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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

**Statements by Members**

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Conception Bay South, Burin - Grand Bank, St. George's - Humber, Mount Pearl North and Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

Speaker, it's with great pleasure that I rise in this hon. House to honour two very special ladies who celebrated their 100th birthday on March 26.

Ms. Mabel Dawe and Ms. Alice Clarke, better known as "The Janes Twins," were raised in Paradise. Mabel resides in Long Pond, Conception Bay South, and Alice still resides in Paradise. These identical twins are strong, independent women who both live in their own homes, where they are cared for by family. Both have very sharp minds and are known for their great sense of humour.

What makes their journey through life so inspiring is not only the memories the two have created, but also the inseparable bond they've formed with one another. Their favourite pastime is knitting; they chat with each other daily, have frequent visits and get their hair done together.

Both are truly amazed at how much the world has changed throughout their lifetime. They have worked very hard for the things that they have and are very appreciative of the little things that life offers. Their life experiences have modelled them into the role models their families look up to. Their motto is, "If you can't help someone, don't hurt them."

Please join me in wishing Mabel Dawe and Alice Clarke a very happy 100th birthday.

Thank you.

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

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

**P. PIKE:** Speaker, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is so fortunate to have so many Lions Clubs, which are located throughout our great province and in many communities.

Today I would like to acknowledge the Garnish Lions Club in the District of Burin - Grand Bank. The club has been serving our region for 47 years. The Lions Club has been involved in a number of major initiatives, but the one that I will focus on today will be the Lion Morgan Knitting Project. This involves purchasing wool for seniors and other citizens, with the finished products being donated to the homeless and health care.

The Lions Club has donated items to The Gathering Place, the Grace Sparkes House, NL Housing & Homelessness: Burin Peninsula Network, the Salvation Army, Ches Penney Centre of Hope and to the Burin Peninsula health care system for newborns.

Most recently, they have decided to make items for Ukrainian families. Last Sunday, the Garnish Lions Club collected donations for the displaced Ukrainian families coming to our province. It's great to see that all communities in the District of Burin - Grand Bank are eager to help.

I ask all Members to join me in expressing gratitude to all volunteers and for the kindness displayed in this great province of ours.

Thank you.

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

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

**S. REID:** Speaker, it is a pleasure today to rise to recognize the work of Humber Valley Trailers, a group of volunteers from the Humber Valley Resort, who have been maintaining and improving recreational facilities in their community for the last seven years.

The group initially focused on organizing group outings. As those became more popular, they expanded their activities to improving trails and facilities.

One of the trails they have been instrumental in improving is a decommissioned forest access road that runs along the north side of Deer Lake. This group has organized dozens of brush-cutting trips and cleanups along that trail.

Another recent initiative of the group has been the Humber Valley Kitchen, a structure with a stove and tables, seating area, close to the resort to promote year-round outdoor activities.

This group continues to upgrade trails, including culvert installation, construction of a wooden bridge and construction of a steel bridge along those trails. Their work has resulted in a significant rise in the use of these trails by people of all ages year-round.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in recognizing the work of the Humber Valley Trailers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**L. STOYLES:** Speaker, Mount Pearl has always been a great place to live and raise a family. Over my lifetime, I have seen much growth and improvement. With that, also comes the need to care for one another in our community.

The local churches noticed a need and started helping families at Christmastime with food hampers. It was soon apparent that the need extended long past the holiday season.

Almost 25 years ago, food banks officially came to Mount Pearl. Today, we have three major food banks: two operating under the banner of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, one at Mary Queen of the World Church and the other at St. Peter's Church. The third food bank is at the Salvation Army on Ashford Drive.

The volunteers who operate these necessary food banks are very caring and giving people. They normally operate five days a week for a few hours a day, but this is only the tip of the iceberg. Hours are spent stocking shelves, picking up food and sorting donations, answering emergency calls and recording the necessary paperwork – it all takes time.

These volunteers are to be commended for their dedication to their fellow neighbours.

Speaker, I ask all Members to join me and thank all these wonderful volunteers.

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

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

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

I am so very proud to rise today and honour William Lorne Goudie who was born in Springdale on September 13, 1966, along with seven brothers. He has earned four degrees: a B.A., a B.Ed. and a M.Ed. from Memorial, along with an MTS from Tyndale University and Seminary.

During his teaching career in Grand Falls-Windsor and Bishops Falls, Lorne found time to become a published author, as well as a travelling ministry musician.

In Lorne's other career, he served with the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. In October 2020, Captain Goudie moved to Petawawa, Ontario with his wife Dawn, where he served as a commissioned logistics officer and 35th Field Battery captain until he retired last month.

My good friend and hero to so many, Captain William Lorne Goudie retired so he could jump on a plane and head to Poland and is currently in Ukraine doing what he does best: helping people. The heart Captain Goudie has allowed him to do God's work throughout his lifetime, and I am so very proud to call him my friend.

Please join me today as we let Captain Goudie know just how proud we are of him as he is in

the Ukraine. Burgers on me when you get home. Stay safe, brother.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

**Statements by Ministers**

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

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

As we are nearing the Easter break in schools and looking toward the end of another year, it is time to once again recognize educators that have gone above and beyond for students and school communities.

Today, I am pleased to announce the opening of nominations for the second annual Premier's Award for Teaching Innovation and the Minister of Education's Award for Compassion in Teaching.

Last year, we were pleased to introduce these awards that recognize teaching excellence in areas that have, at times, been overlooked but which are meaningful and impactful for our province's K-to-12 students.

The Premier's Award for Teaching Innovation recognizes primary, elementary or secondary teachers in all disciplines who have demonstrated innovation in instruction and a commitment to preparing their students for future success.

The Minister's Award for Compassion in Teaching recognizes inspirational and compassionate teachers at the primary, elementary or secondary level who have demonstrated a commitment to supporting the social, emotional and mental health of their students, colleagues or school community as a whole.

Speaker, last year we held the first annual award ceremony here at the Confederation Building and it was a very special ceremony. Members from both sides of the aisle joined the festivities and I think all who took part can agree that it

was extremely gratifying to see the pride of the educators who were recognized, their families and their colleagues.

I encourage students, teachers, colleagues and administrators to nominate a deserving teacher today. The deadline for submissions is May 20. Information about the awards and the guidelines are available on the Department of Education's website.

Thank you, Speaker.

**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, I join the minister in noting the opening nominations for Premier's Awards for Teaching Innovation and the Minister of Education's Award for Compassion in Teaching.

Given the unprecedented challenges of the past two years, teachers are to be commended for their innovation and compassion in the classroom. So many of our teachers, administrators and staff have risen to the challenge of COVID-19 by providing exceptional leadership and ensuring children receive a quality education. We've also heard so many stories of teachers going the extra mile to ensure students get a helping hand on their journey through the school system.

Sadly, I continue to hear from teachers with concerns related to overcrowding in the classroom, lack of supports and respect from this government, and this was even before COVID-19. I do hope the long, long-promised review of the teacher allocation formula that is finally under way will provide some structural change to address some of these issues.

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. Teachers continue to go above and beyond as we emerge from the challenges faced at the height of the pandemic. We encourage the department to go further than symbolic awards; reduce class size and ensure teachers have the resources they sorely need to prepare our future generations, our children, for the world we are building for them.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

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

**A. PARSONS:** Speaker, I am pleased today to notify Members of the House of Assembly that the provincial government is lifting the current moratorium on wind development, creating an opportunity for industrial customers to generate wind energy –

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

**A. PARSONS:** – for their own consumption and wind generation for export.

Speaker, a moratorium on wind development has been in place since 2007 and was a barrier to investment and development.

Newfoundland and Labrador has some of the best wind resources in North America. These can be used to power wind turbines and generate electricity for industrial customers; export through transmission lines; for the production and export of hydrogen or ammonia; and to supply energy to Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

Speaker, my department has been engaged with a number of companies interested in exploring industrial development. By lifting the existing moratorium to enable onshore wind development, we are allowing companies to proceed through an approval process for wind development. Details on this process will be released in the coming weeks.

Our government launched the province's Renewable Energy Plan in December 2021. One of the short-term commitments in the plan was to review the moratorium on the Island Interconnected Electricity System. This is an initial step in a multi-stage process to enable wind generation in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, this is a significant move and is supporting our transition to a greener economy. This supports government's focus on working with the private sector to find new export markets for the province's underdeveloped renewables.

Newfoundland and Labrador possesses valuable and abundant developed and undeveloped renewable energy resources, as well as experience and expertise in the province's technology and energy sectors. Our renewable energy industry is growing and today's news will continue to grow on the experience and economic potential of the sector.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Speaker, our province is rich in abundant resources. I'm a firm believer that all of our resources, including wind energy, should be developed to the benefit of our province, our residents and our industries.

While I believe this announcement by the minister is a good first step, it is a first step. There are still unanswered questions. The minister must outline what the appropriate process for a company who wishes to set up a wind development and the relationships between the province and the industry. For example, will a royalty on energy generated be collected by the province?

I also believe that our publicly funded college, CNA, should offer training so that this becomes an industry, which can employ

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for many years to come.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. This is wonderful news and shows that we can capitalize on opportunities for a just transition, when the political will exists. However, we must ensure that any development is sustainable, that energy resources remain public assets and that their primary benefit, and all benefits, remain for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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:** Thank you, Speaker.

The health care system in this province is broken. Doctors, nurses and front-line workers are desperately calling out for help. The Health Accord called for investments into the system, yet the Greene report called for a 25 per cent cut in funding.

I ask the Premier: Which hand-picked expert will you follow in this year's budget?

