



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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Volume L

FIRST SESSION

Number 37

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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Wednesday

March 16, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Are the House Leaders ready?

Admit strangers.

Order, please!

### Government Business

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 11.

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

**J. HOGAN:** That's Motion 10, isn't it?

**S. CROCKER:** My apologies, Mr. Speaker, I meant to call Motion 10, not Motion 11.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, Government House Leader.

I want to speak to the report that was tabled yesterday from the Standing Orders Committee.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I need a mover and a seconder.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

**J. HOGAN:** I move.

**SPEAKER:** And a seconder, please.

**J. HOGAN:** Seconded by the Government House Leader.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Sorry, we're all – well, I shouldn't say we're all a little bit rusty; I'm a little bit rusty from the break. I'm not going to blame everybody here.

I'll try it again. This is take three. Three strikes I'm out, though.

I want to thank all the Members of the Standing Orders Committee and the House of Assembly staff that worked together to produce this report. I must say it was a great process. We started with a long list of items, Speaker, and shortened the list to the Committee's top priorities. Then we had input on options for each priority from the House of Assembly staff. We debated the pros and cons over a series of meetings, then came to decisions, which is what you see in the report today.

I'll note that the debate was very thoughtful and led to the Committee unanimously supporting each of the items you see here in the report. I want to note that the report, the decisions and the conclusions are in line with other jurisdictions throughout Canada.

The report has four recommendations. Two of which are to amend the Standing Orders, and I'll speak about those first. The first amendment is to Standing Order 65 as it relates to private Members' resolutions. What the Committee has recommended is two-fold. First, it will reduce the amount of speaking time for a Member from 15 minutes to 10 minutes. The benefit of this should be obvious. Because each PMR is limited in time, this amendment will allow more Members to speak to each PMR. This, of course, will lead to a broader range of debate and for more constituents in this province to have their voice heard through their Member.

Second, it will allow the Speaker to make an advance ruling on an amendment to a PMR. This will also allow for more time to be spent in debate because the House will not have to recess for the Speaker to determine if an amendment is an order or not.

The second amendment is to Standing Order 25. All this does is codify the amount of time a minister can speak during a minister's statement, as well as the speaking time for a Member of the Official Opposition and for the Third Party to

respond. The time will now be set, as opposed to the Speaker having to make a determination of the Opposition and Third Party Members after the minister has spoken and his or her time calculated. It gives more certainty to all Members speaking under Standing Order 25. I note the prescribed time limits are very much in line with the average time limits during the last session of the House.

The third recommendation is that the Speaker enforce Standing Order 48 at all times. Currently, Members have to be relevant to bills when speaking, but, historically, for an unknown reason, this didn't apply to money bills. The Committee decided that the Standing Order should be enforced as written. Therefore, when any Member speaks, their comments must be relevant and not extraneous.

I want to stress this does not reduce the amount of time a Member can speak. All the Committee is asking is that Members speak to what is relevant. Speak about the issue that is before the House. Essentially, do the job we are elected to do as legislators.

I cannot, for the life of me, see why anyone would oppose this. They would be saying they do not want to be relevant in the House of Assembly.

Finally, the fourth recommendation is to defer votes on Division. This will allow Members to ensure they are available for a vote. This is not a permanent change. It is a provisional change in the event we have a COVID situation in the House where a Member may not be available, immediately, to vote. However, while it is temporary, we may find that this is a family-friendly amendment, which we might make permanent at a later date. It will not result in losing any time of debate because any debate that is ongoing will resume after the deferred vote takes place.

Again, I want to thank all Members of the Committee and the House staff for their collective efforts on this report. I think this brings focus and structure to our work here in the House, which will allow us, ultimately, to be more productive for our constituents.

Thank you.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Speaker.

It is with great pleasure that I also comment on this important report that came through successful, I think, collaboration on the part of all of the Members. As the Minister of Justice and Public Safety has indicated, it certainly did not come from just idle chatter. There was very thoughtful debate with respect to these four recommendations.

I think when you review the report you can see in the report the recommendations pretty much speak for themselves. The first recommendation was that the time would be reduced in debate from 15 minutes to 10 minutes. I think, again, that's a good recommendation because what it will do, it will allow more Members the opportunity to speak on issues and certainly that's why we are here, is it not, to provide free reign for people to have that opportunity to discuss important topics of the day.

As well, allowing for advanced ruling on amendments. That, again, is an important recommendation as well. I think that most people will agree that this is important because it will allow for more efficiency in the House of Assembly. If there is the opportunity for the staff and for the Speaker to have advance notice on amendments, then they will be able to lesson the amount of recesses and the delays that take place because of that. Again, that's certainly, in my view, is a positive recommendation.

The recommended amendments to Ministerial Statements, that as well is good. I think that will go a long way in increasing efficiency in the House of Assembly. I think we need to do that. We need to see more efficient debate, more opportunity for us to get at the real core issues that face us here in the House of Assembly.

Now, with respect to the issue and the recommendation with respect to the rule of relevancy. That, we took a lot of time in reviewing this important rule. The rule of relevancy in debate is important. It already exists in the *Standing Orders*. I think that is something that really needs to be made clear.

That rule of relevancy is in the *Standing Orders*. It's stipulated in Standing Order 48(2). That delineates the rule of relevancy for the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly. I think what's important there is that rule was placed there – I think it was adopted back in 1951 and it has been unchanged since then. It's there because of the importance of us keeping our debate relevant. Irrelevance and needless repetition is not necessarily a good thing.

Of course, we do know that we have to have latitude. There has to be latitude. I think the parliamentary practice that we've seen allows for that latitude in debate on bills and resolutions. There is a long-standing practice for wide-ranging debate on money bills and wide-ranging debate on Address in Reply and the budget debate. That is in place; there's no challenge to that. What is happening with respect to this resolution is that now the Standing Order that is on the books, which already exists, the Speaker will have the opportunity to enforce that. That I think is important.

We had considerable debate and discussion in Committee and one thing that was of utmost importance to me, as the representative for the Official Opposition on this Committee, is that there not be any restriction or limitation on freedom of speech. That would be unacceptable and we would not be able to support anything of that nature. So there is still that opportunity to have wide-ranging debate. It means that Members can speak of topics of their choosing when debating money bills, but, again, it is the discretion of the Speaker.

There is no limitation here but it does allow that latitude will continue so there is no fear that will be restricted in any way. As far as that goes, we are in support of that. We know and we have to recognize there has to be rules and that's why the Standing Order was put in place many years ago. It can't be just a free-for-all. In any kind of debate, in any kind of institution, there have to be guidelines. There have to be rules to guide us and principles to guide us in our debate. That's all that this is in terms of the Standing Order relevancy peace.

In conclusion, I would just like to say that I'm pleased to support this. I think that it will lead to more efficient opportunity for people to have debate and more Members will have that opportunity going forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I was listening to the Minister of Justice saying he can't understand why anyone would have any issue with this bill. Well, I do have a couple of points and I do have an issue with it, probably not surprising.

Anyway, the first point I want to raise is on the PMR and reducing from 15 minutes down to 10. I do agree with that. I think it's a good opportunity for more Members to be able to participate in Private Members' Day. I would say, in particular, for the independent Members, of which we have three now, we have three independent Members here, that in terms of Private Members' Day, I get my Private Members' Day in 2023, I think, after the Member for Bay of Islands and before the Member for Lake Melville here. That's when we get our Private Members' Day under the current system. So we don't get much opportunity to even have that.

If we're going to now reduce the time on the regular Private Members' Day from 15 minutes to 10, thus allowing more Members the opportunity to speak, I would've liked to have seen some sort of a recommendation to say that given the extra time, at the very least, there would be an allocation for one of the independent Members of the three to be able to be guaranteed a spot to speak and we could even rotate through or whatever, but at least to give that opportunity.

Now, in fairness, we have had Private Members' Days. I have to say the Official Opposition on different times has come and said, b'ys, if you have anything you want to say to this, we'll sit down and give you five minutes or whatever. I

really do appreciate that. But there was no mention of it, no discussion, or maybe there was discussion, I don't know, we're not part of that Committee, which is another issue, I suppose. But I would like to see that with that additional allocation that there could be some allocation for the independent Members to be able to speak to private Members' bills.

The other point I have, and it's a concern I have, is the point around relevance. Now, I don't have any issue, Mr. Speaker, with the concept of relevance when it comes to a piece of legislation being debated here on the floor. Obviously, if we're talking about ATVs and if I stand up and I start complaining about education or health care or something, that's obviously not relevant. I get it. If we're debating ATV legislation, we talk about ATV legislation.

Where I have the concern, though, is the point in here that it says that this also applies to money bills. That's where I have a concern and I'm wondering where this is going, because when you think about it, there are lots of issues that we hear – well, on all sides I'm sure we hear from our constituents. But, in particular, Members on the Opposition side, we're tasked with holding government's feet to the fire and raising issues that are important to the people of the province that are not necessarily being raised by government itself.

Obviously, if we are debating legislation – I'll just use, again, ATVs as an example – then that does not allow me or any Member here the opportunity to talk about the home heat rebate that I should think should be reinstated for some people; no opportunity to bring that up.

Now, you could argue that you could ask a question in Question Period, but there's a reason why it's called Question Period and not answer period because that, quite frankly, is not necessarily always a useful exercise.

So the opportunity, really, to raise these issues in the House of Assembly is when we get to what we all refer to as a money bill because under a money bill you could basically talk about whatever you want.

So any issue that I might have, whether it be the waitlist for people requiring surgeries; whether it

be the announcement yesterday, did it go far enough to help people in terms of the gas prices; whether it be Bay du Nord; whatever it might be, when I get to a money bill that's my opportunity to raise those issues on behalf of people who elected me to do so.

So my concern, when we talk about relevance and money bills, I'm trying to understand exactly what that means. I'd like some clarification as to what that means. Does that mean and will it be interpreted as an example that when we go through the budgetary process and let's say if government decides they're going to raise some taxes, we get to a money bill where they're going to – the imposition of taxes or whatever, that's considered a money bill.

So when we were talking about the sugar-sweet beverage tax, for example, I stood up, I think I said I've got some concerns with the sugar-sweetened beverage tax, blah blah blah; however, now I want to talk about health care because it's a money bill and some issues I'm having, and I could do it.

So under what's being proposed here, if we got to a bill like that, is it going to be said you can talk about the sugar-sweetened beverage tax and if you talk about anything other than that, you're not relevant? Because in the past, it's a money bill and I can talk about anything. Now am I going to be told to talk about that tax and that tax only or, if not, it's not relevant?

If that's what this is all about, trying to cut back on debate, trying to limit Members in their ability to speak up on behalf of their constituents and the people of the province, then personally I have a big problem with that. I really do.

At the end of the day, we're only sitting in this House – I mean, we're only here for a couple of months now in the spring. We're only here for like three weeks in the fall. It's not like we don't have the time to do it. We can sit in the evenings if we want to, if we need to. We've always gotten through it before. If this is some kind of an attempt to shut down debate and to prevent Members from raising issues on behalf of their constituents, because there will never be an opportunity to raise them, then I have a big problem with that. I think the people of the province would have a problem with that.

I mean, this is supposed to be a democracy. We can't get into the business of trying to control Members to say you can't talk about this, you can't talk about that and we don't want to hear about this. I saw enough of that in these controlled media things that have been going on during COVID and everything else. That's not good for democracy either. Oh, you can ask one question and one follow-up question that we see.

To my mind, that's not democratic; it's really not. There used to be a time that a minister would make themselves available and the media would have at them or her; ask whatever they wanted. Not this oh, you can talk about this subject. I'm here to talk about this; don't ask me about that. That's where we're going. That's where we've been going the last couple of years. I'm really concerned about it from a democratic point of view.

I know that myself and my colleague here from Humber - Bay of Islands, I can remember a year or two ago and you called a special session of the House of Assembly and we weren't consulted on any of it. You had your couple of days, your Question Period and whatever, and we were left out of it. We weren't given any time. So we used the adjourn motion, because you were allowed to debate the motion to adjourn.

We took that opportunity to say, no, I don't want to adjourn, Mr. Speaker, because I wanted to talk about blah blah blah, health care. I wanted to talk about these issues, that issue, and we used that tool that was there in the rules. And what happened? The minute that we did that, next time we come back to the House a motion comes in the House: No longer allowed to debate the motion to adjourn. Trying to shut us down. Well, they did shut us down on that particular aspect.

Now we are seeing this here and I'm not going to support it unless I have – it is fine to talk about latitude and all that. I wasn't part of these discussions, but I would certainly like clarification that if a money bill comes to the floor and I could talk about whatever I want that concerns my district and the people that elected me, I don't want to be told you're not relevant because we're talking about a tax and you can

only talk about that tax and that only. If that is the intent, I don't support it.

If we're going to have latitude, as my colleague from Harbour Main says it is, if that is the intent that there will still be lots of latitude and I can talk and we can all talk about issues of importance to our district, then I don't have a problem with it. I don't have a problem with having to stay relevant and being called on relevancy. If we're talking about a piece of legislation in health care, I have no problem saying you can't talk about education. If you're talking about the ATVs, you can't talk about child care. No problem, we all agree with that. But if the intent is to shut down legitimate debate on money bills, then I will not support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand in support of my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands and I just want to go back to what he mentioned about the closure bill. We were in here for a special debate and there were questions. I wanted to ask one question. The Member wanted to ask one question. The questions were on health care. I had a person who couldn't get eye surgery during COVID. Needed the eye surgery; everybody said he could do it; couldn't get eye surgery.

I asked for one question. Here is the question I want to ask. I need it on the record to see what the minister can do to get this done. The government at the time – the Liberal government – would not let me ask one question to help a citizen – who was going blind – and the Member had the same concern. We had three days and wanted one question each. That is it. I gave the question. Here is the question. We were stopped.

When they introduced the closure motion to adjourn, I stood up and I spoke for 40 minutes. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands stood up and spoke for 25 or 30 minutes. The next day, the same thing, I stood up again because that's the rules of the House; the Member stood

up and spoke about his concerns of health care. We did it for three days.

We were up to a meeting with the Premier, and the deputy premier was there, and we were talking about we have to have collaboration. We walked back in this House that next day – I don't know if it was the next day or a few days later – we walked back in this House and what was introduced? There were amendments to the closure motions that we couldn't stand up and speak on closure.

We weren't consulted. We sat down with the Premier and the deputy premier, at the time, who was the Government House Leader, and said we have to have collaboration. We walked in the House of Assembly, then, all of a sudden, here is the *Standing Orders* that they already had changed, stood up and voted against it.

You want me – and I know the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, I can speak on his behalf also.

**P. LANE:** Absolutely.

**E. JOYCE:** You want us to say trust me – trust me.

I'll just give you a great example, Mr. Speaker. There are times here when they're saying let's leave it up to the Speaker. There are times here Speakers in this House stifle debate. I make no bones about it. I remember times here when questions were shutdown because the Speaker didn't like the question; although there was 104 asked on the same issue, the Speaker shut it down. This idea of trust me in this House is not there. It's just not there.

When you bring this issue up to say, no, no, it's not relevant and it's not relevant on a money bill, I'll just give an example. We brought up the sugar tax. If you bring up the sugar tax here and talk about it, it's a money bill. I'm not allowed to talk about the effects that the sugar will have for people with diabetes.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Yes you are.

**E. JOYCE:** You say, yes you are. Who are you to say it is? You're saying it's up to the discretion.

I say to the – and I won't name the Member – but I'm saying this is the issue. You're saying you are and here we're saying we'll leave it up to the Speaker for discretion. Why change something on a money bill? We have legislation in this House now that's on a fixed schedule. We can't go past that fixed schedule, it's legislation. We all agreed to that legislation.

What we're trying to do now – if it's the Committee or the government, however it's going to happen – is say in between that fixed schedule we're going to limit your debate. We're going to bring in the bills that we want discussed and you can't go beyond that discussion. It's wrong. It's fundamentally wrong.

I've been in this House of Assembly, I think, there's one Member here longer than me in this House. I first got elected in '89. I used to come here and listen to the debates in '89; since '89 if it's a money bill, you could speak on any issue you want, since '89, since I first started coming to this House; '89 when I used to be up in the galleries watching. Then in '99, when I got elected again, I'd come into this House, if you had a money bill, you could discuss – if you had issues you wanted to discuss, you still got the same time limit that you would have. No time limit has changed.

There are many times that you have issues that's related to funds. There are many times that there's a money bill brought in this House that has implications down the road, but if this here is approved – we need clarification like the Member for Mount Pearl – Southlands said. If this is a fact, that you can speak on the money bill but you can't speak of the implications of the money bill down the road, it's just fundamentally wrong.

If you want to talk about stifling debate again, if you want to talk about stifling debate, here's another example of stifling debate.

I can give you a good example. If we want to stand up any time on a money bill and I want to talk about nurse practitioners, I can't do it.

**P. LANE:** Cataract surgery.

**E. JOYCE:** Cataract surgery, I can't do it. Even though it's related to a money bill, but the money bill may be for some other reason. It's tradition. It's tradition anywhere around.

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

**E. JOYCE:** I hear the Members opposite agree with me, because a lot of you were over on this side before. Mr. Speaker, you know what I'm talking about. Once you get up on a money bill you can speak about any issue in your district. It has been tradition in this House.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Once upon a time.

**E. JOYCE:** Once upon a time, you're right, yes.

Then the problem with it is you're trying to change it now.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That's right.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. JOYCE:** You're right. You're trying to change it because you want to stifle debate. That's the issue. You want to stifle debate.

Anybody in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and we get it, and all the Opposition and the people who were in Opposition over here said why don't you bring this up? But I can tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador right now, and even the backbenchers and even the government Members and ministers, if this is brought in here, forget that saying you have to bring this up because your limitations are being decreased on a regular basis. It's being decreased. Trust me.

So what's happening now, we're taking this Legislature now – I remember back when we were in government and there were some decisions that were made; I was in the backbenches and I was part of government at the time and some decisions were made, I remember people who have been around with me said: Be careful what you're doing because some day you

will be over here; some day there are going to be issues when you're in Opposition, which are on this side now.

I'm speaking on behalf of the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, we had discussions on this, that when you have to start stifling debate and you're over here, you're going to start complaining that you can't speak up, just remember, you're bringing this in. You're bringing this in right now.

So I'm putting this government on warning now that if you want to be stifling me and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, you're going to have a hard time calling relevance, because I can tell you that I have issues that I'm going to bring up.

It's tradition; it's parliamentary tradition in this House and in all the Houses across Canada that if it's a money bill you can speak on an issue that's related to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

**J. HOGAN:** That's not true, though.

**E. JOYCE:** I hear the Member over there saying it's not true. I've yet to be stopped on a money bill.

So my question is if it's not true, why change it?

**J. HOGAN:** It's not true in every jurisdiction.

**E. JOYCE:** It's not true in every jurisdiction. Okay. But why change it? Why change it if it's never an issue?

We always have a Parliamentary Calendar that we have live by. So if we can't change the Parliamentary Calendar – we can, but if we don't change the Parliamentary Calendar, we can debate whatever we like within that time. But what's happening –

**P. LANE:** (Inaudible) to be criticized.

**E. JOYCE:** What?

**P. LANE:** Don't want to be criticized.

**E. JOYCE:** Don't want to be criticized; don't want issues brought up. That's the bottom line;



that is the bottom line. I just hope that the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador understand what's happening here in this Legislature now and what's happening with this.

If anybody wants to stand up and try to stifle debate, I can tell you I'm one person against it. The Member for Mount Pearl Southlands is against it. I guess there are other people who can stand up and speak as they see fit.

I just ask that the government have a second thought at what they're going to bring forth in the *Standing Orders*, bring forth in the House. Let's keep this House the way it was, that people got an opportunity on many occasions to bring up issues on money bills, because, Mr. Speaker, once we start stifling debate then what we're going to have to do is just sit down and tell the people of this province you have no avenue to bring up any concerns that you may have.

I'll close on that, Mr. Speaker, and if the issue is that you can't speak and leave it up to the Speaker to decide what the relevancy is on a money bill, I am totally against it.

Thank you.

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

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

I just wanted to add commentary to this Standing Orders resolution. I listened to the Member from Mount Pearl - Southlands and Humber - Bay of Islands and I don't disagree with everything that they're saying. I do think it is kind of a stretch because we're the Official Opposition, we want leeway. We want leeway of the House and Speaker, when a money bill is here, to be able to branch off and to talk about various issues. If what they're saying is accurate, no one in this House would support that.

As I said to the Government House Leader yesterday when we were having a – well, it was a private conversation. I said to him and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands made the same comment then. I said, you should always remember that you're not going to always be on that side of the House, which is true and he

agreed, and we all know that's the way this House works.

When you're bringing in these Standing Orders, my concern and our caucus's concern and our representative, the Member for Harbour Main, who represented us on the Committee, we all talked about this at great length. You don't want to limit yourself but, in actual fact, the ironic part is there is nothing being changed. This always existed. We had a lot of conversation when that was brought out and explained to us.

So, really, there are no changes coming in effect other than the fact that I'm taking it and we're taking it more as a warning that Speakers and Deputy Speaker and I suppose Chair of Committee or whoever is governing the House at that given time will be more stringent, I guess, on trying to keep some relevance. But, in saying that, I do hope that in your role as Speaker and our Deputy Speaker as well there is still a broad range.

Again, I'll go back to my conversation with the Government House Leader yesterday and he made a reference of my colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans who made references talking about the Premier's office in his speech. The Member from Exploits also had a rant about that, too. But he said that is still relevant because it is about spending money; it is about spending funds. If that is the way it is going to be governed, I have no problem with that.

I don't think the House is designed to do stuff in here that you can't do out there. I'll leave that at that and people here can read between the lines what I'm saying. I have heard stuff said in this House that probably should never have been said in here or out there. You would never get away with it out there. So what you can't get away with out there, you shouldn't do it in here.

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

**B. PETTEN:** I strongly feel that way and I think that a lot of Members in this House also agree. We have seen that happen. That is the unfortunate part sometimes. I'm all about debate. I would like to think we're going to get a lot of leeway. I do expect that leeway, because you can tie pretty well anything to government

spending. There's not much you can't put to government spending.

So I guess what I'm saying, I agree with some of their concerns, but I don't think they're founded. I do hope this is not about muting debate. I do hope that it's just about the quality of debate and what's being debated. Like I said, we can talk about any issue that's important to anyone in this caucus here and tie it to money. I do hope that we do have the leeway of the House to be able to do that. It's no place to be personal and it's no place to talk about stuff that's totally not related to anything other than your own personal agenda. I don't think that's what this House is designed for. I don't think that's what people elected us to do.

I think we're elected to come in here and represent the people of our districts, and a lot of that is tied to the financial well-being of the province. It affects everyone's daily lives. We're living it now with the cost of living on the street, the cost of fuel, the cost of home heating oils, the cost of groceries. That's what we should be in here debating, improving the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We don't have to go other routes.

I do entrust you, Speaker, and future Speakers down the path when I may not be here – there will be hopefully be a Tory government in place. I know that might not be what the Members opposite want to hear. I do hope that Standing Orders and the spirit – I guess I'm a traditionalist, too. I've been around this place a long time and I know the Standing Orders and precedents and tradition carries a lot of weight in this House. The Minister of Education who was a Speaker himself and I'm sure he can agree with what I'm saying. It's all about traditions, all about parliamentary – you go back and you research. I know we have debates here on private Members' resolutions all going on precedents of what was decided or what rulings were made. Speakers depend a lot on former rulings.

I do hope that these Standing Orders, when someone here is stopped for relevance, it's valid and it's not contentious. I think it's fine to bring a bit of order to the House, but I do hope we do get the leeway to be able to – because we're representing our constituents. It's not so much a

personal agenda. I mean, I get up here on many rants; very seldom you'll find my rants on Facebook – not my Facebook. It might be someone else's, but it will not be mine.

Again, being a traditionalist, I think it's very important to debate the issues that matters to the people that we represent. I think if we all do that and we're given the leeway, which I do hope, based on the fact there's no changes being made to these Standing Orders, other than the fact it's being clarified, I hope we do get that leeway.

Other than that, the rest of those Standing Orders, we're in agreement with everything else. We agreed with this in general, but I think from my end of it and just my view as being Opposition House Leader over here, and myself and the Member from Harbour Main have had a lot of conversations and it is something that I'm very familiar with, I just wanted to have those few words and put our stamp on it that we do still expect to be given the leeway to debate the issues in this House that is important to the residents of our province and that money bills not be restricted. I am assuming and I trust that that won't happen.

Thank you very much.

