that type of thing. It's internal government coming to Treasury Board, to the secretariat for financial assistance. I can certainly get you the most detailed list I can.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** That would be wonderful, thank you, and I would appreciate that.

A more specific question: Yesterday or the day before in Estimates, we found a pocketful of money that was essentially discretionary. Is there any of that money in this pot?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** One of the things that I have not found in my five years in Cabinet is a pot a money.

**MS. COFFIN:** I found one in two days.

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes.

No, within the department or within the secretariat that I represent there are no discretionary funding pots. There's no discretionary funding. This is funding for providing public services.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you.

That is reassuring, but you know I have to ask.

In terms of Financial Assistance, it says Revenue - Provincial. Is that a repayment of loans?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

**MR. CROCKER:** The one that shows zero balances?

**MS. COFFIN:** 3.3.04, Financial Assistance, Capital.

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, that's actually the repayment of a loan to Corner Brook Pulp and Paper.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Oh, okay. Nice to see that's coming in.

Let's see here, I do believe that maybe all of my questions in this section.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Any further speakers?

Shall 3.1.01 to 3.4.06 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.4.06 carried.

**CLERK:** 4.1.01 through 4.1.05 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 4.1.01 through 4.1.05 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Thank you very much.

Again, some general questions, I guess, to start off with.

I noticed in the mandate letter to the minister that it talks about "leading shared services, continue to take steps to consolidate corporate services that will provide increased efficiencies and savings."

I wonder can you provide an update of exactly what has been taken in under shared services right now. What is actually part of the shared service model?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister for Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Thank you very much.

In terms of shared services, my understanding is shared services will be transitioning to my responsibility, but it hasn't yet. We haven't yet looked at which areas can be consolidated and prioritized, but we anticipate doing that.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** The former minister of Finance referred to the shared-service model many times in his speeches. Again, I ask: Can you find out exactly what has been consolidated to date and what the plans would be for the next round? That would be fine.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Yes.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Carrying on in that same theme, I guess, is that the mandate letters asked to reduce a lot of the manual paper-based processes and increase the number of products that are being delivered online. In doing so, obviously, there will be a need for less people.

I'm wondering if you have had any plans, or lined up any plans yet, on what that would look like or have you talked to any of the unions about it.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Right now, we're looking across all government departments and which services that we currently provide to residents of the province in different channels. Some are online already, some by phone, some by fax and some in person. So there are hundreds and hundreds of services.

We are prioritizing and looking at the cost benefits of all of those, which ones we can and should digitize adding to the list that we currently have, the projects are ongoing.

We have not considered, I guess, a reduction in staff. That's not part of the thing we're looking at, at the moment. We are focusing on the services, the highest vying services and moving them online for people who want to do services online, to create better experiences for people on the phone.

For example, Motor Registration Division, currently our Mount Pearl office, as we spoke in Estimates last night, there's a seven-day wait for an in-person appointment. So the more services we can provide online for people, the better services we can provide for people in the current channels, for example, phone and in person. At the moment, we are not looking at a reduction in staff as a result of digital services.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Can you provide me then with how you're going to increase efficiencies and savings without impacting staff? Where do you anticipate getting significant savings from?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** We're currently looking at that. A big portion of the savings will be in increasing how easy it is for residents to do transactions with us. For example, if they're applying for income support, rather than a paper-based process that they currently have, which is very onerous – as an MHA, I regularly drive around St. John's and deliver an income support application to someone in paper, take a picture of it and email it in for them.

For example, if someone is applying for income support they might have a smartphone, so rather than having them complete a paper-based process, they complete a process on their smartphone so that it's more accessible to them. The lens we're looking at right now is in terms of ease of the residents of the province who are completing the services.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** I understand that principle is the idea to save some efficiencies for people, to make it easier for people but I'm not sure how that equates into savings for government at this time. That's what I'm a little confused about.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** We are looking at savings. The funding model is interesting, if you will. For example, OCIO, which is what we're talking about now – when we build something for a department, OCIO absorbs the cost. Right now when we build a digital service, the department doesn't pay any of that cost for development.

We are still working on the nuances of when we build a new digital service, how and where do those departmental costs come out and who

bears the result of that. There are some internal discussions we still need to have around that.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** There's really no direct plan that you could lay out today that says this is where we're going, this is exactly what we're doing, type of thing.

**MS. STOODLEY:** We don't have a plan yet. Other than the digital services we are planning to build, there are no specifics in terms of which department is taking it, which (inaudible) at the moment, but we're moving towards that.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Just on another general topic, I'm not seeing any additional costs associated with COVID. Of course, there was a time in government, in my day, when you couldn't get a laptop or a phone. I'm wondering if the additional costs on IT requirements were needed to support all of the work that was done remotely and all of the people that worked at home because of COVID, and where are those costs reflected? Secondly, were there any security concerns with so many people working from home?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Firstly, I'd like to say I think the teams did an amazing job during COVID. The majority of the public service worked from home during that time. It was very difficult for a lot of staff, particularly the OCIO teams.

There were no direct costs to OCIO as a result of COVID-19 that I'm aware of. Many of the departments absorbed those costs.

We did have a reduction of costs. If we went into some of the line items, we would see that. For example, many projects that OCIO were undertaking, those projects were delayed as a result of COVID-19, as staff stopped doing things they were doing and did other things; for example, configuring laptops for people. I know

laptops were repurposed across the public sector and they were kind of really shared. A lot of things stopped so that other things could continue on.

As far as I'm aware, there are no direct costs related to COVID-19 from OCIO.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

Can we keep the noise levels down again, please?

Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** I just wanted to go back to the agencies, boards and commissions for a second. Back in 2014, I directly worked on a project that identified a shared service model for RHAs that would involve consolidation of payroll, supply chain, finance and human resources. I'm wondering: Has that been rolled out?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** The Member is asking about shared services for regional health authorities?

**MR. WAKEHAM:** As part of the whole government, regional health.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Okay.

I don't have that information, but I'm happy to take it away and report back.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** I'm just wondering: Where does that fit in the overall plan for government? The plan to consolidate shared services, back-of-office functions for all of government, including government departments themselves, where is that? Is there a plan for that to happen?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** At the moment, we're looking at resident services that we're transitioning online. I'll certainly take it away in terms of the RHAs and get back to the Member on that.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** I'm not sure, Minister, if you would know anything. Has the consolidation of the data centres with the ABC's taken place? That was something we had asked last year in Estimates and I'm not sure if it has been done yet.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** We have not yet completed the consolidation of data centres with the agencies, boards and commissions.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** A number of years ago we were talking about the potential for government to move to the cloud platform. I'm wondering if there's been any progress on that. Is that part of where you might be going?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** That's certainly an excellent question. I've been asking that of the teams. It's certainly something they are continually looking at, especially when we look at saving costs.

Part of the challenge is that requires a significant change in skill set in team members, and also has huge security considerations for how we store and keep information and maintain information. It is something we're actively looking at, but there's no immediate plan to transition any services to the cloud at the moment.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.



**MR. WAKEHAM:** I'll get right into some of the quick ones. 4.1.01, Corporate Services and Projects; under Professional Services there seems to be an increase in that particular budget going up to almost \$1.5 million. I'm wondering what that would be for.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Under Professional Services, essentially, that covers a lot of the contractors we bring in. That includes: \$350,000 of one-time project funding for Digital Government; \$200,000 to do some important needed work on legacy applications we received; \$99,000 integrated service management carried forward from last year; and then a reduction of \$76,000, as I think some things were realigned between Purchased Services and Professional Services.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** 4.1.02, under Professional Services; again, there's a budget of \$1.77 million and last year we spent \$1.474 million. I was wondering if you could explain how the monies in Professional Services were used last year and what the plan is for this year.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** The \$1,474,026, the reduction was related to COVID-19, projects that were delayed and couldn't progress. Obviously, that resulted in fewer payments to vendors than what we expected.

Then, this year, we're anticipating a full complement of projects. This year also includes one-time funding to move some reports, transition them across data centres, which includes \$70,000 extra.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Under 4.1.03, Operations and Security, under Supplies I notice there's approximately a little over \$7 million budgeted and spent last year the same thing, about \$7.1

million. Can you tell us exactly what that was spent on?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Sure. So Supplies in OCIO actually includes all software for all government departments. When the Department of Health needs a new piece of software, that comes into OCIO under Supplies. So we're not talking about office supplies; we're talking about Microsoft Office; we're talking about Adobe; we're talking about all the programs that all government departments use.

In terms of the specifics under Operations and Security, there's a small change this year, \$41,000 less – things that we don't need anymore over last year – and then an extra \$10,000 reprofiling; a change in software needs, essentially.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Thank you.

Again, under the Purchased Services just underneath that, a line down in the same heading, 4.1.03. There's a budget of \$4.1 million; last year's actual of \$5 million. Again, what types of services were purchased and what are being planned?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Purchased Services under 4.1.03, the changes here reflect \$1.1 million less around moving data centres; \$4,000 less in annualization of decisions made last year; \$77,000 less, just reduced demand; and then an extra \$300,000. Essentially, we engaged a new security service provider to help prioritize and action security threats. That falls under this line item as well.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Thank you.

4.1.04, again under Professional Services, same type of question. Last year, \$5.8 million was spent and I'm wondering what the plans are for the \$6 million this year.

**CHAIR:** The Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Professional Services this year, this includes, like I mentioned previously, contractors and extra people we have to bring in on short notice and people we can't find to work on projects and people with specialized knowledge. This number includes an extra \$650,000 one-time project funding, as well as a reduction of \$275,000, which was a capital project reprofiling. These are directly related to capital projects.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** We can get a listing of those type of things, I assume?

**MS. STOODLEY:** Yes.

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Okay. Thank you.

That's all the questions I have.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Any further speakers?

Shall 4.1.01 to 4.1.05 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 4.1.01 to 4.1.05 carried.

**CLERK:** The total.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Office of the Chief Information Officer, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council carried without amendment.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that the Committee rise and report the Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council.

**CHAIR:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

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

The Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to

report that they have passed, without amendment, the Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and has directed her to report that they have passed, without amendments, the Estimates of the Legislature and Executive Council.

When shall the report be received?

**MR. CROCKER:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2, Bill 44, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 44, entitled, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2, now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2," carried. (Bill 44)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 44)

**MR. SPEAKER:** The bill has been read a first time.

When shall it be read a second time?

**MR. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 44 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now recess.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that this House does now recess.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

We are recessed until 2 this afternoon.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Are the House Leaders ready? Yes.

Third Party House Leader ready?

Independents ready?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

Admit visitors and begin the broadcast.

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we will hear statements from the hon. Members for the

Districts of Mount Pearl - Southlands, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, Terra Nova and Bonavista.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

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

It's with great sadness that I recognize the sudden passing of a gentleman who touched many lives in my district and throughout our province. Ordained in 1987, this proud Mount Pearl resident, the Right Reverend Dr. Geoffrey Peddle, served many parishes, including the Parish of the Ascension and Parish of the Good Shepherd in my community.

A noted author, he penned various academic articles and books including: *From Mount Pearl to Mount Sinai*, *The Atonement of Jack Fowler*, *The Church Lads' Brigade in Newfoundland: A People's Story* and *The Church of England Orphanage in Newfoundland: 1855-1969*. He became bishop of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador in 2014 and had just recently retired prior to his sudden passing.

Bishop Peddle would be described by many as a visionary who was well-known throughout the province for speaking out on issues facing both the Anglican Church and the world at large, from same-sex marriage, to the closing of churches, to the treatment of prisoners.

I ask all Members to join me in offering our deepest condolences to Geoff's wife Kathy, sons Adam and Benjamin, and the rest of his family.

May he rest in peace.

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

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

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

Dave Murphy recently put his scissors and clippers in the drawer at his shop for the last time, retiring from his long career in the barbering business. Dave's barber shop on Main Street in Grand Falls-Windsor is a well-known

business and landmark to many in the Central area.

Dave started cutting hair with Mike Murphy on January 27, 1952. He remained with Mike until the spring of 1966. He was the last barber to apprentice under Mike.

In 1968, Dave started a shop with Terry Ballard. This business partnership ranged from 1968 to 1974. Then Terry left and started up in the mall.

Dave's shop on Main Street burned down on February 3, 1977. In less than a month he was up and running again. The number of haircuts Dave has given I can only imagine. It's safe to assume he has given a million-plus haircuts over his lifetime. Many will remember their very first haircut from Dave's.

Hats off to Mr. Murphy for his many years of dedicated service as he hands his scissors over to Mr. Greg Beson. After 68 years of cutting hair, Mr. Beson has some big shoes to fill, but I have no doubt he's up to the task.

Thank you for your service, Mr. Dave Murphy, and enjoy your retirement after 68 years of cutting hair.

**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 a leader on the Great Northern Peninsula – Mildred Lavers of Port Saunders, who taught for more than 35 years locally and in Indigenous communities in Labrador, Quebec and Nunavut.

She is a determined advocate for the advancement of Indigenous people as president of the Great Northern Peninsula Mekap'sk Mi'kmaq Band, NorPen Aboriginal Women's Circle president and director at the Qalipu Cultural Foundation, and former director of Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network, NAWN.

Mildred has led many talks; her women's circle shares culture through a drumming group and has advanced various research projects such as

storytelling and a collection of oral Indigenous history. Throughout the pandemic, her band council worked hard to support vulnerable people. They recently received funds to provide vegetables to seniors in the community.