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

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

Of course, we know that the health care system is incredibly strained and challenged, that's why we asked Sister Elizabeth Davis and Dr. Pat Parfrey, two well-known experts, to evaluate it, including over a year co-operating with stakeholders and seeking input. We're thoroughly investigating that analysis right now to see the best path forward, Mr. Speaker.

We know that there is going to be required an investment at some point in the health care system; we understand that. We need to make sure that we are providing the utmost care for the patients of this province, Mr. Speaker, and that's what this government is all about.

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

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

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

I'm happy to hear that the Premier acknowledges that we need to do an investment, but we're in a crisis. That investment should happen this Thursday for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador (inaudible) health care system.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, the Premier promised the people of Newfoundland and Labrador a chief economic recovery officer in the last election campaign. It's been over a year and the position has yet to be filled.

I ask the Premier: Are you going to keep this promise and the many others that you've made?

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

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

That vacancy has been advertised, as I understand it. I'll check and see where it is right now and report back to the House, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It's good that we're moving on some of the promises. There are a number of other ones that the people of this province expect the Premier to deliver on.

Speaker, during her presentation on the Greene report, Moya Greene said she would be happy to serve the province further in any way she can.

I ask the Premier: Are you holding this position open for Moya Greene?

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

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

No.

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

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

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

It's good we've got a distinct answer there. Good, we can move now to hopefully getting somebody in play who can actually help move the economy in the right direction.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, a family physician in Grand Falls-Windsor has taken to Twitter to illustrate how desperate the situation is with local emergency rooms on constant diversion. Dr. Lynette Powell, who is also a former president of the Medical Association, has painted a grim picture of patients with chest pain and respiratory distress being turned away from local hospitals.

Speaker, this Liberal government has been in power for seven years. Will the Premier finally agree that this situation is a crisis?

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

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

I'm not sure about finally, because I've always acknowledged that the health care system has incredible strain and is incredibly challenged. I've worked in it; I think I know probably perhaps better than anyone in this House the challenges that the health care system is facing right now, aside from COVID-19.

It's been chronically underfunded. We need to make sure that we are doing the best to recognize that as we emerge from this pandemic, this time of disruption, that we are re-imagining the health care system to provide the best care possible, to drive the ultimate outcomes. We've been spending the most per person per year on health care for year after year after year, yet we have the lowest life expectancy, the highest burden of disease. We can't continue to invest in the old paradigms; we need to create a new one, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I have to acknowledge that, to the Premier, the people of this province see the difference between a challenging health care system and a health care system in crisis. We're in crisis, and that's the effect it's having on people in the province.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Similar stories to physician shortages are all too common, in Fogo, St. Alban's, Twillingate, Springdale, Baie Verte, Buchans, Harbour Breton, New-Wes-Valley, Bell Island and the list goes on. In emergencies, patients are being transferred hours and hundreds of kilometres away.

I ask the Premier: After seven years, why has the government been unable to get its act together to save rural health care?

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

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

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

That's exactly why we put the Health Accord in place, Mr. Speaker, to recognize that we need to deliver health care differently. The old paradigms of the past, the old GP practices of the past, they are simply not going to cut it. We need to make sure that we are investing in a new health care system, one that's been re-imagined for the first time since the '60s, Mr. Speaker.

The population has changed, the demographics have changed and technology has changed. We need to make sure that we are harnessing that change to create a new health care system for the people of the province that drives ultimate outcomes as close as possible to home, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Dr. Parfrey and Sister Elizabeth Davis have acknowledged that part of their work will take 10 years. What they need is immediate investments here. So I would hope that immediate investment comes this Thursday, with a commitment to the people of this province that health care will be improved.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are one accident, one heart attack or one stroke away from losing their lives because the Liberal government can't get its act together. Dr. Powell has compared the current crisis to pre-Confederation health care.

Speaker, last week the Premier boasted about the 73rd anniversary of Confederation. Does he share Dr. Powell's assessment of health care in rural Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Frankly, Mr. Speaker, pre-Confederation, it's a false analogy

completely. You can look at the data yourself. The life expectancy, the neonatal mortality rate, the maternal mortality rate, that's an unusual comparison. I recognize that the health care system is challenged, but frankly, to compare it to before Confederation is wrong. It's statistically wrong and it's not accurate.

We are moving, as this government, recognizing the Health Accord, working with people like Lynette Powell and the NLMA to ensure that we are delivering the care that is required in the communities. Inventive, innovative solutions like harnessing technology, using collaborative care clinics, just to name two, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I tell you, the government has had seven years to get it right and we're still waiting.

Speaker, I'm delighted the government has finally taken my suggestion to have the Auditor General review Memorial University.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Funny it may be, but it's true.

While it's unfortunate that it took a year of asking, the minister also indicated all changes to the *Memorial University Act* are on hold until the review is complete.

So, Speaker, will the changes to MUN's accountability and autonomy also be put on hold?

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

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

As the Members know, we have been working on having the Auditor General go in to Memorial University since last year. In fact, there were two pieces of legislation changed in this Legislature, one specifically, the *Memorial University Act* and section 38.1, and the other



more broad and looking at all government agencies, Mr. Speaker.

But to answer his question specifically, the *Memorial University Act* amendments are looking at autonomy, looking at accountability. We will await the independent review by the Auditor General to add that to the work that is already being done on the *Memorial University Act* and feed into it.

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

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

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

Speaker, in the minister's news release yesterday he said an unbiased overview of how the university allocates their investment is critical before changes to the act are brought forward. If the minister can hold off on all amendments of the *Memorial University Act* until the AG report is complete, will he also hold off on increasing the tuition at MUN as planned for this September until the AG has completed a review?

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

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

I don't know what purpose that would serve. Memorial University had given notice to government – as they have the right to do; the Board of Regents has the ability to change tuitions at the university. They had given government notice months prior to last year's budget that they were increasing tuitions.

So with or without removing the tuition freeze funding, which is meant to freeze tuitions, tuitions were going up. We made the determination that we would take that funding and direct it into student aid and student loan programs, Mr. Speaker, which is where the money was needed.

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

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

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

It's fallen on the backs of students. Everything else stays as it is, but everything else falls on the backs of students and that's something the minister is missing.

Speaker, government has sat by while tuition is supposed to double; lavish renovations were completed to the president's office and dubious spending on a personal trainer. Yet, the students are struggling with the high cost of living, as are the rest of us in this province, and will face a tuition increase later this fall.

Again, is everything else on hold? Why are the students the only ones being penalized?

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

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

Again, we don't make determinations or the decision on tuitions at Memorial University. I do trust that the university has done their due diligence, Mr. Speaker, in determining the tuition rates. I understand from the president that they are still very competitive when compared to other Canadian universities. I also understand that applications for the upcoming semester have remained stable.

So the tuition freeze funding, Mr. Speaker, was to freeze tuitions. That wasn't happening. Without taking that funding back, we wouldn't have the funding to put into additional grants and loans for students, Mr. Speaker. Many of the students who graduate are eligible for loan forgiveness in this province, unlike many other provinces.

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

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

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

This is a case of passing the buck, Speaker. The minister is well aware. We've debated this. It's not a new topic. We've debated back and forth in the House, outside the House and in person.

Six months ago, we passed legislation to let the AG come in and review MUN's books. What are we waiting for now? Six months later, we

announced yesterday – we don't know when it's going to happen, when they're going to come in and do it. They could have announced this six months ago, Mr. Speaker.

Now we are looking at least a year or so before the AG gets her final report, so we're not going to see a MUN act for 2023-24 – maybe after the next election. And hopefully someone else with the right sense are in power to make the right decision and not follow what's happening across the way.

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

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, if we're waiting for the other side of the House to make the decisions of this province, we'd have another seven years cleaning up their mess.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, I'm not even going to comment on that particular point, other than to say that right now, yesterday, the government announced that they were going to do a review. They were inviting the Auditor General to come in to review the books of MUN and talk about transparency and accountability. At the very same time, the Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board received the Rothschild report and quickly told the people of the province she has no intention of releasing it to the people to see it.

So I ask the minister: Will you ask the Privacy Commissioner to take a review of the report and cross out or redact anything that is, quote, "commercially sensitive"?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much, Speaker, and thank you for the spirited question.

I will say to the Member opposite that I'm sure he does not want to have a detrimental effect to the people of this province. He would not want

to put any type of assets at risk. I will say to the Member opposite that I know why he is asking for the report, but I will say to him that we have to protect the public interest. It is important that we do so and we will continue to do so on this side of the House.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, yesterday the minister said she would do the responsible thing. The responsible thing would be to ask the Privacy Commissioner to examine the report and to redact anything that might be commercially sensitive.

I ask the minister: Will you at least release the report and tell us exactly what assets – a list of the assets – you plan on selling off?

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, I am sure that the Member opposite understands the ATIPPA legislation; I have to believe that he does. When he speaks about the Commissioner, the Commissioner's role is oversight. The Commissioner's role is not to come in and redact. The Member opposite must understand that. Either he is misunderstanding it or he is misinforming.

I will say to the Member opposite, the –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** Sorry, Speaker, I am getting interrupted.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** If he doesn't understand the legislation, I'd be happy to walk him through it. I will say that it is very important that we protect the public interest. There are a lot of commercial sensitivities. We wouldn't want to have it impact the commercialization of any asset.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, the only one being misunderstood or misunderstanding are the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador who this minister refuses to allow to see the report that they spent \$5 million to commission. It is about time that the people of the province saw this report.

We also notice that it is the same government, of course, that have hid the secrets of the whole deal that was done with Canopy Growth. They still never released that, yet they ask for trust.

A senior in my district, yesterday, called me up and talked about why is it the government can spend \$5 million on a report but can't do anything about the price of furnace oil.

I ask the minister: Will you implement a home-heat rebate program?