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

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

I am going to start some comments with a definition. I just looked it up on Google – anyone's free to do that – on the word "debate." As a noun a debate is "a formal discussion on a particular topic in a public meeting or legislative assembly, in which opposing arguments are put forward." For example, "last night's debate on the Education Bill." As a verb, it's described as you can "argue about (a subject), especially in a formal manner." And, as an example, "the board debated his proposal."

So I think that's quite relevant for us because when we talk about a debate, which is what we're doing here – we're debating legislation; we're debating motions. It's about staying focused on the topic at hand: the proposal, the motion, the bill. As sitting as the honour that I had to sit as Speaker during two Assemblies,

relevance was something that I felt was very important and I often would ask the Members to think about that in their remarks. I mean, otherwise, why are we here for any particular case and occasion?

And, yes, there were situations where I will say that I ruled on a couple of different points on relevance. I also ruled on motions that had been proposed, debated and passed, concluded in this House and then were tried to be reintroduced over the course of a money bill or anything else. That, essentially, is just wasting the time of the House. That's why I ruled in that occasion.

So I welcome the guidance on relevance. I do support my colleague's point, from Mount Pearl - Southlands, on the aspect of relevance. And there is interpretation. Let's face it, we can never think about or consider the wide breadth of situations, of contextual comments that could be interpreted as being relevant or not relevant. I feel that it's important and it's incumbent upon us, as legislators, to challenge ourselves, even if it's a money bill. I'm sure that most of us can think how, if there's a particular issue, we can generate it back to the focus of financial policy of this executive and what they're doing and tying whatever's bothering us to that point. I think you just have to keep drawing it, again with the money bill, with the financial aspects of it.

I think it will help us up our game. As you say, it's there now; it's just a matter of being consistent a little bit more often in things like *Standing Orders*.

I also agree with my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands on the PMR. I can remember one time I actually introduced a PMR and it was so popular that we actually, with the consent of the House, continued after that 5 o'clock time that we have as a hard finish, because we all wanted to speak to it. I think there will be those occasions, but I think reducing – not think – I feel that reducing our allocated time to 10 minutes is a good way to encourage more opportunity, particularly as an independent. Again, as my colleagues both said, there's no reason why anyone in this House shouldn't have an opportunity to speak to a matter if it's going to be relevant and if they have some meaningful contribution.

I also thank the Opposition, because on the Wednesdays where I've experienced on this side of the House, I've said there's been good co-operation. I've been able to reach out and say I'd like to speak to a matter. I feel that's in the right direction.

I still believe there will be many occasions where Members will say: I'm just going to speak for five minutes. I just want to get a comment in on this particular matter and so on. Docking it down from 15 to 10 is important when you've only got some two hours. I think that's another great move.

I did want to ask a question of the minister on the last point, the deferral of vote on Division. I did speak to one of the Members of the Committee this morning because I anticipated this might be coming up today. I understand that if a vote is to be deferred it would have to have the agreement of three party leaders or the party leaders that exist in the House. I'm trying to anticipate how that might have occurred, and I'm just going to go back to some very recent history.

In November, one of our last days that we sat before we rose for Christmas, the lotteries bill. I know yours truly, other Members around me and the Opposition mounted several serious comments and concerns that we were hearing across the province, brought forward these comments in debate during second reading and then when it went to third reading, we took the opportunity, as we're able to, to speak to it again.

I note that on the government side there were several Members missing. When the Government House Leader moved to go to third reading, they frankly didn't have enough people in the chairs to pass that motion, if the Opposition was fully opposed to it. I'm just trying to understand what would've changed now, had this Standing Order been in place at that time, to effect what the outcome would've been there. Would that have been deferred?

I mean, when Division is called the bells ring, we have 10 minutes for everyone to assemble. I remember seeing several on the other side on the phones gathering the Members in, because, obviously, everybody's busy, there are things

going on, but it really is under the control of the Government House Leader as to when that critical decision, that critical vote is going to occur. No one else, that person controls it.

I, having served as Speaker twice, can appreciate there is some responsibility or opportunity as is indicated, but really it's the Government House Leader that can make that call. I just wondered how this might be different if this is incorporated.

So thank you for the opportunity. I'm really glad to see that we are taking time to look at the *Standing Orders*. I feel it's really important as Legislatures evolve and as we mature and learn from others, it's really good to take a look at our own rules of engagement on debate.

Thank you.

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

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

I'll just take a second, I'm just going to address the point that the Member for Lake Melville just made. I think, Mr. Speaker, with reference to deferred vote, that was certainly a consideration that we took in when you look at COVID-related circumstances in this House right now if we were to find ourselves, especially in the spring sitting, with COVID still a presence among us, it would give us that opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, what would happen is if the three House Leaders weren't able to come to an agreement on a time, the Speaker would rule. So it's not left into the hands of the Government House Leader, it's an agreement what would be between the three House Leaders and if there was a circumstance that we couldn't agree, the Speaker would make a ruling.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Lake Melville. Oh, sorry, the hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** Close, close, Mr. Speaker, he's my neighbour.

I will speak to this here. I'm happy to see that we're going to give more Members the opportunity to speak in PMRs. I know I introduced a PMR and there were more people who'd like to speak, obviously, and you can tell. Unfortunately, there is limited time and limited opportunity. So giving more people an opportunity to express their thoughts and stuff on a PMR is really good. A PMR generally is good debate. I think that it's really healthy and important to give more opportunity to people there. So I'm really happy to see that change there now.

Also with the deferred vote, we did have a lot of conversations around that and how to make the House operate, an ability to operate in these unprecedented times. Any Member can suddenly have to leave while we're in a sitting and end up isolating at home, so given that opportunity – that was one of things we did mention, myself and my colleague, the Official Opposition House Leader, that we wanted to make it as fair as possible. We did have a really extensive conversation on that. It's not left in the hands of one House Leader or anything like that; it is basically consent from all parties in that way.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the situation with COVID, you want to be here, obviously, there are important things that have to be voted on, so having that opportunity to defer that, it's not new. It is more common – from our research and everything like that – practice in the federal system than it is here in the province. It is a good tool to have during these unprecedented times during COVID. It will stick around after, and that's to be seen by the Committee, but for this sitting right now we have it temporarily, from my understanding.

On relevancy and money bills: relevancy is important but having latitude is also important, too, because some Members, each one of us have our own characteristics for trying to explain something. Everyone is different; everyone is unique in that way. Giving a bit of latitude is really important as well, trying to get to the point, trying to get to the story, trying to express your thoughts, because everyone in this House does it differently and everyone has their own characteristics about doing it. So making sure to have the latitude and also the ability to understand everyone's unique way of speaking,

everyone's unique way of expressing themselves, we do have to take that into consideration, too.

Some people have a roundabout way of getting to the point. They want to get to the point but they have their own unique way of doing it. That is something that I hope, Mr. Speaker, you do take into consideration when granting latitude to somebody as well, because you might not see it right away but when you get to the end of their thought, then you understand what they're trying to say. We have to take those latitudes into consideration when we do talk about relevancy.

I know I have my own roundabout way of doing things. My colleagues do as well. The uniqueness has to be taken into consideration as well. That's the beauty about this House, we all come from different corners of the province and we all have our own unique ways of speaking and expressing ourselves. When latitude comes to it, it's very important that we do take into consideration, especially with the money bills where money is a broad topic to talk about in this province, because, technically, the root of everything we do discuss, at the end of the day, is money related.

So we do have to make sure that those latitudes are taken into consideration. I know that there's no actual change we're going to vote on, but I know it's been asked of yourself, Mr. Speaker, to enforce that Standing Order. I just ask that when speaking with latitude, make sure to take in a bit of consideration of how people express themselves because sometimes it is a roundabout way.

With that, though, I do really like the change for PMRs and deferred voting under these COVID times is really important. As we adapt and change with the changing times around us, we have to make sure that we are flexible in that way as well.

Anyway, with that, I take my seat.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I just speak to the issue of relevance and probably one of the most challenging aspects, when I first became an MHA, is listening to debate on money bills and walking out and coming back in and hearing a speaker and wondering are we on the money bill because you could talk about everything.

That was difficult and I still try to keep my comments relevant, but I will say this: It's important as well – and I take the comments by my colleagues in the back here with regard to this in the leeway. My main concern is that there should still be leeway. For Members, if they wish to bring up specific issues that may be tangentially related to the money bill itself or to the budget, I'm concerned always that when there's that vagueness around it as to what that means. That's my only real concern here is that the Members do raise valid points in terms of when else do you get to bring up certain issues, whether it's in a PMR or otherwise.

I would certainly like to see some clarification around what relevance exactly that we're talking about here. And that it doesn't, indeed, stifle debate. For the most part, I try to keep my own comments relevant to it. It's the background I was brought up in in terms of my previous life – three minutes, get to the point, sit down. I appreciate that. At the same time, I understand, certainly within this House of Assembly, that there was leeway given and in the time that I've been here, I can see the value of that.

Of course, there are outer limits but, at the same time, it's important, especially if you're an independent Member who doesn't have the ability to ask questions all that often, the opportunity that the Official Opposition and the Third Party would have. So I think in some ways during money bills or during the budget debate that they would have that opportunity to bring those issues forward. Really, that is their only avenue or one of their only avenues. That is my only caution with that and I leave it at that.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers if the Minister of Justice and Public Safety speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

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

Thank you for everyone who contributed to the debate this morning: the Members for Harbour Main, Mount Pearl - Southlands, Humber - Bay of Islands, Conception Bay South, Lake Melville, the Government House Leader, Labrador West and St. John's Centre.

I just want to make a couple of comments after hearing everyone speak this morning. There was some comments about stifling debate and limiting time but if you look at what the report does, just for example, the amendments to the PMR, it allows for more debate. The point of this report is not to limit what people can say and how many people can speak; it is to enhance debate, focus debate and make sure we're doing our job here as legislators.

There are also some concerns about what is relevant and the definition of relevance. Relevance is certainly in the eye of the beholder and, Speaker, that is going to be your job to determine what is and what isn't relevant. But I would sort of echo the comments from the Member for Conception Bay South that it is hard not to be relevant when you're speaking about a money bill.

I don't think any Members who complain about the report this morning should predetermine that they are already irrelevant. Let's let the debate happen and determine and make sure that the Members are relevant and don't assume that they have already crossed the threshold into irrelevance. I think we should give them all a chance a see how this shakes out.

There were also some comments about some worry about the democratic process but since I've been here about a year now, this is the prime example of how democracy works. Members from government side, the Opposition side and the Third Party got together in the Committee and met on numerous occasions and we had fulsome debate and came back with a unanimous report. If that is not the true definition of democracy, I don't know what is. To complain about democracy when all Members of a Committee from three different

parties have agreed, that just doesn't make sense to me.

There was a question about why we're doing this. I think it was the Member for Lake Melville said it will increase the quality of debate, and that is what we're here for. We are here to focus debate.

Just to dumb it down a little bit, if you're arguing about who is a better hockey player, Wayne Gretzky or Mario Lemieux, talking about Bobby Orr doesn't solve the problem. It doesn't answer the question. So we are here talking about a piece of legislation; let's talk about the legislation. Let's not talk about something that is going to waste time and not allow us to accomplish what we're here to do. The correct answer is Wayne Gretzky, so we don't need to debate it.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Finally, on the issue with relevance, we're debating something here but we're not actually changing anything. The Standing Order has been for a long, long time from what I understand and, now, we're not debating whether we're changing it; we're here to tell Members of the House and members of the public that we aren't changing it. We're leaving it as is. That is how it should work. That's how we're asking the Speaker to apply it in the future.

With that, those are my comments, Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour of the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 11.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, March 16, 2022, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m., on today, for Routine Proceedings and to conduct government business and that, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to debate Bill 45, granting of Interim Supply to Her Majesty.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!

We are now considering the related resolution and Bill 45, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

### Resolution

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

*"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 the sum of \$2,754,562,200."*

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

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

My God, it's wonderful to be able to stand up again.

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

**P. DINN:** I can't start talking about this unless I say that my thoughts and prayers go out to those in the Ukraine.

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

**P. DINN:** It really puts everything in perspective, what you see on TV, what you see that's happening every day, every minute, every hour, is just unbelievable. So my thoughts and prayers, as I am sure everyone in this House, go out to those in the Ukraine and those with family and relatives that are dealing with that. Not easy for sure.

We're talking about Interim Supply. Of course, we know Interim Supply is to get us to budget time. As most people spoke about the other day, yesterday, when speaking to this, they spoke about the bill is there to keep the lights on and to make sure employees are paid and to make sure all bills are paid.

I don't think any of us have an issue with supporting that, but there's another issue that we need to be focusing on and that's the cost of living. The cost of living has gone through the roof here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I know government presented a plan yesterday, a five-point plan, to help address the cost of living. That plan certainly focused on some vulnerable populations within Newfoundland and Labrador, no doubt about it. Those are populations that need help, need assistance. A lot of them needed that prior to seeing these skyrocketing fuel prices and cost of living.

But there's another segment that we've missed, we've ignored, we're not dealing with. I'm sure everyone in this House, since yesterday, has gotten many emails or phone calls saying what was done yesterday did not go far enough. No one is disagreeing with it, but it did not go far enough.

With every program that was announced yesterday, or most of them, there's a threshold. There are thresholds for when a program kicks in. So you have to be at this level, or not above this level of income to receive any funding or assistance. Then you have those who are just above that threshold, whether it's seniors on fixed income, whether it's the working poor, that family who has two or three children who are just above that threshold. We've done nothing to help them. We've done nothing to ease the burden on them. We've known this for a while, we've seen the histograms of the gas prices going up and we've seen that effect on the goods and services that we buy on a regular basis.

This time last year, a litre of gas was around \$1.38. So in just a year, we've hit over \$2; we're still hovering around \$1.90. That's in the range of a 45 per cent increase and that affects everyone. That affects everything. A simple dozen eggs last year, you might get it for \$3.80. Now, it's \$5.80. Again, another 40-odd per cent increase.

I consider myself not doing too bad. I have an income, my wife has an income, I have three wonderful daughters, but I actually find myself now looking at the prices. Well, think about those families on one income, think about those families who are not hitting that threshold, they're just above it. We've done nothing to help them. Think about the seniors who are just above that threshold on a fixed income or fixed pensions. They're seeing no assistance.

We talked about a home heating rebate. That has worked in the past, and there's nothing happening now. I've talked to the seniors who have told me that last month or the month before they usually pay around \$700 or \$800 to fill up their tank, now it's hovering near \$1,000 on a fixed income, on a pension. What do you do? It's \$300 a month extra just for fuel. Where does that come from? Who's helping them ease the burden?

No one's asking for a handout, no one's asking for a handout, but we're at a time where they need a hand up right now. They need a hand up to get through this. This increase in the gas prices and the increase in the cost of living. We've failed to do that; government has failed to do that.

They've certainly started to deal with the most vulnerable, no doubt. Nobody, as I've said, is arguing that point, but we're failing the working poor. Those out there who make a salary, who budget every cent, and now they have to pay more that they don't have. They're delving into some of their savings now to get through.

We really need – and I hope we see it, we should've seen it by now but I hope going forward, I'm hoping, I'd love to hear at dinner hour a new announcement on some tax relief or something to help our average working families out there. They're a big part of our tax base. They've paid in. We've all paid in. Maybe it's time we can pay out a bit to help them through this.

As I said at the start, everyone in this House, I'm sure, has gotten the calls since yesterday – everyone. I'm in a district that's a good working-class district, but I'm getting the calls from there; people are struggling with the prices.



I went out the other day – well, a couple of weeks ago I was asked: Can you run in? My wife asked me to pick it up, which happens a lot – pick up this, pick up that. I ran in to a local grocery store to get one of those single-serving salads (inaudible) like that.

I went in and I looked at it on the shelf, no lie – and anyone who buys, someone who eats healthy like I do all the time, you pick it up. It's mostly lettuce with a few of those little cherry tomatoes tossed on top. Maybe if it's really low calorie it would have some artificial bacon bits. I jest in saying this – I say that because I can afford it – but think about people going in to get that who can't afford that healthy eating.

That salad was \$11-and-something. That's amazing. So now we have our average individual working family out there trying to support them on a fixed income or an income that hasn't increased, and we've come in with a plan – government has come in with a plan – to deal with the most vulnerable. But we've forgotten, or government has forgotten, about the common, hard-working Newfoundlander and Labradorian.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Humber - St. George's.

**S. REID:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to have an opportunity to speak on this Interim Supply motion here today in the House. Interim Supply, as other Members have mentioned, is an opportunity to discuss financial issues. Usually we've had a wide-ranging debate. I think that's important as well, because it's hard to distinguish between things that are financial. Many things are relevant in terms of a debate like this, especially on a budget motion.

Just for listeners at home, the fiscal year ends the end of March so we haven't passed the budget for next year yet so, in the interim, we have to provide for funds to continue the operation of government, and that is what we are doing here in this Interim Supply motion. We're approving, I think, about 25 to 30 per cent of the

budget this year. In terms of about how much, about \$2 billion – I'm not sure what; I don't have the bill here with me.

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

**S. REID:** It is \$2.7 billion this year we're approving. So it is a considerable amount of money, but that is all part of the budget debate. This is just a preapproval of an amount so that government can continue with the operations. It is important that this motion be passed soon because we're approaching the end of the fiscal year. I think the date that we have to have it approved so that things can continue is maybe March 21 or 22, around there, so that government employees continue to get their cheques and business continues as usual, so those sorts of things. That is what we are doing today.

There are a few issues that I want to talk about and a few things I want to mention. One of those is the volunteer effort in Stephenville related to Ukraine. They had several events. As I was thinking about what I was going to say, I was listening to the debate on relevance as well. I wondered was what I was going to say be relevant in this type of debate. I guess the connection here is that if you have volunteer activities happening, it impacts the amount of revenue that a government has to spend. Also, it relates to expenditures that the government is making through the department. So I think there are ways to relate most things, even things that are happening on our districts, to this type of finance motion that we're dealing with today.

I just wanted to mention what's happening in Stephenville. There's a large number of Ukrainians in the Stephenville - Bay St. George area. A number of people are working there in Stephenville - Bay St. George area. Some of them work in the agricultural industry there, in dairies and things like that. Others are dance instructors; others are family members of Newfoundlanders who've gone to work in Ukraine and came back and married people while over there. There's a significant population.

A group of volunteers have got together and they're doing some concerts to raise funds to help Ukrainian refugees who want to settle in

Newfoundland in particular, in the Bay St. George, West Coast area. They've had several events. I know other Members of the House have been supportive of this. The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port and the Member for Bay of Islands have been involved in some of the organizing meetings as well. It's something that has support from a number of people.

I just want to say it's great to see that type of volunteer effort in our community, because it's so important and it helps very much in supporting our area and our communities. I just wanted to give a hats off on that.

As well, I listened to the Member, the person who spoke before me, and he mentioned that he knows other people are hearing these calls and concerns from their constituents as well. I would say I can verify that, as one Member of the government side, I've heard these calls as well. I see messages, calls, emails and things like that.

It's certainly an issue, especially in rural areas of the province such as Bay St. George South or Codroy Valley, which I represent. People often live in rural areas and they drive to either Stephenville, Port aux Basques, Corner Brook sometimes, and they have a lot of expense in terms of travelling. These high gas prices are really impacting them and the way they live. But I want to say that what the government did yesterday in its announcement was a good first step. It was something that could be done immediately with programs that are already set up, easy to implement and impacted some of the most severely impacted by these gas prices. So it's a good first step and I know we'll be working towards other options as well.

One other thing that the Opposition brought up yesterday – I guess there are immediate things we do. There are things we do in the short term and then there are long-term things that we do as a government and we do as a society and economy, as we work towards dealing with the situation that we are in.

Some people talked about oil development. I'm a supporter of offshore oil development. I think this government has taken a strong stand on encouraging the future developments as well. I think we have some of the cleanest oil in the world here. Most of the oil off our coast is what

they call sweet crude. It's less carbon. If you burn oil or use gas, this is the most environmentally friendly of any oil in the world, amongst most friendly. I would say it's ethical oil as well.

I think what we have to look at is if we stop producing what are the other options. Where would we be supporting oil produced in a less ethical way, less ethical environment, political situation? Those are questions that we have to ask ourselves as a country when we talk about offshore oil in this province and development of offshore oil. Those are some of the issues.

I think, as well, in terms of long-term things, I think one of the things this increase in the cost of living, the cost of food in our stores is I think it encourages us to look at how we get our food, where we get it from and the importance of having an agriculture industry here in this province that can supply the food we need in a cost-effective manner. I think part of that is our sectors have to be innovative.

I talked to some farmers in the Codroy Valley a week or so ago and they were talking about the cost of fertilizer because part of fertilizer is made with petroleum. One of the options they were looking at is fertilizers made of products from fish waste and things like that, how they could look at other options.

So I think those are the sorts of things that we have to look at as we face these challenges.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

I certainly appreciate the opportunity to stand in this House and represent the District of Ferryland during this debate of Interim Supply. It's certainly a great honour indeed.

Just touching on some of the issues that we discussed since yesterday since we've started on

the debate on Interim Supply. First of all, I'd like to thank some of the Members on the Opposition, for sure, for when you make calls or you respond to calls, we do that out of respect. We all respect each other's time and efforts, but sometimes when we make a call, we're calling for our constituents to get some issues addressed and not responding is not acceptable, in my mind. I'm at this job to represent the constituents of my district and to make a text or make an email and then some of the people on our side will say, well, you're better off putting it in an email. If you put it in an email they can ATIPP it and if they didn't respond, you know. But if you send a text you don't have to because you can't ATIPP it.

You should respond, and I'm not saying you've got to respond right away because that's not the way it is, but not responding to a text or not getting back to you is not acceptable. I do appreciate the people that, when you do send out texts, that you do get back. I texted someone the other day and I think he answered before it got through, to be truthful; it was that quick. But there are other people that you text and you text again and you don't get answers.

Listen, if the answer is no, then the answer is no. But at least discuss it with you so you can get the answer. That's all we're asking. For people not to get back to you, I just don't think it's acceptable.

We're sitting here talking about the cost of living and how it affects everybody and the price of fuel, the price of groceries. We sit here and look at the government and they spent \$5 million with Rothschild to make an evaluation of – we can't get somebody in Newfoundland to do that? It's incredible.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Or Canada.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** It's incredible. If somebody got a contract in Newfoundland for a million dollars they'd be delighted I'm sure. I don't know what the cost is. I have no idea but to spend \$5 million and give it to a US company – out to lunch. I can't believe it. We're talking about the common people here in Newfoundland and that's where we get lost.

Your heads are up in the clouds. I don't know what part of the country you're working in. You don't look at people. You don't talk to people. You must not go anywhere that people are there, that you don't realize that you're giving the people in the States \$5 million to do an assessment of our assets. It makes no sense to me. Maybe you can explain it when I sit down. It makes no sense to me. Somebody in Newfoundland should be able to do that job – Newfoundland and Labrador, I won't say Newfoundland alone, Newfoundland and Labrador. It just doesn't make sense.

You're talking about the cost of living; we just put somebody in Central Newfoundland to represent the Premier. It is going to cost, probably, a quarter of a million dollars, and we can't take off a couple of cents worth of gas for the common people to be able to drive around. What part don't we get? I just don't understand it.

The common people are who we are here to serve. They all voted you in and we have to take care of them. We sit here and making announcement. Yesterday, just before we go in the House, you make a great announcement. There's no question, a good announcement, just before you go in the House so you take some heat of yourselves.

People look right through it. They look right through it and you still want to play the political game. It would just get on your nerves after a period of time. It just gets so down in the hole, it's unbelievable; people look right through it.

You talk about electricity, and I like the electric car, I worked in the industry selling cars. We sold two a year when I was at it, two, and they were \$40,000 or \$45,000.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That was a good salesman.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Yeah, good salesman, yeah, no doubt.

Sometimes I look at it and say what am I doing in here, I should be in trying – well, you can't sell vehicles now, they're not there to get. There are some there but there are not a lot. To be able to put in these promotions for electric cars, the

reality is, first of all, you can't afford them. Second of all, you can't get them. You can put all the rebates out there you like.

Put the rebate on home heating fuel.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Put the rebate on home heating fuel, because you can't get those cars. Yes, you can, you can get 12 or 13 or 14, there are companies that can get them, but they're not making them yet. But you have to have them out there, and I agree it's a good incentive, but get the home heating rebate out. The taxes on home insurance, I'm not sure if that's still there or not, get that off.