Mildred, along with various members, was instrumental in advocating and collaborating with the public and government to submit a proposal that would see the establishment of the first Status of Women's Council on the Great Northern Peninsula. Mildred now serves as chair, and NorPen Status of Women's Council is celebrating its one-year anniversary.

Mr. Speaker, Mildred Lavers deserves recognition, especially for her dedication and commitment to the advancement of Indigenous people and women on the Great Northern Peninsula.

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

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

**MR. PARROTT:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about a group of individuals, both in my district and across the province. Volunteer firefighters are the backbone of many towns, LSDs and small communities. I am blessed to know so many of these passionate, dedicated, driven individuals that serve, at a minutes notice, unselfishly.

They act as soon as pagers go off, leaving the dinner table, getting out of bed without question, leaving their families behind in order to help someone else in need. Unfortunately, throughout the last year we have lost some of the finest firefighters I know, great friends and some family.

On October 17, 23 fallen members were honoured with a virtual helmet-laying ceremony. From the District of Terra Nova, I am glad to stand and honour these members, their families and their fire departments: Wilson Wiseman from Clarenville, past president of the provincial association; Dylan Simmonds, Harold Chatman and Hector Chaulk, all from Charlottetown; Randell Meadus, South West Arm; and my own father, Frank Parrott from Wabush.

An excerpt from the firefighter's prayer, "I want to fill my calling and to give the best in me," describes every firefighter I know.

I would like for us all to stand and congratulate the firefighters and pay tribute to fallen members.

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

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

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

On Friday, July 10, within the District of Bonavista, the Discovery aspiring geopark was designated a UNESCO Global Geopark. It consists of a 1,400-square kilometre land mass and approximately 280 kilometres of rugged coastline comprising 25 communities, seven of whom are incorporated municipalities, with a population of more than 8,200 people. With over half-a-billion-year-old rock formations, internationally acclaimed hiking trails and provincial and national historic sites, the promise of increased tourism is very real.

I commend the many volunteers over their 13-year journey as they endeavored to bring natural resources geologist Sean O'Brien's idea of a UNESCO designation to fruition. The pioneer members of this effort included: The Sir William F. Coaker Heritage Foundation, Edith Samson; Tourism Elliston, Colleen Duffett; the College of the North Atlantic, Marilyn Coles-Hayley; Trinity Historical Society, Jim Miller; King's Cove Historical Society, Mary Batterton; and the Town of Bonavista's, John Norman. This initiative is a prime example of what can be achieved through leadership, vision, determination and collaboration at the local level.

I ask the Members of the 49th House of Assembly to join me in congratulating all those volunteers involved in this outstanding achievement.

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

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

**Statements by Ministers**

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

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

I am pleased to provide this hon. House with an update on an infrastructure project that will improve the way we provide critical health care services in Labrador.

Last week, I had the pleasure of taking part in a sod-turning ceremony for the new six-bed mental health unit to be built in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

The extension to the Labrador Health Centre will provide private bedrooms for patients and include a dining space, lounge space and recreation space. The extension will also include a group therapy room, which can be used for Indigenous ceremonies.

Construction starts in 2021 and is set to be completed in 2022.

Mr. Speaker, this extension means patients in Labrador who require mental health care can receive it close to home and close to family.

A \$5.1-million contract has been awarded to Moss Development and the company has informed us they will be hiring between 25 and 50 people to work on the construction site – all from Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**MR. BRAGG:** Mr. Speaker, this project and the new adult mental health and addictions hospital we announced this summer for St. John's are transforming the way we provide mental health care in our province.

This project and our investments in the Trans-Labrador Highway are also transforming the way we deliver services in Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the government on this important initiative. Access to health care is a critical concern, especially for those residents in rural and remote areas.

As our society struggles with mental health and addiction issues, this new addition will be a much-needed addition to Central Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, I must, however, note, that the minister proudly boasted the construction of the facility will be 100 per cent Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. As we have seen on the new Corner Brook long-term care facility and in Central Newfoundland, this has not been the case.

It leaves me to question will he be able to boast about 100 per cent employment on the new mental health addictions hospital in St. John's.

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 the advance copy of his statement. Support for families and support for mental health services are both integral to people suffering from mental health issues. I'm happy to see the residents in and around the Happy Valley-Goose Bay will no longer have to choose.

This new unit, along with the new unit in St. John's, will go a long way in filling massive gaps in health care services. However, residents in Labrador West have communicated to me that they feel this new unit will not meet the needs of all of Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The hon. the Minister of Education.

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

On October 5, the Government of Canada announced this year's recipients of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence.

This annual award honours exceptional elementary and secondary school teachers for their remarkable achievements in education and for their commitment to keeping students engaged in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, otherwise known as STEM learning.

I'm pleased to recognize Grade 4 Vanier Elementary, French Immersion teacher, Ashleigh Hudson, recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence and Mount Pearl Senior High physics and science teacher, Paul King, recipient of the Prime Minister's Award for Teaching Excellence in STEM. Both these teachers were selected based on their remarkable achievements in Education.

I congratulate Ms. Hudson and Mr. King for their dedication and commitment to students, as well as for their innovative approaches to education. These awards demonstrate how Newfoundland and Labrador educators are among the best in the country and we are grateful for their continued focus on our province's young learners.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating this year's recipients. Our teachers are helping develop the culture of innovation we need today and into the future.

Thank you.

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

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

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

All of us on this side of the House join the hon. minister in congratulating this year's recipients of the Prime Minister's Awards for Teaching Excellence.

As a former teacher and administrator myself, it gives me great pride to congratulate Ashleigh Hudson and Paul King for their awards. I can attest that there are many exceptional teachers in our K-12 system. I have worked with many and as the minister has stated, they are amongst the best in the country.

Innovation in education is a key to fostering student achievement and growth. Ms. Hudson and Mr. King are clearly leaders in the country in this area and should serve as role models to their peers and everyone in the K-12 education system.

In closing, congratulations again to these two individuals on their award and I wish them every success in their careers.

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

We, in the Third Party, also join him in congratulating Ms. Ashleigh Hudson and Mr. Paul King for receiving these highly prestigious awards.

I echo the minister's statements that our educators are some of the finest and most professional in our country. As a former teacher, I've had that opportunity to work with them.

But I will say this: Gratitude must go beyond words. Government must provide our teachers with the necessary resources so they can continue to focus on our province's young learners, especially in these unprecedented times.

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

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

The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs.

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

I would like to speak in this hon. House about the merits of the Labrador Sport Travel Subsidy program under the Labrador Affairs Secretariat.

For years, Labradorians have travelled with friends and teammates to participate in provincial competitions on the Island. These activities instilled the benefits of physical activity, teamwork and competition. Win, lose or draw, Mr. Speaker, they achieved personal growth and made lifelong friends.

Without support from this program, such excursions would not be possible. Funding is available to Labrador youth, Special Olympians and sport organizations to offset the cost of air travel. Another component of the program supports School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador. Funding is also used to support provincial tournaments held in Labrador, and to assist in developing coaches and athletes.

More than 525 athletes and coaches in Labrador, participating in 15 sports, took advantage of the program during a nine-month period before the pandemic brought a halt to travel in March.

As travel restrictions start to ease, we are extremely encouraged by the renewed uptake of the program from coaches and athletes in Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the benefits of the Labrador Sport Travel Subsidy program are evident. All you have to do is look at the smiles on the faces of participants and listen to their inspiring stories.

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

I'm honoured today to acknowledge the athletes and coaches of Labrador and the tremendous pride they bring to the Big Land. Labrador produces some of the finest athletes in the country and are supported largely by their families, dedicated coaches and volunteers.

Travel from Labrador for athletes can be very difficult from a logistics perspective and also a cost perspective due to the largeness of our Big Land that we call Labrador. However, I am really encouraged that the government continues to support these valuable endeavours. As a former Labrador athlete myself, I know the true value sport brings, not only from a physical wellness perspective, but I can attest to the mental health and social benefits that sport brings to us. Also, the lifelong friendships that grow with it.

I wish all the athletes, coaches and volunteers of Labrador the very best. We are all very incredibly proud of you.

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 thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

It's important that the geography of our province not hinder the opportunities available to our athletes. I hope that we can continue to build on this program to ensure that all Labradorians are able to participate in the provincial athletic community, but also we can expand the program to help the arts community as well.

This program allows individuals to reap personal benefits that come with competitive sport and help build a healthier province.

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, thank you.

Our hearts, all of our hearts, I'm sure, go out to the family of Jordan Naterer who is missing in the backcountry of British Columbia. I know his father, myself, who lives in my District of Windsor Lake.

Concerns have been raised that the search was called off too soon and that clues have surfaced.

I'd ask the minister: If he's spoken to his colleague in British Columbia to make the case for resumption of the search?

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

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

I, too, send my thoughts along to the family of Mr. Naterer and his entire family.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, we have, as of yesterday, spoken to the Department of Public Safety and, subsequently, the emergency services division in British Columbia. We did have an update as of about half an hour ago, and we're extremely hopefully that the search will be restarted, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** I thank the minister for that responsive answer. We wish the searchers success.

Mr. Speaker, the people of the province through Nalcor own 5 per cent of the West White Rose project, roughly a hundred million dollars. We

know Husky is looking for another equity partner to which the federal Liberals have said a loud no.

What has the minister done to protect the public's investment, and which industry players has he approached about becoming an equity partner?

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

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

Certainly, through OilCo we are very aware of our interest in this project and our responsibilities in the assets that we have in our offshore and throughout this province.

What I can say is we've spoken to multiple agencies, groups, whether it's federally, provincially. We're looking to sovereign wealth funds. We've spoken to absolutely everybody when it comes to trying to restart this offshore industry which is facing difficult times right now.

We spoke to Husky again yesterday and we are working with them quite actively on trying to figure out ways in which we can help them restart. We realize that time is of the essence. Those conversations are ongoing and certainly quite active.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** In May 2018, the Trudeau government announced it would buy the Alberta-BC Trans Mountain Pipeline from Kinder Morgan for \$4.5 billion, which is now estimated to cost \$13 billion to complete.

With this same Trudeau government saying a flat no to an equity investment in West White Rose to safeguard jobs and royalties, is this fair treatment for Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

I certainly know what it's like to deal with projects that have ballooned in size to \$13 billion, I can tell you that.

What I would say is two things. Maybe this is a question best asked to the federal government. What I can say is that we've worked with them quite actively and we've secured \$320 million, alongside the other commitments that have been made in the recent past, as well as when we talk about the Atlantic Accord and commitments that have been made, as well as federal loan guarantees for the Muskrat Falls development which have been quite, quite substantive.

Right now, our attention is being paid to the money that is there. We have a task force that is working with us, very diligently, to try to get money out the door to these projects but, again, we must work with the operators, the task force and everybody. It's certainly not a simple proposition.

Thank you.

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

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

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

The minister may wish to inform the House as to how much of the ballooning he just mentioned happened on his government's watch.

In September 2020, the Trudeau government provided \$200 million to Gateway Casinos with the same Trudeau government saying a flat no to an equity investment in West White Rose to safeguard jobs and royalties.

Is this fair treatment for this province?

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

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

I would invite the Member to read the Muskrat Falls inquiry that we commissioned, the LeBlanc inquiry, because I believe there was a date in

there where they said this project was off the rails and nothing we can do. I can tell you what, it was long before I sat right here. That I would say to the Member. You may want to speak to some of your colleagues that were a part of that process. You may want to speak to the candidate you just hired up in Labrador West, Mr. McGrath, who was also a part of that process.

What I would say is right now they can talk about that. What we are trying to do is work with the task force. We have \$320 million. We are willing to do anything that we can to get this jump-started and, again, I invite the Member to contribute his suggestions or solutions to make this better for all of our constituents.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** The project the minister refers to, Mr. Speaker, was sound in concept but poorly executed by Nalcor, and much of the poor execution happened on his watch.

On October 1, the Trudeau government provided \$1.5 billion to accelerate adoption of zero-emission buses and charging infrastructure.

With this same Trudeau government saying a flat no to equity investment in West White Rose to safeguard jobs and royalties, is this fair treatment?

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

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

I'll come back to the question to the Trudeau government, but I cannot leave it alone. If the Member opposite wants to talk about sound economics and policy behind Muskrat Falls, one only has to look to the words of Justice LeBlanc where his report indicates that the former Progressive Conservative government "failed in its duty to ensure that the best interests of the province's residents were safeguarded," and whereas the PC government "failed in its responsibly to objectively assess and oversee the

decisions and actions of Nalcor” and that it “resulted in the combination of unrealistic optimism, a willingness to misrepresent costs, schedule and risk, and an inability to change course when things were going wrong.”

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member for his comments, but I think we’ll set our own course.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** What the minister just left out of the picture is that high executives within Nalcor misled and deceived the government of the day as to matters of cost. Those same executives remain in place under his administration’s watch.

Does he plan to keep them on or will he act against them?

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

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

Again, the good news is I look forward – we have a ministerial committee, we have a deputies committee that are working with the LeBlanc inquiry. I thank Justice LeBlanc for taking the time to put this report together, which unlike the project that the Members opposite sanctioned which was over time and over budget, Justice LeBlanc actually came in on time and under budget.