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, I am sitting, literally, I don't know, 12 feet from the Member opposite, he does not need to shout. I can hear him completely. I have an earpiece in my ear as well just in case there is chirping or comment.

I will say to the Member opposite that the report will be reviewed; it will be analyzed. What we're trying to achieve here is making sure that we're protecting the people of the province. I am sure the Member opposite does not want to have a detrimental impact on the people of the province.

With regard to the home heat rebate, I will say again to the Member opposite and, again, to the people of the province – and the people of the province understand this, I can't understand why the Member opposite doesn't – the home heat rebate has been rolled into the Income Supplement and the Seniors' Benefit and that we've increased.

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

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

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

I will make sure that the minister clearly understands what I am saying, but let me clearly say to the minister the program that she talks about that was introduced in 2016, at that time, the price of fuel oil per litre was 61 cents. Today, it's at \$1.83; three times the amount when that program was introduced. So that's no excuse for not implementing a home-heat rebate program. As a matter of fact, we've gone so far as to ATIPP. In two years, we could not find any recommendation or discussion by this government about even looking at a home-heat rebate program.

So, again, I ask the minister: Can you please implement a home heat rebate program for the people of the province who really need it?

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

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

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

I'm sure the Member opposite understands, because he just admitted to it, that the home heat rebate was folded into the Income Supplement. We've just raised the Income Supplement. We've raised the Seniors' Benefit. That is included, people are getting their cheques; they'll get them four times a year. Speaker, there may be other things in the budget coming in a short two days that may be helpful for the people of the province on the cost of living.

We all recognize that these cost of living concerns are very real, we understand that and we understand that it's not just locally; it's nationally and internationally. We are all concerned about the cost of living, it's not just the Member opposite; it certainly is this government. I'm sure he'll see more in the budget.

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

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

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

The manager of a food bank said: “We’ve kind of got a new demographic really. We’ve always had some working people, but we certainly didn’t have this many working people ....”

Why did the minister fail to support these people who are now forced to look for assistance from food banks?

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

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

Recently, we were talking to and have been working with Food First NL and we’ve provided them some additional funds this year to support food banks and food programs across the province, while we work through the very difficult time in the community in terms of accessing food.

Also, as the Minister of Finance just mentioned, we have a five-point plan, we’ve increased the Income Support payments for individuals and families, we’ve increased the Income Supplement and we’ve increased the Seniors’ Benefit. So we’re putting out as much money as we can at this time until we wait for the budget.

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

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

**J. DWYER:** Well, I can appreciate some of the work that’s being done. It’s the people that are actually keeping our economy going that are struggling now. They still have to buy their lunches and put gas in their car to get to work. We’re talking about a lot of people that you increase stuff that, yes, it’s important for them as well, but it is a fixed income.

It’s getting more expensive to live here, simply. That’s pushing more people to food banks in my district and the whole province; people who once donated to food banks, now have to look to them for food.

What additional supports will the minister implement to lower the cost of food and provide more supports to food-sharing organizations?

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

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

We recognize, as a government, that the cost of living is increasing. We’re doing what we can, where we can and how we can to address that. We have the five-point action plan, but more specifically to your question, we are working with Food First NL. We have just put out additional funding to them to allow them to receive applications from the community for those food banks and food programs that need assistance to support the clients that they’re working with right across the province. We’ve started that process and we’ll continue to support them in the weeks and months ahead.

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

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

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

I think everybody has seen the rally we had on the Burin Peninsula about health care. According to the local health care committee on the Burin Peninsula, the Health Accord team has informed them that they will strongly recommend that speciality services such as surgery, obstetric care and intensive care units be removed from the Burin Peninsula Health Care Centre.

I ask the minister: Will these services be removed?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to reply to the Member’s question.

The Health Accord has delivered its summary report to the department and we are currently analyzing that. We are, however, still awaiting

their second document, which is an implementation report. All of these discussions are currently conjecture. Once that report is received that, too, will be analyzed before the department and government make any decisions about these kind of things.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

Speaker, personal care home subsidies in the province haven't seen an increase since 2017. Since then, they've seen substantial increases in costs such as a 21 per cent increase in utilities, a 22 per cent increase in groceries and supplies, a 30 per cent increase in labour costs and over a 100 per cent increase in insurance premiums.

I ask the minister: Will this budget include an increase to personal care home subsidy?

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

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

I obviously can't speak to the budget, that's not my mandate, and it's not Budget Day anyway.

In terms of the personal care home sector, I have met with groups representing their owners. We know that the review done by Deloitte some years ago contained recommendations around subsidies, and time has passed those by.

We have asked Deloitte to go back to their figures and revise them in light of some of the cost-of-living changes. I would however like to point out that we've provided considerable financial and in-kind support to the personal care homes to cover their administration costs and all their PPE during COVID. So they're not falling on deaf ears, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Contrary to what the minister says, the Minister of Finance spoke to the departments actually (inaudible) into the budget. So he should know what's been asked for.

To go back to the Deloitte report, having that redone, that's not going to change our demographics. That report looked at seniors doubling. So that's not getting any better.

Speaker, without an increase in the subsidy, some personal care homes, especially outside the Northeast Avalon, are in danger of closing, displacing seniors from their homes. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick have taken progressive steps to increase their subsidy rates.

I ask the minister: What is the plan to ensure personal care homes continue to be viable and provide high-quality care to the vulnerable seniors of this province?

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

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

For clarity, I think the Member opposite may have his Deloitte confused; there are at least three reports done by Deloitte governing the personal care home sector. The one I reference was simply around the figure for subsidies. The others are relevant but not germane to his question.

In terms of small homes outside the Avalon, particularly, we are conscious that a per capita bed subsidy has not worked for them in the past. It is crucial that whatever we do with funding for personal care home beds, it takes into account the importance of small homes in rural areas that provide a service and employment, which cannot be managed the same way as the large 100-bed homes. We're working with the operators to achieve that, Mr. Speaker.

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

**P. DINN:** It's – I don't know what to call it, I was going to say amusing that the minister would say that the increase and the reports of

increase and the huge numbers of our seniors over the coming years is not germane; not germane to this issue. Wow.

Speaker, we hear regularly from our constituents around long delays to be assessed for admission to personal care homes and reassessment for higher levels of care. We only recently saw the instance of two seniors, one who has unfortunately passed away. This means that seniors are left waiting for extended period of time to access the care they require.

I ask the minister: When will he take action to ensure timely access to personal care homes and other care seniors may require?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Again, Mr. Speaker, for clarity, the issue of the numbers of seniors requiring support, either in their own homes, in personal care homes or in long-term care, has been very much front of mind. We have our Home First philosophy to deal with the first group. Personal care home sector itself has built an additional 1,800 beds, of which 1,500 are still empty because they have a vacancy rate and that is not due to placement issues.

There are, however, placement issues, particularly in Avalon. The other regional health authorities less so. This has been occasioned by COVID; has been assisted to some extent by the Good Neighbour Agreement with the unions; and we're working with Placement Services in Eastern to streamline their process, Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** The teacher shortage issue in Labrador West is well known. The minister must be well aware of the staffing issue crisis at Menihek High School. A former teacher described the situation as a house of cards. There are not enough replacement teachers and teachers have to cover other classes since September. Now with four teachers set to be off

for the rest of the year, the house of cards is collapsing.

I ask the minister: What short-term and long-term measures are being put in place to ensure Menihek High School can continue the necessary teaching and maintain staff for in-person classes?

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

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

I thank the Member for the question because it is a concern for the NLESD and the department. It is the area of the province with the greatest pressure. It is due to the ability to get teachers in that area based on pay and the amount of rent.

One of the issues that we are undertaking in that area, Mr. Speaker, is a building that is owned by the NLESD with apartments in the building itself. We're constructing additional apartments and they should be in place, hopefully, Mr. Speaker, for September so that we can use that to help attract additional teachers.

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

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

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

We are hearing across districts from Torngat Mountains to St. John's Centre that critical supports patients need to achieve health outcomes are not effective or not available to them. Supporters were here yesterday in the House of Assembly advocating for a patient that is having difficulty getting proper medical supports and is feeling abandoned.

I ask the minister: Are patients supposed to accept this and just give up or will this government review the patient outcome supports and ensure that cases like Simeon Poker and many others across the province can succeed and not fall through the cracks?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much for the question, Speaker.

We recognize that as the health care system with its specialization and sub-specialization becomes increasingly difficult for individuals to navigate, we have adopted across the RHAs a technique we used in cancer care, which was to institute the role of care navigators. Each regional health authority has them. They are straightforward to contact.

We are working with our Indigenous partners to ensure that those people for whom there may be cultural or language barriers to accessing care have those barriers removed. Indeed, as recently as yesterday, Eastern Health, for example, were in contact with Indigenous groups to provide support for families from Labrador who don't find English their first language.

I would argue the supports exist, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** There are 800 residents in Western Newfoundland on wait-list one for cataract surgery and will have to wait up to a year to 18 months, many in your own district, Premier. Many seniors who cannot even see this broadcast today. Many seniors had their driver's licence taken away from them and can't even read their medication instructions.

The Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital hasn't performed any cataract surgeries since January 2021, 15 months ago, due to equipment and medical packs. There is a backlog of surgeries at Western Memorial Regional Hospital with limited time available for cataract surgeries. Three specialists can eliminate the wait-list in a timely matter with more OR time available at the Apex building.

I ask the Premier: Will you immediately convene a meeting with yourself, the Minister of Health and Community Services and the three specialists on the West Coast to resolve this issue?

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

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

For the information of the House, the number of cataracts performed in Western Health has increased by just over 20 per cent in the last five years. The number that were done in Western Health facilities in the last year dropped by 99 per cent. The reason that there have been no cataract surgeries performed in Western Health is because when there was a defect with the microscope, the individual concerned said he was not going back to Stephenville.