That's the stuff that people are looking for. I had somebody, when I knocked on the door last year, they gave me a sheet of paper with their costs, with the money that they made. When they finished, at the end of the month, they had \$34. Now what do they have this year with the cost of living? They didn't get any increase. Maybe it's the \$400 that they're going to get, if they qualify for that.

It just doesn't make sense, how we don't see the people that we need to represent, that need to get the breaks in this society to be able to survive. That's the ones that we have to take care of, not giving \$5 million to the US or giving – I don't know what it's going to cost to put an office in Central Newfoundland for the Premier's –

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** There's a number out there, but why don't we take that quarter of a million dollars and put it towards the people that really need it. Did they need to have that representation? They're paying that gentleman and that gentleman there and they're paying all of you to represent the constituents. You don't need somebody else out there to do that.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** It's not acceptable.

I sit here and I respect everybody on that side, but sometimes you have to get down to the people that need to get these breaks in life.

When I go to an arena, go to a show, or go wherever, these people are talking to you and they say: Where are they with all this stuff that they're doing which doesn't make sense?

I'm in the District of Ferryland. Last year they took an ambulance out of Trepassey and brought it down to Cape Broyle. What was the cost? We have no idea yet. Who did it benefit? Did it benefit the ambulance owner or did it benefit the people? The people in Trepassey need a second ambulance. When one goes, they are two hours away. Most times – you don't see it in the news – they are getting in their car and they are driving out themselves, two hours to get here. Now it is going to cost them more to get here again. Then they come out here when they are two hours away and you got to eat out here.

It just doesn't make sense some of these moves. I'm wondering who is making the moves. Is it the minister making it; is the ambulance owner making all these rules? Because I haven't got any answers yet. Then you go up there and people are putting on Facebook the ambulances are not cleared off. It snowed last week and they're not cleared off. Twenty minutes to get them cleared off. Should they be inside? Should they be stored inside, an ambulance that leaves and goes to a call?

That is the kind of stuff that – they have contracts. I don't know the contracts. I came here three years ago and to sit down and to see the contract and try to find it and it's not there – it could be there, but there is information and each one could be different. But it is not acceptable to have this stuff happening and to make a call.

You look at saving money. This is what this debate is about; it is about saving money. I look at the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, saving money. I would say they spend more on signs and pylons to get around washed-out roads than anything in the district; it is incredible.

Maintenance: If anybody has a vehicle, and I have worked in the industry, if you do maintenance on your vehicle, then that's where it's to. That saves you money in the long run. But if you don't do any maintenance, then you're going to have washouts and you're going

to have plugged up ditches and you're going to have everything washed out. So what part of that don't we get as a district – every district got it, not only mine.

The South Coast and the West Coast certainly got their share this year, there is no question. But some of that is maintenance. Trepassey area, Portugal Cove South, they're 30 years since they had pavement – 35 years up in St. Shott's in that area and it is called the Irish Loop. The other side is paved; that is Liberal. That is paved, but not on this side. And I sit over here and I'm going to get less because I'm going to speak out against it? Well, I'm certainly not getting run over with pavement right now, so why shouldn't I speak about it?

They got to get out and get the maintenance done. There is ditching up there to be done. There is tree cutting to be done. There is brush cutting to be done. You see it all over the Island. That is preventative maintenance and that is cost saving because, if not, it is going to cost you more in the long run. It's the same as a vehicle. If you spend money upfront, it should save you money later on.

I live in the Town of Bay Bulls and they had some flooding this year. But I've got to say they did their ditching, because I saw it. It was next to my house. I saw it through the community as you drive through it every day. They did their ditching and they had less flooding this year. Now, maybe it's a coincidence. Maybe they didn't have as much water there, but I tell you they had less flooding.

Now, we had a lot of rain, there's no question. But they did their preventative maintenance, and that's some of the stuff that we've got to get in the departments. We get calls from people about washouts. Now we've got to send an email. We're not allowed to talk to the depots. It just doesn't make sense. These are the people that we have a good rapport with. I have a good rapport with my Department of Transportation – I'm going to say I do, but my CA does for sure. We deal with it every day. We got to have that communication to be able to get things done. I'm not here to jump on anybody but we need – I've gone through, I'm going to say, three ministers now in the Department of Transportation, so I can't leave it on the last

person that just got it because it is a stressful job. But –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** I was there, too.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** You were there too, yes.

This is preventative maintenance. I know you can't take all of the money and put it everywhere you want, but that is preventative maintenance and every single district got this issue. And it's preventative maintenance is what we've got to get to and that's what's going to save you money. Not just sit here and throw money at everything that's going to suit you and give us press conferences just before we get in the House.

Do the preventative stuff that's going to save us some money. Not just throw it wherever you want. We're really out of touch with that stuff and I think that we've got to get to it and be able to get this preventative maintenance done and it'll save you money – bottom line. If you don't do anything with it for four or five years, then it's going to cost you money in the fifth year.

You've got to start spreading out some of this money and give it to all districts so we can have some paving. We sit here and do petitions and try to get everything we can, but we have to get down to doing this stuff and get back to the common people and to the people that you represent.

Thank you, Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. The Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Chair, for this opportunity this morning to speak to Interim Supply.

I guess from the Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation perspective, primarily, but, first of all, I'd be remiss in my role if I didn't congratulate Liam Hickey on his silver medal performance; Team Gushue, who, even with a one man down, was able to win the Brier and are

now headed to Vegas for the world championships; and, again, Team Young.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Not only is the last name of skip, Young, but the team was young. We saw a 15-year-old from the Cape St. Francis District actually throw a rock at the Brier. I think it bodes very well –

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

**S. CROCKER:** – for curling in Newfoundland and Labrador when you see a team that are that young actually get to that national stage. I think a lot of that can be attributed to the success of Team Gushue.

Chair, the tourism, culture and arts industry has been one, I will argue, hardest hit by COVID-19. Since March of 2020, as a government and as a province, we've been there to help the hospitality industry, the tourism industry and the artists that help support that industry as well. We've done it three times through the Tourism and Hospitality Support Program and the Artist Support Program.

I can assure that industry that as we move into budget 2022 we'll, again, be looking at ways to assist that industry as we recover. Because I've said – I actually stole this line from my federal counterpart. Minister Boissonnault uses the line all the time: Canada will not have a full economic recovery until the tourism and hospitality industry recovers. That's no different in this province. Prepandemic, it was a \$1.12-billion industry, and you can add to that our arts and culture industries as well supplying 20,000-plus people with employment and 280 businesses.

That leads me, I guess, to one of the initiatives that we've taken on this year in the department, and that's Come Home Year 2022. That program is designed not only to celebrate Newfoundland and Labrador and bring our friends and family and relatives back and encourage others to visit the province, but this, in a lot of ways, is a stimulus program for the industry, the hospitality industry, and a way to make sure that our artists are getting out and working this summer.

We had the Cultural Economic Development Program which closed maybe a little over a week or so ago. We had received 500 applications from 171 different towns and different organizations throughout the province. The Premier and I were in Corner Brook on Friday and announced the first round of that funding for the West Coast back to parts of Central. We'll be announcing others in the coming days.

I look around this House and I can assure every hon. Member here that there is something exciting going to happen in your area, in your towns, this summer when it comes to Come Home Year. This is peppered all across the province, some great ideas. We would've loved to have been able to fund every single idea. Unfortunately, we won't be able to do so. Again, I can tell you there's been a lot of hard work by the staff combing through some 500 applications and evaluating those applications.

We saw a program in Municipal and Provincial Affairs that was oversubscribed and the department went back and actually found a way to fund, I think, every application that came in. I know my colleague in the Department of Environment and Climate Change had a program through the MMSB, again, I think it was oversubscribed, but I think they have been able to go back and find a way to get there. The enthusiasm around Come Home Year is great.

The Member for Topsail - Paradise talked about the cost of living in his remarks a few minutes ago. I don't think there's anybody in this House or anybody who doesn't recognize the fact that we are going through, I would say, inflation. I've never seen it in my lifetime, I think, 5 per cent last year and looks at being 4 or 5 per cent again this year.

The programs announced by this government yesterday will help 200,000 people in this province, but, again, as my colleague for – I'm having trouble with names this morning, Mr. Chair – St. George's - Humber referenced, we know that we will have to continue when it comes to the cost of living, and it's certainly not an easy task but one that we will have to continue to look at as we move forward.

Again, I hear it regularly from the industry, the hospitality industry, every time I chat with them on anything, they will bring in the fact of the cost of living, because not only has there been a cost of living increase to individuals, but if you look at businesses, the restaurant industry, for example, are going through a very tough time when it comes to cost of living. Again, we will be working towards programs in budget 2022-2023 to do our best to alleviate some of those pressures, if at all possible.

I'd be remiss if I didn't take a moment to talk about the impacts this past year on the film and television industry. We had our best year ever last year on film and television in this province. We had the Disney shoot, we had *Son Of A Critch* and *Hudson & Rex*. We have great success happening right now with *Rock Solid Builds*. I did an interview yesterday with – I think it was a media outlet from Nova Scotia, who wanted to talk about the impacts of the film and television industry and in particular *Rock Solid Builds* on tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I had the opportunity, last year, to meet with home and garden television and the approach that they have taken to that show and to the Spracklin family and the cast and the crew of that show. What they have done to highlight Newfoundland and Labrador with that show, it is not really measurable. It's an indirect positive for the tourism industry every time you look at it. I think last weeks show started in Cape Spear and talked about that being the most easterly point in North America. Even the intro every single week, when you see that drone footage of Brigus, it is an ad that we can't buy, Mr. Chair, and it is very valuable to us.

I'll conclude my remarks and just quickly talk about the planning that is under way for the 2025 Canada Summer Games here in St. John's. That will also be a great event for this province, for this city. It will give us some investment in infrastructure around the city and it will bring a lot of people here for what would, hopefully, be another successful year.

Mr. Chair, I'll take my seat right now and look forward to other opportunities to talk about the department that I am so pleased to be in

throughout the budget debate in the coming weeks.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

First of all, I would like to say how proud I am to stand here and represent the wonderful people of the District of Harbour Main. It is always an honour to speak on their behalf in the House of Assembly.

I would like to, first of all, start off by mentioning what the Government House Leader has stated, there are things that we have to look forward to; there are positive signs. His reference to *Rock Solid Builds*, which I am happy and proud to say originates from the District of Harbour Main in Brigus.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** We are very, very proud of the work that they do and of the attention they're bringing, not only to Brigus and the surrounding areas in the District of Harbour Main but to the whole Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Also, we need, at this time, some positives to look forward to. Of course, Come Home Year, hopefully, that will provide that bright light that we desperately need right now because, Chair, these are very troubled times. We only have to look at the geopolitical reality that we see in the world today. Our hearts and prayers are with the people of Ukraine and we only pray that the Russian war will come to an end soon and there will be peace in the world again.

Mr. Chair, I can say with respect to the problems that we face here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I don't know how people are going to handle this; how they're going to survive; how they're going to do it. I received many responses, yesterday, about the

cost of living, a plan that was announced by government.

I'll read one from a constituent, a concerned constituent who is a working constituent in the District of Harbour Main. She said: Oh my God, please, on behalf of all your constituents that travel every day to go to work and who are drowning in gasoline prices, please stand up for us against government's announcement today and get further help.

Chair, this cost of living announcement – I heard one of the Members from government say earlier that it is a starting point, but it's woefully inadequate. We need a new cost of living plan. Yesterday's financial help package really doesn't cut it. It just does not cut it. As other Members on our side have stated, we've been hearing from constituents ever since.

There's a lack of help for the working Newfoundlander and Labradorian and I fail to see why that is the case. There's nothing in that plan – that 5-point plan – to really help the working poor. They are the people in our province who are struggling. They're struggling to afford gas to drive to work and this is not an exaggeration.

I go into a store and I say: Okay, guys, what's the issues? The issues are the war in the Ukraine. We're so concerned about that, but we're also concerned about how we are going to survive as well because we have real problems here and the reality is the rising cost of food. Families are having a hard time feeding their children and women, as has been stated, and I stated it this week and earlier, women are significantly impacted as a result of COVID. It's a fact that they were disproportionately impacted by COVID. So women are also having difficulty in providing food for their children.

We ask: What are government's priorities here? What are their priorities? I mean, this is one constituent that reached out desperately yesterday and said what is happening here. Is it that our government doesn't care? Is that what it is? Or is it apathy? Is it elitism that they can't relate to the average Newfoundlander and Labradorian?

When we look at that five-point plan, there's nothing really to help the working poor. We see that there's assistance there. There's a 10 per cent rise to Income Support and the Seniors' Benefit programs, but we've seen, I believe, a 25 per cent rise in gas prices. That's not going to even cut it. That's not going to cover that rise in gas prices.

We see three of the points are related to poverty reduction, but also there are two of the points in this financial plan yesterday that focus on climate change and the transition. Those measures, yes, they are necessary measures that we have to look forward with respect to green energy and the future, but right now those measures are not helping people in our province who are struggling with the price of gas, who cannot afford to go about and buy a new electric or hybrid vehicle. They don't have the means to do that.

Chair, is this government really, the choices they're making – we have to question these choices. They're not the choices that the people who elected them want them to choose. This package yesterday, it does provide limited relief, but, as we've stated in the Official Opposition, a home heating rebate would go so much further to help the people of our province today.

We are given suggestions: Wait for the budget; maybe something is going to come out then. Well, people can't wait. I mean, people need help now. Chair, it's very concerning. We're all hearing from our constituents and we're trying to encourage government to go back and get a new funding package. Look at it. Our people are telling us that they need further assistance here. Are you listening? Are you listening to the people that elected you? You're here to govern and you're here to listen. We're telling you what we're hearing. We're not exaggerating; these are the realities.

One other point that I want to make is with respect to the Bay du Nord Project. I was encouraged when I heard the Minister of Energy reference that it is important to the minister, and the Bay du Nord Project is something that is definitely of concern and that they will be supporting.



Chair, forgive me if I'm skeptical, forgive me if I doubt that, but I hope that is meant with sincerity and genuineness, because Bay du Nord is a critical project for the future of our province. It will create jobs for our people, it will increase supply opportunities for our businesses and it will positively impact the economy. It has other benefits like the potential to produce the lowest carbon barrels of oil in Canada. We have to recognize, though, this is very important. It's critical for us to appreciate the scale and importance of this project. It's bigger than Hibernia; it's the largest offshore oil and gas project that this province has ever seen and, if approved, it will be the largest subsea project of its kind in the world.

So this can help the province for years to come. We will benefit. It will create jobs. It will create further oil revenue. We are at a watershed. A choice has to be made. Our government has to stand up and fight, if necessary, to protect that project. Do we continue to import high-carbon oil and fund oppressive regimes, Chair? Do we continue to jeopardize the economic and energy security of our country, or do we chose a different path and support Bay du Nord? The people of the District of Harbour Main, many of whom will benefit as well, ask that we do that.

Thank you, Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

**J. ABBOTT:** Thank you, Chair.

It's certainly my privilege to be here in the House today to debate the bill to grant Interim Supply to the government. I want to put this in a larger context and relate it to events in Ukraine and how it ties back to our democracy here in this province. What does this bill have to do with my ability and my privilege to speak in our House of Parliament and how it relates to events in the Ukraine?

Yesterday, the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills spoke, both eloquently and forcefully, about, as he said, the illegal, immoral and horrific war visited upon

Ukraine by the Russian neighbour, the aggressor. For me what's at stake in this invasion and unwarranted war is the exercise of democracy for President Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian Parliament and all Ukrainians, for them to be able to continue to have the ability to debate their future course for their country. Do they want to join the European Union? Do they want to join NATO? Do they want to explore other economic and political affiliations? This should be their right and theirs alone.

Civil wars have been fought over the centuries to protect the right of self-determination and the role of Parliaments to hold governments accountable for their actions, including the raising of taxes and approval of expenditures on public services, as we are doing here today. But we see in Russia that these two basic principles of democratic government have been swept aside, and that the dictator Putin wants the same for the Ukraine.

Now, this brings me back to our debate on what may be considered a mundane piece of legislation: Interim Supply. What I want my colleagues in this House to keep in mind, as well as the public and the electorate at large, is that we have this hard-won right to meet as a Parliament and to debate based on our beliefs and our consciences. In light of current events in Europe, let's not take this right for granted.

Now to the bill itself. It provides the government with the funds to continue to deliver essential services needed and wanted by the public. For instance, when it comes to health, to keep our hospitals running. In terms of our Department of Education, to keep our schools, our college and our university running. For my Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development, to keep income support payments being made to over 20,000 households without interruption on April 1; for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, to support our tourism and art sectors to be ready to receive our guests and families for Come Home Year 2022.

When we look at the Department of Justice and Public Safety, it's obviously to keep our police forces funded. When it comes to Transportation and Infrastructure, to keep our roads clear from snow, for the month of April and to make sure they maintain on a go-forward basis.

To keep this Legislature going, all important; to keep our MHAs paid, believe it or not; Environment and Climate Change, to keep flood mapping going so that we're ready for future floods; for Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, to support our various sectors under the mandate of the minister; for Industry, Energy and Technology, again, to keep their programs and service running uninterrupted after April 1; for Municipal and Provincial Affairs, obviously, it's to support the municipalities with their operating grants and infrastructure funding; for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, which I'm responsible, is again to keep the operations running, to keep the rent supplements flowing and to make sure our units are available for rent, and to support our tenants.

Chair, the bill assures that our Westminster form of democracy continues to be exercised and remains relevant dating back to over 1,007 years ago to when King John in 1215 signed the *Magna Carta*. It is that principle that's at stake in the Ukraine and it's a principle that we want to ensure that stays relevant in this House of Assembly.

Chair, there was a lot of discussion by Members opposite on what was announced yesterday in terms of responding to the rising cost of living in this province. I'm certainly proud to be a Member of this government that is taking that issue quite seriously; have worked hard to make sure that we can come up with responses that meet the immediate needs of those who are most vulnerable, because it is that part of our population that we owe a responsibility to ensure that they have the finances and incomes to continue to run their households. The fact that we're spending approximately \$20 million very quickly to get out the door, I think, is a testament of our commitment to that particular cause.

Can more be done? I think that's something we will obviously want and are considering, and there are other things that we need to look at. We need to make sure we improve our education system so that those who are coming through the school system are ready and equipped for our workforce. We still have a very high unemployment rate. Not that there are jobs lacking in this economy, but we find very often

that people do not have the skills to meet the demand of our workforce.

There are other things that we are looking at as a department. We're looking at how we improve our income support program, how we look at poverty reduction in the context of a social and well-being plan, so, again, to support all individuals, all families in this province to meet their needs.

This is not done overnight, it's going to take us weeks and months to put some of these further strategies in place, but I'm optimistic at the end we will have the right policy instruments and the right programs in place to address many of the things that the Opposition, Third Party and others have been commenting on.

The challenge, I think, before many families today literally is dealing with the immediate cost of living. We need to be responsive to their needs. As a department, we're monitoring and working with the community agencies so that any individual, any individual family that is in immediate need, we can support and reach out to them. I'm committed to making sure we address those needs.

We have a housing program that is probably one of the better programs in this country. We have new rent supplements that are helping individual families find accommodations and that is working quite well. We want to expand on that in the future. We're looking at making sure that seniors have the appropriate housing that they need for the short, medium and longer term. Whether it's in Lab West, St. John's Centre, whether it's in my own district, whether it's anywhere else in the province, we are committed to addressing those housing needs.

Chair, I will sum up by saying that when we look at events across the world that are happening right now and the influence that they're having on this province, most of which had not been predicted two or three weeks ago, it's a price, unfortunately, we all are going to have to pay while the fears in Europe are sorted out. What the government is committed to doing is making sure in the very short term that we address the immediate needs of those who are most vulnerable.

I think we are on the right track in doing that. Obviously, we have a budget coming in a couple of weeks, and the Minister of Finance will be providing more direction and investments in other programs and services to support our economy through which are some very unprecedented times, rocky times, yet support the future of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Chair.

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

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

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

**B. WARR:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

When shall the report be received?

**S. CROCKER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the Committee sit again?

**S. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** In accordance with paragraph 9(1)(b) of the *Standing Orders*, this House do stand recessed until 2 this afternoon.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

Good afternoon, before we start today's proceedings, I'd like to first of all begin by welcoming our two new Pages. They were here yesterday helping out, but today they're sitting in the Page role.

To my left, we have Cody Dalton from St. John's. He's studying political science at Memorial University. To my right, is Gala Palavicini Jauregui from Mexico who is studying political science and Russian language and literature at Memorial University.

Welcome.

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

**SPEAKER:** In the public gallery, I would like to welcome Niki Greeley, Lodge Bay's Fire

Chief and Member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Indigenous Tourism Association.

Also joining us in the public gallery are Gina Parsons, Assistant Head of School at Lakecrest Independent School and students, Amelia Parsons and Alexia Bishop. They are joining us today for a Member's statement.

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

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Baie Verte - Green Bay, Stephenville - Port au Port, Labrador West, Harbour Main and St. John's Centre.

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

**B. WARR:** Speaker, I rise to recognize the NLOWE 2021 Entrepreneur of the Year Award for Economic Impact, Ms. Joy Barker, a business owner from Baie Verte.

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

**B. WARR:** NLOWE is the Newfoundland and Labrador Organization of Women Entrepreneurs honouring outstanding women in business. The Economic Impact Award recognizes an entrepreneur whose business has significantly impacted the local economy, employing locals and stimulating growth to sustainable community development.

Joy Barker has economically impacted both her hometown of Baie Verte and the nearby Town of Springdale. Joy is president of JSR Holdings, owner of a gas bar and convenience store, Copper Stop, at Baie Verte, as well a decommissioned provincial park, now Blue Canoe, a family RV park near Springdale. Joy saw an opportunity, took a chance and expanded the businesses.

Joy believes it's important as a business owner to support local resources. If we don't use it, we lose it. Joy attributes hard work and devotion to her success. She's thankful to fiancé Brad and her family – Roy, Idella, Tamara and Peggy – for their support and encouragement.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in applauding Joy Barker and wishing her continued success.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

Rosie Ryan, a Kippens resident and former physical education teacher, has been influencing youth throughout the Bay St. George area for over 40 years. Rosie's involvement in sports include softball, running, volleyball, basketball, indoor soccer, ball hockey and badminton.

Retired, she continues to use her skills and expertise to promote physical fitness among youth and is involved in sport and recreation as a coach and community volunteer. In recognition for her contributions to student participation in recreational sport and physical activity programs, Rosie was awarded the School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador's Participation Nation Ambassador Award.

Rosie has also helped start numerous programs across the province, including the Bay St. George Special Olympics program. In 2018, Team Newfoundland and Labrador named Rosie a Special Olympics coach and she was named coach of the year by Special Olympics Canada. In 2019, she was chosen as an associate coach for the Canadian team competing at the World Special Olympics Summer Games in Abu Dhabi, marking the first time a Special Olympics coach from Newfoundland and Labrador had been selected as part of a national team.

I ask all hon. Members of this House to join me in congratulating Rosie Ryan for her continued work and commitment to the youth of our province.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Charlie Russell was born and raised in Port Hope Simpson and moved to Labrador West to raise his family. Charlie grew up watching his father use his dog sled team for various things like carrying wood and bringing local residents to the hospital. Charlie wanted to keep his heritage alive and saw that dream come true when he started his own dog sled team in Labrador West 28 years ago.

Over the years, Charlie participated in over 30 races, rode as a hobby and shared this Labrador heritage with visitors from around the world by bringing them on dog sled rides. He enjoyed this very unique way of connecting with his heritage by riding through the trails with his team and seeing Labrador's vast beauty.

After 28 years, Charlie is retiring from mushing. Owning a dog sled team is hard work, and it becomes a part of our everyday routine. I know it wasn't an easy decision for him, but we are very proud he and his family worked to preserve and share our culture.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking Charlie Russell and his family for their pride and this dedication to keeping this Labrador tradition well alive.

Thank you.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, it's an honour to stand in the House of Assembly today, only days after International Women's Day 2022, to recognize an amazing woman who grew up and lived for many years in the Harbour Main District. And, who due to her sheer determination, inner strength and resilience, overcame one of the worst adversities imaginable: child abuse.

Ms. Bev Moore Davis suffered much as a young child. Now, as a young woman, she has written about her early childhood experiences in her inaugural book, *White Picket Monsters*. Her

story is an example of survival and empowerment.