One thing I want to say, we can talk about it all we want, the report finds that the former Progressive Conservative government was determined to proceed with the development of the hydroelectric potential of the lower Churchill River and it initiated several activities to advance this development. Again, the big thing I say here, I keep saying failure, failure in their duty, the Member opposite continues to fail in that duty because he clearly hasn’t even read the report.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On the floor of the House of Commons yesterday questions were raised after one of the federal Justice minister’s political staffers sounded the alarm that the Liberal government selects judges on a partisan basis.

I ask the minister: Does this explain why there are a total of seven vacancies in judicial appointments in our province?

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Absolutely not, Mr. Speaker. I’m not sure who’s writing the questions over there today.

The process for this province was to make recommendations for our appointee to the judicial appointments committee. We actually did that in January, I think, of 2019. The appointee that was there prior to that would have expired in June 2019.

In January or February of 2020, the previous minister actually wrote the federal Justice Department and asked where the status of these appointments were. Then we went into a worldwide pandemic, Mr. Speaker, and that brings us to where we are today. I’m confident that the process has restarted and hopefully we’ll get those justices in place as soon as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, long before COVID happened, these positions needed to be filled. Obviously, these vacancies are very difficult for this government to justify or explain.

Mr. Speaker, we learned yesterday that two RNC officers involved in the shooting death of

Jordan McKay in 2018 are returning to active duty, despite an ongoing outside investigation by the Ontario Provincial Police.

Mr. Speaker, why is the minister allowing this unprecedented action to take place?

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

**MR. CROCKER:** First of all, Mr. Speaker, I'm a little disappointed in the question because I would have thought the Member opposite would understand the role of the Department of Justice and the role of us in a police force. We do not direct a police force. Nothing any good comes out of when a government interferes with the police force.

Mr. Speaker, I rely on the expertise of Chief Boland to manage his police force, the same way as we rely on Assistant Commissioner Parsons to manage the RCMP in our province. I have confidence in both gentlemen to manage their departments.

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

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

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, I understand very well the role of the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. This issue goes well beyond operational; it is a matter of significant public interest within the minister's responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time, we understand that some 11 correctional staff remain off work with full pay pending an investigation into the sudden death of Jonathan Henoche at HMP in November 2019.

Can the minister explain the double standard?

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

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

Again, the Member opposite is going down past it. She knows that I can't go down, whether as

the Justice Minister or the minister responsible for HRS. I'm not going to comment on individual files that are under investigation or that were under investigation.

We are talking about the judicial system and the correction system in this province. We will do what we have to do to make sure the people of our province are safe, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

This morning, Grieg announced it will be postponing the construction of its post-smolt unit. This will mean 200 jobs are on hold for the construction workers in communities in my district in the Marystown area.

Yesterday, the minister stood in the House and talked about the great benefits of this project.

Was he aware that these job losses were coming?

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

**MR. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

In reference to my speech yesterday around this industry, I stand by those words that I said yesterday. I became aware of this this morning, Mr. Speaker, and chatted with the company. Unfortunately, one job loss is one too many and there will be job losses of 193. That will happen between now and Christmas, but the overall project will be proceeding and once they reach their milestones, we'll be happy to say that it is progressing. But, unfortunately, there will be job loss.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. DWYER:** So within the past two weeks families and communities on both ends of my district, Mr. Speaker, have been dealt devastating blows with job losses.

I ask the minister: What hope and support will be offered to all of those families in my district who are very worried about their futures?

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

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

I thank the hon. Member for his concern around those jobs and I echo those same thoughts. We all are concerned. One job loss is one too many. I chatted with the company this morning and they reassured us that this project will proceed, but, unfortunately, at this time, this piece of the project will not be proceeding, it will be deferred, but the end goal for this project will happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. DWYER:** Within those discussions this morning, Minister, was there a date that they set where they would be interested in getting back to the table and getting back to construction?

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

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

Just to reiterate that this industry has been challenged also by the global pandemic, like other industries as well. I don't have a set date with regards to that particular piece of the project. Again, I've been reassured that the overall project will be proceeding and they are looking forward to meeting their milestones on this project.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. TIBBS:** Mr. Speaker, I have a constituent of mine in Grand Falls-Windsor, Mrs. Val Healey. Mrs. Val Healey has not had teeth in the past year and a half and her health is deteriorating very rapidly.

I'd like to ask the Minister of Health: What's our plan here to help Val Healey in Grand Falls-Windsor?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** I thank the Member opposite for raising a constituent's concern on the floor of the House.

Should he supply me with the lady's consent, MCP number and date of birth, I can look into the circumstances surrounding that, Mr. Speaker, and I will get back to him.

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

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

**MR. TIBBS:** Mr. Speaker, in the past year all of her consent and her forms, MCP number, all her personal information has gone to the minister's office three times. I have it all here, in the past year.

I'm just wondering: Is the minister the Minister of Health for all of Newfoundland and Labrador or Gander? Because if I have to take her to Gander, I'll personally do it.

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Mr. Speaker, a person once said to me: The high road, the air is a bit thinner but the view is a hell of a lot better.

If this lady has some concerns, the Member opposite has simply to bring that information –

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

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** – to my attention and I will look at it, Mr. Speaker.

We have an Adult Dental plan that is in the middle of the pack for Canada. We are on a par with the top five jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker. We, under ideal circumstances, would be delighted to be able to redeploy money to do this. Given the fiscal circumstances of the province, the economic challenges we face, that money simply is not available currently.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to discuss constituents' issues with the Member opposite.

Thank you.

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

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

Laughing about a senior who can't afford dentures is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker – not, not.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**MS. EVANS:** Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary to the Premier made troubling comments yesterday that were recorded. Constituents of his and of mine heard his comments stating that some transient people in our province were choosing a life of addiction rather than taking advantage of the help.

I ask the minister: Is blaming the victims of intergenerational trauma or any other type of problems that lead to addictions the new policy position of the Liberal government?

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

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

The Premier and this government recognizes the far-reaching and profound impacts of intergenerational trauma.

**MR. CROCKER:** Who's laughing now?

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

**MS. COADY:** It is very serious, Mr. Speaker.

I can say the Premier has become aware of the comments in the last couple of hours and is reviewing those comments. I can also say that the Member has apologized, but we do take this very, very seriously.

I thank the Member for the question.

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

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

It has been reported that at least nine social workers have quit in Labrador in the last year. Many of them have taken up jobs with other organizations such as Nunatsiavut Health and Social Development because they feel that CSSD is failing our most vulnerable children and families.

I ask the minister: Are social workers sending a message to this government by quitting?

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

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

I take the question from the Member very seriously, Mr. Speaker. The safety is paramount of our social workers, not only in Labrador but throughout the province.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to visit social workers in their elements in Labrador, at their offices as well in Labrador last week. Certainly, I heard the concerns loud and clear. I began working with my own staff, Mr. Speaker, and there was a survey done of social workers just recently. I had the opportunity to read that report and, as early as this morning, I met with the members of NAPE on a skype call to discuss the outcomes of that particular survey.

I am committed to working with the social workers, Mr. Speaker. They are paramount to our society, they do fabulous work, and I intend to work on this on their behalf.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I ask the minister now: Would he be willing to sit down with social workers that left CSSD to take up jobs with other organizations and discuss some of the reasons why they actually left?

Thank you.

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

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

If there's an HR issue with the social workers that has to be dealt with under those circumstances. However, Mr. Speaker, I did commit this morning, and I'll commit to the Member now, in my travels, it is my intention to visit every office throughout Newfoundland and Labrador to hear first-hand the issues that social workers are dealing with today.

Again, Mr. Speaker, they provide us with valuable work and I certainly appreciate the opportunity to hear their concerns. I've already committed to the hon. Member who's asked the question, Mr. Speaker, to sit down with her and to further discuss that.

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

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

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

NAPE President Jerry Earle said there's a problem with violence towards social workers and the problem is getting worse.

I ask the minister: Why is the problem of violence towards social workers getting worse? Is his government failing to protect our provincial social workers?

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

**MR. WARR:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate my first comment. The safety of our social workers is of utmost importance to my department.

The day that I entered the department, Mr. Speaker, we also hired an occupational health and safety personnel who the department was looking for, for quite some time. I applaud the government for giving us that position.

Mr. Speaker, I've read the reports. I understand entirely the issues that are facing social workers today. We have had issues with recruitment and retention. We are addressing those issues, Mr. Speaker, and we are looking forward to working with Mr. Earle, his members of NAPE and our social workers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

From what we're hearing, provincial social workers are quitting and going with other organizations because they feel their needs are not being met. We're also hearing from social workers that they don't feel safe in their jobs working with this provincial government.

I ask the minister: What concrete steps are you taking to address the needs of provincial social workers?

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

**MR. WARR:** Mr. Speaker, I am concerned. I read the full report. I will repeat it, Mr. Speaker: I've read the full report and I think there were 169 persons throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that were surveyed.

Mr. Speaker, there were some pretty serious remarks made in that report. My staff heard it as well. We had this meeting this morning. I stand

committed to working with NAPE and, certainly, to all members of our social work team.

Mr. Speaker, I can't leave without saying that it is paramount, the safety of these workers. We certainly respect this valuable resource to the province.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, there is a gap in the mining industry training that is available in and around Labrador's mining communities. To receive training, workers have to take expensive costs to leave Labrador to augment their skill set. Job opportunities in Labrador are requiring a new skill base.

How will the minister work with industry to ensure that the needed training is available to workers and industry where the work is being done?

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

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

I apologize to the Minister of Education who wanted to take this. I just wanted to comment because this is a topic that was brought to me by the Member a couple of weeks – or I think, actually, on Monday the Member brought it to me and said he had been speaking to one company in particular. I said we hadn't been approached yet by this company. I'm not aware that we have been approached.

What I would say is we are willing to be extremely responsive but we need these companies to come to us. We can work with them individually or we can work on a general basis, but either way we're willing to consider this and to help this situation.

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, 14 anti-poverty groups called on government to make a one-time amendment to the *Income and Employment Support Act* to wave any penalties imposed upon income support recipients who also received CERB.

I ask the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour: Will he stop his expensive moral-finger wagging and commit to introducing this amendment as soon as possible so that vulnerable people do not have to be victimized by government policy and legislation?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

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

I'm not sure the characterizations of the hon. Member are helpful to this particular discussion, but I'll take the matter for where it needs to go.

We have a responsibility to do whatever we can to assist those who are most vulnerable. That's why I'm very proud of my department. When individuals transitioned from income support to federal CERB benefits, we noted that while they were ultimately receiving more money under the federal benefit than they were previously receiving under the income support benefit, we recognize that other supplementary supports were needed and valuable. So we continued to provide things such as the drug card and other things.

Now, I had a very productive discussion with End Homelessness St. John's and we worked through a number of different issues. I can say that we're very much a partner with End Homelessness St. John's.

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

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



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

I take that as a no and that the input of 14 anti-poverty groups really doesn't matter.

Is the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour prepared to have the provincial government absorb the cost that will arise as a result of disqualifying people who received CERB from income support?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, I don't believe the hon. Member is very well aware of the approach that the government is taking and the approach that other governments have taken in the past, which is there has been an assertion that people will be cut off of income support and transitioning from CERB; they'll be cut off of re-entering income support for many, many weeks, if not months.

I explained to the hon. Member and as well to End Homelessness St. John's and the coalition that was not the case. We had a very good discussion because they became better informed of circumstances that were of interest to them. They did not know, for example, that the drug card would be continued on to individuals who received CERB benefits and they did not know, for example, that the transition period from CERB back to income support, where required, was a matter of days, at most, weeks, just a few short weeks. They were suspecting –

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. minister's time is expired.

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

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

**MR. JOYCE:** Last fall, a funding announcement was made between the provincial government and Bell in the towns of Lark Harbour and York Harbour regarding the expansion of the cellphone coverage service for the towns. It was expected that the work would be completed by August or September of this year.

Not only will this service be positive for the residents and businesses, it will also have a positive impact on tourism and the safety of the motorists and the many visitors who hike the mountains in the area.

I ask the minister: Will you please advise the current status of this project and if this project is still scheduled to be completed this year?

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I appreciate the question from the Member. It's an issue that we have discussed numerous times since I came into this department.

It was supposed to be done earlier, but the company has advised us of delays for various reasons when it came to the construction, which was to be done on their part. We're very proud of this \$400,000 project which will benefit the citizens.

What I can say is the most recent update I had from Bell was this morning and there's a crew on site this week doing construction. They anticipate power testing and completion in three weeks.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. JOYCE:** I thank the minister for that answer.

In the 2016 budget, there was a commitment to bring agencies, boards and commissions in line with the provincial government and also a commitment to bring in certain boards and agencies under departments with an expected savings of hundreds of millions of dollars per year. In the '20-'21 budget, there was no reference to this realignment or if any action has been taken so far by the government.

As we face a financial crisis, will the minister bring in these initiatives in the '21-'22 budget,

thus happening to save the province estimated hundreds of millions of dollars?

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for his question; it is indeed a very important question.

I will say to the Member that there has been a tremendous amount of work done in shared services; that's the combining of services across agencies, boards and commissions in government. The Member opposite was indeed here this morning for the questioning of OCIO, the Office of the Chief Information Officer, where we talked about the savings that can be realized and there is a tremendous amount of money that can be realized through that shared services.

I will also say to the Member opposite that when the oil company of Newfoundland and Labrador was removed from Nalcor and made a stand-alone entity, all the employees of the oil corporation came under Treasury Board guidelines. So that is a start, a mechanism and a means to make sure that we have that kind of oversight and also those kinds of savings.