It has been fixed on the direction of the department and we are awaiting the return of the surgeon. There are some contractual issues, which we are looking into with Western Health.

Thank you.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, you can say how much you like are done, there are still 800 waiting to be done. I have a letter from Western Health saying because of equipment failure and because of the supply packs they could not perform the surgeries. So are they misleading the people of Western Newfoundland, I say to the minister.

Eight hundred people need this surgery and want their eyesight. They want their dignity back and quality of life. If the surgeries were completed at public facilities, MCP would be billed. Funding is not the issue now. It is where the procedures are performed. The OR time at Western Memorial Regional Hospital is limited. The backlog would only increase if it's not eliminated.

Premier, residents I have spoken to don't care where they get this surgery done. They want their eyesight. Premier, you said on many occasions the buck stops with you. While your government are arguing where the surgery should be performed, the eyesight of 800 residents is in your hands.

Would you please resolve this very difficult situation and perform your job as the Premier and meet with the specialists?

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

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

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

Part of the arrangement with the Medical Association around cataracts was a provincial approach to cataract waiting.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. HAGGIE:** There is capacity in a variety of facilities across the Island and I am delighted to hear –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I heard the question. I want to hear the response.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**J. HAGGIE:** There is capacity in a variety of facilities across the Island. I am delighted to hear from the Member opposite that his constituents are prepared to travel for the cataracts. We bought extra cataract surgeries over and above. We bought 5,000. We did not expect that the RHA list would be abandoned in favour of a more lucrative approach.

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

**SPEAKER:** Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

#### **Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees**

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

**B. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 17 of the Harassment-Free Workplace Policy Applicable to Complaints Against Members, I am pleased to present this report respecting the review of the policy conducted by the Privileges and Elections Committee.

I thank the Members of the Committee for their due diligence and hard work, and I recommend this report to the House of Assembly.

Thank you. Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Other presenting reports by Standing and Select Committees?

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

#### **Notices of Motion**

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

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

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That the House concur with the report of the Privileges and Elections Committee tabled on April 5, 2022.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** 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.

These are the reasons for the petition and the background to this petition, and it's hopefully for the minister that's leaving to go get a glass water and not the room.



**AN HON. MEMBER:** You're not supposed to say that.

**J. DWYER:** No, I said he was going to get a glass water.

**SPEAKER:** Order!

**J. DWYER:** I apologize. I withdraw.

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

**J. DWYER:** Oh, okay.

Roads in our province are in various states of disrepair. Many rural communities are concerned that the deplorable road conditions will keep visitors away from the Come Home Year celebrations. We are inviting the world to come to our province this summer, yet many rural roads are unfit to travel and many local vehicles are damaged by 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 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 to many rural roads throughout our province.

This one here is signed by people from Petite Forte and Rushoon. I presented one for Chance Cove and I'm sure there are going to be more to come.

I'd say the only ones that are upset with me presenting this petition are probably the mechanics, because they're the ones that are going to be the busiest this summer. I hope they don't make any plans for their own vacation this summer, because I'm sure they're going to be backlogged with the state of the roads.

So I ask the minister to have a look at it and fight on behalf of the people in rural Newfoundland. I mean, I know what I was grandfathered into and a lot of it comes to maintenance not being done for a while and stuff like that. So if that takes buying some new equipment like brush-cutting attachments to do

it ourselves instead of contracting out, we might get a little bit more done because then we can take that attachment and put it in different depots as needed.

There are many ways that we can fix our roads, but we have to have a willingness to want to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

WHEREAS Newfoundland has the highest incidence of cardiac disease in Canada and we need to do what we can to improve the ability to save lives; and

WHEREAS the implementation of a new registry can be completed for less than the cost of a new vehicle; and

WHEREAS after implementation, the annual cost will be five cents per resident;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly: To urge government to enact legislation requiring all AEDs in the province to be registered with an online registry. This registry must be linked to the 911 system to enable faster response time in the case of cardiac emergencies.

Speaker, this is not the first time I've presented this petition in the House. It's the first time in this session probably in a while now, but this is something that I've spoken about in the House on numerous occasions over the last number of years. I believe we may be the only, or one of the only provinces in the country without this registry.

The simple fact of the matter is that it's been able to make sure the AEDs are operational when needed, which is a big thing, batteries up to scratch and what have you. In government facilities and whatever, they probably are looked after, but not in every facility.

The key point to it is – and I emphasize this because I have a family in my district who suffers from ACR, the very deathly heart condition, actually, and they all operate with pacemakers, who pushing this issue. But the biggest point to this registry, and I hope government gives this serious consideration now that we're dealing with 911 again, is if you have an emergency when you call 911, they will know where the nearest AED is. You could be down on Water Street and you have a medical emergency, they'll tell you this building here is the closest AED on the street. That saves lives. AEDs are saving lives.

This is a very serious issue. In fairness, every time I brought it up before government were receptive to it, but it had to be depending on when 911 was in place – 911 didn't have the capabilities in the old system; the new system would.

I'm looking at the minister when I say this, but this is one I strongly think you should consider. It's not the first time I've talked about this; I'm sure your officials may be aware. This needs to be brought in place. AEDs save lives, simple fact of the matter, and they should be included in our 911 system that they have an active registry, not only to keep the batteries up to scratch, but know where one is, should an emergency happen.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I'm going to rise on petition again today on the cataract surgeries in Western Newfoundland. I'm going to read an email I got from Western Health. The Minister of Health and Community Services –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member has to read the petition.

**E. JOYCE:** I already did.

**SPEAKER:** No, you have to read it each time you present it.

**E. JOYCE:** I have it here somewhere.

You go ahead, Mr. Speaker. I'll find it here.

**SPEAKER:** Okay.

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 the marine shipping service between the Island portion of our province and our Northern Labrador communities of Rigolet, Makkovik, Postville, Hopedale, Natuashish and Nain.

This marine freight service was removed in the spring of 2019, resulting in freight having to be trucked now to the port of Happy Valley-Goose Bay and then shipped to our northern communities. Since then, the additional shipping has directly impacted prices of food, building materials, vehicles, including trucks and off-road vehicles, household goods and many essential services to our communities.

Our Northern Labrador communities are totally isolated with no road access and marine transportation services are limited to just five months per summer, on average. With the cancellation of the direct marine freight service from the Island portion of our province to our communities, residents are now witnessing exorbitant price increases of basic needs impacting overall quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, this petition is really important to the people in my district. In actual fact, it's the reason why I ran. It's the reason why people actually asked me to run. Because it was this actual Liberal government that took away the freight service from the Island portion of the province to the North Coast communities that drove up the price, not only of food – we see in the stores now four frozen pork chops costing \$28 – but also building materials. In actual fact, the contractor services now have ballooned. A serviced lot, without the house, costs \$250,000. That's what they can charge us.

It impacts household goods and materials; most people are forced to haul wood using a snowmobile. Well, a snowmobile now from Goose Bay costs a minimum of \$2,500 more than we would have paid if we could had gotten it from the Island. From the Island, we would save \$2,500 to \$3,500 off the price and were thrown in bonus materials that actually improved the quality of the machine. Now, we have to pay these high costs.

It's impacting families. With the price of food and materials now, families are struggling, not just low-income families.

Mr. Speaker, this service, in actual fact, is not just about marine freight service. It's about the ability of our communities to have quality of life. The removal of the freight boat was so unacceptable to people in my district that they asked me to run. That's one of the things they asked me to do. I have hundreds of pages of signatures and I tell you, every time this House is sitting, I'm actually going to read this petition because it's not right, it needs to be returned.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

I read the petition as follows:

WHEREAS there are approximately 750 to 800 people, mainly seniors, who are on a wait-list for cataract surgery in Western Newfoundland; and

WHEREAS it will take almost 14 months for these seniors to have the procedure carried out; and

WHEREAS many of these seniors have had their driver's licence suspended, they can't read the instructions on their medication, they can't read a book or watch TV due to cataract problems affecting their eyesight, which is having an impact on the quality of life in their later years; and

WHEREAS a one-time allotment of funds will eliminate the wait-list for cataract surgery in Western Newfoundland and Labrador and give

these seniors, and others awaiting surgery, a better quality of life which they deserve.

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 the necessary funds required to carry out these life-changing surgeries in a timely manner.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health and Community Services just got up and said they can perform surgeries at the Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital. I'm going to read an email, and if they give leave, I'll even table it in the House. Here's what Western Health said. Now, the minister can take it up with Western Health, that's up to him, but do not take it out on 800 seniors that need this surgery and make statements like that, which is easily proven false.

I'll read what they said: "There have been no cataract procedures performed at Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital since January of 2021. Of note, there were equipment challenges from January 15 - Sept 2022. One list was booked in November 2021; however, it was cancelled due to Code Grey. There have been also challenges with availability of custom supplies." That's the letter from Western Health.

The Minister of Health and Community Services can stand in his place with 800 seniors who can't see and say they can do it in Stephenville. That is just false. For God sake, Government, these are seniors. This is a personality conflict with the minister and somebody else – 800 seniors.

Now, the minister is giving the impression in this House of Assembly that now they can travel anywhere across the province. Instead of getting it done in Corner Brook, now they can come to St. John's.

I ask the Premier of the province: How many of your residents are going to have to travel to St. John's? The Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay: How many of your seniors now are going to have to go to St. John's instead of Corner Brook? That's what the minister is saying.

How many from Corner Brook? How many from the Humber Valley area? Stand up. How many are going to go to St. John's now because

there is capacity in St. John's? You can get it done in Corner Brook, but because of a personality conflict, none in Stephenville; one or two days in Corner Brook, one of those is for ophthalmology. He does the whole province, so he can't do cataracts for that day when there's a listing that he can do what he like.