She has quickly become a publicly acclaimed writer and just recently received the prestigious honour from *Atlantic Books Today* as the 2021 number one bestselling author in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Her objective in writing this book was primarily to give other survivors of child abuse hope and to also provide awareness and education on this important issue. She is truly a role model for all women and young girls to follow.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Ms. Moore Davis, to thank her for her courage in sharing her story and to wish her continued success in her advocacy work in this area.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Lakecrest Independent School is St. John's only nationally and internationally accredited independent school, serving 150 students from kindergarten to Grade 9. Located in downtown St. John's, Lakecrest has been serving local and international families for over 25 years.

As an International Baccalaureate World School, Lakecrest focuses on creating global citizens and preparing students for the future by developing the skills and characteristics needed to be successful.

Lakecrest is a small, community-focused school emphasizing the development of the whole student through academics, physical education, music and art. The elementary, junior and chamber choirs are renowned throughout the city, as is the theatre arts program.

Lakecrest celebrated its 15th year participating in the Terry Fox Run and was joined by Mayor

Danny Breen. The robotics team participates in numerous competitions. The sports teams and hockey skills program provide further opportunities for students.

Lakecrest's educational philosophy provides many other opportunities to extend learning outside the classroom, through field trips to places like the Salmonier Nature Park and the Sunshine Rotary Park, to the use of the new outdoor classroom to enhance the learning environment available to students.

Lakecrest welcomes families of all backgrounds, nationalities, ethnicities and celebrates diversity and inclusivity.

I ask Members to join me in celebrating the accomplishments of Lakecrest Independent School.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**A. PARSONS:** Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the recipients of the 2022 Research Inspired Student Enrichment – or RISE – Awards.

I had the privilege of personally sharing the exciting news with one of the recipients, Samuel Ruttgaizer of Marystown Central High School. He, along with 14 other Level II high school students, are being recognized for their interest in research and innovation, as well as their academic excellent in science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

The provincial government is pleased to deliver the awards program, including support for tuition, accommodations and travel for recipients to attend summer research-related enrichment programs at either the Boston Leadership Institute or the Research Science Institute at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Speaker, the application process for the RISE Awards was very competitive. I was happy to learn of the significant interest this year, with all applicants demonstrating high academic achievements and strong interest in research and development activities. Our government is committed to the early development of talent that is required to advance research and development, encourage innovation and foster economic growth for our province.

Speaker, the successful recipients are from many regions throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. I speak on behalf of all hon. Members to say we are very proud of these exceptional students and we wish them the best as they represent our province abroad in the months ahead.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'd like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I'd like to extend congratulations to the recipients of the 2022 Research Inspired Student Enrichment Awards: Julia Caines, Evan Dicks, Farah Farah, Grace Goudie, Amber Hann, Sanuda Jayasinghe, Eunho Lee, Shathvihan Logendraraj, Ash Peddle, Rachel Reid, Samuel Ruttgaizer, Colin Spencer, Daniel Stokes, Samuel Wheeler and a special recognition to Daniel Collins who, I must note, is a student of Govertown Academy in the great District of Terra Nova.

I'd also like to congratulate the mentors, teachers, parents and all those who have supported these students in their academic research journeys. I do hope these students take advantage of the great opportunity and attend the Boston Leadership Institute or the Research Science Institute enrichment programs. I look forward to the great things they will achieve in the future.

Thank you.

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

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

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

These students are a prime example of how innovative we need to be to secure our province's future. We need to incubate their interests and make space for them, give them a place to apply their skills and talents in the future for our economy, so we can build a better future together for this province

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Education.

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

I'm pleased to join members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association to proclaim March 14 to 18 as Education Week.

This year's theme, "A Place to Grow," encourages a happy, stimulating and nurturing environment that allows students to develop socially and academically, while envisioning all they can be.

More than ever before we recognize the importance of education and the role it plays in our communities. Maintaining instruction has been central to our approach to the COVID-19 pandemic, which is why we've invested nearly \$60 million in the school system since 2020 to keep schools as safe as possible.

We recognize the value of in-person learning and of belonging to a school community for the emotional well-being of students, as well as for their future successes in everything they do. While memories of this time of adversity will fade, the lessons we've learned, both inside and outside the classroom, will remain.

Speaker, I want to sincerely thank the many dedicated teachers, administrators, support staff

and volunteers who go above and beyond to inspire our students to grow each and every day. Teaching doesn't stop at the classroom.

I encourage students to take part in the many activities happening this week, and I ask all Members of the House to join me in celebrating Education Week 2022.

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

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

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

I would like to thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement. Speaker, all my colleagues on this side of the House join me in celebrating Education Week. Like the minister, I acknowledge the significant role of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, and I would also add the Federation of School Councils, who are also significant partners in education.

Speaker, we recognize and appreciate the role of teachers, administrators, support staff, volunteers and parents who make such a contribution to our children's educational experience. As the minister pointed out, COVID-19 has provided exceptional challenges in our classrooms that are faced with substitute teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms, poor air quality and lack of a formal online option for learning.

Speaker, as we emerge from COVID-19, my greatest hope during Education Week is that the minister will urgently release a plan to overcome the learning deficits our children have experienced over the past two years.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. As a former educator, Education

Week is one that is close to my heart and to my family. Our education successes these past two years are due largely to our teachers, school staffs, family and to the resiliency of our school communities.

I would like to take this opportunity to renew our calls for continued investment in a long-neglected system by decreasing class sizes and installing mechanized ventilation so that our children have a safe and nurturing place to grow.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, we're glad to see the Premier was in Ottawa yesterday to press for our case for Bay du Nord with the prime minister.

Can he update the House on his bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau yesterday, and when can we expect an approval?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the hon. Member across knows, my primary purpose yesterday was to be there to show solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** I think it's incredibly important that we stand with our federal colleagues and our NATO partners across the world as we show that solidarity, not just in the fight for the Ukrainian people but the fight for democracy. As generations before us have done, we need to do that, too. That was my primary focus there yesterday, Mr. Speaker.

That said, I did have an opportunity to have many discussions with many ministers about Bay du Nord and I re-expressed, as I had publicly very many times, my commitment and support for this project on the merits of the project, the environmental merits, the economic merits. This is a solid project. It is what the world needs now more than ever before, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I can attest to the fact that all Members on this side of the House stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine and, yesterday, we very diligently watched the response and the speech from the president of the Ukraine, Mr. Speaker, very much so, and looking how we can support the people of Ukraine.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, if the prime minister was too busy for a formal meeting, can the Premier update this House on his meeting with the federal Environment minister who has the Bay du Nord approval letter on his desk?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have expressed many times to the federal minister and to our federal colleagues the importance of this project. Let me walk you through them again. First, environmentally, which I think is a key component as we are in a time of transition, this project will come in at 0.2 megatons of carbon per year.

For example, in a comparative, Bombardier, the Quebec company, is 0.13 per year and increasing. This is the product we need on the environmental standards alone: 8 kilograms of carbon per barrel versus the oil sands at 60 to 80 kilograms per barrel. So the environmental impact of this project is perfectly suited for this



time of transition and I believe it will fit in the federal government's carbon plan.

I did have a discussion briefly with the federal Environment minister yesterday on the floor of the Assembly and made sure that he understood our position, yet again, as I have so many times in the past, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Speaker.

Just so I'm clear, the prime minister wasn't available to meet with the Premier, the Environment minister refused to meet and all we got out of it was a few selfies. What I ask that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador need to know, selfies are not going to solve and keep the oil and gas industry fluent in the province. We need more action from this administration for our oil and gas industry to survive, Mr. Speaker.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** People who received the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement will receive an extra \$11.25 every three months, which is a 12 cent-a-day increase. The minister said that your government is here to help but I ask the Premier: How does an extra 12 cents a day help someone who is struggling to afford groceries?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that important question.

We all understand the importance of the cost of living. I think we are all here because we want to make a difference. We are caring, compassionate parliamentarians who recognize this incredible issue for the people of the province right now. Yesterday we launched a plan that was meant to address the acute immediate need of those in need the most, Mr. Speaker. By the way, that touches several

hundred thousand Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Albeit, it is not the last of the plan and the minister will speak to budget. Because we don't take a myopic approach; we take a fulsome approach. We don't employ the knee-jerk responses for the politics of the situation. We want to make sure that we have the correct policy instrument that will drive what is necessary in making sure we're looking after the most vulnerable, including the middle class, as we go through this time of need.

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

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

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

We acknowledge the fact that the priority at the beginning should be the most vulnerable, but 12 cents a day is going to do very little for any sector here, particularly the most vulnerable.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Seniors will get an increase of \$131 in the Seniors' Benefit, which is less than \$11 a month. I've heard from seniors who are already behind on paying their oil bills.

How will \$11 a month help them put oil in their tanks?

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

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

I believe there's a famous quote that says: The true measure of any society can be found in the way they treat their most vulnerable. That's why yesterday I think we took a large step to say that we recognize the concerns of the people of the province. As the Premier pointed out, over 200,000 people will receive the stipends that we talked about yesterday.

We're spending over \$74 million on Income Supplement. We're spending \$63 million on the Seniors' Benefit. These were designed to include

the home heating rebate, to include the GST, to include things that we felt were important to help the people of the province – over 200,000 people. We're spending \$205 million on income support.

Mr. Speaker, I will say that I think that we're doing the first thing.

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

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

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

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

Giving pennies to people who are vulnerable and thinking that's going to help them get over this crisis is an insult to those people. More has to be done.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Yesterday, I was approached by a mother who between her and her partner earn \$51,000 a year. They have two children in school and they're now saving their pennies to try to afford to go to school and participate in sports tournaments.

Why has the Premier failed families by ignoring them in yesterday's public relations event?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think we failed families; in fact, we've always been there for families. We started to ensure that families' electricity rates didn't double, Mr. Speaker.

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Listen, there is nothing I would like more than to spend \$500 million a year looking after families a bit more, Mr. Speaker.

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Unfortunately, we have to use that to make sure that they –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** We have to use that money to make sure that it's not doubling. That's looking after families, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

All we ask the administration to do is be proactive, not reactive. They're not being proactive again with the needs of people as they face financial crisis here.

Yesterday, the Premier left three ministers in charge. Instead of coming up with ways to reduce the cost of food, fuel and rent, they instead admitted that they had no plan to help the middle class.

Now that the Premier is back – will you fix the mistakes from yesterday and announce an actual cost of living plan?

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

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

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

I will say that for all the rhetoric that's been espoused here in the House, I think the Members opposite and the people of the province recognize that we're helping over 220,000 Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Yesterday, we actually made improvements to the way we deliver the Income Supplement, the income support benefits and the Seniors' Benefit. This is valuable to the people of the province. The Premier also talked about the fact that we have made a lot of very, very difficult – I'm going to call it – heavy lifting to ensure that the price of electricity doesn't double. We made

sure that the price of child care is reduced substantially. These help the middle class as well.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I find that the rhetoric is not from this side of the House, unfortunately. It seems to be coming from their side. The Premier talks about needing to take time to build a program. We had a very successful program in this province. It was called the Home Heat Rebate Program.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** The minister eluded to the fact yesterday she had \$70 million in additional revenue that she could use to help the people of this province who really need it.

So I ask the minister: Will you implement a Home Heat Rebate Program immediately?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I will say either the Member doesn't know or he ought to know the fact that the Home Heat Rebate in 2016 was rolled into what's now called the Income Supplement and the Seniors' Benefit. These were expanded programs to allow for the people of the province to have the supports when they need it most, and that's what we did yesterday was increase those benefits.

I will say to the Member opposite, we recognize the price of fuel and the cost of living has gone up. Hopefully, fuel will continue to come down. We're seeing that now because of the changes in the global markets. It's not me or the people on this side of the House that actually set global oil prices, but I will say to the Member opposite, we're doing everything that we can to support the people of the province.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, those programs the minister talked about were indeed brought in and they were important when oil was trading at \$65 a barrel which was what the budget was based on. Unfortunately, for most Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, the price of filling their tanks has gone through the roof.

I would also like to ask the minister: Can you confirm that for each litre of gasoline purchased, the government is currently getting 40 cents a litre in taxes?

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

**S. COADY:** First of all, let me talk about the price of oil, because the Member opposite has referred to it twice now.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, in the budget of last year, we said we would average about \$64. I said in the fall fiscal update it would average around \$74. Right about now, it's around \$79 averaging for the year. We have taken in extra money because of that and we have been able to invest that in COVID, in Education and some of the other programs that the people of the province are utilizing and using.

We also remind the Member opposite, we have a very huge deficit and an incredibly large debt that we have to pay off, thanks in large part to Muskrat Falls.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, they must not have much faith in their rate mitigation strategy that they negotiated because they continue to want to talk about Muskrat Falls.

I ask the minister if she was getting 40 cents a litre –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** – she's getting 40 cents a litre on a litre of gas right now and she wants to talk

about it. She didn't mention the \$5 million they gave to Rothschild to try to tell us what our assets were worth. It's about choices and this government has a choice to make; it has a choice to make for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So will you turn around, immediately, and cancel the HST tax on tax?

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

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, I'm going to say that either the Member is misinformed, which he could be, or he's misinforming because he should know that we do not have control over the HST amount. That is set. We have a Harmonized Sales Tax in this country and what that means, Speaker, is I don't have the lever to be able to take HST off a particular item such as gas.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So, Speaker, the minister acknowledges that she has no control over the HST charged on the tax. We're paying HST on the federal excise tax, we're paying HST on the provincial gasoline tax and we're paying HST on the carbon tax.

Now, I'll ask the minister: Will you write your federal counterpart in Ottawa and ask him or her to defer the increase that's due April 1 on the carbon tax? Will you also ask them to defer the carbon tax itself for a period of time until gas prices return to a more normal price?

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

**S. COADY:** Again, either the Member is misinformed or he's misinforming. I will say to the Member opposite that he knows full well that HST is set in a harmonized rate. He knows full well that the 14.5 cents, which is the provincial gas tax, has been lowered over the last number of years.

What he's referring to is the carbon tax. The carbon tax is a plan and a policy of the federal government – not of this government – that is set out to address the very serious concerns around climate change. It is the federal government who has set that direction and to address climate change. I'm sure the Member opposite realizes how important it is to address climate change.

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

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

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

This morning when we debated the Interim Supply bill not one Member in this House denied not getting calls on the shortcomings of the cost of living plan yesterday – not one. In fact, most acknowledged they were getting the calls. I can tell you also now, I'm getting calls already on the shortcomings of the IVF program that's just been offered.

So I ask the minister: Does he believe that \$5,000 is nearly enough when IVF services cost Newfoundlanders and Labradorians tens of thousands of dollars?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm delighted to stand and address the program that we announced today. It is backdated to the first of September to allow for the fact that I was a little bit optimistic in the number of weeks it was going to take to get done. It is a program that is generous in the sense of levelling the playing field and dealing with the inequities that living in Newfoundland and Labrador provides from a travel perspective.

It is \$15,000 over three cycles. It is for anybody who holds an MCP card and is referred out of the province by the Newfoundland and Labrador Fertility Services clinic. It has received enthusiastic support on social media in the last hour.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I beg to differ on social media that it's generous. All the calls I'm getting already do not mention generous.

When fertility drugs cost upwards of 15 grand, when travel with your partner costs up to 30 grand with accommodations and drugs cost up to 15 grand, this is not generous. This is the same as the cost of living plan yesterday. It's just plugging a little hole, not looking at the big picture.

Last year, 14 months ago, the Premier promised IVF services here in the province. Here in the province, he promised it.

I ask the Premier: Will you deliver on a fertility clinic in 2022?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

What we committed to was a program that we found was not going to be adequate to meet the needs, so we enhanced it. We are in a very good situation compared with other jurisdictions. These are not services that are ensured under the *Canada Health Act*; nowhere else funds them in Canada.

There are four jurisdictions that provide no financial support at all for people who require fertility services. We have levelled the playing field. So it doesn't matter whether you live in Kilbride or Carmanville, you can get the same level of service as if you lived in the outskirts of Calgary, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**P. DINN:** Mr. Speaker, he has levelled nothing, but misled the public. The Premier misled the

public – misled them. IVF clinic in the province – no debate.

Last week, we heard of a couple married 73 years, separated through lack of long-term care resources. This is a story we've heard many times.

I ask the minister: Does he believe that separating couples like that is moral and ethical?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** I'm going to deal with the preamble first, Mr. Speaker, because I cannot let that go; it's a travesty of the truth. We misled nobody. We have a fertility services clinic in this province, which the department, through Eastern Health, funds to the tune of \$700,000 a year. What we committed to is to work with them to see what gaps existed that could be reasonably expected to be filled by those clinicians in this province.

In the meantime, we committed to level the playing field so that couples who needed services that are not available in this province could get them out of province. There is no cap on this program. It is available to anybody. It is not means tested and it is \$15,000 for each couple, if they need it.

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

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

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

You just need to go back to the news releases and back to the quotes and you'll hear exactly what was said on this issue – exactly.

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

**P. DINN:** Not a problem.

Mr. Speaker, we are one of the few provinces in the country without long-term care legislation. Last year, Nova Scotia introduced the *Life Partners in Long-term Care Act*. It came into effect preventing couples from being separated

in long-term facilities, even when they required different levels of care.

Now, we know that the minister reviewed that because he commented on it yesterday, commented about the shortcomings.

I ask the minister: When will he table made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador long-term care legislation in this Chamber?

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

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It is difficult when couples are separated because one cannot be managed in the same environment as their life partner. I appreciate that and, believe me, I empathize with those individuals. However, I would point out that in situations where, for example, one spouse needs a personal care home and the other doesn't, we will, if need be, subsidize that spouse to go into a personal care home.

We are not in a position to do that with long-term care for multiple reasons, not least of which is despite this government having built an extra 260 long-term beds and open 100 long-term care beds that the Members opposite left empty, we have still not got enough capacity and we're working with that with our Home First Initiative, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Speaker, recently our caucus received an email from the executive assistant to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure informing us that from now on all constituency inquiries must go through the minister's political staff. The 2014 ATIPPA statutory review chaired by Justice Clyde Wells spoke out against this practice.

Does the Premier support this action by his minister?

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe the question is important and it's good timing, because we heard from some Members across the way about communication. I feel that what we put in place – and it was given to me a pat on the back from someone on your side that said it's a good thing, because I believe then it would allow us to be consistent in terms of our response to the issues that your caucus has and other caucus Members as well. Which I must add, we get a lot of emails and issues coming to the department.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's about privacy and it's about people's rights as elected officials' rights.

Former leader Dwight Ball stated: Having ministers' politically appointed staff involved in the basic constituency matters jeopardize the privacy of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I ask the same question which he asked: Will you now eliminate this practice and allow MHAs again to deal directly with government officials on constituency matters?

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think an important point is to stress upon – and the people who are listening, and I hope the Member is listening who asked the question, because I think he is. There are a lot of issues that come through the department – a lot of issues. Some Members had said yesterday and

today that sometimes we don't get a response. Well, that concerns me. So I feel that –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. LOVELESS:** – what I've determined to do here, or attempted to do, and I thought that support would be on the other side, is to have consistency about responses to the issues that you have on behalf of your constituencies.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, this is not about consistency; it's about a minister who will not answer any questions of any Members in this House. You go into that department, it's the most frustrating department in government to deal with. I've been the shadow critic for that department for years and, trust me, the worst it's ever been is now. Now you have the minister in hiding. The minister is actually in hiding.

There were some ministers that used to actually respond to you, such as this one. The Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde complained that going through a minister's EA was – I quote – a mistake. These are their words, Mr. Speaker. And he said he was glad when it ended.

I ask the minister: Does he now endorse the practice his colleague, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, is endorsing?

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I have to tell you, you want to make reference to when the department was in a bad state. When your current leader was minister and you were EA –

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

**E. LOVELESS:** – you built two ferries out of the province only to realize that we had to float

them in the water for a year and cost taxpayers over \$12 million – taxpayers' money, \$12 million. You didn't get it right because the vessels wouldn't fit alongside of the wharf. That's your mistake, the two of you.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** I'm glad to see he can actually –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

You want to waste time during QP?

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

I'm glad to see he's responding, though. It's nice to see it because I haven't heard a word for the last two years.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Nice to know he is in the room.

**B. PETTEN:** So it's kind of nice to know he's in the room. Yeah, I agree on that; I appreciate that.

I quote the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

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

**B. PETTEN:** And ironically, he was the first person I thought of when this sent to me, because I remember it and I agreed with him: MHAs are entrusted by their constituents to inquire on behalf of the workings of programs and policies, but MHAs are diverted at every turn to executive assistants.

As the hon. Member asked: How are Opposition MHAs expected to do their job when your government is running political interference? And that's their words, Mr. Speaker.

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to speak to this; I was feeling left out today.

What I will say is I remember making that comment, and it was a response to when I did sit on the Opposition and I had a meeting scheduled with a health board in the province. When the executive assistant and the Minister of Health at the time found out that I had the meeting, they went and cancelled it.

So I asked questions when I was sitting in the Opposition about why my meetings with health boards were getting cancelled by the executive assistant. What I will say is, regardless of what you want to say about the policy, I don't think that that kind of thing is going on. I appreciate the fact that the minister is trying to answer all the emails, all the queries coming in in a timely fashion.

Thank you.

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you Mr. Speaker.

I think the problem is not with government or Opposition. It's with two parties that refuse to answer when they're in power. Air ambulance services for Labrador are often unavailable, forcing patients to rely on luck and hope that barriers preventing them from accessing critical health care does not leave them with permanent disabilities or death. That's the reality we face.

We don't know how often air ambulance services are denied to Labrador critically ill or injured patients. The data is hidden across multiple government agencies and departments.

So I ask the Premier, not the Minister of Health: In the spirit of accountability and transparency, will your government provide this data openly to Labradorians and to this House of Assembly?

Thank you.

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We acknowledge that the air ambulance system in this province needs some work and we have endeavoured to do some of that pending the Health Accord. Decisions, however, about who is transferred and by what route and with what degree of urgency are totally clinical. They are not made by anybody other than physicians.

Those patients for whom there may be delays in evacuating them to a higher level of care receive care remotely, virtually from the referral centre. So whilst I appreciate the Member's concerns and have explained that we will be working towards improving this, I wait for the Health Accord implementation plan, which we hope will be coming very soon.

Thank you.

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

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

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

On March 2, the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills announced the establishment of the Ukrainian Family Support Desk to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians seeking to bring family members in Ukraine to our province. Now, while this is to be commended, the announcement, like the announcement to welcome Afghan refugees last fall, is short on details.

Will the minister elaborate on the nature of supports and resources that will be offered to Newfoundland families and to their Ukrainian family who come to this province?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

We are absolutely astounded with the level of support that is being offered to Ukrainians from Newfoundland and Labrador, indeed across coast to coast to coast. But Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are standing tall and proud;



they are standing with Ukraine. We have heard of offers of houses, of apartments, of bed-sitting rooms and of opportunities to provide voluntary daycare. It is absolutely unbelievable.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize that Newfoundland and Labrador is home to 1,400 people who identify with Ukrainian descent. We offer the Ukrainian Family Support Desk, initially, to provide support to our Ukrainian neighbours.

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

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

**P. TRIMPER:** Speaker, this government has now spent millions of dollars repairing the homes damaged by the flood in 2017 at Mud Lake and vicinity, investigating the cause of that very serious flood, predicting that yet another flood equal or more dangerous will now occur in the next 15 years and, as the minister stated yesterday, established a monitoring network to let us know when this will occur.

However, as we brace for yet another spring breakup, when will government address the real issue and move the 34 residents who signed the petition I tabled yesterday out of harms way?

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

**B. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

As I mentioned yesterday, I did have the pleasure to tour Mud Lake and listen to the concerns and, obviously, we have seen that. We have put in place a state-of-the-art flood monitoring and warning system using NASA satellite imaging and advanced modelling processes that we have in place. We have also given an opportunity for individuals to receive disaster funds, and most of those chose not to move out of the location.

The hon. Member knows that if the whole community wanted to come forward and wanted to relocate, then we'd look at that as an option as we move forward, but we got to get –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Ninety per cent.

**B. DAVIS:** Yes, 90 per cent and we understand that. We have initiated local river watch committees, many of which –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

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

I didn't hear a when part there.

Another when question, here we are again, one year later, I'm on my feet again asking: With the few remaining caribou in Southern Labrador being hunted by residents from Northeastern Quebec, today, as I speak, both provinces know they are witnessing the extirpation of this species.

When will government meet with community leaders in their communities on the north shore of Quebec?

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

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

I can barely sit in my seat here today; I'm that excited for our enforcement officers in Labrador. Over the last week or week and a half, we made two – I can't say arrests but we detained two groups who were found with illegal caribou in their possession. We seized their machines, the kamutiks, the snow machines, everything they would have had, rifles. The officers in Labrador are so happy right now of what they did. This is perseverance of patrol after patrol after patrol.