I thank the Member for that important question.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Time for Question Period has expired.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

On a point of order, I'd like to speak about section 44. During Question Period – and this has happened in the past and it's worth bringing up – the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology in addressing his questions from the Leader of the Opposition is speaking directly at the leader in a personal manner as opposed to directly to the Chair.

Could I ask you to make a decision on that, please?

**MR. SPEAKER:** I've reminded Members numerous times, comments are to be directed towards the Chair. The purpose of this is that helps depersonalize the comments and to maintain civility in the House. It's important that we all do that.

Thank you for your point of order.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

### Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees

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

**MS. HALEY:** Grand Bank.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Grand Bank, sorry.

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

The Government Services Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have passed without amendment the Estimates of Consolidated Fund Services, Digital Government and Service Newfoundland and Labrador, the Department of Finance, the Public Procurement Agency, the Public Service Commission and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, and recommend that the report be concurred in.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to thank the Committee Members: the Member for Ferryland, the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, the Member for Lake Melville, the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, the Member for St. John's - Quidi Vidi and the Member for Terra Nova.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank the Table Officers and show our appreciation to the Members who assisted and substituted when other Members weren't available, Mr. Speaker, and they were busy with other duties of the House of Assembly.

I respectfully submit this report.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further presenting of reports by standing and select committees?

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

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

I give notice and move the following: that Motions 6, 8, 9 and 10 now on the Order Paper be deleted; that notice on the related bills be deemed to have been properly given; and that in replacing these motions, the motions before the House therefore be as follows:

The hon. the Minister of Finance move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution respecting the imposition of tax on carbon products, Bill 43; the hon. the Minister of Finance to move that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution respecting the imposition of a tax on tobacco, Bill 45; the hon. the Minister of Finance to move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider a resolution related to the raising of loans by the province, Bill 47; the hon. the Minister of Finance to move that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a resolution respecting the imposition of taxes on vapour products, Bill 48.

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

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

**MR. SPEAKER:** We have time for one petition.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

WHEREAS Route 60 through Topsail - Paradise is a heavily populated area with physically active residents; and

WHEREAS residents and young children who walk daily to school are finding it very unsafe with the deplorable state of erosion along the shoulders of Route 60 through Topsail;

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 find a more permanent solution and install curb and gutter to the areas affected by erosion.

Mr. Speaker, I've had talks with the previous minister responsible and the current minister. They have given me commitments along the way that this work will be looked at this year. I've had chats with the current minister responsible and certainly there are some areas where infrastructure underneath falls under the town's purview and they have to look at some compromise there to get those areas done but there are still many other areas through that stretch of Route 60 through Topsail that need a more permanent solution to it. It is unsafe conditions, and if we go through another winter and another spring runoff you're going to have less of a shoulder on those roads.

With the end of the construction season fast approaching, and I suspect the asphalt plants will be closing down, it has become even more timely that these areas be looked at sooner rather than later. Some of these areas are on school crosswalks; some are going the full width of the road.

I know there are many areas on Route 60 that are in good condition but it is these sporadic areas throughout the route that are of great concern for the safety of the residents of Topsail. Again, I've been lobbying for this for quite some time. I would hope that we would see some action on some of these areas this year that would be more permanent than what's been done to date.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, with a response to the petition.

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

I thank the Member opposite for his concern about Route 60. The Member will be happy to know, we have an outstanding relationship with the mayor and council out in CBS and the good work that these fine people do. I look forward to conversations with Mayor French out in that area to talk about what we can actually do.

If there are things that are happening under the ground – the good thing about being Infrastructure and I guess Transportation highway’s side of it, is that we have the ability to look at replacing the subterranean issues and upgrading it to a point that it adapts and meets the town’s needs and also meets the needs for the highway standard to upgrade the road after that.

It’s not a quick fix, Mr. Speaker. It’s not a chance that you can just run out and put a coating of pavement over this. There’s some engineering work that has to be done. I will continue my conversations with the mayor and council on this and look forward to making a resolution sometime in the near future.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members’ Day

**MR. SPEAKER:** This being Wednesday, I now call on the Member for Lake Melville to introduce the resolution standing in his name on the Order Paper.

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

I’m going to sit today, with these COVID-19 times.

I’m very pleased to introduce the following private Member’s resolution. This is seconded, by the way, by my colleague, the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

WHEREAS Health Canada has concerns about vaping as it can increase exposure to harmful chemicals and lead to nicotine addiction with youth being especially susceptible in its negative effects that include altered brain development, memory and concentration; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol and Drug Survey of 2017 reported that 54 per cent of all students thought it would be very easy to get an e-cigarette with nicotine if they wanted one; and

WHEREAS a 2019 British Medical Journal survey of youth in Canada, England and the United States found that from 2017 to 2018 the prevalence of vaping for teens aged 16 to 19 jumped from 8.4 per cent to 14.6 per cent, representing a 74 per cent increase year over year;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House refer the following reference question to the Social Services Committee for immediate action and report back with recommendations by March 31, 2021: What can be done to reduce the prevalence of youth vaping in Newfoundland and Labrador?

Mr. Speaker, this is quite a topic, and I must say that it’s come about because there’s been increasing attention on a strategy that was initially introduced as a means or a method for addressing those who are trying to cease smoking habits. Unfortunately, what we’re finding is it’s increasingly found in the youth, not only of our province but of our country and perhaps around the world.

We are finding that the prevalence of youth vaping has increased. We’re finding that teens are indicating it’s very easy for them to get their hands on these materials. What we need to do is give these young minds – and if anyone understands about how a human body develops, it’s really important that until the brain is fully developed that it not be exposed to any contaminants or harmful chemicals such as exist in a vaping material.

This PMR today is building on healthy living commitments in *Budget 2020*. Several of my colleagues have been discussing that and speaking to it in Estimates, and these certainly

will outline concerns by the harm caused by vaping tobacco, particularly among youth.

There's a bit of a story here, Mr. Speaker. I want to also acknowledge the support, help and assistance from the Newfoundland and Labrador Alliance for the Control of Tobacco, they're known as ACT, particularly the executive director Kevin Coady and Melissa Moore who's the program and education coordinator.

This is a partnership between the provincial government and a variety of non-government organizations. We are all dedicated to reducing the negative health, economic and environmental effects of tobacco use in this province. With its partners, our partners, ACT is responsible for developing, implementing and monitoring the Tobacco Reduction Strategy.

As I said, the PMR has been on my mind for some time. I can remember, it's about 15 years ago, I say, perhaps less, when I started hearing and seeing about vaping. Again, as I said, it was promoted at the time, I think, a lot by the tobacco industry as a means for helping folks stop the habit of smoking. It was seen to be – perhaps I'll paraphrase – a healthier strategy than that of smoking. Essentially, it's simulating or emulating a lot of the activity around smoking. Unfortunately, it also contains addictive components, such as nicotine and other chemicals, many of which we really don't understand the long-term consequences of.

What really struck me was it was about two years ago when I first started thinking about this and thinking about PMRs, and I noted that in my own community of Happy Valley-Goose Bay, during the breaks from the nearby high school, I would see students gathering at a local coffee shop. They're just outside and you see this situation of, I'll say, a few individuals who are vaping and many others standing around, seemingly with this sort of cool attraction for others to get involved and these huge clouds of this chemical vapour enveloping the entire group of them.

I got thinking: Wow, how did this happen? How did society lose a grip on – I think in so much of this generation and a generation ago, we've really come to understand the harmful effects of smoking. Now, we've allowed, or are

witnessing, vaping to enter into society and now it's getting into the youth of our province.

Go forward to the 12th day of March this year. It was an interesting day for all of us in this House, because it was the last day that this House of Assembly sat in normal pre-COVID times. It was a Thursday. That morning I was invited to serve as a judge at a science fair at St. Bonaventure's College. I was very pleased to accept. I've done a few of these. I really enjoy them. It's so interesting and exciting to see young minds at work.

As I worked my way around the different locations, there, lo and behold, I came across a young lady. Her name is Julia McCarthy. She's a Grade 8 student; she's 13 years of age. I just remind people: She's 13 years of age in Grade 8. She had an exhibit there, and I took a photo of her and this exhibit at the time because it just struck me. She was exactly speaking to so many of the concerns that I had. Her exhibit that day talked about the hazards of vaping. She had interviewed a local doctor, a Dr. Lockyer, and had learned much about the ills of vaping and through the interaction and interviews with him and her own research, was greatly concerned.

We started up an excellent conversation, and when we decided this week to do the PMR, my office reached out to her and I was very pleased to say that her and her mother joined us earlier today. We brought them in to show them the House of Assembly, but more importantly to hear further about her concerns around vaping; several issues around contaminants, around peer pressure. Here she is as a 13-year-old. She says she's not seeing it a lot yet at her age group, but is worried that she's starting to see it in students and other youth just a couple of years ahead of her.

It was fascinating. I just sat with her, along with other researchers, listening to some of her concerns. She's going to be watching today. I thank Julia and her mother, Joy, for joining us. We're going to do our best. What we're really going to do is challenge this House today.

What we want to do is to take the feedback that I'll hear from the various speakers, which will follow me, and we'll take those recommendations to the Social Services

Committee. I would hope that with the PMR passing that we can carry those recommendations to that Committee, from which we will formulate further steps and perhaps we can look and see what else government – and I mean everyone in this House of Assembly – can do to address this issue of vaping and preventing the harmful effects of exposing this to the youth of our province.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stop because I know we have several speakers on our side. I'm hoping the same enthusiasm exists on the other. I look forward to hearing what my colleagues have to say. I'll be taking good notes, and I'll see you back at 4:45.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I can't say I'm addressing this with enthusiasm; probably with a bit of regret because we've arrived at this point in time where vaping has been so detrimental to our youth. I'm enthused that we are putting the PMR forward, but not so enthused about the reason why because I think it's totally preventable.

The Member opposite spoke to a lot of facts and figures, and I'll do the same. We see this whole vaping mechanism, or call it what you want, e-oil or e-liquid that they put in these vaping devices, initially came out to help individuals get off smoking. That's what it came out to do and it's actually done the opposite. I know people who started this years ago, whenever it came in, they were getting off smoking, but I think they vape even more than they ever smoked and it's really something. They still go on vaping as if it has no harm to them.

I was reading an article there not too long ago, I think in some of these vaping e-liquids there are as many as 80 – 80 different chemicals. That's amazing. The Member opposite mentioned nicotine. I was looking at some quotes here on nicotine, and this is from Les Hagen, he's an

anti-tobacco advocate in Alberta. I'll just quote what he said here: "Nicotine is one of the most addictive substances on the planet. It's the reason why we have 48,000 Canadians dying from tobacco use each year, which is more than all substances combined. It's the No.1 preventable cause of premature death, disability and disease in Canada." That's a pretty strong statement of the effects of nicotine and the nicotine content in some of these e-liquids.

Where these e-liquids and vaping have taken hold is with our youth. Many, many youth have started vaping before they turn 16 – before they turn 16 they're vaping. Also, statistics show that nine out of every 10 people cite the flavours as an important reason why they started vaping. They've made it the cool thing to do. They have, apparently, over 15,000 different flavours of e-liquid for vaping – 15,000. I never ever smoked so I don't even know how many flavours of cigarettes you could get out there. I don't have a clue. It might be menthol and plain, I don't know, but 15,000 flavours of e-liquid for vaping.

I'll just give you a rundown of some of the names, just of some of the more popular ones. I hope I won't get called on a point of order because I don't know if I can say half – I won't go to the ones that are maybe a little vulgar here.

This is what kids are buying off the shelf. They're buying: Trinidad Ice, Unicorn Blood, Snake Oil, Unicorn Milk, Lava Flow, Milk and Honey, Cheerios – which I thought was something you could eat, but anyway, apparently you can vape it – Hawk Sauce, Monkey Business, Blue Voodoo, Smurf Cake, Deadly Sin, Naked 100, bubble gum – you can get bubble gum vaping. This one I like: I Love Donuts. That is actually a flavour of vaping. Then they have something odd like strawberry and orange and banana. They throw those in there, too.

You can see who they're marketing to: They're marketing to kids, essentially. I'm sure there are kids out there, youth that try and cover every flavour they can. In actual fact, stats will tell you that youth vaping is far surpassing what we had when we had a problem with youth smoking.

I can tell you some stories. There last year or the year before, I spent a lovely evening up at the

cabin. A couple of cabins over – I went over for a visit – there was a young crowd up there with their friends. I am not exaggerating. When I came around the corner, they were all sat around the fire; there was a fog hanging over the fire. Each one of them were there with their – I guess you call it a vape stick. They were passing them around.

They had this flavour, that flavour and I could see why they would take it on because, I tell you, you can also smell it. If anyone likes scented candles, scented candles are nice; but the vaping, the scent off them is just as nice but it's a hell of a lot more dangerous.

Moving forward, doing what we can do to curb the use of vaping in our youth is certainly something we should be looking at. There's no doubt about it.

Dr. Andrew Pipe, he's the board chair with the Heart and Stroke association. I'll quote him. He says: "Young people are starting to vape before they turn 16. They are vaping six days a week, 30 times a day, and they are addicted: the majority (59%) have tried to quit vaping multiple times without success and many have begun smoking after vaping. We are throwing decades of successful tobacco control out the window by creating a whole new generation dependent on nicotine." That's exactly what we've done.