For God sake, Government, this is fact. Information that is being put out in the general public is false by the minister. Here's a letter, if I have permission to table it, I'll table it right here.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time has 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 to Bull Arm, Long Harbour and other areas for work as well as the commercial and residential growth in our region has increased the volume of traffic on the highway.

Therefore we petition the House of Assembly as follows: Upgrade to this significant piece of infrastructure to enhance and improve the flow of traffic to and from the Trans-Canada Highway.

We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to get this done.

Speaker, I spoke on this a number of times and it is a piece of infrastructure that certainly needs to be upgraded. Each year there are thousands of tourists that use the Witless Bay Line as access to the Irish Loop. Right now, starting this week, you're going to have crab trucked across the Witless Bay Line as well. You also have all kinds of people that travel it to go to Soldiers Pond, Long Harbour, Bull Arm and wherever across the way.

Some of the complaints that I get, certainly from campers, are they will drive the Southern Shore Highway and go out the Trans-Canada rather than go across the Witless Bay Line because it is so rough. A couple of our Members have driven across, to cut across to get up to Bay Bulls and they drove it and they were astonished at the state and disrepair of the road.

You know, they did an upgrade last year, I think they did four kilometres. Certainly, maintenance on this is a big issue and trying to get in and get some of those holes filled. I understand this time of the year that you fill it up and then it's gone again on the next snowfall, plowing it out and not being able to hold the asphalt that they put in or the cold patch.

I hope this year in the budget the minister looks good on it and be able to see some pavement hit our district in the Witless Bay Line area and up in Irish Loop and Trepassey area.

Thank you so much.

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Actually, I am going to respond to a previous petition that was from the Member for Torngat Mountains who was talking about the ferry service and painting a picture that the sky is falling.

Well, I would like to say to the Member that facts do matter. Last year, the passenger numbers were up, the vehicle numbers were up, the cargo numbers were up and overall it has been classified as a good service. So the sky is not falling and facts do matter, I want to remind the Member for Torngat Mountains.

Now, to the petition on roadwork. The road plan is coming out. The ask is enormous, but I always have to live within my budget. But it is duly taken under consideration, his concerns as he has brought them before this House before.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that under Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 5.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, third reading of Bill 48.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that Bill 48 be now read a third time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act. (Bill 48)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Financial Administration Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 48)

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4, Bill 53.

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

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

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Judicature Act, Bill 53, 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 Justice and Public Safety shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Judicature Act, Bill 54, and 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.'

The motion is carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Judicature Act," carried. (Bill 53)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Judicature Act. (Bill 53)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 53 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Order 9, Bill 41, An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting of Emergencies.

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to –

**SPEAKER:** A mover and a seconder, please.

**J. HOGAN:** Sorry, I have to move again. I knew I was missing something.

Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that Bill 41, An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting of Emergencies, be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 41, An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting of Emergencies, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting of Emergencies.” (Bill 41)

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

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

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this new piece of legislation. Just so everyone knows, we’re updating and revising the *Emergency 911 Act*, which will now be entitled the *Emergency 911 Act 2022*.

The new act will assign responsibility of the 911 system in the province to the Department of Justice and Public Safety. This government’s decision to integrate NL911 into the Department of Justice and Public Safety is in line with our government’s desire to streamline delivery of services, specifically with reference to the public safety part of the department. There have been numerous recent initiatives to broaden the scope of emergency services in this province.

The Emergency Services branch includes the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre, the future implementation of a province-wide radio system, Fire and Emergency Services and the implementation of recommendations flowing from the Ground Search and Rescue inquiry.

Residents of the province are well aware of the use of 911 in emergency situations. This is why this service fits within the Emergency Services branch. In recent years, there have been many developments that have highlighted the need for a more strategic review of emergency management and response throughout our province. The GSAR inquiry and subsequent recommendations is one example, as well as the Nova Scotia mass casualty inquiry in relation to the shootings in Portapique and various severe weather events that have cut off residents and communities from emergency providers and their economic supply chains, including the recent rainstorm on the Southwest Coast of the Island, Hurricane Larry and Snowmageddon.

Emerging issues such as cybersecurity, which we have now seen, not only around the world but here at home; the federal government’s use of the *Emergencies Act*; and, finally, the health emergency in COVID-19 that impacted all aspects of society. Clearly, the landscape of emergency management is changing and this government is positioning itself to make sure all facets are aligned and complementary to one another.

We view 911 as a key communication tool within a larger emergency management

framework. It only makes sense to have it all under one roof, so officials within the department, those who live and breathe emergency services every day, know exactly what each facet of our emergency system is doing at all times. Officials and experts will know how they can all work together. Having a single emergency service operating in isolation is not prudent. In fact, it would lead to gaps or a failure to communicate, and we all know in an emergency situation every second matters.

Integrating NL911 into the department will provide for direct oversight of this service and allow for identification and development of synergies within government as we move forward with initiatives such as the implementation of the Health Accord and regionalization of local government. Including this service as part of core government is consistent with the approach of other jurisdictions. Eight jurisdictions: Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and the Yukon have their 911 services as part of their government department structures.

As a government, we are taking steps to ensure that the integration of NL911 will not change the 911 service for residents. The public will still be able to rely on the service just as before. I do think it is important to explain how the service works so the public will understand how the call-taking service will not be impacted by the changes in governance.

The basic process is an individual requiring emergency assistance dials 911. The 911 call is answered by one of the two Public Safety Answering Points referred to as PSAPs based on the location of the caller. NL 911 Bureau contracts these PSAPs with the City of St. John's and the City of Corner Brook. The two PSAP system ensures that there is redundancy in the system and each provides backup to the other in the event of a problem. When the call is answered at the PSAP, the call taker determines the correct emergency service provider for response and then forwards the call on.

The bill we are introducing here today keeps this model in place. Furthermore, the bill does not change the contractual arrangements that are currently in place with the PSAPs. Staff

currently working these PSAPs can rest assured that the introduction of this bill will not impact their employment or job function.

As we transition NL911 staff into core government, we are hopeful that they will see the opportunity that this integration presents in terms of potentially expanded scope of work, new projects or career development and other or new learning opportunities.

The cost for implementation of the Next Generation 911 system is unknown at this time. We are estimating it to be in the range of several million dollars. The date for introduction of the Next Generation 911 system is dependent on decisions of the federal CRTC, which regulates the telecommunications industry in the country.

It is important to note that this is not a decision of NL911 and it will therefore not be a decision of the Department of Justice and Public Safety. Nothing is being taken away from NL911 and we will follow the process and decisions of CRTC.

Next Generation 911 is not available in any jurisdiction in Canada. So as other provinces make changes, so, too, will this province. Government's intention is to move forward with Next Generation 911 and so we will be working closely with our partners to move this project forward when the time comes.

Funding requirements for Next Generation 911 service will be addressed through the annual budget process, again, when the time comes.

The move to bring 911 service into core government is about looking for new opportunities to find synergies and expanding and co-ordinating the emergency service in the province. There is no downgrading of service in any way.

To the board members who have worked so hard to develop the 911-telephone service throughout this province, I thank you for your contribution. Many of you are also representatives of the emergency partners that my department officials interact with on a daily basis. So I expect that we will continue to enjoy productive, collaborative relationships on the various aspects of emergency management. We will continue to

look for opportunities to engage with our emergency partners as we move forward.

Finally, I want to take a couple of minutes to address potential concerns I have heard. First, the issue about the current fund that is allocated for Next Generation 911. As I have said, this government will follow the CRTC guidelines related to Next Generation 911, which is not anticipated until at least 2025.

We have, as a government, committed on numerous occasions to proceeding with Next Generation 911 when the country, as a whole, is prepared to move forward with it. Whether this commitment is made from the current board or from the government, the commitment is there and nothing changes.

I want to refer to the new legislation. It specifically says in section 7 that the minister shall be responsible and responsive to changing technologies. So there is a statutory obligation to proceed with new technologies, which will include Next Generation 911.

In fact, the current fund is not specifically mandated for Next Generation 911, and the old legislation only speaks to improving the service. Whereas the new legislation mandates government to keep up with new technology and, therefore, the new legislation does speak directly to Next Generation 911.

The new legislation also broadens the scope. Currently, under the old act, funds are collected for an emergency 911 telephone service. However, now, funds will be collected for an emergency 911 service. It is not a fund just for telephones. In fact, the new definition specifically includes reference to the province-wide radio system. This is not something that could happen under the old legislation.

Second, the issue of consultation has been raised and specific reference has been made to local knowledge. This is important and it is why the new legislation mandates the minister, in section 5, to work with municipalities and emergency service providers. Furthermore, in section 6, the municipalities are required to participate. There is a legal obligation to consult.

Third, the question has been asked essentially saying, why bother, and that the current operations at 911 is sufficient. The new legislation is not just about 911; it is part of a broader public safety initiative. The legislation refers to the RNC, the RCMP, fire services, all within the Department of Justice and Public Safety already. The new legislation refers to the province-wide radio system currently within the Emergency Services Division of the department. These entities will work together to ensure an overall streamline and efficient public safety service.

Finally, this is part of the overall streamlining of government. We anticipate savings. The board is a tier-one board that is remunerated. Third party contracts the corporation has can potentially be offered from within the department. Financial and human resource issues such as payroll can be done by JPS officials.

And, most importantly, infrastructure for 911 radios and other broadband initiatives can be integrated to 911. This means taxpayer dollars and service-fee dollars do not have to be spent on multiple infrastructure pieces when there is a way to do it collectively and effectively. Mr. Speaker, 911 will not and should not be in a silo.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

I just want to touch on this act. Of course, as the minister mentioned, it's updating and revising a new act. It talked about streamlining the delivery of departments. It talked about emergency services.