I met with these guys about two or three weeks ago when we talked about the situation ongoing in Labrador. I said guys, something like Dr. Fitzgerald, hold fast. We will catch them in a minute.

My friend compared poaching to bingo one time: You play long enough, you win; you poach long enough, you will get caught.

Thank you.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### **Tabling of Documents**

**SPEAKER:** I do have one.

In accordance with section 19(5)(a) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I hereby table the minutes of the House of Assembly Management Commission meetings for September 15, September 22, October 6 and December 1, 2021, and also for January 5 and January 12, 2022.

Also, pursuant to section 18(9) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I'm advising the House that the Members of the House of Assembly Management Commission are as follows: the Government House Leader; the Opposition House Leader; the hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation and Minister Responsible for Labrador Affairs; the Member for Burin - Grand Bank; the Member for Harbour Main; the Member for Torngat Mountains; the Speaker and the Clerk.

Any further tabling of documents?

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

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

I hereby table the Business Plan for the Office of Women and Gender Equality for 2021-23.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

### **Notices of Motion**

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion that the Standing Orders Committee comprise the following Members: the MHA for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde; the MHA for Mount Scio; the MHA for Windsor Lake; the MHA for Harbour Main; and the MHA for Torngat Mountains.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

And that the Government Services Committee comprised of the following Members: the MHA for St. George's - Humber; the MHA for Mount Pearl North; the MHA for Burin - Grand Bank; the MHA for Baie Verte - Green Bay; the MHA for Ferryland; the MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans; and the MHA for Labrador West.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that on tomorrow I will move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, March 17, 2022.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, April 4, 2022.

**SPEAKER:** Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

The background of this petition is as follows: Roads in our province are in various states of disrepair. Many rural communities are concerned that the deplorable road conditions will keep visitors and family members away from Come Home Year celebrations.

We are inviting the world to come to our province this summer, yet many rural roads are unfit for travel for local and visiting traffic, and many vehicles are damaged by the huge potholes, unrepaired washouts and uneven shoulders. This is a real deterrent to tourists and family members from out of province who wish to join in our celebrations this summer.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase the provincial roads program budget to address the need for repairs on many rural roads throughout our province.

The people that signed this one, Speaker, are from the Sunnyside and Come By Chance area and I have others that are going to be on the way. I certainly expect to have signatures from the Terrenceville area and Chance Cove. We've got one of the most beautiful trails that is kind of becoming world renowned, but the trail is in better shape than the road to get there.

The Chance Cove branch and the Bellevue branch are both bypass roads if there's an accident out on the highway; these are being utilized by more than just local traffic. These are branch roads that need to be addressed.

I'm sure I'm going to have another petition – the same petition – filled out by the people in Jean de Baie, Rock Harbour, Spanish Room and Little Bay. All these places have been neglected for years.

It's brush cutting and ditching. I mean, to have a \$2-million budget for all the brush cutting in our

province is ludicrous. That could easily double and still not be enough.

What I'm asking the minister and the government of the day is that if we are going to be inviting people here from all over the world, let's welcome them with something to drive on and a way to get around instead of coming home and beating up their cars and costing them a fortune.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise again today on a petition concerning cataracts. I won't read the prayer of the petition; I put it on the record yesterday. But, Mr. Speaker, I just want to rise again. I heard the Deputy Premier in a question that she was asked today – I know she's over there listening very attentively. The Minister of Finance and the President of Treasury Board said – and I quote – a society is measured in how they treat their most vulnerable. That was her quote.

I ask the Deputy Premier: Would you insert yourself in this issue when I ask you do you think that over 800 seniors who cannot see, who have bad vision, ones who lost their driver's licence, ones who can't read their own prescriptions, ones that are isolated, ones that are too scared to walk outside because they're scared of falling – do you think these people are vulnerable?

I say that to the Deputy Premier in all sincerity. If you really feel that, I ask that you bring that back to Cabinet because there's no reason why that this can't be done. This is very serious. There's absolutely no reason why the wait-list, on wait-list one, in Western Newfoundland cannot be eliminated. Every rejection, the reason why it should be, was proven false – every one I say to the Deputy Premier.

There are no rooms to have surgery in Western. Stephenville is not operating as we speak. Stephenville is not operating. There's no surgery

time in Western Newfoundland – absolutely none. There are three specialists that can get rid of this wait-list in two to three months for the sake of \$1.3 million. There's no reason.

So I say to the Deputy Premier, with all due respect – and I know you meant what you said. I know the Members from on the West Coast, I know the Member from up in the Straits and I know the Member for L'Anse au Clair also have patients coming to Corner Brook on the wait-list. I'm asking: Will you please bring it back to your caucus and Cabinet? Because what you're doing to those seniors, the most vulnerable, is atrocious.

I ask the Deputy Premier here today: Will you stand by your comments that you made in this House and bring this back to Cabinet and please get this fixed? Because it is an easy fix.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

The local service district of West Bay and the Town of Lourdes have an agreement in place for the extension of water services to West Bay. They applied for funding through the Canada Community-Building Fund but when the water service was tested, it didn't meet the federal standard, resulting in the rejection of the application. The water service does meet the provincial standard and the communities still agree in principle on extending the water supply into West Bay, pending funding.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to secure funding through the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure to ensure safe drinking water for the residents of West Bay.

Speaker, there's a lot of talk about regionalization. The Lourdes water system was built and designed as a regional system. The local service district in West Day would like to

join on to that system. The Town of Lourdes are saying yes, no problem; you can do it.

So they've applied for funding and were turned down because the quality of the water in Lourdes, apparently, was not good enough for the people of West Bay. When we asked about quality – the question was asked about was it safe to drink. The reply was yes, it's perfectly safe to drink. So here we have a clean drinking water supply that's safe to drink for all of the residents of Lourdes but, for some reason, it's not good enough for the residents of West Bay to drink and the funding was denied.

There has to be a way for us to work together to ensure that the community of West Bay – because I would argue that the quality of water in Lourdes is certainly better than the quality of water in West Bay, considering they have no water. One of the key components of the Health Accord talks about safe drinking water. The water in Lourdes is safe to drink. The people of West Bay would like to join to that system, but they need their government to help them and they need their government to provide funding to make that happen.

So I urge the government to work, find a way, to find a solution that can help the people of West Bay to actually get access to the Lourdes water system.

Thank you.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

Over 750 volunteers, comprising 25 teams, provide the core search and rescue capability in the province. Members train extensively and respond to emergencies under adverse and dangerous conditions to provide an important community service – the return of lost or stranded individuals to their loved ones. The Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue Association is a model for other jurisdictions in Canada.

However, as the provincial government allocates only \$91,000 annually, the majority of revenue, to cover expenses, is from fundraising and other community support.

The tragic death of Burton Winters in 2012 resulted in calls for an evaluation of all aspects of search and rescue capability and coordination. In December 2021, Commissioner Igloliorte released the final report on the inquiry into ground search and rescue for lost and missing persons in Newfoundland and Labrador. Many of the recommendations related specifically to better supporting the members of the NLSARA.

WHEREAS the Newfoundland and Labrador Search and Rescue Association is the core provider of search and rescue in the province; and

WHEREAS members of this organization serve as volunteers providing a valuable community service; and

WHEREAS these volunteers must fundraise for additional equipment and consumables to maintain their effectiveness; and

WHEREAS most searchers are not provided mental health training or support to deal with the trauma they face when responding;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to implement the recommendations of the inquiry, including the provision of capital and operational funding, insurance coverage and mental health training and support for these heroes of our province.

Speaker, I must thank the ground search and rescue team in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, first of all, for their co-operation. I met with Harry Blackmore last week and they prepared – I have to show the House – probably the most beautiful petition we’ve ever tabled here; they printed it off on nice paper. I don’t want to digress from the seriousness of this very important issue.

In his report, there are 17 recommendations that James Igloliorte – a very good friend of mine; many of us know him – have advocated to this government for implementation. Many of them deal with mental health and support. The others

deal with capital and operational support for these teams of volunteers who, I must say, in Goose Bay every year – and I served on the team for a decade – stood out there every spring selling tickets in whatever conditions so that the teams can raise money across this province to go out and save our loved ones.

There is something very wrong with this situation. I hope the government is seriously looking at these recommendations. I look forward to seeing a response.

Thank you.

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

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

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to return affordable air travel to the region of Northern Labrador through subsidization of the cost of airfare between Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the Northern Labrador communities.

Our Northern Labrador communities are totally isolated with no road access and marine transportation is limited to summer months only.

With the provincial government cancellation of the Lewisporte freight boat to our communities, families are now struggling with increasing cost of basic needs, including food security. Our only means of transportation is marine or air.

Our marine transportation service is once a week, with the ferry running July to October. Our air transportation service is provided by a single monopoly airline, Air Borealis.

The cost of air travel for residents living in Northern Labrador is grossly disproportionate to available income, thereby restricting travel, increasing costs of living and contributing to isolation.

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 provide an air transportation subsidy to reduce

the cost of airfare between Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the Northern Labrador communities.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time I presented this air request, and I don't expect to get an air subsidy in actual fact. I've been in the House long enough to know how things work. What I'm saying is no longer shocking to the House because I've said it many times.

The closest community on the North Coast of Labrador is Rigolet. To actually travel to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, a return fare is about \$800. Our most northerly community of Nain, a return airfare is about \$1,100. That's for one person.

It's no longer shocking. What's shocking is we live in a Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and it's okay for the North Coast not to be able to travel. If somebody has a grandparent or a mother or a relative in the nursing home in Happy Valley-Goose Bay – that's the only place, other than the South Coast, which is even further to travel – they have to pay this money. So what happens is they don't get to travel.

A connection to the Trans-Labrador Highway would actually be a huge – I think it would be a huge venue for people to be able to travel. But the problem is three budgets ago now – we're going into the third budget – \$200,000 was announced for a pre-feasibility study. That money has been announced again and it will be announced again.

Do you know something? It's shameful to hear that comment: it'll be announced again. Yes, it'll be announced again, because there is no consideration for the people on the North Coast of Labrador. Are we not a part of this province?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

The background to this petition is as follows: The Witless Bay line is a significant piece of infrastructure.

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

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

I spoke on this numerous times over the last couple of years. Looking at the stretch of highway, we probably have about nine or 10 kilometres left. They did some work, the previous minister did, I think we had two kilometres and we ended up getting four, which is significant. But fixing half of it is only a part of the problem. We have to fix the whole issue. It's like if you have a leak in the bow of a boat and not fix it, water is going to go everywhere.

To realize that to fix this infrastructure, it has to get in and get fixed. There are people that use this every day going back and forth to go to Holyrood. People in our area drive back and forth to Holyrood. We have dozens of tourism people coming in during the summer and even in the winter as well, people going across Witless Bay Line to go skidooing on the West Coast. Sometimes instead of going across the Witless Bay Line with their trailers in tow, they go out around St. John's and go out the Trans-Canada.

The condition of the road is really bad. It's something that needs to be looked at with a lot of people going to Soldier's Pond and, hopefully, at some point again, Bull Arm. I know they're going to Long Harbour as well.

Last summer, when I was doing this petition or last year, some of the motorcyclists had said to me, don't forget about the motorcycles going across because they're driving across this piece of infrastructure and they're zigzagging across the opposite sides of the roads and it's very dangerous. It's certainly something that needs to be looked at.

Hopefully, the minister can see and put it in his budget for this year, to have a look at that and, hopefully, get it repaired and totally done so we don't have to hear any more petitions on this piece of infrastructure.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

**Orders of the Day**

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

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991, Bill 44, and I further move that Bill 44 be now read a first time.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Sorry, it's moved and seconded that the said bill 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.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991" carried. (Bill 44)

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act To Amend The Provincial Court Act, 1991. (Bill 44)

**SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

**S. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act, Bill 48, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the Minister of Finance shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act, Bill 48, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act," carried. (Bill 48)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act. (Bill 48)

**SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**S. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 48 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Repeal The Colonial Building Act, Bill 50, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Repeal The Colonial Building Act, Bill 50, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation to introduce a bill, "An Act To Repeal The Colonial Building Act," carried. (Bill 50)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Repeal The Colonial Building Act. (Bill 50)

**SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**S. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 50 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Access To Health And Education Services, Bill 51, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Access To Health And Education Services, Bill 51, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Access To Health And Education Services," carried. (Bill 51)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Respecting Access To Health And Education Services. (Bill 51)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

**S. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 51 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The



Petroleum Products Act, Bill 52, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Digital Government and Service NL shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend The Petroleum Products Act, Bill 52, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Motion, that the hon. Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Petroleum Products Act," carried. (Bill 52)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Petroleum Products Act. (Bill 52)

**SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall this said bill be read a second time?

**S. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 52 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 45, Interim Supply.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I shall now leave the Chair for the House to

resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 45, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

### Resolution

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

*"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 the sum of \$2,754,562,200."*

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

Chair, yesterday we heard the announcement of the five-point plan, and I will say it's in the right direction. It's baby steps, but it is in the right direction to address a problem. I do believe, however, that we need a broader approach that addresses the systemic underlying issues.

A lot of discussion has been around food prices. By the way, I'll come to this. There has been a plan that was in place many years ago that has merit and seems to have been abandoned. *Canada's Food Price Report* for 2022 was released in December of 2021. It actually projected a rise in food prices of between 5 per cent to 7 per cent, an extra \$1,000 for a family of four, on the Canadian average; however, food prices in Newfoundland and Labrador along with four other provinces were projected to be much higher.

They just didn't focus on gas and fuel as the main reason, but they talked about food supply chain issues and logistical issues created by the pandemic, transport costs, maritime transport capacity, labour shortages brought on by the pandemic, as well as climate-induced drought and wildfires that devastated much of the Canadian grain and US grain crops.

Interestingly, three weeks ago, I was contacted by PROOF, which is a Food Insecurity Policy Research group based in the University of Toronto. They had a special interest in Newfoundland and Labrador because they noticed that between 2007 and 2012 that food insecurity declined with the introduction of the poverty reduction action plan in 2006. But that the gains have evaporated since 2011 and 2012 and have escalated since.

Actually, they said that the odds of being food insecure in 2017-2018 rose by 49 per cent from 2011-2012. In other words, a 49 per cent chance of being food insecure now. Sixty-five percent of households on social assistance, Chair, in 2017, were food insecure. Let's call it what it is: hungry. That's an increase of 46 per cent since 2011-2012. The pandemic, of course, exacerbated this and the volatile oil prices heaped just more uncertainty and instability on the process.

I go back to this. We had a plan in 2006, *Reducing Poverty: An Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador*. It was introduced by the PCs. They did a lot of good, actually. I'll mention a few parts that they identified there – what we learned, key themes related to income support specific issues that identified barriers for income support clients who are wishing to pursue work or post-secondary education;

health-related issues, that there is a link between low income and health that are economic; employment development was affected by low wages, poor benefits, low minimum wage and precarious employment; and that poverty was an important aspect of women's inequality – it affected women more. They also suggested expanding the provincial drug plan. When they interviewed people and asked the question, why are people poor, the answer was because they do not have an adequately paying job.

Which brings me to the case of the two women I've been trying to help and the problems that they've encountered in trying to get off income support, problems that are caused by current government policy: Krista and Sarah. Both are income support recipients; both wanted to pursue post-secondary education to improve their employability, with the intent of getting off income support to get on their feet and then be contributing members to society.

Sarah is starting a family. Actually, she just had her first child, her and her partner, in the last week or so. She and her partner are on methadone. They've kicked their habit to the point where they are able to take their methadone carries home. That's a level of trust that indicates that they are committed to the process. You just don't get to carry the methadone home.

Krista is 43 years old; she has been in the news. She completed her Adult Basic Education; went back to school last year; Type 1 diabetic and relies on intravitreal eye injections, which are about \$1,800 a shot a month, to maintain her eyesight. Both returned to school later in life, during a pandemic, online. They took on enormous challenges.

Krista had to take out a student loan, which she is going to have to pay back regardless of whether she gets a job, ends up on income support or not – back again.

Sarah applied for support through the Immigration, Population Growth and Skills program there that's federally funded, not even provincial funding. If you look on the surface, it looks like they've received an awful lot of money and that they're doing better than what they were on income support, until you realize

that now their heat and light is no longer subsidized, nor is their rent. Actually, if you look at the balance sheet they're worse off.

But the kicker, the problem that really threw them for a loop is that they lost their 100 per cent drug coverage, which, by the way, as I understand it, if you end up working in a job, you can maintain that for a year. Not so, if you go back and pursue an education – a post-secondary education.

I will say they were panicked. They were sick to the stomach. They had regretted and – they wished they had been told at the beginning – second-guessing their decision to even go back and pursue post-secondary education. In other words, instead of helping these two women, government policy put barriers in the way of women who are already facing significant barriers; people who wanted to get off income support; people who wanted to get on with their lives.

Now, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development acknowledged that there are gaps in the policy for income recipients accessing post-secondary education, and we managed to arrange a co-pay. It's not 100 per cent coverage and that seems like a positive step; however, when you're already at the margins, it's not. It's already beating them down.

So a simple solution here is to provide the 100 per cent drug coverage for people on income support who wish to pursue post-secondary education to get off. It's a policy change. It doesn't require legislation. It's a simple thing to do until we can come up with a permanent fix.

But the other aspect, Chair, is that to look at the systemic issues, we have to start looking at an idea that is mentioned in the Health Accord of some form of guaranteed basic or universal basic income; let's look at some form of that. Let's get the Committee going that the PMR that was voted unanimously, twice, in this House; strike that, let's take a look at it.

Let's review and increase the amount of income support; it have been decades. Let's look at a minimum wage that is a liveable wage. If it comes down to small businesses, if they're the

ones that are challenged, then let's start looking at giving tax breaks to small businesses, local businesses, so that they can offer a living wage to their employees.

We don't need to give that to the Walmarts of the world or the Canadian Tires. They are national and international and they can handle it. But I think right now we can certainly look at removing the barriers from those who wish to get off income support and those who are seeking to improve their lives. Give them a hand up; don't put barriers in their way.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It is really nice to stand. I know we now have the option of standing or sitting, but there is a reason they call it House sitting in the spring and fall, because it is too much sitting. It is nice to have the opportunity to stand and speak for a few minutes, Mr. Chair, on the Interim Supply.

I was thinking while I was sitting there, to folks that – often our colleagues say there is no one watching, but from time to time there is someone watching so what does Interim Supply really mean? Interim Supply basically is just a bill. In this case, it is just under \$3 billion that is necessary for all people in the Legislature to pass to ensure the continuity of operations. It doesn't involve any new expenditures.

When I think about the public service, the hard-working women and men, and I just need to look no further than my district. I really need to start with the people that work on the roads. It has been what folks in my district call an old-fashioned winter. We have had temps that have dropped down, out in Labrador West where we were recently, to minus 54 the night myself and Minister for Children, Seniors and Social Development was there.

I have communities like Red Bay that have received more than 400 centimetres of snow so

far since January. We have had seniors that sadly have had to leave their homes because the only thing out is the roof. I can tell you it has really challenged the people who work on the roadways in these terrible, terrible elements. Someone said to me last week, a supervisor on the road, I think we've had consistently one blizzard every single week since 2022 came in.

So our hats are off to those people. Often when we're tucked in at home at night, those people are out on the road, away from their families in less than ideal conditions.

Chair, it also includes the nurses. I can't think of anyone who needs a bouquet tossed to them anymore than our nurses. There's been lots of chatter over the last week. We're about two years since the first Public Health state of emergency was declared in our province. I think at that time, as we started in those first weeks, we probably thought this will be a month; this will be two months. But who could have ever anticipated that we would find ourselves two years navigating through what turned out to be a really unprecedented time, not just here at home in Newfoundland and Labrador, not just across the provinces and territories in our beautiful country, but, really, Chair, across the globe.

Every day us, as leaders, in our various districts were saying to people: stay home, stay home, stay home it could save lives. We had people that every single day, having to, in many cases, kiss their children at home and go to work on the front lines. We certainly appreciate the work they've done.

Teachers: I know teachers in my district; they've done some really creative things to keep students engaged in virtual learning. So there's a bouquet that we could throw to all of these people.

Basically, that's why it's important. This is kind of routine business. Sometimes it gets dragged out in the House. I'm sure we'll have a vote in very short order, but it's so important that we go through this democratic process and we pass the vote on Interim Supply to ensure that vital services of government continue across the province.

I meant to say this at the start when I got up, when I mentioned democracy, I would be remiss

if I didn't acknowledge what's happening in Ukraine. The world's not that big anymore and even though Ukraine, at one point, even to myself, seemed far away, we're feeling the impacts and we're going to feel the impacts for years to come. It will take unprecedented amounts of money; it will take a worldwide effort to build Ukraine.

As we sit this week in the House, for me, yesterday – on the weekend leading up to coming in the House, I was filled with a lot of reflection as someone who's had the privilege to serve this province for almost a decade. I've also had the tremendous privilege to represent our province on a national committee. During that time, I got to travel and present in nine legislatures across the country. I got to travel and represent Canada over in the UK, in one of the Channel Islands there, in Guernsey and sit with nations from all across. It was an international event. To see democracy, how it works, to see what's happening now, those folks that are ravaged by war and the senseless lives that are lost, it really strikes home. Perhaps, Chair, because I am in the position that I'm in right now, I've been giving a lot of thought to that.

It's challenging times. We've heard our colleagues yesterday and today – I can't see the clock on the other side any more because of the bright lights, Chair. We're hearing a lot about the cost of living. Folks on the other side get up and they ask us every day what are you doing about this; what are you doing about that. I always sit here and I think those topics matter to us as well. There are 40 representatives here in this Legislature. Whatever banner you sit under, I think we've all signed up for the right reasons; we want to do right by the people that put us there. As an MHA, I think that our most important role is ensuring that the people that we represent, the voice that we are for the people, that we ensure that they have access to services.

Chair, I sat for a couple of years on the other side; I did the same thing. I got up every day and we asked questions of the government of the day. Then I had an opportunity to sit in the Chair as Deputy Speaker for just under two years and sort of watch, as I was a presiding Officer during that time. Then you come on government side; it is a more challenging position. Just take it down

to your own household, Chair. If you have a household, you have a family and you have a certain amount of money that you have to spend each month, you have to make decisions. Those are not easy decisions.

It's when we talk about this major project and the impacts that have had on residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, I'm not raising it from a blame perspective. I'm just raising it that it is certainly a reality that we have to deal with. I don't envy our current Finance Minister, I can tell you that. A lot of times when I leave late, her vehicle is still here. She's got a pretty challenging job right now. Things like Ukraine, things like the pandemic and the oil prices, yet we have this major chunk: \$500 million.

I represent a rural area. I am the voice at a big roundtable for Labrador, which is a vast land with lots of challenges and so I come with a lot of requests to the Finance Minister. I come with a lot of requests to my colleagues across departments, but we always have this \$500 million that is the first chunk of the pie that has to come out and be set aside. That is what it is, but we do have to talk about and we have to acknowledge it because I just think about in terms of meeting needs for new schools, in terms of the health care demands and you could go right across the board. That could go a long way, but it is what it is and we have to find our way through it.

But, Chair, there is always better days ahead. Last week, I was in Calgary at an Indigenous tourism conference. It was nice to be in a room with almost 400 people after a long time. I was really struck by whatever was happening in other provinces or territories. I just kept thinking: We have that. We have the potential to do that right here at home in this province – to do it in Labrador.

Just yesterday, my friend, her first day on vacation, she said I'm not going down south anywhere; I'm going to stay home and have a great time. So she has pictures today all over social media of this ginormous polar bear that, in my view, she was too close to, but some really cool shots. We have the potential; it is just supporting the right people to go out.

I'm excited about the future. Come Home Year, there is lots of talk about that. I think we all need to be encouraging our family that has been away and, in some cases, family that we haven't seen for a long time to come home. I think there is a special pride of place when you're a resident of Newfoundland and Labrador. So I know that in my district and across Labrador and through my Indigenous Affairs portfolio, I'm looking forward to getting out at a number of events that are already planned over the coming months, Chair.

I want to give a shout-out on the heels of International Women's Day. There was a very big event that happened in my hometown on Saturday. We are seeing a real revival of the dog team race and there are about six dog team races that are happening in my district over the next number of Saturdays. Last week, there was 11 teams that lined up on the bay and a very good friend of mine, the lone female that entered the race, she came in with the gold. So I was quite proud of Belinda Williams is her name. She sets the bar high for women. She has a partner and they have a fishing enterprise; she is involved in that every summer. Everybody was pretty proud of Belinda when she came in; minus 29 when the gun went off and they left the ropes to do their about seven kilometres on dogs. I'm sure I'll see her in Port Hope Simpson, is that plan, this coming Saturday.