I think we were duped; I think we were all duped by industry that said: This is going to get people off smoking. It has created a concern that's worse. It's gone the other way and we really need to start curbing that.

As I said, the flavours entice the youth to smoke. In fact, 92 per cent of young people have said that's why they vape, because they like the flavours and I suspect the names of them and so on. Nine out of every 10, 92 per cent of young vapers, because these e-juices have different levels of nicotine and some have not, but 92 per cent of them use e-juice that contains nicotine.

My understanding – again not being a smoker – would be that you would start at a high level and taper down until you can come off the nicotine and you're cured from smoking. That's not what's happening here. Kids are smoking this,

they're not even considering looking at the nicotine content; they're looking at the flavour and the name and they're smoking. Two-thirds of young people who use vapes use the highest concentration of nicotine available; two-thirds, that's 66 per cent of our kids who are vaping are using the highest concentrations of nicotine.

I'll applaud government across the way in their budget on an item where they talked about attaching a 20 per cent tax to vaping products and also increasing the tax on tobacco and cigarettes. I understand it's a starting point and it's something we really need to be looking at even harder than that, because another reason why our youth are vaping is because it's affordable. It's not near as expensive as a pack of cigarette and not nearly as appealing.

In Canada, cigarettes are taxed at a much higher rate than vaping products. Cigarette taxes range from 60 per cent to 76 per cent of the purchase price across provinces, while vaping products are taxed at between 5 per cent and 38 per cent.

Now, I spoke about the little gathering around the campfire where everyone was vaping and sharing their vapours – I don't even know what to call them, anyway, their little vaping sticks – but this is another concern. Here we are in a pandemic, can you imagine sitting around and passing around your vaping stick? That's certainly not doing a lot for keeping anything like a pandemic under control. So there are other things outside there.

I think the biggest issue here is we're doing quite well in curbing cigarette smoking and we come in with this fabulous new device that industry provides to us and, b'y, this is going to eliminate – eliminate – cigarette smoking and everything is going to be wonderful. But actually what's happening now is many, many of the young vapers are becoming smokers.

Over one-quarter of those who used to vape are now smoking, over one-third know someone who went from vaping to smoking. There are only 17 per cent – 17 per cent out there – who have actually taken on vaping as a way to quit smoking; 17 per cent took on this that was designed to help them quit smoking, but only 17 per cent took it on to quit smoking.

According to other recent Canadian research on vaping among youth, it skyrocketed by 112 per cent – 112 per cent – from 2017 to 2019 and vaping is clearly linked to lung injury and increased blood pressure.

If we are truly, truly concerned about the health of our communities, about the health of our youth – and it's been said in this House and I like the little phrase: wellness over illness. This is clearly an opportunity to come in with measures that will put wellness over illness.

I had the opportunity in my community – I've done it for many years; I've been active in sports. I coach a lot of youth in sports, and I can say out of all the youth I've coached over the years – because it becomes sort of a culture; peer pressure has a big part on it, too. If you hang around with someone who is vaping, the chance is, let me try that, and it moves on and on; whereas, if you're coaching kids and youth on fitness, then they tend to run with the same crowd as well.

I can honestly say, in the youth I've coached over the years in many sports, I don't think I've ever seen a vaping device, but you can go around coffee shops, corner stores and the like and it's just a haze. I remember when vaping first came in, you'd be stopped at a stoplight and a haze would be coming out of the car window. That cannot be healthy for people around it.

If we're putting this PMR forward, which I support, to deal with Health Canada concerns and putting it to the Social Services Committee – and I'm glad we have a time limit of March coming for this because I think the sooner the better. There are other things we can do. Like I said, the tax piece is one approach; moving the stuff behind the counters; raising the age limit for how they can be bought or who can buy them; eliminating the 15,000 flavours, because that's what's driving kids to avail of this.

What can we do to curb the use of vaping by youth, I think is a serious question. It is something we truly need to address sooner than later. I applaud the government on the PMR and I'm hopeful we'll get some clear answers as we move forward.

Thank you.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER (P. Parsons):** Thank you.

Any further speakers?

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

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, this private Member's resolution builds on healthy living commitments in *Budget 2020* and those of the Liberal government that outline concerns about harm caused by vaping and tobacco, particularly among our youth.

Madam Speaker, the prevalence of youth vaping has increased and vape products pose potential health risks for youth and can lead to nicotine addiction. For people who smoke, completely replacing cigarette smoking and vaping may reduce their exposure to harmful chemicals; however, it is not safe for youth to use any nicotine products, including cigarettes and vaping products.

Facts are important, Madam Speaker. While early studies demonstrated some potential benefits to e-cigarettes as a smoking cessation device, current research remains inconclusive and the body of evidence is rapidly growing and shifting.

Vaping is not harmless, Madam Speaker. Vaping can increase your exposure to harmful chemicals. Vaping can lead to nicotine addiction. The long-term consequences of vaping are unknown. It's rare, but defective vaping products, especially batteries, may catch fire or explode, leading to burns and injuries.

Data from a recent Health Canada survey showed that 23 per cent of students in Grades 7 to 12 have tried an electronic cigarette. Vaping devices may also be used for other substances, like cannabis. Vaping products can be difficult to recognize. Devices come in a variety of shapes and sizes, and some resemble a USB flash drive. Liquids can have high levels of nicotine and come in a variety of flavours. Vaping may not leave a lingering identifiable smell.



Then there are add-ons, like the vinyl wraps that can also make these items harder to recognize, marketing to our teens. Vaping products have many names, such as e-cigarettes, vape pens, vapes, mods, tanks, e-hookahs, and the list goes on. They may also be known by various brand names.

Teens have indicated that it's easy for them to get their hands on vape products. Newfoundland and Labrador, along with PEI, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, New Brunswick and Ontario have a minimum age for vaping set at 19 years old. However, even though the act prohibits these products to be sold or given to youth, many of us have seen youth that appeared younger than 19 years old vaping. Vaping devices and liquids are readily available to buy on the Internet and at local retailers.

Madam Speaker, nicotine is a highly-addictive chemical. Youth are especially susceptible to its negative effects, as it can alter their brain development and can affect memory and concentration. It can also lead to addiction and physical dependence. Children and youth may become dependent on nicotine more rapidly than adults.

Although not all vaping products contain nicotine, the majority of them do. The level of nicotine can vary widely. Some vaping liquids have low levels, but many have levels of nicotine similar or higher than a typical cigarette. By reducing the rates of youth vaping, we are working together to ensure that their brains develop properly; they are knowingly exposed to potential harmful chemicals and that the opportunity to develop addictions to drugs like nicotine is not there.

Madam Speaker, today we are asking that this hon. House refer the following reference question to the Social Services Committee for immediate action and report back with recommendations by March 31, 2021: What can be done to reduce the prevalence of youth vaping?

As much of the interaction around this particular issue occurs at home, government and community organizations should continue with awareness campaigns directed at youth and their parents, caregivers and older siblings. Some of

these messages include how you can start by setting a positive example by not smoking or vaping, but if you use tobacco or vaping products, be honest with your teen about the risks and any regrets, difficulties and health effects resulting from your experience. Talk with your teen about when and why you started to smoke and vape and explain how you thought it would make you feel and how it is affecting your health.

Madam Speaker, vaping is not for youth and non-smokers, so start the conversation to help prevent it. We need to educate ourselves, educate the public and educate our children. We need to find the right moment to discuss this. We need to take advantage of situations where you can talk about vaping. It doesn't have to be formal. For example, when passing by a group of teenagers who are vaping, take that opportunity to have a good conversation with your teen about it. Discuss the facts and correct any misconceptions right there and then on the spot.

You have to be patient and you have to be ready to listen. Avoid criticism and encourage an open dialogue. Remember, your goal is to have a meaningful conversation, not to give a lecture. You need to thank your teen for being honest with you if they tell you that they have tried vaping or do vape regularly, then offer to share some information about the risks of vaping and discuss the benefits of being smoke-free and vape-free.

If you find out that your teen is vaping, go get support. Ask your health care provider to talk with you and your teen about the risks of vaping and ways to be smoke- and vape-free. Consider suggesting that your teen talk with other trusted adults, such as relatives, teachers, faith leaders, coaches or counsellors whom you know are aware of the risks of vaping. Often, teenagers don't want to talk to their parents, and these supportive adults can help reinforce the parent's message.

Keep the conversation about vaping going; don't let the conversation die. Odds are you will probably need to talk about the subject many times and in many different places. Strike up a conversation again whenever you have some time together. You will also find that as your

teen grows, your conversations about vaping will change and reflect their growing maturity, intellectual abilities and the pressures they face.

While I just listed some of the things that can be done today in terms of awareness and education with organizations like the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco and vaping, we know based on statistics and studies that vaping is harmful and prevalent among our youth and that more needs to be done. In *Budget 2020*, our government included more than \$1.7 million to prevent and reduce tobacco and vaping use, including community-based and school initiatives and public education using the type of messages I just described.

Madam Speaker, I hope that all hon. Members here today will support this private Member's motion.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

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

**MR. PARDY:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

In my years in education and conducting staff members' professional development, I'd often say we avoid redundancy. Try not to repeat what the previous speaker said to make sure that we garnish and secure as much time as we can to be on the topic. So I'll try my best not to duplicate what the speakers have said previously.

Speaking from an education background, it's a pleasure to talk about vaping this afternoon. Maybe I can come up with a few thoughts in advance of the Social Services Committee from a school perspective.

My colleague from Topsail - Paradise talks about wellness over illness. Our mandate in school was to maximize student achievement. That was our mandate, but our primary goal had to be the wellness of the children that we serve. If we have 60,000 children in our schools, roughly, our goal has to be on the wellness and looking after those children to make sure they are at the top of their game in order to be able to

achieve academically, socially and the other domains. That's our goal.

I commend the PMR. My focus will be on the youth, which I think is what the essence of the PMR would be.

When I first got the position as administrator in Clarendville Middle School – my first tour of duty as an administrator. When I went to the school, they had an issue where children would be leaving the school. On the property or adjacent to the property they would huddle where they would smoke, much the same as my colleague would state. My other colleague from Placentia - St. Mary's referenced the small groups that were occurring and seen vaping – experiencing.

What we did as a school on that first assembly that we had with the students, we educated them on the ills of smoking. We also stated that what we would do on handling those that would be caught smoking is that our first default would be to notify the parents. What they did was they moved off school property. Keep in mind, at that point in time a lot of them we didn't know their names because it was still early in the mandate that we had.

We had a wooded area that was adjacent to the old school, before we had the new one, and there would be a group of us that would walk down to see if we could catch students that were smoking. If we did, we didn't raise our voices. We would return to contact the parents, each and every one, and tell them as to what we witnessed. Many of them were surprised that their child was smoking, but remember in the assembly we had informed them all, Madam Speaker, that we had their health and welfare at heart. Most of the students maybe now in the Clarendville area would look at it to say, well, I remember it because I was one of those. It was those occurrences where often the smoking stopped and that was all that was needed.

We'd have the guidance counsellor and teachers that would be working with them to make sure we had the message on the ills of smoking. I would say in the education system it's something we ought to do now, to make sure that we have it in the curriculum, and we look at staffing of schools to make sure what exactly the

mandate of the staff would be and some action plan as to what we do when we know that people are vaping on or around the school properties.

Keep in mind, we've had parents who were one hour outside the Clarendville area, or close to an hour, who would bus their children in. From the time they would arrive at the school at 8:20 in the morning to the time they would leave at 2:45, we took our position as being guardians of those students, and teachers and educators, very seriously. We had to provide care for them.

If you had a child that was smoking or vaping at school, it's quite conceivable they're not doing it in their own community but they're doing it in and around the school. I would say to you we have an obligation to make sure that once we take the guardianship of those children in local parentheses of the parents, we make sure that we have a good eye out for them.

Another thing I would say to you, and I would think my colleague from Exploits maybe very shocked to hear this, but we have a health curriculum in our school, an intermediate health curriculum that was designed and put into the system in 1993. I should correct that, it is the textbook of which the curriculum has suggested to use.

I taught intermediate health for years, and there were activities in there like: What do you think is going to happen when the calendar rolls around to 2000? What do you think is going to happen when it rolls? We're talking about curriculum that's 27 years of age that our students – the textbooks that supplement the curriculum are still in the system, then that's something we ought to be looking at in and around our Department of Education. When we look at intervening on this PMR, I would say one of the key players ought to be the Department of Education in resolving and interacting into this matter.

I asked one high school principal, and here is what he had stated in reply to me in relation to vaping: It has not been as big an issue inside the walls of our school this year, but with that being said it is still early and the weather has been very nice – I'm assuming that he means they may be outside. We still have a large number of

teenagers vaping and many of them are junior high. We need legislation that makes it more difficult for young people to obtain this stuff. In short, he states: This excuse for an industry needs much more stringent regulations.

As I stated, I didn't want to be redundant, and I think the two speakers previous to me spoke on that topic.

Another thing I would say, on Wednesday of last week we talked about the Health budget. We look at \$3.1 billion to service the health and well-being of the province's population. Every opportunity we get to curb the wellness and the lifestyle of our youth ought not to be missed. We're out now, us as legislators, we are reacting to an issue and a problem that we have in our youth – it's vaping. It's nice that we be proactive in how we tackle a lot of issues.