Interestingly, yesterday the minister mentioned, when speaking to this bill and speaking to 911, spoke about it not being about efficiencies but being about safety. Not once in the preamble did we hear safety – not once. The word wasn't used. It talked fully about efficiencies.

This 911 is clearly about safety. It is clearly about individuals who need emergency services



and they pick up the phone and they make that call and they hope there is somebody on the other end of the line that is going to have an ambulance or a paramedic to their door, or firemen reporting to a fire. It is clearly about safety.

You want to have efficiencies around safety. Yeah, you can find efficiencies but at the end of the day, it is all safety. Make no bones about it, it is all about safety. Then it was mentioned about 911, a communication tool. It is a very, very important communication tool.

The minister said it makes sense. It is not prudent to have it where it is. Not prudent to have entities outside of government; it is better to have it in there. Every second matters, and every second does matter. But when you bring it all into government, we know that the service or the program is not as nimble as another entity outside who can look for better prices on things, get contracts on things, and get a better service on things. When it comes within government, you're talking about red tape and bureaucracy. There is no way around it. That's what you see when you bring it in.

So I have seen and heard nothing in the way of why this only makes sense. There has to be data out there. There has to be issues that tell us why it makes sense. When you talk to a current 911 board, for one thing, that is who I would go to right away. If I'm talking about making changes to legislation and creating a new act, talk about 911 service and bringing it into government because it is prudent to do so, well, it's prudent to have a discussion with the board of directors for 911.

And they brought concerns to me. They brought concerns: No consultation – no consultation. No response to the concerns from the board. No details provided on the efficiencies planned, and I haven't seen them here today. No plan provided for protecting the funding for the 911 service enhancements. And here we are, now, the bill is here in the House and no promises for engagement to stakeholders. This is all from the current board.

We talk about the Next Generation 911. So NL911 have a fund reserve and it has been created to cover the cost of enhancements and its

future operation without having to increase the telephone fee for service. I have heard nothing to speak to how that will be addressed down the road. Will we see increased fees?

If 911 is folded into a government department, the reserve fund will no longer exist and government may have to increase that fee, especially if they are implementing a New Generation 911. The board goes on and tells me that no increase in the service fee will be required if NL911 remains as an independent agency, as the reserve fund will be adequate to cover the cost. The reserve fund they have will be adequate. And the minister mentioned the CRTC. The CRTC has mandated the communication subscribers to provide a Next Generation 911 enhanced service for 911.

And those enhanced services would include automatic location information, automatic number information, text and video message ability and sharing data with the Next Generation dispatching agencies. So all agencies would be involved. You don't need them all in the one group. Our technology today – it doesn't matter who you are dealing with or what entity – should be able to develop that service.

NL911 already have planned to move into a Next Generation 911 system, and the development of it is well under way with the reserve fund they have to cover the cost. This board have made great progress in ensuring the safety of our residents when someone calls 911.

When you push that within government, the Newfoundland and Labrador 911 service fund becomes general revenue and it's no longer dedicated to the 911 service. It's general revenue. Then your NL911 process, every budget, you have to compete then for funding with all the other departments when you have a group there that are doing the work and have money in the bank, so to speak. If not seen as a priority over other government needs, the NL911 may not be funded adequately to continue to develop the Next Generation system.

Again, you talk about putting it into the bureaucracy, you put it in there and it gets mixed in with everything else, so there's an issue then with if it gets the right priority that it should be

getting. And again, this is so much a safety issue.

The NL911 service fund is currently not considered public money applied under the *Financial Administration Act*. So NL911 may use the fund for the following purposes under the *Emergency 911 Act*: It can be used for developing, establishing, operating and improving the emergency 911 telephone service. It can be used for the operations of the corporation and it could be used for paying the costs that are associated with administering the fund.

The minister thanked the board of directors. It's a great board; they've done great work. But I think they would love to be at least consulted with ahead of this and some of their questions responded to. They haven't gotten that, and these are dedicated people. When you look at this board, this board's comprised of diverse backgrounds of stakeholders in emergency service. You have Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, the City of St. John's and Corner Brook and regional representation from Labrador.

I don't have to mention anything about Labrador; we know the different issues Labrador are dealing with when it comes to health and safety and it comes to 911. When it comes to getting individuals flown out of there for health services and emergencies, we know that.

When it gets folded into the government department, this wealth of experience from this board of directors is lost. The mandate of this group was to establish, implement and operate a province-wide emergency 911 service.

Because there are so many questions on this, because there's been nothing concrete that tells us why this needs to be done other than telling us it will create efficiencies and so on and so on – safety hasn't been mentioned which is a key piece here we need to talk about. The POMAX report that was done a little while back was commissioned by government and recommended a separate agency – a separate agency – as the most effective and efficient way to develop and maintain 911 services in this province. The minister has spoken about all the

efficiencies and the effectiveness that this is going to create, but we haven't seen it.

What I would like to know is: What has been said, or what has happened to reverse this recommendation? Again, I look at the bill, I look at the issues around it and what's been presented and I think the key to this is safety. It's great to put all your beans in the efficiency bucket, but it's still a safety issue. The group that should know, or be the most informed on this, the board of directors for NL911, should be the ones speaking to this; should be the ones consulted; should be the ones who had answers to their questions. What I'm hearing is that none of that has taken place.

So I cannot and we cannot support a bill that is not supported by proper documentation to show us that this is the right way to move.

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

**SPEAKER (Trimper):** Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker.

It is indeed a privilege to have the opportunity to speak to this bill today and, as always, to speak in the House of Assembly on behalf of the residents of St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows. Today, I'd like to take a minute to just talk about NL911 and the critical service that it provides to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, ensuring their safety and their well-being.

This bill, in an attempt to repeal and replace the current *Emergency 911 Act*, will dissolve the NL 911 Bureau as an independent corporation and integrate all of its functions into the Department of Justice and Public Safety. And this transition of staff into a core department will allow us to retain the knowledge and the experience that has been achieved and acquired over their number of years of service.

It certainly is not intended to compromise those processes and how those things work but certainly to add an efficiency to the department. When you look at a service that is being provided across such a broad spectrum, if you

can bring that additional expertise into the department, then that is going to be beneficial to everybody on both sides of the equation.

We're streamlining the lines of business associated with corporate services like HR, payroll and finance. I think we could all attest to even some redundancies that we find in our own management. So if we can do those types of things, then we're being more prudent in the service that we're providing.

As we move forward with initiatives and upgrades, as have been discussed, like the province-wide public safety radio system, that will be an enhancement for volunteer organizations and public entities all across the province. As we've talked about today, Next Generation 911 is still very much a work-in-progress, but this will ensure that we're part of that conversation and we move forward with the rest of the country as the CRTC arrangements permit. So bringing the province in line with other jurisdictions is a valuable piece of this equation.

Mr. Speaker, this bill will not change the current model for a 911 service. As the minister outlined, somebody dials 911, there will be a response from the PSAP based on their location and then the call-takers will determine the most appropriate responders and then dispatch accordingly. So that process will not change. The fees will not change. Those will remain the same. We will still continue to provide the supports that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have come to expect and to deserve from the service of 911.

The value of the service provided by these front-line emergency responders is truly immeasurable, and many of these are volunteers. We are very appreciative of the role that they play, particularly in our communities. The legislation references the legal obligation to consult as well as the municipalities' co-operation, and I don't think that's going to be a problem. Municipalities are notoriously involved in fire and emergency services and providing these services in their communities.

The role of emergency responders is first and foremost on conversations around council tables and the municipalities find these services to be a

cornerstone of their community. They work very closely with the Department of Justice and Public Safety to ensure that these critical services are maintained and supported all across the province.

Fire trucks, fire departments, ambulances and ambulance bays, all of these things have become critical structures or the heart and souls of our communities all across the province. For sleepovers and potlucks or town meetings, these buildings house these events and volunteers are usually supporting that effort. That is in addition to the emergency roles that they play.

Speaker, I have had the opportunity to be on the other end of that line. I have been the appropriate responder that has been dispatched. When an ambulance is required, it's certainly something that everybody wants to be efficient and effective.

As I read through this bill, one of the things that jumped out to me was civic addressing. If you will afford me a moment of reflection, I'd like to remember a few calls that I have gotten from rural communities over the course of my time in health care where the caller described their location.

On one occasion, the lady said: Well, Maid, I don't know how to tell you how to get to where I'm to. I'm out in the cabin lot; I'm in the red cabin with the triangle windows. Another caller referenced: Can you please send an ambulance over to Uncle Lonz's over in the bight. Or, Maid, I'm in the third house on the left past the convenience store. It's a yellow house. There's a red Dodge Ram in the parking lot and I'll flick the lights over the door as soon as I see them coming around the cove.

Speaker, these are challenges that can be addressed through civic addressing. Our department is working on an approach for regional government that will oversee the development and implementation of civic addressing. I am sure that we could all agree on the benefits that would be associated with having a map or some type of allocation to determine where you're actually requiring these services. Numbers on a house, numbers on a box, numbers on a pole so that an ambulance operator or a fire truck would have an accurate

description of the location that they are attempting to service.

These implementations certainly wouldn't be intended to overwhelm citizens. It's not a major undertaking to simply put a number on the side of your house or a piece of property in your yard. So these are considerations that would be implemented as part of a plan where we would see a regional model for governance.

The benefits of this would certainly be realized as we talk about NL911 and integrating those services into core government would allow us the correlation between departments to have these conversations, to make sure that these things make sense for our constituents, for our residents all across the province and that we have something effective and efficient to move forward with.

That's been one of the keystones and cornerstones of our conversations as we talk about a lot of these rural areas that find these challenges to be front in their minds and as part of their committees and their communities.