I also want to acknowledge it was First Minister Tyler Edmunds of Nunatsiavut – he is now the interim president of Nunatsiavut. The Premier and I have worked really close with President Lampe. He is on leave right now as he battles some health issues. We have had a phenomenal relationship; a lot of respect for that man; we wish him well on this side of the House and I am sure on all side of the House. I'm looking forward to working with interim President Tyler Edmunds, who I am sure will do a great job.

I had so much more I wanted to say, Chair, but time goes very fast when you only have a few minutes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you so much for the opportunity.

**CHAIR:** I recognize the hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

**P. TRIMPER:** Thank you, Chair.

I have so many issues – I know I’m going to run out of time, but I do want to make a couple of comments on the questions I just asked. Again, relevant to the fiscal policy of this Executive.

The first one I asked today was dealing with Mud Lake. I was asking the minister about when will government actually look down at the report and go through it in great detail, and I will remind him that there are individuals that are on both sides of the river that are at risk. He’s got a million-dollar study which has identified they’re going to get hit again.

So when I’m thinking fiscally responsible, forget about all the ethics of protecting our residents who are living in harm’s way; let’s just look at it from a financial perspective. Are we going to, every few years, have to go in and put houses back on foundations, fix up docks and vehicles and everything else that was destroyed and then yet go through all the expenses of helicoptering out the people who are at risk? By the way, that is their only option over there. That’s why this situation is so different than anywhere else in the province; they don’t have a road to drive out on.

The other comment I wanted to make was on caribou. I asked specifically of the minister about when will this government go to the communities in Southern Quebec and actually speak to the leaders of these communities. Yes, there have been two charges recently, two incidents where the enforcement officers – excellent people; I know them all, great people, dedicated to protecting this resource, but they involve situations in Labrador. I’m speaking specifically of those on the Quebec North Shore – and know some of these individuals very well; I’ve known them for over 20 years – who are determined to try to resolve a boundary dispute at the expense of a species which is completely disappearing. So a very shocking situation. The minister and counterparts from Quebec and Ottawa need to go to the North Shore of Quebec; that’s what we have to do. Everything else is gravy on the side. We have to go to those communities.

I now want to tackle some of the issues that I have in the community; I’m just going to go through them. One is Route 520 and I know the minister has been working with myself and my office for the last few years, a lot of challenges around the tendering. I’m looking forward to seeing and hearing more about the plans for Route 520 this year. The holes and the situation do not get better; of course, it gets worse. We all know that; we all talk about our highways. This is an important artery and it, by far, is the worst highway I would say that I have to deal with in my district, and it’s ranking up there with perhaps the worst highway in Labrador right now. We’ll have to see.

I wanted to, also, as I’m speaking about financial issues and everything else that’s happened – you can always tie money to any issue that, frankly, any of us are dealing with. A very important one, you’re seeing it in the press the last few days and the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development was recently in Labrador along with the Minister of Labrador and Indigenous Affairs, we met together at the Labrador Inn, which has become this temporary overflow situation. It has been in operation now for the last two years. It’s now, I would suggest, the largest “shelter” – I put in quotes because it’s a hotel but we are now sheltering as many as 38 individuals at any one time.

My colleague from Torngat Mountains was with me a little while ago, we’ve made a couple trips over there, because many of the people that are at great risk and are dependent upon a lifeline, literally, in the brutal winter that we’ve had this year, we’ve been over to make sure that things are there. But what is missing? The key ingredient that’s missing – and I heard it in the minister’s answer to the question yesterday, he talked about supports sitting at the Hub. Well, you have to understand the geography of Happy Valley-Goose Bay. The Hub is a six kilometre walk and minus 40 to minus 50 degrees away.

Essentially, there are no supports. I am heavily involved in the situation, particularly at the Labrador Inn. I’m pleased to see some movement happening on security cameras and so on, but we need professional counselling support at this location; up to 38 individuals, we really are not helping them.

It is an incredibly precarious situation, and as the province knows and probably much of the country, we've had two very serious, very unfortunate deaths there recently in the community. One was at the Lab Inn. This is an emotional, economic, you name it; it has to be a priority, not just for my district but for the province.

A couple of items I want to speak about in terms of constitutional obligation. I mentioned this to the Finance Minister a little while ago. As a jurisdiction of Canada, we are obligated to provide quality education for the residents of our province in English and in French – en Français.

The school in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, École Boréale, has been lobbying for years to have some expanded capability, a basic situation such as a gymnasium. I want to bring this to government's attention again while I have this opportunity. We have an obligation to pick up our socks and tell Ottawa that we are meeting this constitutional obligation, because we are not right now.

We have many French-speaking families. We have other families who choose to have their children raised in a bilingual situation. It is a struggle to get those situations there.

When I talk about providing French training, I'm also talking about health care; a lot of doctors, nurses and other professionals that we could be availing of in Northern regions such as Labrador. Well, guess what? Why should we exclude a family who may like to come to a location because you can have their children pursue an education in French?

So all these little features, they all help us attract and deal with so many other issues that are fiscally really challenging us.

The other constitutional obligation I'm going to alert here to this House, and particularly to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, is at the Labrador Correctional Centre. We are obligated to provide recreational facilities for the inmates at that facility and we do not have any kind of indoor situation at all.

So the people that are housed at that facility right now, their only option for recreational

activity is outside. As I just said in my previous remarks, we have just had four of the roughest months I've experienced in my 35 years in Labrador. It's been cold. It has been unfit to be outside. So, essentially, the inmates are confined to their cells and we're all aware of the mental anguish and anxiety that develops if you don't have an outlet. It's really important.

I want to underline that for the minister and the Finance Minister and the entire government to put that on their radar.

The road to the North Coast. This is not only something that is important to my colleague from Torngat Mountains but it is important to the district of Lake Melville, and I can tell you folks, it's important for the entire province because it's how we're going to work together.

I've listened to my colleague and I've come to understand the difference between the words equity and equality. We can provide a 10 per cent increase in the cost of living and for the income support announcement, for example, yesterday. Well, that's 10 per cent across the board. That's great, but I can tell you when it costs a lot more just to drive – forget driving, there's no option – just to get out to somewhere for professional services that we all take for granted, there is no equity in it. So, equality and equity, you have to think about it.

It's been announced for the last two years; it's time to get on with it. I have a lot of personal experience with this route. The opportunity to get from Northwest River to Postville, basically, is quite straightforward. After that, it will be challenging. I just want us to all collectively focus on getting started on this project. Get the feasibility going; get this first piece built up to Postville. We can talk later about how we're going to get up to Nain and then get further south.

I have to mention RCMP support. We now have, between the two locations of Sheshatshiu and Happy Valley-Goose Bay – I have confirmed this with the RCMP – the highest per capita call-out rate in the province – in the province. I often hear a Justice minister – not anyone in particular – say: I only respond to the requests I receive from the RCMP.

Well, I understand they have submitted requests for additional resources, both in terms of numbers and then in terms of specialized services. Unfortunately, we're dealing with serious addictions and drug enforcement and we could really use – we could, we need desperately, so I'm asking government to take a close look at that if they could, please.

Then, finally, because I just promised somebody that just contacted me late today – and I have tell you, how many times do I send out a message, and anyone in Labrador, somebody says, oh, we're going to meet at 2 o'clock NL time. What's that?

We have two time zones in this province, and down in the Straits they actually deal with yet another one. So I could see a lot of merit, a lot of financial savings if we all move on to one time zone. By the way, let's standardize it like the rest of the world is starting to do as well.

With that, Mr. Chair, thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Thank you, Chair.

Mr. Chair, as I was driving in this morning I was listening to *Open Line* and I happened to hear a lady talk about one of the programs that we announced yesterday. In total, we announced some support to over 230,000 residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. That lady this morning was talking specifically about the special payment for income support.

Now, sometimes income support doesn't get a great rap. As I was looking at my Facebook account overnight and social media and Twitter, I was reading individuals' opinions on income support and on that particular program yesterday, and people have a lot of opinion.

This is \$5 million to provide a one-time benefit for those currently receiving income support, which will be issued the first week of April; it's \$200 for single people and \$400 for families. I listened to the Opposition and I hear you say this is not enough. I agree we need to do whatever we can do within the means we have available to us. But I was very relieved when our

government announced this for persons on income support; persons on income support are the most vulnerable.

But the other point is that's about 20,000 individuals or families. So that's 20,000 of 510,000, approximately, give or take. It's not a lot of people. Of those 20,000 people, there are a lot of individuals who are individuals with disabilities, individuals who cannot work. Let me repeat that – cannot work. Not that they choose not to work, they cannot work.

I bet that every individual in this House of Assembly knows an individual who is vulnerable and who cannot work. Our government is working to support individuals with disabilities, individuals who are low income and individuals who are vulnerable. I am certain that everyone in this House of Assembly supports that initiative.

I don't know if anyone has ever sat down with an individual as they were doing their income tax and as you're going through it and you're assisting them and you get to the bottom line and it says your total income for the year was \$10,000 or \$15,000; that's a pretty low income. Now, there are lots – well, probably not lots, but there are a number of supports and services that are available, and navigating the system can be somewhat confusing at times. That is our job; we are elected MHAs, elected to represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Elected to assist them to navigate the system, to navigate supports and services.

There is a significant number of people living in poverty, but there is also a significant number of supports and programs that are out there. One of those programs was the initiative that our government put forward yesterday for persons with income supports. It is to be applauded. Assisting individuals, empowering individuals is to be applauded. That's what we need to do. We need to do it together.

One of the Members just mentioned the difference between equality and equity. Again, persons with disabilities are looking for equity. They are looking to be empowered and given the tools to make them equal with everybody else in society. That is what our government is doing.



That is what we are endeavouring to do, to empower individuals.

We do have seniors who are lower income and they have no ability to earn additional income, so yesterday, again, our government worked to empower seniors and to enable them to have a more equitable living. The cost of living has gone up. Everybody knows the cost of living has gone up. Yesterday, we showed that we have acknowledged that the cost of living has gone up.

Income support benefits include basic and non-basic financial supports. There is family and individual benefits that is to assist with expenses, such as food, clothing, personal care, household maintenance and utilities.

Government provides those type of supports to enable and empower individuals. There are shelter with rent and mortgage assistance. There are non-basic benefits. There are things like municipal tax payments. There are things like eye examinations and prescription glasses. There's private child care related to employment or training. There are expenses for burials. There is a lengthy list of supports and services. It's our jobs, as MHAs, to help people navigate the system and avail of these supports and services as they individually qualify for them.

Chair, individuals are dependent – and it's individual circumstances, so it makes it difficult to understand a person or be able to do a blanket approach so, again, we have to work with each individual. As I had mentioned there a few minutes ago, there are about 20,000 families or individuals that avail of this benefit that's going to come out the 1st of April.

We have the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug plan; we have medical travel, medical supplies. There are community supports. There's the Mother Baby Nutrition Supplement. The list goes on and on. Those are the kinds of things that we need to talk about as Members of this House of Assembly. We need to talk about what's available and to enable and empower people to access these supports.

I agree with the Member for St. John's Centre that we need to work towards giving individuals a hand up. I know we all do that. So take benefit for doing that, for working on behalf of your

constituents and enabling them, supporting them and informing them of the programs and the supports and services that are out there and that are available. There's nothing wrong with doing that. Our government is working towards empowering individuals.

Chair, we're debating Interim Supply here; we're debating a bill that will ensure that we continue with the operations of government until we introduce budget 2022 in April. Every single person in this House of Assembly agrees that this bill is needed. There are reasons why we're debating it and it's part of the Legislature, but we're doing it to, again, provide supports and services for the people that we represent.

If we had more money, we would expend more money. Somebody said this week that facts don't matter. Well, facts do matter. Facts are important. The reality is we do have a \$500-million bill for Muskrat Falls. We have it; you can't say it's not there. It's there, but we can work together to address it and to deal with it. You form a positive attitude towards persons with disabilities, towards individuals with lower incomes, towards individuals battling addictions, to expand their opportunities and promote their inclusion, again, by empowerment.

Chair, I believe that yesterday's announcements by our government, and specifically the announcement towards the special payment for income support, was an empowering announcement. Would I like to see more? Yes, of course, I would, but so would every single person on this side of government and on that side of government. We all want to see more, but we also need to work towards empowering the individuals to access what we have available.

I have a couple of minutes left. I just wanted to talk about employment and enabling employment in the province. The government, since I was elected and before, have worked with two particular programs. One is called the Community Enhancement Employment Program and the other one is called Job Creation Partnership. Now, if you're an MHA for rural Newfoundland, you definitely know what these are. They're probably not used as much in the St. John's area but possibly, occasionally it is used. But in rural Newfoundland, these two particular programs are used significantly.

In my district in St. Mary's Bay north section of the district, we have consistently used these two programs since I was elected in 2015. We've used them to enhance and empower individuals in the area with employment opportunities, with insurable earnings and with increasing their income. It's about employment, empowering the people we represent, allowing them or informing them and giving them access to programs that government has available for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

These two programs in rural Newfoundland are often used to help beautify your community, to make your community more welcoming and to give people some pride in their community and their area. This being Come Home Year 2022, everybody likes to see an investment in their own communities, employment investment, beautification investment, empowerment of the people, representing the people, enabling them and attaching them to the workforce and doing what we can and as Members of the House of Assembly to represent the people whom elected us here.

Thank you very much, Chair.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** I thank the people for the applause. I haven't spoken yet.

It's always nice, Mr. Chair –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**E. JOYCE:** – when you stand up and they know you're going to say something very educational and very concerning to the people. So I just thank the people of the House for that kind applause and welcome.

Mr. Chair, on a serious note, it was brought to my attention – and I brought it up when we were doing the health care meetings that we had concerning the new Health Accord across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – nurse practitioners. As we all know, we know there are

doctor shortages across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, up to 100,000 people without a doctor. We know what concerns that causes and misdiagnosis, no diagnosis or other issues that happen without a doctor – prescriptions filled and a lot of other medical things.

Mr. Chair, one of the things that I brought up that I am hoping is going to be in the budget and I hope it is going to be in the Health Accord is the nurse practitioners being able to bill MCP. That is one thing right now – I know there is a group set up in Corner Brook, they can go and see and they can charge. But a person with a doctor don't pay nothing and a person who sees a nurse practitioner, who needs bloodwork, has to pay \$45.

We are short on doctors and I know the minister committed that he was going to start a new program for recruitment. There is no doubt we need that. But there is a gap until we get X number of doctors in this province, we are going to need to help out with our residents.

Nurse practitioners, they're well qualified, they're well educated; they're well equipped to do the basic work that people can see for bloodwork and diagnosis and other things.

I am bringing this up today because it was brought to my attention and I made a commitment that I would bring it up. I am asking that in the new Health Accord that will be coming in April, and I hope the government has it in the budget also, is that we can have nurse practitioners bill MCP. That would help a long way, not only to the group that is in Corner Brook; that would help a lot of nurse practitioners who want to set up shop. It would alleviate the concerns of the health care across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I urge the government on that issue; it's a great initiative. I brought it up with Dr. Parfrey in the meetings that we had. Those meetings with Sister Elizabeth Davis and Dr. Parfrey were great. They were open, they wanted to know what you thought, they wanted to know what the issues were and they wanted to know how we could get past things; it was a great consultation, I have to say.

I trust that the government will take this under advisement and I trust that we can help out a lot of people who need the doctors through nurse practitioners, those trained professionals. If we can get it through MCP that will make some difference in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for people who will – if we don't get this done – fall through the cracks. There will be a lot of misdiagnosis of medical conditions for those people.

I call upon the government to include that because if there was a doctor in place, they could charge the MCP, if a doctor was in place. Where there is none, we should be able to put the nurse practitioners in there. I just wanted to bring that up for the first five minutes, Mr. Chair.

The second thing I'm going to bring up, again, is with the cataract surgeries. I will continue to bring that up because every day that I go home and even here or at the office in Corner Brook, I get people calling concerned about it. I know a lot of people on the West Coast get the same calls. They get the same calls.

Mr. Chair, I just don't understand why it's not done. I really don't. The issues are: Is it cheaper? Yes. Is there OR time to be done at the Western Memorial? No. Is Stephenville hospital up and running for cataracts? No. Is there a wait-list right now of 800 people, mostly seniors? Yes.

So I am just behooved why – I just don't understand why this decision is not made. Like I said yesterday, it's time for two or three people to get together and put a bit of water in the wine and let's get this settled. Let's get this settled. Because I know right up the Straits of Labrador there are people on the wait-list. I know that. There are people up in St. Anthony and areas coming to Corner Brook on the wait-list for cataract surgery. There are.

I can go right across – in Corner Brook there are lots. In the Premier's own district there are people who came to that rally in Corner Brook, from his own district. So, Mr. Chair, there is a major concern with it and every opportunity that I have and every time there's a reason put out why it can't be done, that is dispelled.

I don't even know if the Minister of CSSB was the deputy minister at the time when the study was done. I think it was done by Grant Thornton. I don't know if he was the deputy or not. I'm not sure if he was. He can answer that. When his department was involved with the Grant Thornton report that showed that it's 23 per cent cheaper to do it at the Apex building.

I just want to put another point out there. The three specialists in Western Newfoundland – one of them does all glaucoma across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador; the three specialists are in that building.

So when you look at the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association putting out in their press release saying we've got a backlog of surgeries and we're going to do it cheaper somewhere else. There's no OR time as we speak now to cataract surgeries at Western anyway, but if there was, you could find more time now to do the surgeries where the backlog is at. The three specialists have the clinic set up, I just don't understand why we – and I'm talking about we, as legislators, the government itself – do not put in \$1.3 million that would give the eyesight back to 800 people in Western Newfoundland and Labrador.

I heard the Department of Health saying that well, wait-list two – and I know the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port is well aware of this – is the one that already had the consult with the ophthalmologist. What they refuse to recognize is wait-list one. Wait-list one are the people who are referred by the optometrist to the ophthalmologist. Once they are seen by the ophthalmologist, then they go on wait-list two. So if they went off now and said, okay, let's go see all these 800 people, that'll go on wait-list two. They're expecting to get the surgery done, but they can't do it because of the cap for another year or year and a half.

So you're going to say, okay, we're going to see you, but we can't do the work for another year or year and a half, by then there maybe some changes. That's where this government is not recognizing the people.

In my last two minutes, Mr. Chair, I just want to make it quite clear, these aren't numbers that are pulled out of the air and say, look, here are the

number of people who need cataract surgery who are on the wait-list. There was a program put out by the Department of Health and Community Services to put intake workers into those facilities to do the list and bring the list up to date. Those two workers at the Apex building in Corner Brook are paid by the Department of Health through Western Health. They sat for over a year at the Apex building and they went through the whole list, right to the bottom, who passed away, who moved away, who had the surgery and they came up with the list. So this is not some list that's pulled out of midair. I'm sure the Minister of CSSD understands that, it's not some list.

You might have been there when that funding was approved; I'm not sure.

**J. ABBOTT:** (Inaudible.)

**E. JOYCE:** You weren't? Okay, he wasn't. But it was approved, \$250,000 to get intake workers – these intake workers are receiving calls every day: When am I going to see the doctor? When am I going to see the ophthalmologist? When am I going to see him? They can't see him because we're not going to put in the \$1.3 million to take care of those people, mainly seniors.

Like I said yesterday, and I'll say it again, I hear a lot of announcements. I see the Minister of Tourism out giving away money. I have no problem with that, because I will tell you, everybody in the district that are eligible, I send them an application to apply. I have no problem with that. But if we could find funding for \$5 million to do a study of what we owe, if we could make announcements, we could find \$1.3 million to help out most of the seniors in Western Newfoundland who need cataract surgery.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm happy to stand here again in the House and speak. It's been a while. Just so my colleagues on the other side aren't kept in suspense and to set a record: Muskrat Falls. I have the record for earliest one. I hope you keep that marked down.

It is absolutely an honour and a blessing as always to be able to stand here, to be able to speak, to be able to talk to important issues regarding the province. I only have about 10 minutes so I'll try my best to –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**A. PARSONS:** I'm getting leave already. I'll try my best to keep it within 10 minutes.

I kept this sort of a list of different items that I will get a chance to speak about – whether it's Interim Supply or during the budget process or other opportunities – that being the technology sector, connectivity strategy and broadband, natural gas, which is a really exciting prospect, hydrogen. We could talk about Come By Chance and Braya Renewables, CFI, Terra Nova. There are a lot of big files. I don't know if it will take me the entire time but one that I wanted to speak on is an issue that I brought up yesterday, but Question Period is not really the place if you want to get into a little more detail on specific issues.

This is probably my best opportunity because it is something I've spoken about in the media but, again, when you're speaking with the media, you have to rely on their clips of your comments. It's a comment that relates to two things: one being a press release that was put out by the PC Opposition back on January 24 and a press release that was put out by the PC Opposition on January 25.

This is interesting. The first one – and, again, the second one, I get it. You'll see where I'm going with this; I'll try to tie it together. The first press release on the 24th said: “Andrew Parsons” – I'm allowed to say my own name – “interference into Fisheries Science is ‘disturbing’” by the Member for Bonavista. So that was about my apparent political interference in fisheries science is disturbing to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who rely on the fishery.

So now, the second one the next day was “Evidence shows Liberals failed to support Offshore Oil and Gas ....” That came from the Member for Terra Nova. I’ll give the Member for Terra Nova credit; he’s actually done a number of press releases on this issue. We had a great debate on it yesterday. I don’t disagree with what he’s trying to say, that we all unite together to speak about it. But the funny thing here – and I’m actually going to speak about the letter I wrote – is that the day before the Member for Bonavista, in fact the PC Opposition, said that I should be removed from Cabinet for interfering with fisheries science.

So here is just a few of the quotes here: disturbing to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; when Minister Parsons was contacted by the media, he declined. The fact that he leaked a report is concerning; it is disrespectful and plain out wrong. Science does not have a political agenda, and Minister Parsons should account for his actions and explain to those who rely on our proud fishery why he believes his political agenda is more important than the work of the scientists. If he again declines to explain himself, then it is incumbent on the Premier to step in and ensure accountability.

So that same day I did do interviews, so the first part – whoever wrote the press release got it wrong. I did speak – again, I have never had an issue speaking and explaining my actions. Here is the funny thing, though. So this is the one calling me out for interfering with science. The next day: Not enough with oil and gas.

So I’m going to refer to a letter that I did indeed write to Minister Bernadette Jordan at the time who was the minister for DFO and it was about the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat draft report. So I am just going to give you a few excerpts for that letter and I am willing to provide this letter to anybody because I wrote it; I stand by it; I put my name on it.

I am writing today to share my significant concern with the CSAS draft report on coral and sponge mitigations in relation to exploratory drilling programs. This report which recommends prohibiting drilling in sensitive areas has been identified – and it goes on. I have concerns with this draft report because it may be

based on insufficient evidence and that it has significant potential to threaten the viability of our offshore oil and gas industry.

The draft report seems to revisit the recently completed regional assessment of exploratory drilling and it appears to be inconsistent with the mutual commitment noted in the Hibernia Dividend Backed Annuity Agreement for our governments – and I quote – “to work together to plan the use of the offshore area to develop petroleum resources and protect marine biodiversity.”

While we acknowledge that DFO is currently reviewing the draft report, we have heard that the potential for these recommendations to be implemented has already resulted in regulatory uncertainty and a loss in investor confidence. My hope is that you will take these concerns under careful consideration.

So if anybody had actually bothered to ask me about my interference, what my interference was that I took a report that was not leaked, as the Member opposite for Bonavista said. It was given to me by people in the industry who said we’ve got concerns here. They’re suggesting doing something in our offshore that is not done anywhere else in the world. It is going to hurt us. So I took the concerns. I listened to all these people in our industry and I said: I share your concern. I wrote to the minister. Laid it out in black and white and said we have concerns and if you’re not going to do a report that’s accurate, if you’re going to do it on insufficient evidence, then we don’t think you should put that out.

So I would say to my friend on the other side from Terra Nova, I think if the tables were turned and you were sitting here and I was sitting there, I believe you would have done the same thing. I have no doubt you would have done the same thing. I have no doubt that most of the Members on the other side would have done the same thing because they stand up every day and speak about the need for oil and gas, the need for Bay du Nord. In fact, the next day, they said I wasn’t doing enough. But when I do go to bat and when I do go to the feds and say what you’re doing is going to be harmful, they tell me I should be kicked out of Cabinet.