If we're looking at the wellness of our students, I stated Wednesday past, if we look at wellness in our school system – we allocate 6 per cent of our daily physical education to wellness, the physical wellness of our students. Alberta and BC have a large percentage of their schools with 10 per cent of their curriculum and their day, which would be on the wellness of our youth.

I would say that if we increase the wellness opportunities of our youth, we'll find that the outcomes fall in place and it'll work hand in hand to try to minimize the impact on the health care system going forward. I would say if the figures are correct that we have 23 per cent of our youth who have been exposed or periodically use vaping products, then we have some significant interventions in health care that will need to be made into the future as a result of this instance.

So while I look at March of next year, we'll have something to report back, I would think that it's very important that we would get to the vaping much sooner than later.

In my remaining time, I just want to tell a little short anecdote. Back in 2013, myself and the assistance principal were called to St. John's in the Department of Education for a session within the Department of Education. We travelled in and on the table was drug use in our schools. When we walked into that meeting at the

Department of Education, myself and then vice-principle Gerry Organ, we sat the end of the table, closest to the Deputy Minister who sat at the head of the table, because it was the only two seats left. When they started to go around the table, they started on the other side, and we were the last ones to speak, or I was the last one to speak.

As we went around the table with a lot of large schools and administrators talking about the drug use in their schools, and then it was smoking, it was drugs that were involved, it was rather shocking to hear about the issues they would have within the school system. These are the largest schools that would be in our province. It was shocking. When we got halfway around the table, Gerry Organ leaned over to me – and Gerry, if he's listening, will vouch for this – he said: Craig, when you speak, these people are going to say that you're lying, you are not telling the truth. Because we hadn't had one incident of drugs in our school system in the years that we were there, and one would say, well, what a coincidence that would be, what a coincidence that is.

But when I had a chance to speak, I talked about imagine a school system like this: One where everybody who wanted to play volleyball or play on a school team could; everyone who wanted to play could. If we went around the table of the schools that were there, they would have tryouts. You may have 30 kids tryout. They come two sessions and then all of a sudden you're down to 12 and the rest are finished, that's it. We've got one team and then the gym time becomes that one team.

It is pretty complex to make sure that the children that we have in our school system for the entire day, if they can be fully engaged in something meaningful in the day and even after school, then we have a greater chance of making sure that they don't slip away from us and go into experiment or tackle something that we think they ought not to be doing. So something as simple as that, that you would look at, they had a sense of belonging. After school they wouldn't be out gone somewhere, they would be on the gym floor with a meaningful engagement with one of those dedicated leaders and coaches, that my colleague had mentioned, and they would be engaged in school activities.

If we look around at our schools and say: Clarendville Middle had 340 students, they had 185 students participating in volleyball, playing in a meaningful volleyball tournaments, and if we look at another school that had 800 and they had two teams, then we don't need to be educators to look, Madam Speaker, and say that's a pretty big difference. Because the children were more active in one school than another school, it's a greater chance that they may not be subjected to the ills of which we need to curb and to initiate legislation on at this point in time.

We had an initiative here yesterday, the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, he had stated yesterday and read a Ministerial Statement and he talked about the importance of active living. I don't have time to quote him here now, but he discussed that and which I concurred and asked for a copy because I agree wholeheartedly.

I agree with us focusing on, not only increasing the recreation opportunities, but why don't we talk about in the Department of Education, increasing the activity of the children who are going to be partaking in these recreation activities? Engaging in the ones that are going to be our future ones in the health care system that we're going to be looking after, not only in Health, but even financially, and I would say to you that it is complex.

Let's focus at the root of the issue and make a difference there within the education system.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

I'll speak to this motion. It is certainly one that I would support. What can be done to reduce the prevalence of youth vaping in Newfoundland and Labrador? Part of what I'm saying here will be from my experience as an educator.

I'll start out with a story because my dad worked on the railway and I do remember – I'm old enough to remember a time when he smoked. I

think my mother was smoking, too. I do remember that and then they quit. As I understand it, most people quit cold turkey.

Now, my father, though, worked on the trains, but what I do remember that he took up with a great vengeance was the chewing of tobacco. Apparently, not as harmful as smoking cigarettes unless you happen to be sitting in the backseat with the window open and dad is chewing tobacco in the front. I can't say I inhaled it but I did get a good taste of it every now and again.

He chewed it for many years because, if nothing else, on the train it was a way to keep the face warm while you're out on the train, that's what it came down to, that was one of the main reasons.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. J. DINN:** That's only a sibling or a son or a daughter of a trainman could tell. It also coincided with the wintertime when he would let his beard grow because it would shield his face from the cold. I'm sure he got his fix of nicotine. I would say that maybe you could say chewing tobacco was healthier. Not necessarily so. It has a health effect.

My second year of teaching, I was in Trepassey and just about everyone on the staff chewed tobacco. They did not smoke in the staff room. They chewed tobacco. There were some teachers there who were particularly grossed out by it. Not me because I had witnessed it, I had grown up with it. Nevertheless, it's interesting over the years just how – and students chewed tobacco. They didn't smoke; they chewed tobacco, the less harmful. That's way, way back in 1982.

Obviously, it's probably the lesser of two evils. Certainly anyone chewing tobacco, I didn't have to worry about inhaling it unless, like I said, I was in the back seat.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I can't hear the speaker.

**MR. J. DINN:** I'll have to start using my teacher voice, Madam Speaker.

Here's a thought. Let's cut to the chase because it's interesting, e-cigarettes have been touted as the less harmful method or the way to get people off, and they have become more than that. Part of it is definitely because of the flavour.

Here's a simple thing. I'd think, why wait for a report. I think we need to have a full report on this, to do a study and figure out where we need to go, but why not start right now with banning flavours. Other provinces have done it. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. At least put a temporary ban until we have the full-fledged report so that we can stop young people from getting into it. It is a gateway into this activity.

You can tell the vapers. They're the ones that have clouds of it coming out of the cars and everything else. It's a simple way, pause the use of flavours in this province until such time as we have more concrete action. Nova Scotia, as I understand it, has done it. Ontario has banned it in any stores where a youth would come into it. Start with that, and then let's start looking at other measures that come with it, whether that's taxation, whether that has to do with – I'll get into this about a public awareness campaign and so on and so forth.

We know there are problems with e-cigarettes: popcorn lung, for example, the destruction of the alveoli. It's going to have a long-term effect. I will look at this, we pay now or we pay later. So we put the measures in place to reduce this immediately or we're going to be paying for it in health care costs and other costs down the road.

As I said, most people quit cold turkey. I'm not sure about the vapers vaping. Otherwise we're going to be put in a situation somewhere down the road where we're going to be suing vaping companies like we did with tobacco and the companies that manufactured opioids. Get ahead of this. Why wait until we have a health emergency on our hands.

Now, like my colleague from Bonavista, I come from an education background. I can tell you, part of supervision in a high school had to do with patrolling who was smoking on the school grounds. It was a source of unending conflict. Just get off the school grounds. I came to the point, why not just build them a shelter and let

go out there because they're old enough to make the decision. But as a teacher, you can't do that.

I will tell you this that many school counsellors I have spoken to, and certainly in my role as NLTA president – and my colleague from Bonavista can probably back this up. Many school counsellors would tell me that underlying just about every addiction is a mental health issue. In other words, the addiction is the person's way of dealing with a mental health issue, whether it's ADHD, whether it's stress and anxiety, depression, you name it.

When I think about the number of students I taught who had a lot of these issues, yes, they had addictions, whether it was alcohol, smoking and down the line. So part of dealing with this problem is going to have to be putting – and I'm going to come back to this – about putting resources into the school if you want it because – and I'll come back to this in a minute – it can't be all on the school. There are only so many teachers to do supervision.

I have some great stories about catching students who were – the best one is students who were smoking up outside. I said – they walked away from me, they had their hoodies up. I didn't know who they were. I said, come back here. And to my complete amazement they turned around and came back. As far as I was concerned, they were – they didn't have the sense at that time, if they had kept walking away they would not have been in trouble after that. They couldn't understand, though, why I was asking them if they wanted a bag of chips or anything like that at this point in time, if they were feeling hungry. Nevertheless, those are some of the humorous asides.

I can tell you another case where a police dog was in a school, not for any reason other than maybe it was a presentation. That day we uncovered the biggest cache of marijuana in the school. I have to give the student some credit because he was, indeed, an entrepreneur, ahead of his time, but it underlies a serious problem here. That in the school system there's only so much that teachers' supervision can do. It's something bigger.

It can't just be the school. I do believe in this: It takes a community, a village to raise a child. It's

about a community. It's the school. Often the children, when they first appear in front of a teacher, it's the teacher who's going to see a lot of the issues that they're dealing with. Often the children who have issues are also children who are under the care of the health system, social services and sometimes the justice system.

Let's talk about the case of one teacher in a school I know where they're doing time and they brought in the analog clocks. This young fellow, he's only in primary, brought in a mantle clock. Of course, inside was taped something along the lines of \$50,000 on the inside of the clock. Obviously, the child took care of getting himself ready that morning, brought it into the school. Needless to say, police were involved in the process somewhere along the line. Those are humorous anecdotes that only a teacher can tell, but there are issues outside the school that must be addressed.

You're going to have to find a way to bring in school nurses. I've heard it from school nurses, their workload has increased. The numbers of public health nurses have decreased and they just don't have the time to deal with school-related issues. They need to be brought in there. I do believe you also need to have it set-up so that you have police officers stationed in the school, not for enforcement but for public relations. I know in some schools that's exactly what they have. It's the community. It's sort of like the officer – I forget her name at the moment – who's going around with the trauma dog, the therapy dog.

I think in that way, when you start bringing people into the schools from outside, you start developing trust. Again, if indeed it takes a village to raise a child, then you put the resources there in the school in addition to. Occupational therapists: I think Newfoundland is probably the only jurisdiction in the country that does not have occupational therapists within the school system.

There are ways, I think, Madam Speaker, that this can be dealt with. I will tell you from school counsellors, the biggest challenge they face is having a two-way conversation with the other government jurisdictions, the other government agencies. As one counsellor put it to me: Information goes out from the school but

nothing comes back to the school as to how the school can help, sometimes. That's frustrating to a school counsellor, especially who is doing his or her level best to help the student in front of that counsellor.

I will say this, my colleague and fellow teacher as well – because we still think of ourselves as teachers even though we're retired from the profession – talked about recreation. Well, I can tell you, there needs to be – if we're going to start looking at this – more of an emphasis on healthy living. It can't be just STEM, but somehow we're going to have to find a way to put healthy living into this, healthy choices.

Phys. ed. now, or health is a vast cry from when I was in high school, it's broader. Most of the focus in high school, at that time, was team sports, and as my brother and colleague for Paradise would say, I didn't really excel in that area. I'll say that before he gets a chance to say it.

**MR. P. DINN:** So true.

**MR. J. DINN:** So true, there you go.

I will say this, it's about healthy alternatives; it's about healthy choices. Basically, in the end, some students may never use trigonometry or calculus, but I can tell you one thing, the ability to cook a healthy meal, that's going to come in handy later on. Developing healthy lifestyles, that's going to be useful down the road; it's going to save government a lot of money in long-term health care costs, legal costs, you name it.

Deal with the issues there, give the schools the resources it needs. I'm not just talking about put the money in or give them the technology, but bring in the other agencies. How do we bring them all in so that the school has a chance? The school is the focal point. I can tell you that right now, the school is the focal point. How do you bring the community together so that you can help the children that are there, help the teachers, help the school help those children and help the parents?

One other thing, a public-awareness campaign, I remember reading years ago that the smoking rates among male youth had declined

significantly, but the smoking rates among young females had kept on growing. Why? Because a lot of the public-awareness campaigns were targeted to males. It worked but it also didn't target females and so the rates kept climbing. I don't think we can ever take our foot off the gas pedal on this, Madam Speaker, because it comes back in different forms.

I applaud this motion. First and foremost, let's do something immediate until we have a final report: Ban the use of flavours. Make it less desirable for young people to get into it. Eliminate that now. Other jurisdictions have done it. Then we'll see what comes out of it.

Secondly, just don't put something else, another light bulb on the Christmas tree for schools, or another thing on the plate without taking something off or giving schools another plate or another Christmas tree. Whatever it is, put the resources there so the schools can do their jobs. Teachers have enough to do, administrators have enough to do in the schools, but give us the human resources we need.

If I had one other thing to say, start right now launching a public awareness campaign. Look what other jurisdictions have done and then we can worry about tailoring our own. Those would be the three things: ban flavours, support the schools with human resources from the other agencies and start a public awareness campaign right now.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. Minister of Health and Community Services.

**MR. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

It's a pleasure to sit and speak to this motion, which in some ways, really, you could almost be dismissive and say it's a no-brainer. Taking the Member for Bonavista's comments about not wanting to repeat what everybody else has, coming as third speaker it really doesn't leave

me an awful lot to go at, quite frankly, but I'll make a stab at it.

We are dealing essentially with a process of getting people addicted to nicotine. If you look at this from a business or a commercial point of view, tobacco is struggling to keep its market. The biggest source of nicotine and nicotine salts are the big tobacco companies and they are doing what any business would do in the free market, they are trying to enlarge their market.

One of the challenges we have is that it is said that 11 cigarettes is what it takes to become addicted. I've heard different figures but that's kind of an average that kind of stuck with me over the years. It may be an antidote, it may be based on some literature I looked at when I was a medical student, I honestly can't remember now, but the facts of the case are, it is one of the most addictive substances on the planet.