So it certainly speaks to the work that is being done on behalf of NL911 and the important role that they play all across our province. That's why I'm pleased to support this bill.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

I'm just going to speak briefly on the new *Emergency 911 Act*. When I attended the technical briefing, it was the usual language: repeal, replace, dissolve and integrate. One of the most important things that came up was the changes wouldn't affect the quality of service. That's really important to me. Before I became MHA, I was an advanced medical responder. A lot of this service for 911 is about life-saving services so it's very important that this be done properly.

Just looking at the language, 911 Bureau, the corporation, will be replaced with the minister; all powers of the bureau will be transferred to

the Crown. So I was going along and I was thinking this is a straightforward transition, basically, bringing it into government. But there are some concerns and I think they need to be addressed.

When we look at the new *Emergency 911 Act*, it effectively dissolves NL911 and incorporates it into the Department of Justice and Public Safety. So on the surface that's not concerning and it's not going to impact the quality of the service, as the minister said. So, with me, I always look at why, why are we doing this? More importantly, what are the benefits and what are the drawbacks, i.e., the concerns?

The stated goal for this change by government, the government said, is to find efficiencies in the administration of the service: efficiencies in the service. Streamline the integration of 911 services into search and rescue, that's all good. That's really, really important.

But just listening to what the Member across was talking about earlier about rural Newfoundland and Labrador, in my district, if we have an emergency outside of our communities, no one would think of calling 911. Because you'll get somebody who doesn't understand anything about your environment or the resources there available to help. We would actually call the local ground search and rescue. If we had a medical emergency in our communities, we would actually call the clinic. The number to the clinic. We wouldn't call 911. If we had an emergency where it had something to do with the law, or violence, or anything to do with that, we would call the RCMP. So I do understand what the Member across was talking about.

What I'm hoping to see in the future is that 911 actually grows into a service that the whole province can avail of, whether you're out in rural Newfoundland and Labrador or downtown St. John's, you would think to call 911. That's very, very important.

So what are some of the concerns that we heard? The concerns that I heard is basically about this fund that was built up by actually collecting funds from the public who use the service – this huge fund. The concerns are that has been built up for the day-to-day operations of the service,

but also for improvement of the service that's going to come up, this new service that we're going to be looking at.

What was really concerning to me was these issues were being brought forward by the NL911 board. I've got to say, I try not to laugh, but, I mean, really, honestly. When you enter government and you think government operates on a certain level and then you start reading these things and you sort of wonder, well, it's not really transparent here, right?

So the revenue that's causing some of these concerns comes from the public. Residents are currently charged 75 cents a month through the telecom provider for the provision of this 911 service. The provider takes a – I'm just going to say how much it takes – point zero seven?

**P. LANE:** Seven cents.

**L. EVANS:** Seven cents for administrative costs. So this was all put into this fund that was actually for day-to-day operations and also for planning and contingency.

But, you know, I'm a pretty straight talker. Like, I'm not going to use eloquent, flowery words or grandiose sayings or whatever to make this look overly important or make me look overly dedicated to people who do have concerns. At the end of the day, we need to talk about what's wrong with this picture?

Thirty million dollars, is it?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Twenty.

**L. EVANS:** Twenty million dollars.

**AN. HON. MEMBER:** What's \$10 million?

**L. EVANS:** What's \$10 million?

What's going to happen to that money? It's going to go into the general revenue. Then when we're looking to expand the service and improve the service, we're going to have to go back to the regular coffers. We're going to have to compete with everybody else who's looking for money. But right now, that money has been put aside, ready to be used, ready to develop and

implement a service that we need. That's actually been mandated by CRTC.

For me, on the surface, I just had to say that at the very beginning if was going to then start delving down into the eloquent, flowery words that actually take up a lot of time. But, for me, what's important is the impact to the service. The new act calls for all responsibilities, property, assets, agreements be transferred from NL 911 Bureau to the Department of Justice, as my fellow MHA talked about quite eloquently, I must say.

There is supposed to be no immediate change in service – status quo, actually. When we were on the technical briefing, they were saying the status quo will be maintained. That's reassuring for somebody like me that don't deal with the day-to-day operations or don't have insight into all these other issues.

I agree that we need to find efficiencies. The province, we're not doing the best financially. Also, we don't want to be burdening our users of the 911 service with additional costs. So efficiency always sounds good on the surface, but one of the pitfalls of this, if we're not really careful, is that if we go along with this, there's the potential for, in actual fact, the 911 user to have to pay increasing costs just to be able to access monies to do these upgrades that are coming down the pipe, once they're approved.

We've already paid the money. We've already contributed to the fund by the users; that's public money. I have to say – I'm just having a little bit of fun now. It's funny and not funny, as my niece always says. I don't know if I'm wrong, but I'm sort of looking back when I was younger and one of the concerns was the teachers' union. They had built up a lot of money. Remember the teachers' pension.

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

**L. EVANS:** Sorry, we didn't talk about this, so I might be poking somebody that I shouldn't be poking.

Back in the day, the provincial government took the money invested by teachers for their old age security and spent it on roads. Remember that crisis? Remember that? That's true, isn't it? I

didn't dream that. I was quite young at the time, but I think that actually happened.

If we're not careful, the money that the public contributed to upgrades for this new service – the monies that we put away, paid by the public – could dissolve and could be gone. Then, really, who ever is in government could turn around and say no, the end-user has got to pay the cost for these upgrades. We already paid for it.

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

**L. EVANS:** Exactly.

So that's one of the biggest problems. Finding efficiencies is important. But we can't be downloading again the cost to the users for something that is a life-saving service.

Just looking at this now – anyway, it's not funny. What concerns me is when the NL911 board is almost, I guess, for lack of a better word, forced to actually go public with their concerns. As my fellow MHA talked about, they did meet with government. They did have concerns, they had questions on the operations and they basically wanted to actually find out what the plan was – twice. And they never received a response from government. So that is very, very concerning.

I've got to say the biggest concern for me is what are we going to do with that fund? Is there anything else we can do with it than basically put it into general revenue, and end up having the public have to pay for it twice? Because it is very concerning.

For me being a novice – I haven't been an MHA for not even three years yet. But for me, in all honesty, when this is actually being done, where you're bringing something in to government and you've had a long-serving board of this service, and they're forced to go public to raise these concerns and identify things that could actually create problems for the general public, for them to be taxed again by having to actually pay for this – to me, that's actually quite disrespectful to the board and also to the public.

If we're going to be a society where we can avail of a 911 service, where we can actually just call those three numbers and have

responders come out to us and help us, a life-saving service, at the end of the day, we should be respectful of this board that actually managed the service. We should be respectful of their concerns about what's going to happen to this fund. Back in the day when we took money from teachers' pensions to build roads and put their pensions in jeopardy, didn't we learn anything from that?

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to continue to talk, but like I said that's a huge concern and I will have some questions at the end.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

It is certainly my pleasure to participate in the debate here on Bill 41. This bill, when passed, will allow the Department of Justice and Public Safety to incorporate NL911 service fully into its operations, along with other emergency-related services such as Fire and Emergency Services, which it has responsibility for.

But, fundamentally, the change proposed by the minister is part of government's overall transformation agenda. In last year's Budget Speech, the Minister of Finance stated: "We can and must take those steps toward a sustainable fiscal future. Change can be challenging but it gives us the opportunity to discover new ways of delivering services, become more efficient and be the best version of ourselves."

The plan proposed by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety is to change the management of our 911 services so that it fits more within the Minister of Finance's aspirational goal for transforming government's operations. Now, Members here may recall that the transformation agenda includes such things as a reorganization of Nalcor to bring it into the existing NL Hydro, which is fundamentally completed. It also includes changing the corporate structure of the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information and bringing it closer to the Department of Health

and Community Services and the regional health authorities – currently under way.

It includes integrating the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District into the Department of Education – actively under way, under the direction of the Minister of Education, with enabling legislation already passed by this House.

There are several other services under review to determine how best to structure them to achieve the best service delivery at the best value to the taxpayer. Examples include our ferry services and our health administrative services.

The Premier alluded to the Health Accord NL in Question Period. In its report, it is suggesting ways we can improve service delivery and health outcomes in tandem with those changes. So we see that challenging the status quo can and will achieve improvements in our public services.

Now, let me speak to the specifics of the bill. Primarily, if passed, the bill would facilitate the dissolution of the NL 911 Bureau as an independent, not-for-profit corporation and integrate it and the functions of it in the organization of the Department of Justice and Public Safety. The bill will support the continuous delivery of the province-wide 911 service for the reporting of emergencies, as already alluded to.

I congratulate the Minister of Justice and Public Safety in tackling this significant change in our emergency response system early in his mandate. It demonstrates to me, and I think to those of us on this side of the House, the critical importance he and his department attach to emergency services and seeking out ways to improve their efficiency and their cost.

In this case, with Bill 41, efficiencies will be achieved by combining administrative functions: financial management, human resources and payroll are some examples, as well as allowing the sharing of expertise in emergency planning and operations across several functions under one department umbrella. I would certainly want to emphasize and bring attention to that. The synergies that can be achieved by having the experts under one departmental umbrella will

greatly exceed any downside where it stands alone.

This approach that the minister is proposing in the bill is similar to eight other jurisdictions across the country and, certainly, on the surface it makes practical sense to do that. Despite the change, or in light of the change contemplated by Bill 41, government remains committed to implementing next stage upgrades to the 911 service when the time is ready. We are not ready yet.

Now, as a former deputy minister of Municipal Affairs, I had responsibility for emergency services and planning for a province-wide 911 service. We have come a long ways since then. We have evolved and the minister's plan is to build on this evolution. Weather and natural disasters over the past year alone speak to the progress we have made in emergency management in this province with the 911 service, really, as a backbone to it.