The question I have – not from my Member for Terra Nova because I know he agrees with me. He will get an opportunity to speak to this. But I say to the Member for Bonavista or the leader, my colleague: Should I be kicked out for that? Should I not speak out on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians when it comes to the concerns we have about our offshore? Am I not doing enough or when I do enough, should I get kicked out? We can't have it both ways, I would say, Mr. Chair.

Here's the other thing. That's the first letter I wrote. Here's the second letter I wrote. I wrote again – and I'll tell you what, anybody out there in this province or elsewhere who says I shouldn't write I'd say, I don't care what you think. I have been elected to this chair and I've been given this duty by the Premier, and my job is to advocate for this industry. My job is to advocate for this province. My job is to advocate for these people. The same ones that we all advocate for, and I am not going to let anybody say that I shouldn't do my job and complain when I see something wrong. I am not going to back down. I am not going to apologize and I tell you what, I'd like to think that I've been accountable. Because here I am, the first opportunity I have had to speak in a forum here where I can get it all out, rather than clips or just press releases that are trying to make a political story out of nothing.

Here's the second one I wrote: I must reiterate our government's key position that all decisions on environmental protection and future economic development should be rendered using an evidence-based and balanced approach. Now, the reality is, I'll give a lot of credit to staff in the department. I'm not the scientist in the department. I am not the engineer. I am the politician. I am the political lead. So I take the work that they've done and when everybody in the department and elsewhere comes to me and says we have concerns with this. This is not being done in Norway – the jurisdiction we are most compared. This is not being done there.

Why are we doing this? We have concerns. And again, it was a draft report. The whole point of a draft is you do it, you send it out for comment, you get it back and then you put it out. Now, I guess some crowd in Ottawa got upset with me for questioning their work. Well, my God, every

single thing I do every day is questioned, that's how it's supposed to be.

So, again, I put that letter out, happy to share it. Oh, Mr. Chair, here is the third letter because I wrote again. Here's what I would say. This is my first opportunity – and this is not meant to be insulting to anybody in particular. Again, it's to share the concern that my colleagues across the way and my colleagues here have. We have concern for our offshore, we know that there's a future, but when somebody tries to threaten it, our job is to speak up.

What I would say is if I have to get kicked out of Cabinet for speaking up every time I want to defend our industry, I'll do it every time, but I would say we cannot have it both ways. I will stand here, I will sit here, I'll go outside, I'll go anywhere and I'll defend this industry. And I tell you what, except for some of the people on the other side, I know the majority, especially my friend for Terra Nova, are going to back me every step of the way.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Chair.

I must say it's good to be able to stand, it's good to be able to talk with the mask off, but I tell you, some things never change and the rhetoric in here does give us all a headache. So the headache is back as well.

Actually, just speaking on Interim Supply now, one of the things that I wasn't going to speak on was cataract surgery, but just listening to it being brought up now and how vulnerable people are.

A higher percentage of our population that are impacted by cataract surgery are our elderly, Mr. Chair. The problem when people develop cataracts, they can't see. They're very vulnerable, they're very susceptible to injury and their quality of life quickly deteriorates. As they have barriers, they're not moving around as much and what also happens is on a huge physical level, their muscles are impacted.

I know this because it happened to my grandmother. My grandmother developed cataracts in one eye. She went to St. Anthony and she had surgery and they basically blinded her in that eye. It was a botch job.

As an MHA travelling around my district I learned about a lot of botched jobs from St. Anthony cataract surgery. What happens is if you can't see, in actual fact, it impacts your whole quality of life. So I do think that this government – privatization may not be the way to go about it, but, really, we need to actually help people be able to get rid of their cataracts and be able to see.

I also just wanted to quickly mention the five-point plan that was announced yesterday. I heard the Minister of Finance and I hear the Minister of CSSD talking about it and one of the things that I heard was a lot of people in this province – I don't know what ratio, but people were very critical because it was only the most vulnerable people being helped, and I heard the Minister of Finance defend that.

Minister of Finance, I'm very proud of you for defending that and I'm very proud, Minister of CSSD, for actually ensuring that our vulnerable people at such a critical time are protected. Because the low-income people, if they don't actually have access to funds, the amount of food that they eat, their houses will not be heated, their children will not have clothing. So they're very, very important.

But the criticism still exists: What about the middle class? And, of course, that is true, we do need some sort of relief from these huge prices that are actually facing us now for our fuel: diesel, home-heating fuel, propane, all these fuel sources that've gone through the roof.

I just heard my fellow MHA from Stephenville, Stephenville Crossing, Stephenville –?

**T. WAKEHAM:** Port au Port.

**L. EVANS:** Port au Port – we've been gone too long. He said the prices have gone through the roof. Do you know something? He's right; the prices have gone through the roof.

I remember the end of February, early March, the prices went up to \$1.77 and a lot of politicians that are in Opposition started to criticize and say we need relief. A lot of community agencies and social advocates started to say we need relief. In actual fact, as a province, we did at \$1.77. Now, we look at the prices at the gas pump for gasoline, it's 192.2 on the Avalon. I think the people across from me, adjacent to me, know where I'm going with this because they heard it before.

In March, when everyone got in an uproar, \$1.77 a litre. Do you know that all summer in the District of Torngat Mountains we were paying \$1.80. We were paying \$1.80 and everybody's in an uproar now that we approach \$1.77 and now we're at \$1.92.

What's the price on the North Coast now? We're froze at \$1.89 all winter.

So, in actual fact, the provincial crisis that everyone is rushing and falling over themselves to actually win political favour by saying we need tax relief; we need some relief at the gas pumps. But, in actual fact, we were already paying that. So where's the social justice? Where's the social justice in all of this?

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

**L. EVANS:** The banter here actually shows how little thought is given to the six Indigenous communities on the North Coast of Labrador; very little thought. We're at \$1.89. All summer we were at \$1.70. No one was talking about a crisis then.

How can people afford to live they say? How can people afford to be able to drive? Well, we had to do it all summer. In actual fact, most of the fuel that was spent this summer was trying to go out and hunt and fish because the cost of the foods at the stores is too expensive.

So Interim Supply or the budget, whatever we may be discussing in this House of Assembly, on the North Coast we are actually already in a crisis.

The other thing I just briefly wanted to talk about was some of the things people have said to me, issues that are a concern to them. They

asked me about what do you think about the Green report? Do you think they're going to sell off public services to pay off the debt? What do you think of Newfoundland Liquor Corporation? Do you think they are going to sell that?

Well, in actual fact, in December, the Minister of Finance did say that all Newfoundland and Labrador assets are up for review. The review is going to be taken over by Rothschild & Co. There was a big uproar about that, mostly about the name. Right?

But what really kind of bothered me was their findings may not be made public. If we're going to be selling off private assets, we should know why we are selling them off. Just take the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation. It averages \$160 million dollars of revenue each year. Why would anyone in their right mind sell that off? The revenue you could generate over and over and over again.

I was asked about it yesterday and I said to one of the guys that asked me: There may not always be a need for oil, but I tell you, you'll always be able to sell liquor. The revenue there, \$160 million right now, is money in the pocket of our province's finances.

Even looking at the privatization of three registry services, that was suggested in the Greene report: Motor Registration, Registry of Deeds. But even looking at something like the Registry of Deeds, that generates \$22.2 million a year. So for us there needs to be transparency; that's the thing that always bothers me.

Revenue-generating services and departments are important for us, but also I think that we need to look at the quality of jobs that this public service provides to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. Those jobs will not be the same – good pay, good benefits – if it's privatized. We always see the erosion of salary, the erosion of actually benefits. When you look at that, residents of Newfoundland and Labrador usually spend their money at home. So not only is that money that's paid as salary a benefit to the individuals, it comes back to the province. So it's important for us to look at that.

Another issue I wanted to quickly bring up was, of course, COVID has really identified that we

need access to Internet. On the North Coast of Labrador our Internet is at 0.2 megabits per second to 1.9 megabits per second. If it's at three, you really are chugging along. But at the end of the day, we do need investments for our Internet.

My time is almost expiring, Mr. Chair, but one of the things that bothered me was the MP was on *Labrador Morning* last week and basically said that services will be upgraded and it will come first to those who have good backbone on the North Coast –

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

I remind the hon. Member that her speaking time is expired.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you.

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Chair.

It's a privilege to speak in the House today and indeed a privilege to represent the District of St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Interim Supply this afternoon and the importance and the relevance that it has to municipalities and communities all across the province.

But before I do, I would like to take the opportunity to address something that happened earlier in Question Period when there was a discussion from the Member for Lake Melville regarding the relocation policy. I did want to acknowledge that recently the Department of Municipal and Provincial Affairs made changes to the relocation policy in this province and that any community now that wishes to avail of that policy can come to the department and have conversations about the potential and the possibilities, and a vote of 75 per cent agreement in a community is what would be required in order to make that change happen. It is, however, the initiative of the community to come to the department to have those conversations. Our department is more than willing and certainly available for any opportunities to discuss the potential for



communities and how it can benefit the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In regard to municipalities and towns right across the province, they are certainly a priority for this government and they rely on Interim Supply to ensure that we can continue to access important funding for programs of the government which support their operations and help them in times of emergencies, providing benefits on the ground and meeting the people right where they are.

This past year has been a first in what I hope are many in which there has been a stand-alone department dedicated solely to concerns and priorities of municipalities and towns. Our laser focus has allowed us to pay attention to details in communities and to make sure their needs are met. We want to ensure that the communities across the province are sustainable and viable and have every opportunity to grow and thrive.

Municipal issues are certainly a priority for me. As you know, I've lived and breathed municipal and community government for a number of years and I'm sure that there are other Members of this hon. House who would identify with that and certainly have similar experiences, on both sides of the floor, and we certainly have a deep appreciation for the challenges, as well as the opportunities, that face the communities all across the province.

This past year, it has been my pleasure to wear a different hat as the minister and to have gained an increased appreciation for the importance of municipalities and how they contribute to the overall growth and strength of our province. Despite the fiscal challenges that our province has faced, the government have been able to maintain this funding for communities and municipalities. Over \$147 million was allocated for communities to improve services. This includes funding under the Canada Community-Building Fund, the provincial Special Assistance Grant program and the Community Enhancement Employment Program. Districts represented on each side of the House were benefiting from those programs throughout the year.

Funding through CEEP this year has helped approximately 1,000 people gain employment

and experience and up to 420 hours to assist with EI eligibility. As my colleague recognized earlier, these programs are vital to sustaining life in many of our rural and remote communities. It's certainly an opportunity to instill pride and ethic into these communities.

Municipal Operating Grants are also a part of the puzzle and they help operate municipalities on a day-to-day basis. They're operational expenditures and making sure that communities have what they need. Interim Supply will ensure that this funding continues to flow and that we can continue to support communities.

The work that municipal governments and staff conduct is vital to our communities and members. Any time I get the opportunity to do so, I'll jump up and say – I'm not going to jump, but you know what I mean – I will certainly take the opportunity to recognize the role and the impact that municipal leaders have, that administrators and staff, as well as many LSD community committee members have in ensuring that the day-to-day maintenance of our communities is sustained. A huge thank you to them and the contributions that they make.

Our Special Assistance Grants ensure that assistance is provided in the event of emergency related to environment, to health and life safety, any unexpected needs in a community or anything that is unanticipated. Mr. Chair, as I'm sure you're aware, we've had several significant weather events in recent months and Interim Supply will ensure that government is positioned to respond as needed in such circumstances.

As I've already noted, the grants assist with some unexpected financial difficulties or special projects, small infrastructures, emergency repairs or initiatives involving communities and non-municipal organizations. We're pleased to have supported so many of those over the course of the year and would aim to do so in the next season. We've provided grants over the past year to approximately 50 communities.

On another note, Chair, the departmental and regional staff provide support and guidance daily to municipalities. I want to thank them for their work. They attend meetings with communities, mostly in the night or on the weekends, and they're available any time on the

other end of the phone. They provide extensive education and training. They conduct it with municipal leaders. These supports are essential to our leaders and communities to make sure that they have the best information to provide services for their residents. It's extremely important that this support continues to roll out.

We are seeing the fruition of some of the projects approved under the COVID-19 Stimulus Program. I was recently in Ferryland and had the opportunity to view the heritage building that was restored. The building houses the Ferryland Museum and, with the assistance of \$135,000 under the COVID-19 Stimulus Program, they have been able to breathe new life into that building. It was certainly a pleasure to stand and hear tales of how they intend to use it for community service and community support.

I would also like to recognize, right now, the life and commitment of the late Harry Bryan, the deputy mayor of Ferryland who passed away just recently. I would certainly like to acknowledge the time and energy and service that man implemented into the community. He might have been a mainlander by birth, but he was a Newfoundlander by heart and he did a great deal to support recruitment in the Ferryland area bringing his friends and family to the area. Our condolences to that family.

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

**K. HOWELL:** He was a large part of the project in Ferryland and it is great to see that continue and there are many other projects that have been completed or are nearing completion. We have work in Spaniard's Bay, Carbonear, New-Wes-Valley, Terra Nova, Anchor Point, Bauline, Pouch Cove, Charlottetown, Conche and the list goes on. It is great to see investments in these communities.

Mr. Chair, one of the largest allocations of our department is dedicated to regionalization and it has been my privilege over the past few months to meet with municipalities, LSDs and committee representatives for those living in communities all across the province. I have met with representatives from about 100 towns and now over 50 LSDs and I want to make sure that people living in those Local Service Districts understand that their voice has been brought to

the table. As we continue to have good discussions and feedback about the joint working group's report on regionalization, moving forward, we will take all of these perspectives to make sure that our approach is reasonable for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and it fits specifically to each area as we approach it.

The report is out there and I do welcome any input. We know that there are a lot of conversations happening and that is certainly what was intended. We want to generate more conversations, but I think the biggest point that we take away from that is that our municipalities are facing challenges. Demographics alone would tell us that over 200 municipalities have experienced population decline and most of those have an aging population. It is certainly time to do something. If we don't change how things are going, then our communities will lose key services, infrastructure and economic opportunities.

I encourage everyone to take a read of the report and to offer your feedback and your thoughts. You can do so at a special email that's been set up: [regionalgovernment@gov.nl.ca](mailto:regionalgovernment@gov.nl.ca).

My time is winding down, Sir, but I certainly would like to acknowledge the fact that this government certainly isn't sitting idly by with our hands in our pockets while the people of this province face challenges. We're working respectfully, responsibly and reliably within our means to forge ahead to create sustainable, self-sufficient Newfoundland and Labrador, leaving a legacy that lives on beyond ourselves.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Chair.

Always an honour to speak on behalf of the people of the beautiful District of Terra Nova and certainly the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think I'd be remiss if I didn't say my

heart and my head is with the people of the Ukraine today. Being a former soldier and understanding a bit of what they may be going through is tough times for the world to watch on TV and certainly I can't imagine what they're going through themselves.

I'll start off by saying I'm not extremely disappointed by yesterday's announcement based on the cost of living, but I am disappointed that it didn't go far enough. We're all hearing stories about where people are. This announcement certainly doesn't touch on the middle class, it doesn't touch on the working poor and it doesn't touch on the people that we hear from every single day. We assume that it's only the lower income people that are struggling, but I can tell you there's a lot of people with well-paying jobs – nurses that have reached out to me, that are considering not travelling to work. Because rural Newfoundland is not like St. John's. I have nurses that live an hour away that drive to Clarenville to go to work and the cost of fuel is killing them.

We need to start thinking about these things. Yesterday's announcement does nothing for any of that. It forgets about people who are in need, just the same as lower income people and seniors are. Now, as a senior or low-income individual on a fixed income, their struggle is not seen to us, I can guarantee you. When you have people calling you concerned about turning their heat on for one or two hours, or they're going up to the mall to walk around so they can turn their heat off, so they can keep warm. When they're deciding between bananas or beans. You go to the store in my district in Clarenville and try and get beans, the shelves are empty. That's what the seniors are buying because that's all they can afford. Food banks are empty. We think we're doing okay. It's kind of funny that the minister said that we're not over here with our hands in our pockets, no, but I can tell you the public feels like your hands are in their pockets right now. That's a fact. They're having a hard time out there; it's terrible.

Listen, I believe everybody is trying to do their best but we need to do better, certainly, with how we effect everyone, because right now the cost of living is a crisis. It's not just about gas. You go and you look at what it's costing a trucker to drive across the Island to deliver

goods, the logistics of that. We do that poorly. We take all of our goods, we bring them to St. John's and then we redistribute them across the Island. It makes no sense. We do that logistically. It makes zero sense to do that. We have to find ways to be better and we have to find ways to lower the cost of living for people – home heat rebate.

So it's all well and good. The minister from Virginia Waters said yesterday he likes to talk about facts. So I'll give you a fact. Buying an electric vehicle when you can't afford to put gas in your gas-powered car is not an option, and yesterday's announcement on electric vehicles does nothing for the cost of living for people who can't afford gas or food, or heat or supplies for their children, milk. It does nothing. So why that was tangled up in that announcement yesterday makes no sense. I can tell you, if my kid comes looking for a snack, I'm not going to look at him and ask him if wants a piece of the extension cord that I'm charging my car with if I can't afford food. It just doesn't make sense.

The \$1.9 million for electric cars – and I think that the Member behind me here from Humber - Bay of Islands will be pleased when he hears me say this – why not take \$1.3 million and do the cataract surgeries? Why not allow people to see and do the things that they need to do? It's far more important right now. We need to make a choice. We all know that we have to make a green transition. Listen, I'm all on board. Nobody in this House, outside of the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, is more vocal about the offshore than I am, but I believe that we have to have a way to pay for a green future. And right now it's not even about a green future; we have people who can't afford to pay for groceries. We have to get people back to work; it's pretty simple.

If the Premier or any of his friends from Ottawa were as vocal as the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, the province would probably feel much more confident about our future. People would probably think there's a reason to stay here and fight and try to go to work at Bay du Nord or the LNG project. If they were more vocal like the minister, perhaps people would be more on board and businesses would be more on board.

If people think that the offshore industry is not concerned about a decision coming from Ottawa right now, they're 100 per cent wrong – they're 100 per cent wrong. That has set off alarm bells throughout the industry that will have repercussions for years to come. And while I trust the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology what he says, how he's fighting for oil and gas, I don't trust the Premier. The Premier lied about the seismic program. He wrote a letter to Noia. He said it would not be cancelled and it's cancelled. The letter is there –

**S. CROCKER:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Standing Order 49 or Standing Order 48, the Member is using unparliamentarily language, I ask that he take back those remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** No trouble. I'll withdraw the statement.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

**L. PARROTT:** I'm disappointed the Premier didn't stand and mention it though.

If you want to lead, you have to listen and that's the problem here. If we listen to the people that put us here – every single one of us in this House. People sat here yesterday tutting saying, oh, that's wrong. I'm telling you, there's not one person here who wasn't getting messages on Facebook or offices weren't getting calls about that announcement yesterday.

If people can sit over there and say that they felt good about that announcement based on the feedback that they got from the constituents – the people that elected them and put them in this House – I find it very hard to believe. Within two hours, I put an actual government post up – and you guys are more than welcome to go onto my Facebook and look at it – 300 and something shares, all negative; hundreds of comments and I guarantee you, you will not find one positive

comment. Feel free to go in; you don't even have to friend me. It's open so everyone can read it.

People are extremely disappointed with yesterday's announcement – extremely. And it's not that it wasn't a start. It's a start, but we're beyond the starting point. People are struggling to eat. We're implementing taxes. We're reaching into people's pockets and telling them don't buy pop and don't buy stuff. We're reaching into people's pockets and saying we're going to regionalize the lower income areas. We're taxing and taxing and taxing. We're going to tax everyone out of here. We talk about population growth; we've got to be trying to convince people to come here, not give them reasons to leave here, and that is exactly what's going on.

It's absolutely ridiculous how we treat the men and women of this province. The reality of it is, it doesn't cost the same to live in metro St. John's as it does somewhere outside. If you don't believe me, ask a cancer patient that has to come to St. John's and can't afford to come here because of the cost of gas; ask an elderly person who needs to go from Swift Current to Clarendville to buy groceries. They can't get a bus. They can't get a cab. They don't have access. It's just not there. It does not cost nearly the same.

That needs to be addressed. The way to address that is through the cost of fuels, which affects the cost of living. The cost of everything is affected by fuel. And we've got to get people back to work. That's one of the main reasons we should be yelling and screaming for this Bay du Nord Project – yelling and screaming for the Bay du Nord Project.

It shocks me that our colleagues with the NDP said they're not on board with it. I'm shocked. You've got one that lives in Labrador West in one of the most industrialized sections of this province that depends on – iron ore don't happen without oil and gas, folks. I don't know if you think it do but it don't. If we shut down oil and gas tomorrow, Labrador West is gone. Our mining industry in Labrador West is gone. I don't know how people think we'll survive it. It just plain and simple does not happen. We need Bay du Nord, the country needs Bay du Nord;

the province needs Bay du Nord, plain and simple.

Everybody in this House should be fighting for it. The silence from our Premier – and I know he says he’s fighting for it. Do you know what? I’ve talked to NOIA, I’ve talked to CAPP; last night, actually, I talked to people from Seadrill here doing the next couple of wells, and they tell me that they’re getting support from this government, but we need to be more vocal. We need to be more vocal. We need to give people hope. We need to have our own people believe that we’re on board with this, because while government is talking to industry and telling them that they support it, nobody else believes you are – nobody else believes you are. Right now, everybody needs a little bit of hope and it’s the one thing that we can give by being vocal.

I can tell you if this was in Quebec or Ontario, and we had an Environment minister saying that they were going to shut down a car plant, or a mine, or some kind of a processing plant, in one of those provinces, the place would blow up. You would be shocked at the response. The response here from this government: silence. The silence speaks volumes. At some point, we need to do this.

Now, Mr. Chair, this is about Interim Supply and the people that keep this province running. I have no problem whatsoever supporting this bill. I would like to thank the fine men and women that work for the public service, who keep this province running. I will be supporting it, and I thank you for your time.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That was a great leadership speech there I must say.

Mr. Chair, we’re wearing ribbons and it represents a lot that’s going on in the world. We all need to recognize that. There is a lot of hurt going on in this world.

I want to start off by saying my heart and thoughts are with, not just the Ukrainians but all that are involved. You see the pictures that are on TV, you hear the people. There was even a pregnant woman that was reported that passed away with her child. To see those images – we face challenges here, but you have to put yourself in those situations and say, our hearts and prayers go out to those countries and to those people who are facing those challenges.

Mr. Chair, in keeping with Interim Supply, I start off with saying that it’s an honour to represent Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune and the district, a rural Newfoundland and Labrador district. We do, through government, support the aquaculture industry; it’s very important to the district. You talk about jobs, aquaculture does create jobs, and not just directly in growing fish, but there are side industries that employs a lot of people. It’s a very important industry.

But also the traditional fishery, we can’t forget the traditional fishery, that’s what we were founded on. In Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune there are a lot of very lucrative industry in terms of the fishery from lobster to crab to other species, as well. We need to continue to support these industries. We met with a fisherman from Harbour Breton who’s a big crab fisherman and a big lobster fisherman. He voiced his concerns around the industry. We need to listen to them. We really need to listen to them.

I spent some time in the Department of Fisheries, recognizing that we don’t have a lot of say around quotas and things that affect their livelihoods, but we need to work together with the federal government to support those in that industry, which is a big part of rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

I also want to say thank you to the volunteers. We do support, financially, the volunteers in our communities, whether that’s firefighters or youth organizations and the list goes on. It’s important that we continue to support them because they do so much for our communities.

Mr. Chair, we are talking about Interim Supply and Interim Supply, I guess, keep services going. In the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, we certainly have a lot of public-facing services that are important.

I have to say at the beginning that I value every TI employee, whether that's internally or on the outside in our depots. While nothing is perfect, they do face a lot of responsibilities, and I recognize that a lot of work don't get done. We recognize, and I appreciate, the infrastructure, the roads in this province because I travelled them this summer. I've had some conversations with those that are in the depots, and others as well, in trying to get feedback of how can we accomplish more. Not just on the responsibility of TI employees in those depots, because they can only do so much in the run of a day.

They do get attacked on a daily basis by some opposite, and I stress some. That is fine; they can attack me all you want. No problem, go right ahead.

I also want to say these people that are in those depots that are also the heavy equipment operators, we've seen drastic weather patterns that have, for some reason, happened on weekends. Those people are out and about on weekends. I have seen the emails and I have seen the pictures.