People talk about cocaine and heroin, but you have to work fairly hard at those to actually get addicted. Nicotine is way easier and we have a challenge around how to manage that. If you look at it from a public health/health perspective the management of addictions really falls under four pillars based around the whole thesis of harm reduction.

Usually in a framework of an absence of blame, this is a chemical switch that goes on inside one's brain. If you really want a very good description for people who don't mind reading but really don't have an awful lot of physiology or anatomical knowledge, Dr. Gabor Maté's book is a really good place to start because it does actually go into some depth about how the switches in your brain change when you become addicted.

Whilst he is talking in a social way about Opioids, he actually references his own addiction to buying classical music CDs, which apparently is becoming an embarrassment to his family.

I think from that point of view, the four pillars of harm reduction are essentially: education, treatment, legislation and enforcement. I think under each of those rubrics I could make a few comments here today and I'll pick up on, if you like, the challenge in some respects from the

Member for St. John's Centre about not waiting until March of next year, with which I agree, wholeheartedly.

The principle comment I have here is that there is absolutely no merit at all to vaping nicotine, with one exception and that is within the confines of a structured clinical program to take someone off cigarettes. That's the only merit that you can see to actually having nicotine vape available.

The youth are vulnerable and I don't think that they realize quite how they are being manipulated by peer pressure, but if you want to go and look at the vaping machines, for example, that you see, they are all cool looking little devices. They fit in your pocket. For the girls, they have really feminine colours. They have glitter and gold and pink and this kind of stuff and there are a whole range to match your outfits. For the fellas, there are these big, chunky macho kind of things that look like they've fallen off a Hummer that drove by 10 minutes ago. They are pitched to do a job, which is to make people pick them up and use them.

What do you put in them? Well, JUUL was the trigger, I think, for a lot of this and has been demonized as kind of the archetype company for doing this, but it's not the only one. It basically took nicotine salt, which was something big tobacco had lying on its shelves and couldn't really figure what to do with, and they found a way to use it.

What they have done with vapes is what they did with tobacco, which has been addressed when the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's was with Service NL, in terms of flavoured cigarettes and these kind of things. They put flavours in. They put the bubble gum in. They put the strawberry, the cherry lip gloss kind of thing, because that's what they do. These are not designed to appeal to adults. These are designed to appeal to 11- and 12-year-olds. That's who they have their sights, Madam Speaker. It is not you or I. We're the wrong generation. They're looking for a lifetime of addiction here, so you get them young and you keep them paying. That's how you make your money.

Schools; I don't have the experience my colleagues over the way have voiced, but I do



know that in some of the schools in my own district, the USB charging ports on school computers have actually been blocked off, effectively denying access. Because these things would have enough charge to have a couple of puffs at recess and maybe at lunchtime, but now with no school buses during the day, they have to recharge at some point. So the school have tried to deny access to that.

Again, looking at the harm-reduction point of view and looking at what we're doing around education, there is an awareness campaign. Myself and the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse aux Clair in her previous portfolio actually went to the Fluvarium before COVID and announced a second tranche of money for the Alliance for the Control of Tobacco which was specifically targeted with ads and social media that would appeal to and be visible to youth.

We took a rather broad definition of youth. We've taken it really from junior high right through to 24, 25. In the harm-reduction world and mental health world, we would look at youth as transition, 16 to 24, but we've kind of tacked this on for the purposes of that.

ACT have been very active in this realm, and this was the second tranche of money. Again, from an education point of view, there are kits there for people who are regularly interacting with youth. That was the second phase. It was designed for youth leaders, it was designed for youth mentors, it was designed for educators, but it was also geared up to the basketball coach or the volleyball coach.

ACT have been very pleased with that. Again, from a wellness point of view, that is certainly something we want to look at. Because as Members opposite have talked about on all sides of the House, if we get this right now then we save morbidity and mortality down the road later on because you don't have the 65-year-old nicotine addict.

As others have said, you really don't know what else is in that stuff. There is a condition called EVALI or it varies by name, which is essentially vaping-associated lung injury. That was associated with some entrepreneur making their own and using, I think, vitamin E as a thickening agent to deal with some of the heating issues that

you can get in these vapes. That came and went, but interestingly enough it did give a really frightening picture similar to an older condition called popcorn lung, which, for those of you who are interested, is associated with yet another inhalational lipid injury.

So we don't know what else is in there. They will argue that it's pure nicotine, and that's really bad because some of the stuff that's out there is incredibly concentrated. It is 60 milligrams a hit, which is three packets of 20 cigarettes in one go. You can smoke that in a modest period of time.

We have, through the RHAs, started a tracking process to see if we can identify youth presenting with nicotine poisoning. We have certainly seen no clear evidence of that yet, but to be honest, it's not a diagnosis that's quite easy to find, because it's not one that's actually terribly easy to make in the emergency department. They often present masked as something else, such as panic attacks, nausea, vomiting or uncontrolled sickness. For an emergency room doctor to try and make diagnosis, nicotine levels are actually a very difficult assay to get done. So we're working on that.

Again, in terms of the other piece around treatment, there is a role for vaping, for controlled concentrations of nicotine, in weaning people off cigarettes. Because we do know that for a heavy smoker, cigarettes are significantly worse compared with vaping of an acceptable level of nicotine in a medium that can be analyzed properly. It's risk reduction, not risk abolition. Certainly from a harm reduction point of view, the one piece I would discuss – which really doesn't apply to youth, it applies to people with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and this kind of thing, where there have been some benefits in that group.

That does not mean it is safe. What the media and the advertising from these companies says, it's the safer alternative. Then they somehow make that contraction into safe and then you give it to the 12-year-old and say it's safe. It is not safe for a 12-year-old or a 16-year-old or a 24-year-old or, I would argue, a 65-year-old who's never smoked. They should not be at it. It's not going to do them any good at all.

The other piece around harm reduction, the other pillars, would be around legislation and controlling its sale; controlling pricing models, for example, because that's both a legislative piece and also an enforcement piece. The enforcement piece is probably the hardest in some respects, because like any addiction you cannot police or enforce your way out of it. What your best bet is to stop people going in, in the first place.

I don't propose to utilize all my time, Madam Speaker. I have said what I wanted to and what I haven't said has really been echoed by others. We need to do this soon and we need to have a broader approach. I would certainly agree with all those here that we can't wait for that to be done and we should make some inroads.

What we're doing is going down the road that we marched down in the '60s with nicotine and we marched down in the '80s with OxyContin, Purdue and opiates. We've all ended up in court and we're all trying to sue each other or defend the indefensible, depending on which side you're on. I can see this going exactly down the same road. The only comment I would make – and, again, it doesn't really apply to youth – is that there is a role for this in a harm reduction role for adults who are addicted to cigarettes already.

With that, Madam Speaker, I would urge everyone to support in favour of this motion and I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

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

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

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

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Madam Speaker.

**MS. EVANS:** Madam Speaker.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** I am a woman.

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you.

I just realized I was going after Dr. Haggie, so I took out my notebook and my pen. That's a compliment.

Anyway, I just want to give my support to the private Member's resolution as well. When I started looking at this, preparing to speak, I was sort of alarmed by all the studies that are coming out. They talk about alarming risk for youth. So I think one of the things that we need to focus on is the effect that vaping does have on youth, because youth grow up to become our adults and become our senior citizens, so it's very, very important.

That's what's getting at the heart of the PMR: What can be done to curb vaping? Just looking at some of the studies, the Canadian Paediatric Surveillance Program suggests that ill effects of vaping and cigarettes continue to rise. The survey talks about new research, which is alarming, linking vaping to increased COVID infections, increased serious health illness, increased death rates. So, to me, that's alarming, because our youth are supposed to be healthy.

Just looking at our pandemic now with COVID, just looking at our youth, our youth are actually supposed to be low risk for COVID, but the impact of actually vaping can actually increase the risk of youth suffering severe medical complications from COVID. We have to look at making sure our youth don't grow up to be adults who have a lot of health problems.

The words, actually, from the studies for me, as a biologist, are alarming. It's scary. It really surprised me, because they talk about vaping-related injuries. When you look at the studies that show vaping-related injuries, one-third of the cases involve ongoing health problems. So if you have somebody that suffers injuries and you have ongoing health problems, that's going to be a problem for the person, their families and also for us – Canada and the province – for basically medical costs.

To me, I think that this private Member's resolution is very timely. I think we need to do everything we can to be proactive, to prevent harm and prevent addiction that actually will cost us a lot more in the future in terms of social, economic and, of course, medical.

One of the things that I also found alarming is that the health program problems are for children and youth. Those ones actually suffer respiratory problems and nicotine toxicity. For me, our youth are growing to become adults, so if they do suffer these injuries, it's really going to be detrimental. We, as responsible adults and as government, need to make sure that we look after this sooner than later.

Another thing I wanted to mention, too, was words like alarming. Not only am I alarmed for what the studies are saying, I'm alarmed at the fact that these studies are usually from large centres where there are actually pediatricians. Looking at Newfoundland and Labrador and other rural areas, we don't actually have a lot of pediatricians to actually collect this data, so the data actually may be underestimating the harm and the number of youth that are becoming seriously injured.

Also, too, we look at: How fast is this happening? If we don't get a handle on vaping – studies here show that vaping amongst Canadian teens has doubled in the last two years. That's quite alarming when you look at the study involved ages from 16 to 19 years of age. They are usually ones that can access money and actually are able to buy these vaping products. It's very, very important for us to try to address it.

Just looking at some of the results here. One question in the study was: Have you tried vaping in the last 30 days? Looking at the results for the question, in 2017, the answer was 8.4 per cent of the children said yes, as opposed to now, in 2019, the study had an increase of 17.8 per cent. That's quite alarming there. When you look at: Why is this doubling? Why are so many teens being taken up with it? A lot of it has to do with the fact that there's nicotine actually in these vaping products.

I can remember first when they came out on the scene, there was no nicotine. In Canada, you couldn't actually buy vaping products. My friends would always, actually, buy products when they were down in the States to get their nicotine. I think a few trips were made down there just to get nicotine vape. That showed the influence of nicotine on vaping.

Also, what previous speakers have talked about is the power of advertising, not only for our youth but for all adults. I think our focus really should be on youth – the power of advertising. We should have learned from what was revealed from the tobacco industry. When the investigations were done and the lawsuits were filed, because we had so many people that were dying from the consumption of cigarettes, the findings showed that the tobacco industry wasn't really on the up and up. They hid the detrimental effects of tobacco smoking and also, too, a lot of research went into advertising, as Dr. Haggie said, to be able to attract younger people to smoking.

If we're going to look at this PMR and try to actually find out what can be done to curb vaping, I think one of the things we need to approach is the advertising, because advertising really influences youth. We need to actually do what was done to the tobacco industry to, sort of, mitigate the detrimental effects on our youth, encouraging them to vape.

One of the things that I see when I look at this is we did the battles for cigarettes. The tobacco industry really, really over the years, like I said, did a successful job of getting people to smoke and then actually keep them smoking. Everybody here probably knows of people who had lung cancer, throat cancer, the cost on the medical system, but also the detrimental effects to families.

One of the things that I actually see myself, when I look back, and I was talking to somebody the other day even before this PMR was proposed, I said: I can see a huge correlation between the age of when somebody started to smoke cigarettes and the trouble for them to actually quit.

I look at my family, I look at my friends and the people that I know that started smoking at a really young age, struggled. I was very lucky; I was born into a family that had very few smokers. But some of the people that I knew really, really struggled and over the years, again and again, trying all kinds of products, the patch, the gum and different strategies on how to quit. You can trace them back to when they started smoking; they started smoking when they were 14, 15 or 16.

I actually believed, myself, and I'm sure there are studies that can support it, that when people are really young, I think nicotine actually interacts with the body quite differently than somebody who starts smoking at an older age. I think that interaction, whether it's blood chemistry or whether it impacts the brain, I think it really makes it difficult to quit smoking.

That's something that we need to make sure with the vaping, is that we don't allow our youth to become addicted to it. It really has a lot of detrimental effects, so we need to protect the next generation.

One of the people I'm speaking of was a relative of mine. She used to struggle with tobacco smoke. She started when she was quite young, I think at the age of 13. When I was in university, I used to save my money, hide my money so when she ran out of cigarettes – when we ran out of money, which was quite frequently, I could actually buy her cigarettes. Because she was a different person because of the addiction. She was like a little mini monster. That was the effects.

I'm going to tell you something now, she quit, I don't know how many times. My family member quit, I don't know how many times over the years, and she hid it from her husband. When she grew into an adult and got married, she hid it from her husband because she would quit and then she would relapse – backslay we call that home.

I think she was negatively impacted by smoking at a young age. When she finally quit – she actually looked after her mother-in-law who was dying of lung cancer and her mother-in-law smoked all her life. What her mother-in-law went through battling lung cancer was the thing that got her to quit. I think she was probably in her 40s, maybe. Yes, I think she was in her mid-40s then. I look at the battles; she started quitting when she was probably 16, trying to quit smoking, and then again in her early 20s, in her mid-20s and in her 30s, and it took having to nurse her dying mother-in-law. That was what motivated her to quit.

I think what we need to do is we need to make sure that we learn from the past. If you don't learn from the past you're going to repeat the

mistakes. So with us, we can't repeat the mistakes we had with tobacco smoke. All the medical issues, the health issues, the cost to our medical care, the cost to our families, the cost to our people.

With me, I'd like to say that we need to address vaping and we need to start with our youth. These studies didn't just include youth, there are children involved as well. Dr. Haggie talked about packaging. Some of my friends talked about the advertising, making it attractive. Another thing, too, is with advertising, making it cool. That's the same thing that was done with cigarette smoking. I remember when I was growing up the nicest looking packages you had with the cigarettes, because I used to go down to the store and buy them for my relatives.

The thing about it is we need to ensure that something is done now because we can't afford to have people getting sick. We can't afford youth growing up to be unhealthy adults, unhealthy seniors. Our medical system can't support it and it's too detrimental to our families. We need to make sure that we're protecting people.

I like some of Dr. Haggie's quotes. I shouldn't be praising him up too much; I think he's over there in the House. He talks about getting them young and keeping them paying. The tobacco industry has now infiltrated the vaping industry in the last few years, and that's the same strategy. I'm not going to say any more of his quotes but they're pretty cool. I have them written down here.

Another issue is the flavouring. I have all these studies here that were mentioned by my co-workers.

I just want to say that this is not harmless. At the beginning with vaping it was actually told to the Canadian public that this was a helpful thing, a healthy thing to get you off cigarette smoking, but what the studies show is that some people have gotten off cigarette smoking but they're still continuing to vape. With vaping comes medical issues, come health issues, come social issues. So we need to make sure we stop this. All I can say is we need to learn from the past, what we went through with the tobacco industry

and how underhanded they were. We have to make sure that's not allowed to be repeated.

I'm just going through all my notes to make sure that I didn't miss anything. There were a couple of points in here that I really wanted to make and I have 29 seconds. Anyway, I think I covered it all, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER (Reid):** The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

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

I, too, am pleased to be here today to express my support for this private Member's resolution in order to address the prevalence of youth vaping. Most Canadians who use tobacco start by age 18, and many go on to become lifetime smokers. This impacts their health and costs to the health care system. Preventing youth from starting to smoke or vape is one of the most effective means of decreasing tobacco use in Canada.

E-cigarettes were first introduced in Canada in the mid-2000s and marketed as an alternative to smoking combustible tobacco. While not an approved smoking-cessation aid, these products grew as a potential way to reduce health risks for existing smokers and assist with cutting back or quitting. However, Mr. Speaker, vaping products are harmful.

E-cigarettes can contain high levels of nicotine. This makes vaping extremely addictive and is even more concerning for the teens who are already more susceptible to addiction than adults because their brains are still developing. Vaping products also emit an aerosol that contains potentially harmful chemicals. The inhalation of these emissions into the lungs may have a negative impact on health, particularly for youth.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very concerned that there has been a rapid increase in the number of youth vaping in recent years. The latest evidence in Canada indicates the overall increase in the rate of vaping has been driven almost entirely by youth and young adults. In fact, data from the 2018-2019 Canadian Student Tobacco, Alcohol

and Drugs Survey indicates the prevalence of vaping has doubled among Grades 7 to 12 students, compared to the previous survey in 2016-2017.

Mr. Speaker, vaping is more prevalent among younger Canadians and they are more likely to vape for recreational purposes. Youth report they vape because they wanted to try it, and often these products are designed to appeal to them. In contrast, older users are more likely to report vaping in an effort to reduce or quit smoking. I'm also very concerned that vaping among youth in this province is higher than the national average. Youth are being exposed to vaping product-related risks, including those related to nicotine exposure, which can result in a dependence on nicotine and an increased risk of tobacco use.

Mr. Speaker, our government is troubled by the harm caused by vaping and tobacco, particularly among youth. Smoking and vaping are significant public health concerns with long-term impacts on our health care system. In 2016, we enacted the *Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act* and regulations, which regulated vapour products in the same manner as tobacco products. The approach taken tried to balance the need to protect youth from vaping while allowing adults access to the product to help them quit smoking. This approach, Mr. Speaker, at that time, was consistent throughout the country.

Most recently, *Budget 2020* includes a 20 per cent tax that my hon. colleagues have been talking about today; a 20 per cent tax on vaping products; a 5 cent increase per cigarette; an additional 10 cents per gram on fine cut tobacco; and more than \$1.7 million to prevent and reduce tobacco and vaping use. This approach includes community based and school initiatives as well as public education and cessation supports.

The goal, Mr. Speaker, of these initiatives is to curb usage and reach people, especially young people, before they start to vape and smoke. Less vaping and smoking supports healthier lifestyles and will help avoid future demands on the health care system.

Mr. Speaker, this private Member's resolution aims to reduce the prevalence of youth vaping. It is absolutely essential that we protect young people from potential public health harms. They are our future and we need them to be healthy to lead us in the years and decades to come. This motion will ensure we work together for the people of the province by developing recommendations to reduce the prevalence of youth vaping. This represents a valuable opportunity to engage with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to create healthier communities and decrease long-term health care costs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. BROWN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the opportunity to speak about this. I know I'm more in the demographic of people who are currently vaping right now. I know I am a bit younger and –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. BROWN:** Yeah, I know. It's rough. But just to speak –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. BROWN:** Yeah, no worries.

Just to speak on it, though, honestly, I actually have friends that vape. I don't know why. I question it, I know one of them has never touched a cigarette in their life, but they now are addicted to vaping. It's really interesting, because I don't see the appeal of it in any shape or form, but it's targeting media.

I want to touch on the fact that a lot of this media that there is, it's not conventional media; it's not on television or on the radio or in print; it's social media and streaming services. You could just go on YouTube and type Vape Nation or vaping competition or vaping (inaudible) and there are people who are sponsored by these vape companies to try to do these crazy

creations with their vape clouds and talk about the technology that's in their vaping devices.

It is disturbing that none of this is regulated. This is work around by these vaping companies to promote the audience and it's because the demographic that they're going for, which is a little younger than me and down that way, but that's the thing, every single person that is interested in vaping, spends the majority of time on their cellphones and that's where they go. They're on YouTube, Twitch, Twitter, all these kind of places to find these mediums because they want to see these Internet personalities, what they're doing today, what they're going to do tomorrow. That's the work around that these industries are using; it's using social media to target youth and that is the real disturbing part of it all.

It is because these are really not so much regulated advertising domains; these individuals don't have to publicly say that they're sponsored by X, Y and Z company. Obviously, they have their brand that they use and it's pretty blatant to us. Maybe to a 12- to 14- to 16-year-old, it's subconscious. They just don't realize it. Oh, my favourite personality uses this so I'm going to go purchase that. That is the dangers of advertising and targeting youth audiences because those individuals, the youth, they don't have the skill set yet to make the distinction of: I'm being targeted by an advertising company. That's where we do have laws in this country about targeting but sometimes they escape when it comes to the world of the grey areas of social media and those large conglomerates of streaming services.

Like my colleague said, all my colleagues have said, we have to get to a place where we can educate our youth and find different ways to engage with them about this. We have to make sure that they understand. I don't know if we even started to get an act to start advertising on YouTube in this province to say: Are you sure what you're watching is in your benefit? Make sure that they understand the health risks of these products.

A cigarette is a cigarette, it's already rolled, you purchase it, that's it, but when it comes to vape, these youth are actually having to mix everything themselves and everything like that,

so there's a lot of danger in that, too. It's a world that I know we don't understand, but I guess as society progresses and technology, other factors also progress in technology in ways that they can get a captive audience. That's what it is, once you're addicted, you're a captive audience. They got you until you figure out a way to get out of it. With technology come the negatives and the more captive audiences.

I don't want to take up too much time of the House for this. I'm sure that other people want to speak to this. Social media and advertising and these grey areas of streaming services and these Internet personalities, questionably where they are actually sponsored by to push these products, this is something we really need to take a serious look at, Mr. Speaker.

We also really need to take a look at how do we, as a government and as a society, make sure that these practices and these forms of advertising and stuff for the youth, are controlled or let the youth know that what they're doing and the choices that they're making right now have a long-lasting impact.

I'm sure when they pick up the device and they think it's cool. They all think it's great and they want to imitate their favourite Internet personality. They don't realize that, yeah, it's fine now but the long-term health consequences down the road is (inaudible), because right now it's there, but as age goes and the continuation, that's when the health effects are there. You're fine in the now but you're going to pay for in the later.

I don't want to take up too much time, but the message to the youth, Mr. Speaker, is that they really need to pay attention to who's advertising to them, what are they watching and make sure that they talk to somebody about the choices that they're making. Because we've all made mistakes, we've all done something in our youth that maybe later down the road we kind of regret and we want to make sure that they don't make the same folly that we all made, like chewing tobacco then is now the vaping of today. So these are the things that we all have to take into serious consideration.

There's always that push from a big company that wants to create a captive audience. We need

to make sure that we give the tools to the youth to know that we've made mistakes but we don't want them to make the same mistakes that we did.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Seeing no further speakers, I'm going to call on the Member for Lake Melville to close the debate.

**MR. TRIMPER:** All right, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I thank my colleagues. They've done as we asked of them in this PMR, to roll up their sleeves and get to work with some good ideas. We certainly took lots of notes and thank goodness for *Hansard* because there were many ideas. I feel that what we really need to do now is to digest this down and then I look forward to bringing this to the Social Services Committee for further deliberation and just see exactly what other moves we can make.

I would like to thank – and let's recognize them for the record – the Members for Topsail - Paradise; for Placentia West - Bellevue; for Bonavista; St. John's Centre; Gander, who promised me he was going to speak for five minutes, he almost used up his entire time, Mr. Speaker, but we let him go; Torngat Mountains; Baie Verte - Green Bay; and Labrador West. Some interesting viewpoints and certainly a lot of regular themes. I heard things like urgency. I heard the need to do more. I know that for many this was a topic that came at them only with the notice when I read this motion on Monday, so they didn't have a lot of time to prepare.

What I'm getting to, and my point is that I would invite you to go to the Newfoundland and Labrador Alliance for the Control of Tobacco. I indicated it in my remarks but you will see in there a variety of initiatives which reflect – much of what I've just heard you say over the last two hours, they've actually started. The timing for this couldn't be much better.

I would invite you to view the news on, I think, either of the networks this evening; I've been seeing them on television just the last few days.

They've started a campaign on awareness. They've started to prepare packages to go into the schools. As the Member for St. John's Centre very eloquently said, it's about the school, what goes on inside the school and what goes on around the school.

There is a package now that has been prepared. It's in the process, at least, of being distributed. I feel it will be very helpful. I feel there are a lot of good initiatives there, but perhaps we can take a look at some of the other jurisdictions. I think several of the Members spoke to that, moves by other provinces and territories and what they're doing. By the way, what our colleagues at the federal government are doing, because Health Canada is expressing great concerns. I feel we could probably reach out to them and say maybe we could use a little bit more strength in some of the legislation that they are bringing forward.

I wanted to take a second just to reintroduce this House of Assembly to this very impressive young lady today, Julia McCarthy. As I said, I met her on March 12. We reached out to her Monday afternoon. She and her mother were here for a couple of hours earlier today and we brought them onto the floor.

There's so much that's exciting about seeing this young lady grab a very important policy question and take it forward in a science fair. I gave her top marks, by the way, when I evaluated her booth in March. There were many good presentations but hers, of course, caught my mind and caught my eye because of the nature of the topic, and the concern that she has for so many of the youth around her and for what's going to happen as she starts to – she's in Grade 8 now, and as she works her way through junior high and on into senior high, the increasing attraction of vaping.

So many of my colleagues have just spoken about the products themselves, the strategy of keeping the consumption of nicotine uppermost in the industry of the tobacco folks. Yes, it's tough on them, but if you look at the consequences of so much of what we learned about, first of all, smoking and then about opioids and what we are starting to learn more and more about vaping. The consequences over the long term for generations to come are going to be very serious. I'm pleased to see that in our

budget this year we have announced substantial dollars to address the whole issue of vaping and to see what we can do to curtail it as much as possible.

As the Minister of Health and Community Services indicated, he does see one merit in it in terms of a structured, clinical strategy for helping people who really are struggling to get off cigarette smoking. There's certainly merit in that, but that was the extent of his endorsement. Unfortunately, though, it is now very much a part of our society and we really need to see what we can do to curtail this.

Mr. Speaker, my next steps, as I say, will be to review *Hansard*. I'm going to go through; I'm going to make a list. I will be speaking with the Office of the Clerk and talking about how and when we can convene a meeting of the Social Services sector. They're very busy and I know we're all busy, but I did hear a lot about urgency today, so striking the balances of remaining sitting days and so on. We have a target of March 31, 2021, but I think I heard very clearly that we want to get going on that sooner than later. I look forward to doing that.

I'm also going to be reaching out to ACT and to Ms. McCarthy as she expressed her interest in continuing on with this crusade. I look forward to hearing from her, ACT and others across the province and, indeed, around the country.

I don't want to end on a negative point, but I remind people that we did catch the attention of the vaping industry. The lobbyists approached both myself and the researchers involved in this in the last two days. It's been polite, somewhat aggressive, but they're pushing their messages. I think it's important that we recognize that, that there's a stake there. We also need to realize that it's the stake of the health of the youth of our province that's very much uppermost in my thoughts and our priority and we're going to take good care of that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I'm going to call the question now.



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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Given the hour of the day and pursuant to our Standing Orders, this House now stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 o'clock.