In terms of some over there are saying they send me emails and I don't respond. Your emails go to employees of the department; I ask them to respond on my behalf.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** They don't respond.

**E. LOVELESS:** There is no perfect situation.

Yeah, they do respond. You just don't like your answer, that's all.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No, they don't. I'm telling you they don't. I'll show you.

**E. LOVELESS:** So Interim Supply – well, you got an answer that you didn't like.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No, I didn't get an answer.

**E. LOVELESS:** Yeah, you did.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you for that protection there, Mr. Chair.

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Is that part of your leadership as well?

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The Chair recognizes the hon. minister.

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you.

Interim Supply, Mr. Chair, financially supporting road construction, and I believe the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue said – and roadwork and brush cutting has been – he has had some work done in his district, there is no doubt about it. He has also said thank you to me and I appreciate that very, very much because I believe he is sincere about it. But he said increase the budget. I'd love to have a bigger budget. I'd love to have a bigger budget so I'll have to chat with the Minister of Finance after. But in all fairness, she has recognized the importance of roadwork and what it means.

Springtime is coming and we're going to be rolling out a roads plan that will be coming out very soon. I know many are anxious and we would be anxious to get tenders out. There are tenders that are already out. So there are millions of dollars that are ongoing right now in terms of work to be done on the Trans-Canada Highway.

Around highway maintenance, I agree with Members that said it across the way, that there are maintenance plans. Some references said there is no maintenance plans, that's not right. There are maintenance plans. How we try to achieve what we want to get from our maintenance plans is the challenge. How do we do better? Do we do it outside of TI work? That is a conversation that has been ongoing. I have had conversations with the Heavy Civil Association about that. I have had many conversations around it and we need to get there. I am willing to go there because we will get – if I can use the phrase – a better bang for our buck and get more work done in the rural parts of the province where the most challenges are.

With this winter and the weather patterns, it's been a challenge on all of our roadways. I am hearing it from everybody that the freeze and the thaw is beyond challenging for our roads. So I

know we have a challenge this coming spring but I'm up for the challenge.

In terms of ferries, Mr. Chair, also we have challenges with maintenance and operations. We're doing a market sounding right now. I'm looking forward to the feedback from that process that will help me to look at the situation and make a better decision because we all know that facts do matter.

I say, Mr. Chair, again, I want to say thank you to TI employees who are in the department that are not out, so to speak, with the shovels. They play a very important role in terms of delivering the municipal infrastructure which is also part – a big part – of the department and one that I know there's always room for improvement, and I will certainly do that.

My time is running short there, Mr. Chair. I will give someone else the time to speak. I'll say to the Member from Terra Nova that the Premier has been very supportive of the oil industry. I'm proud of him, where he stands and we're proud of him on this side of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Chair.

It's nice to be able to participate in what I would call a normal budget cycle for the first time in three years. I think we're actually going to have a budget delivered in April and Interim Supply. So, obviously, we'll be supporting the Interim Supply and making sure that passes in due course.

I wanted to take a few minutes, today, in talking about Interim Supply, to talk about the actual cost of living as all of us have talked about. I was pleased to hear Members opposite, earlier today, talk about the announcement, yesterday, was not enough. They did say it's a good first step but clearly acknowledged that it wasn't enough and more needs to be done. We're going to look forward and offer suggestions on how

that can be done and needs to be done immediately. So let's talk about that in a minute.

My father-in-law used to have a favourite saying. It was simply this: Not to worry, don't you worry. He lived by that and always made people relax and think that there's always better times ahead. But we all know that many people in our province right now are worried. And it's not just my district. It's not just our districts. It's your districts. You feel the impact of the people who find it very difficult to fill their oil tanks, to fill their cars, to buy their food and so we have an obligation, I would suggest, as a government, to acknowledge that and to find creative ways of helping them. You know, that's what governance is all about. It's about governing. It's about making choices.

I've also heard all the comments about, oh, we can't afford to do this or we can't afford to do that. You can always afford to do it. You have an \$8 billion budget. It's about making choices and what choices you make to make that happen, and to help people, that's what it comes down to. So let's not talk about the idea of we can't do it because of some project that people want to keep referring to. That's just an excuse. That's just an excuse. That's not the reality.

Let me tell you something about the reality. My colleague from Ferryland made a comment earlier about a family in his district who were doing up their budget, just like government does up their budget. At the end of the day, they had \$30-something left for the month. Now, all of a sudden, they're facing a \$300 a month increase in oil, just to fill your tank. How do you balance that? How do they balance their budget?

Even the volunteers, you heard the story the other day on TV about a volunteer who delivers meals on wheels. They volunteer, but they drive their own vehicles. Now to put gas in that, just for them to be able to provide that service, it's going to cost them an extra \$20 or \$30 out of their pocket. Those are the things that are happening out there right now that need to be dealt with and we have to find a way to do it.

The Atlantic Chamber of Commerce has written the four premiers and talked about the impact on business and consumers because, let's face it, if I've got to spend an extra \$20 every time I fill

up, then maybe I'm not going to that restaurant down the road as often as I used to, or maybe there are things that I would like to purchase but I can no longer afford to purchase them.

If I've got to put \$300 extra a month in my oil tank and I'm on a fixed income of some kind, how do I ever afford to do that? People are paying that now. We've been talking about this for months. This is not something that just suddenly happened. Yes, this unfortunate crisis in Ukraine and the horror what's going on over there has caused prices to surge even more, but this was happening long before that and it's continuing to happen. We need to take action. People are worried, as I said.

Let's talk about health care for a second. How is health care linked to Interim Supply? In my district, health care has a direct cost right now. Does anybody in this House of Assembly think it is okay for people of Newfoundland and Labrador to have to pay to see a primary care provider? Because that's what's happening in my district. Right now, when you cannot get a physician or access to any other primary care provider, you have to go to a private clinic where a nurse practitioner will see you and you pay that particular nurse practitioner \$35 for the visit. That's not right. I don't care about who you bill or whether it's fee for service or find some other way to do it, but the basic principle should be that no one in this province has to pay to see a primary care physician or provider – no one.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So stop making excuses and find a way to make it happen so people do not have to pay to see a primary care provider.

My colleague from Topsail - Paradise has spoken about our health care system lots and continues to do it, continues to raise legitimate issues around it. That's what we need to listen to. We need to listen to what the people are saying about it. It's just not feasible that somebody would have to do that.

I have an elderly lady who has a significant problem that she's been waiting to see a neurologist about. So she's sitting by her phone – there's a family history – waiting for a call for

an appointment that hasn't come. That's not good enough. Somebody in the system should be reaching out to her to say, hey, you're on our list; we're going to get to you. We'll find a way to make it happen.

The gentleman that waited over a year for hip surgery, and now a father with an 18-year-old son who's been told that his son needs a drug that's not on our formulary that's going to cost \$144,000 a year, that he needs this drug to survive. We have to be able to help people. All of these individual cases, like I said, are not just in my district, they're in everyone's district and we need to make it happen.

I've heard talk today about the cataract surgery piece, lots of discussion on that as well. There is an option. Technology allows us to do things now outside of an OR environment that we couldn't do years ago. So if we have such a backlog of people waiting to get in to ORs, why would we not – as my colleague from Terra Nova said – use the money to turn around and do those ophthalmology surgeries in a private clinic where they can be done? They don't need to go to an OR; let's use the OR for what they need to be used for; let's find a way to do it. That's the key. It's talking about using what we have and making it happen.

My colleague also speaks passionately about Bay du Nord. Let's not forget the last time that we had a major industry shut down in our province it was the fishing industry. It was called the cod moratorium; 20,000 people left our province. They have not come back. We have struggled and struggled, as my colleague behind me in Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans has talked about, in getting these people back to our province. They haven't come back and if you think that cancelling a Bay du Nord Project or not allowing that to go ahead, we will see an exodus like we haven't seen since the cod moratorium. We cannot afford that.

I understand the people opposite are fighting for that, the minister is fighting for it, you're fighting for it and the Premier talks about a full court press. The unfortunate thing about a full court press is you need a team. He has his team here, but his team in Ottawa refuses to participate. That is the problem. When a minister of the federal government refuses to answer a



basic question, do you support the Bay du Nord Project or not, and hides behind Cabinet secrecy while another minister in the same Cabinet from the West Coast of Newfoundland stands up and says, yes I do, but this minister on this side, oh no, I can't tell you that because God forbid –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Not here, federally.

Not good enough. But that is why he needs to be called out. They need to be called out. The prime minister of this country if he really supported the Bay du Nord Project like he supported the pipeline for Alberta, he'd be standing up. We wouldn't be talking about a minister making a decision; that decision would have been made. But that's where this is breaking down. It is quite unfortunate because I think all of us in this House realize the importance of that project and others and it needs to happen.

As my time winds down, I want to leave you with this quote. I'll leave you with a quick quote. This is the Premier of the province on the night he won the leadership of the Liberal Party. He quoted John F. Kennedy and he said, "Let us not fix the blame for the past, let us accept our own responsibility for the future." And so I say to the Premier: If you're going to quote John F. Kennedy, you have to live up to him.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

It is indeed a privilege to be back in the House for this session and to have an opportunity to speak on Interim Supply, \$2,754,562,200, a fair chunk of change. The Member opposite called it not chicken feed; I would have to agree. It ain't all doom and gloom, Mr. Chair; we are lucky to live in this province. We have more opportunities and more abilities here to do anything than ever before.

We are actually facing a labour shortage in this province. You talk about people coming back;

let's bring them back. Look on the government webpage. Every day there are dozens and dozens and dozens of opportunities in our main industries. The Member opposite who just sat down talked about the cod moratorium. We are coming back from that. We had over a billion dollars in sales last year alone in the fishery. That is good.

You go around and you talk to the fishers in your communities – and they're in every community. One time I never thought you'd see a fisherman live in Gander or here in St. John's, but you actually do. It's no longer just a rural thing. Our fishers are living in all of our communities, and they're making a good living. The people who work in our fish plants are making a good living. I encourage people.

I guess I reinvigorated the Fisheries Advisory Council. We have 29 members; 29 members, for three hours a day, once a month and we keep 100 per cent attendance that people stay there. They started at 9:30 and, at 12:30, we're still discussing things. It's a great opportunity to talk about our industry. Our megaproject for this province, I might add, is our fishery. It touches everybody. Almost every family here is somewhat related to the fishery.

This is not a doom-and-gloom province. We have great opportunities. We have great resources. As our minister just said, our offshore, the potential there is great, and we look forward to that. But I look forward to the sustainability in our fishery. I represent a department that gets to your kitchen table. Now, not everybody can say that, but we get to your kitchen table. We're improving on food sustainability in this province. We have 100 per cent milk, eggs and chicken for this province. It's produced right here.

We actually export milk. We have one of the biggest dairy farms east of Montreal. Now, that's pretty impressive for this province. I'm in everybody's district with the people I represent in this department. There are over 500 farms, believe it or not, 551 registered farms in this province. Who would have ever thought that? You would have thought there were might have been 15 or 20; nobody knew there were 500 and more. There are new ones and new opportunities.

We have a CAP program in which farmers get the help. It could be a rock picker – that’s almost a tongue twister for me – hay baler – not good with the aitches, obviously. I mean, the opportunity for our farmers – I’m out there. We’re raising sheep. We’re growing things in this province that was never known before.

Leek: I never knew what a leek was, I’ve got to be honest. I thought it was a leak in a tire, but then I went out to Grand Falls and the farmers out there around Wooddale and I seen what they are producing. It’s amazing. The pride on their face when you walk into their farms and onto their establishment. I’ve never been met with a frown and I’ve been there on rainy days and I’ve had rubber boots on and I’ve been up to my knees in poop on some of the farms.

And it ain’t a pretty sight. I mean, you’ve got to go up, if you ever get the opportunity to visit. A manure digester, it’s amazing. Pack a lunch; come see it. It generates electricity in excess for a dairy farm. Now if you can imagine that, what we can do with poop, imagine what we can do with anything else. I go to the chicken farmers – and I am amused because the chickens, sometimes, put me in mind of the House because they all got their necks stuck out when there’s something to say and they stick their neck out through the cage and it’s tut-tut and I’m like there’s the Member for such-and-such.

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

**D. BRAGG:** So I have a good sense of humour when I go there sometimes. But to know that we produce enough eggs for everybody in this province. I think it’s 11 million dozen eggs we produce in this province. Now, do the math on that for a little over 500,000 people. There are a lot of eggs to go through. That’s why I said we get to everybody’s kitchen.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Four dozen eggs – Brian Warr.

**D. BRAGG:** Brian Warr has four dozen eggs a day, is it? That’s amazing.

So I’m just going to go through some of the things. We have 90 active fish plants. That’s pretty amazing. We have 90 active fish plants in this province. We employ over 9,100 harvesters and 6,100 processing workers. That’s a lot of

people. That’s not the spinoffs. That is direct in the industry. Mercer’s Marine comes to mind and Coastal. Can you imagine to provide the industry how much the spinoffs are out there in crab pots, ropes and gill nets and you name it? It’s absolutely amazing.

So it’s not all doom and gloom. Take a trip; drive around this province; see the prosperity. We had a couple of tough years in tourism, but I encourage you to visit my district. Like, if we’re not the tourist capital of the province, I don’t know what about it because Fogo Island Inn alone generates \$40 million a year. That is amazing for an island in the middle of the Atlantic.

I’m going to go back to agriculture: 6,500 people in agriculture alone employed; in cash farm receipts, almost \$145 million a year. That is amazing. Again, there’s nothing I can say here only buy local, support your local farmers, support the local industry. It’s amazing.

Last year I had the opportunity to go over on Louis MacDonald’s farm outside of Deer Lake; Junction Brook I think it was called. Red clay like you would see in Prince Edward Island, there was not a rock to be seen and the littlest potato stock. And he was getting 10-1 potatoes. He’d put in one seed potato and he’d take back 10 potatoes. I don’t know if you remember the old plastic bags before. I had a couple of those in the back of my vehicle. I have four potatoes in one of those old shopping bags and it was filled right to the stopper. That’s what we can do. Imagine growing that in this province. And then there are spinoffs from that because they make the French fries from it or the mashed potatoes. So there’s lots of opportunity there.

Crown lands: 80 per cent of this province is covered by Crown lands. The Member opposite was quoted as saying the number one problem in the province. Sixty-eight business days we’re doing a return on Crown lands.

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

**D. BRAGG:** There may be some with issues. If you have them, bring them to me. That’s all I ask. I’ve been asking that since I’ve been in this office. Guess how many came to me from the opposite side? Four, five – I don’t need this

hand. So that's not too bad. Please stand up if I'm wrong. If there are more than that, just stand up and just resend them to me, because I do respond, as you guys know. Because you have to, it's such a big department, but we touch every nook and cranny and every kitchen table. I am so amazed by that.

The farming really blows me away because I grew up in a fishing community. So to see what the potential is there in farming and what people are doing. If you have a farmer in your district, go out, visit them and thank them for what they do, because what they're giving this province is absolutely amazing. The potential they have to do more is absolutely amazing.

I want to get to our enforcement officers, very important. I had a question today about caribou. Caribou is near and dear to all of us. The numbers have dwindled so badly throughout North America, but in particular through Labrador and Newfoundland that they're on the verge of – they're going to be re-evaluated in the next year or so. The caribou, what it brings to us, what it brings to the outfitters, what it brings to the local people, what it brings to culture is amazing. To know that we have a group that's been coming in for years from south of our border and we're having a problem to catch them, I have to tell you, that's bothersome.

I reported today that we detained two groups. That's good because we need to know. We have the same thing going on here in our moose hunting. We just went online for our moose applications. Guess how many applied for moose licence in this province?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Not all of them.

**D. BRAGG:** Close enough. The Member opposite said not all of them; close enough. Ninety thousand people out of 500,000 applied for a moose licence. Like, that is nothing short of amazing. Then if you include in –

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

I remind the hon. minister his speaking time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Leader of the Opposition.

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's an honour to stand in the House, the first time in debate, as we debate the Interim Supply. As we come to the end of the discussion here – and obviously, for those who don't know, Interim Supply is about being able to keep the province functioning, being able to pay our bills until we get a budget that's passed and gazetted and ensuring that programs and services that are necessary for people, particularly in these trying times.

I will agree with the previous speaker, the minister, who talked about that Newfoundland and Labrador still is very vibrant and there are still a lot of good things here. I think everybody in this House would agree to that or we wouldn't be here. We wouldn't be putting our reputations on the line. We wouldn't be worrying about working 18 hours a day, seven days a week. We wouldn't be worrying about dealing with constituents constantly and the stresses and the pressures of seeing the trials and tribulations, and the stresses and the challenges that our constituents go through and not be trying to solve them on a daily basis if we didn't think there was light at the end of the tunnel in this province.

There are a lot of good things going on in this province. Every day we see it. It's got nothing to do with political stripes. It has to do with the good people of this province, it has to do with good policies and it has to do with good support from government.

What we saw yesterday was an attempt, in the right direction, to alleviate the issues around the financial burdens on people right now with the cost of living. You've heard it from my colleagues. We've seen the hundreds and if not thousands of emails that it didn't go far enough. But in the gesture of good faith and in conversations with the Premier, I'm confident and we're confident that this is just a starting point. That everybody in this House sees the value of putting in place more programs and more services and more supports to ensure that every citizen in this province, the impact is minimized on them, on their businesses, on their quality of life, on the staples, their heat, their food, their access to medicine, the basic things

that people take for granted and should be able to take for granted.

I understand there are global issues here that are controlling what's happening. But what we're asking here and what we're actually imploring is that we work collectively together.

I've said it and this administration on our side here as the Official Opposition have said, we'll be as collaborative and we'll be as co-operative as possible. We'll probably, at times, question some of the policies. We'll question some of the implementations. We'll even question some of the final decisions. But we, like everybody in this House, I would imagine, want to do what's best for the people of this province.

We are political parties and we all understand that we're all striving for one thing – to move the seats. We're striving to move over there. You're striving to stay there. We'll have lots of time to do that when the province is in a better place, when we're getting closer to an election, to worry about who has the best policies.

Right now, we need to find common ground, and we've made those offers. We've had good dialogue. I won't dismiss that but we need to have more. There has to be a collective approach here by all in the House here. We made offers and we sent letters to the prime minister. We talked about Bay du Nord, the importance, and I don't diminish the fact that every Member on that side sees the value of Bay du Nord.

At one point, I thought we were going to have an open house to come in and for one day debate Bay du Nord but in a positive manner to show we're united and we want to go to Ottawa as united hand of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and I was disappointed.

This is probably the only negative thing I'll say in the next six and a half minutes. I was disappointed that the Third Party didn't see the value of Bay du Nord; didn't see the value of the expertise that we developed in this province and the specialists we have all over the world; and didn't see the value of transitioning.

We all see the value of the environment. That's why there's more stringent restrictions in Newfoundland and Labrador that's been put in

play by these two administrations – the Progressive Conservative administration and the Liberal administrations over the last 50 years – to ensure that we have a vibrant industry, but also is cognizant of the environment. It's cognizant of the fishing environment. It's cognizant of our farming. It's cognizant of our logging. It's cognizant of every other industry here. Yet, they didn't seem to see the value of what that would mean to the people of this province. And even see the value of looking at long term so that you could transition into something else that may be more friendly to the environment.

So that was a bit disappointing. I'm hoping that's the only time I get disappointed from this side of the House. I know we'll have some debate and maybe I'll be disappointed that we're not on the same page with the government on some policies or some funding in the budget but we'll see that in the coming weeks as part of that process.

There's an old saying that says: it's healthy to reflect on the past, it's effective to deal with the present and it's good planning to look to the future. That's what I think we need to do in this House here and we need to do it no matter what political stripe we are.

You know, every administration made mistakes over the years. We're in a bit of a crisis here and we keep pushing back. There was a good process in play, the Poverty Reduction Strategy. I only say that, not to echo one administration over another, but to look at it again. We could pivot back to a lot of the programs and services that were in the Poverty Reduction Strategy that, for a decade, took us from the worst to the best when it came to the needs.

It changed the pendulum. People, the most vulnerable, the disheartened, those who thought society had nothing to offer them, had moved up the chain and were very productive citizens; had gotten control of their own lives and were a value to themselves, and that was so important. If you are a value to yourself, you become an extreme value to our society.

I do suggest you go back, that's still there. It is not that old that it is not usable again or it can't be transitioned or pivoted right back in when

you start addressing some of the issues we're facing right now around the crisis on the cost of living.

Let's look at some of those programs for seniors. Let's look at some of those programs for single parents. Let's look at some of those programs around immigration. Let's look at some of those programs about youth at risk. Let's look at some of those programs about employment initiatives and supports. They are all there. They are easy to transition back, not costly. You can pick the ones that now can be dealt with very quickly to ensure that we get to the next level of making sure that people can get the basics right now.

We know the economy will improve. We know there will be some stability in the world, eventually. We know that Newfoundland and Labrador has a bright future, but we have to plan and make sure that we don't put so much stress or distress on a number of citizens that they just give up or, more importantly, that they leave this province. We need to keep our population here. We need to keep our great minds here. We need to keep the energy of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador here and we need to find a way to attract more people here. Expats coming back. We need to find a way to ensure that immigration is so worldwide that people pick Newfoundland and Labrador to come to because it has all the amenities, it has all the supports and it has a society that has a future in this great country of ours.

So as we talk about where we are going with Interim Supply, I do ask that over the next month and a half or so before the budget is totally completed that we start looking a bit quicker to pivot into some other programs and supports. I say this totally honestly and sincerely to the Minister of Finance, that if there are ways to increase or move the programs and services that need to be addressed right now – I know immediately the most vulnerable is the priority. I get that and I support that but there are more people in our society who we don't see as vulnerable because they don't fit a certain demographic on the curve but they are hurting and they are hurting dramatically.

We saw that from emails that we got, from the calls to places like *Open Line* and that. People are not just phoning in and telling their stories

and opening up because they want sympathy. They are doing it because they are worried about their quality of life. They are worried about the impact it is going to have on their kids. They are worried about the impact it is having on their parents and grandparents.

So we, collectively, all need to find the solutions immediately. It's perhaps the one time in our history of this province where we immediately need to find quick interventions. If that means we're going to find a better way to collaborate in this House, I can guarantee you this side of the House, or the Official Opposition, will do whatever it takes to support government in moving in the right direction, whatever that issue is.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** You've noticed, I suspect, over the last year that there's been a more open, collaborative discussion. There have even been sidebars between our shadow Cabinet ministers and the Cabinet ministers and all Members of both sides of the House here about how we can better solve problems, and we're giving some advice. Or when we don't think what's being presented by the government is in the right direction, we'll give the government an opportunity to clarify for us.

I give credit, a number of times government have come out and clarified exactly why they're doing something and it makes sense. We may not agree with it, but in the direction they're going, it makes sense. So we're open to do that. Let's keep that dialogue open, particularly until we get over this crisis. If it's the next year, if it's the next 18 months, if it's the next three years, whatever period of time it takes to get Newfoundland and Labrador back on the right track.

There's no fault to anybody, and I know every now and then there's a jab back and forth about certain things that are being said and not. Listen – and I will reiterate again – it's great to reflect on the past, it's important. It's more important to live in the present and work towards that, but also plan for the future. There are processes and there are strategies here and they've been presented in this House by both sides, so let's work toward that.

I want to reiterate, whatever we do, we have to make sure the industries that are in Newfoundland and Labrador are vital, sustainable and they benefit the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Chair, on that note, I want to say we're here to make sure Interim Supply goes through, we support that and we look forward to debate on the budget.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Seeing no further speakers, shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service." (Bill 45)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 through 4 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

**CLERK:** The Schedule.

**CHAIR:** Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

**CHAIR:** Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

**CLERK:** An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

**CHAIR:** Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, long title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 45 carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 45 carried without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

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

**B. WARR:** Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 45 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**S. CROCKER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Member for Mount Pearl North, that the resolution be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the resolution 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.

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

Carried.

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

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 the sum of \$2,754,562,200.

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member from Burin - Grand Bank, that the resolution be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the resolution now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 the sum of \$2,754,562,200."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, for leave to introduce the Interim Supply bill, Bill 45, and I further move that the bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board shall have leave to introduce a Bill 45, Interim Supply, and that the said bill now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service," carried. (Bill 45)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 45).

On motion, Bill 45 read a first time.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for St. Georges - Humber, that the Interim Supply Bill be now read a second time.



**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 45).

On motion, Bill 45 read a second time.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, that the Interim Supply Bill be now read a third time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill now be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 45)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 45)

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Premier, that this House do now adjourn.

**SPEAKER:** It is the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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