So any suggestion the government is trying to water down the 911 service through Bill 41 would be unfounded, for what government would seriously consider that: downgrading an essential public service? Not this government for sure.

So under Bill 41 what remains the same? Well, the bill does not change the current model for 911 service. The fee for emergency 911 service remains unchanged and that will be referenced in the regulations. Any and all prohibitions, offences and penalties that are currently in the legislation remain the same and the minister's regulatory making powers also remain the same.

However, under the bill, there are substantive changes being proposed. First and foremost, the minister now replaces any reference to the current NL 911 Bureau board or corporation. So he will stand in its stead or their stead. The definition of emergency 911 service in section 2(b) is broadened to include reference to the province-wide radio communication network. The minister referred to that in his opening comments on the debate.

Reference to the NL911 service fund is removed, as the fund will now be consolidated

into the government's consolidated revenue fund.

I think something that is very important is the emergency response zones will now be defined. That will help those in all parts of the province to know what their zone is and how that is to be serviced for emergency response.

An emergency service provider or municipality now has to give advance notice to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety if making changes to their emergency response zones or their operational procedures that may impact the operation of the 911 service, as the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs referenced. It now makes sure that the municipalities are fully recognized but also held accountable for their participation in emergency management going forward when it comes to 911 service.

Finally, there is a provision for municipalities to provide civic addresses and for the Cabinet, through regulation, to require and prescribe civic numbers on properties to assist in emergency response to houses and properties throughout the province. As we know, this will be a significant undertaking, but something that needs to happen. As the government, we'll work with the municipalities to make sure that is put in place over the foreseeable future.

I'm supportive of the bill and the changes inherent in the provision of 911 emergency services across the province. I compliment the minister and his officials for taking on this significant transformation project on behalf of government and the people of this province.

There's no doubt that through any change like this there are going to be different views as to how this can and should be undertaken. I know the minister has met with the members of the board and the board have communicated their concerns to him, and he's responded in kind. I think those concerns have been adequately addressed in the bill and it will be incumbent upon the minister and his department to ensure that those concerns are fully addressed going forward, but certainly don't act as any impediment on the changes being proposed.

But if you look at it in a broader context, as the Minister of Finance started in the budget speech

last year, which I assume will carry into her next speech and subsequent speeches, one of the things that government needs to do and is embarking on, is to transform how we deliver services. It is incumbent upon all departments and agencies to look at how we deliver services, where we can achieve efficiencies, improve costs and certainly improve value. I think this is an example where it meets the test.

Why do we need a standalone bureau? We don't. It was put in place at another time, in another place. We've evolved into understanding the 911 service much more effectively, but, more importantly, I think, is the need to integrate that service with other emergency response services under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Justice and Public Safety. I think we'll see significant benefit of that integration, literally, immediately, once that takes place.

Some of the Members opposite raised concerns about the use of the current fund and when it gets rolled into the consolidated revenue fund. There is no doubt that the Minister of Justice – those funds will be obviously tabulated and understood what their use is for and that will be addressed on the annual budget process. We have other examples of that in government where there are specific funds that have been earmarked for particular programs and services and they are protected during the budget process. Certainly I sure that the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, the current and any future one, will want to see that, in fact, happens and that there won't be any double taxation as some have suggested.

The reality is that when we look across the country, this is not new. There are eight other jurisdictions, as I mentioned, that currently provide the 911 service within a government department. So obviously, we can learn from them and how that works, and that is something we will be looking at for sure.

I encourage Members on the opposite side of the House here to broaden your minds, broaden your perspective on what the minister is trying to achieve here with Bill 41 and to give it further consideration. We will be looking at other operations like this and how we should be and could incorporate them within government operations. I think we owe it to the taxpayer to



make sure we can achieve the maximum efficiencies, the maximum value at the least cost, and that is an underlying principle here, without compromising the nature of the service being delivered.

Mr. Speaker, I support the bill and commend it to all Members of the House.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

I am very pleased to be able to speak about Bill 41, which is An Act Respecting a Province-Wide 911 Service for the Reporting of Emergencies. Speaker, I will be clear right from the start; I cannot in good conscience support this legislation. The people of the province should be concerned about this legislation as well.

The current existing board of 911 are unanimously opposed to this legislation, Speaker. It is believed that this is not – I repeat “not” – in the best interests of the operations of the 911 service in the province. And not only is it not in the best interests of the 911 services, but also about the further enhancements that are anticipated to occur to this system. I know I heard the minister speak in his opening remarks that this makes sense. Well, I would beg to differ. This does not make sense. Not only does it not make sense, I’ve not heard any valid reason why the existing system should be changed. I’ve heard claims that they want to find efficiencies; I’ve heard claims that there’s a risk to public safety.

Well, let’s look at the first point: finding efficiency. I need to remind government that this current system that was put in place was as a result of a government-funded consultant who recommended – this group recommended to government that an independent, stand-alone, not-for-profit corporation was the most effective and efficient method to implement and operate the 911 service in Newfoundland and Labrador. So this was stated; it was recommended. This

was government’s own entity, their own consultant, that recommended this was the best way to go was to have that existing system that’s in place.

Yet now, what is government doing? They’re drawing it back into core government. I don’t understand why they are now not listening to the advice that was given to them by their own government-funded organization. But, at any rate, they claim that they will find efficiencies. Well, I’ve heard no details about the exact efficiencies that are going to be had. I believe back in June when I raised this question in the House of the minister, the minister said, well, we’ll find efficiencies in things like payroll and finance. We need you to elaborate; we need to see the evidence of this. There has been nothing forthcoming and that has been the concern of the current existing board, Speaker, is that there are no details about how they’re finding these efficiencies.

Now, that was the original justification for dissolving the current 911 Bureau and repealing it and replacing it with the existing emergencies act, which they’re going to bring into government. That was the original justification. In the House of Assembly yesterday, the minister, when I asked him in Question Period, said that public safety is fulsome as it can be by coming through the department. We need to address the public safety issue. So this could be a risk to public safety. Well, I asked the minister: What is your evidence that there is any risk to public safety from the current existing system that’s in place?

They have operated, from my understanding, within all the national guidelines. In terms of safe response times, there has not been any issue to our knowledge. So, please, we need to know if there is an issue of public safety, show us where it is. By bringing 911 into government, how are you going to be able to improve those so-called claimed issue of public safety? So I don’t see any evidence. But again, I look forward to hearing from the minister. Perhaps in Committee you can provide some examples of this issue of public safety to us so that we understand. Also, another point that was made yesterday and I have to ask about this. The minister said that there are eight other

jurisdictions in the country that are doing the same thing and why should we be different.

Well, I looked into this a little bit. Now, they are not actually doing it the same way, what you're suggesting. For example, Nova Scotia has, actually, a separate agency or entity set up to manage the reserve fund. So there are many differences. You cannot just make a sweeping statement like that and say, well, eight other jurisdictions in the country are doing this, without explaining to us exactly how that is the case. Again, that's something else we need to understand.

As well, the minister, yesterday, stated it's going to be three years before the CRTC will make the Next Generation 911 happen. But we can't wait for those three years. I mean the current existing board are already working on this right now. It is their view that you need to do the lead work. You can't wait for three years and then try to, hopefully, have everything up in place when it comes to these enhancements. So again, I've got concerns about that point that was raised as well.

Speaker, these are some of the concerns. The other final point was about the dedicated funding solely for 911. Well, once this moves into government services, that \$20 million – about \$20 million – will become part of the general government revenue. We all know what that means. That means it's going to be in competition then in the budget. It's not necessarily going to be protected or a priority like it is right now. It's a dedicated service fund. It is protected. It is designated for further enhancements that will take place with respect to Next Generation 911.

This is of concern, I think, to not only myself as critic for Justice and Public Safety, but to all Members of our caucus. We believe that this is something that when we hear from the current board that they are unanimously opposed to it – these are the people that have such expertise. They believe as well that there's importance of independent oversight of NL911.

I've heard from the minister in his remarks that we're streamlining, and I've heard references to transforming and synergies and all of this, but this has been working. It's not about being broad-minded. It's about when you have

something that works; it's effective and efficient, what really is the motive of bringing it into government? I mean we know that government, in terms of being nibble and having that ability in terms of decision-making, government is often perceived as a slower decision-maker. Whereas when you have an independent agency like this, they're not bogged down with the bureaucracy or the red tape that we often see when entities become subsumed into government departments.

Again, we have some serious reservations about this. I cannot support this legislation. I think it's a mistake. I think it's ill advised and I don't think that the best interests of the people of this province will be served if this legislation is passed.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's great to have an opportunity to speak to this bill, Bill 41. The official title on it is An Act Respecting a Province-Wide 911 Service for the Reporting of Emergencies. I'm going to refer to it as the 911 tax.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say, first of all, I'm one of the few Members in this House of Assembly – I think the Member for Bell Island would have been there, and certainly the Minister of Education and Member for Bay of Islands, but beyond that, I think we were the only Members that were there at the time when the original 911 bill was brought in, in 2015.

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

**P. LANE:** It was 2015 according to my research. It was brought in at the time by Minister Dan Crummell; he was the minister of Municipal Affairs and Fire and Emergency Services according to what I looked up, and memory. And I think the work had been kind of done previous to that under Kevin O'Brien; he was the minister of Municipal Affairs, and then Dan moved in after the fact.

At the time, I recall the debate in the House and so on because I know that I had some concerns from people on this end of the province, if you will, who were raising the concern over the fact that we already have 911, which was true. Because 911 was and still is being operated by the St. John's Regional Fire Department. They always did 911 and the RNC did it in Corner Brook. But they did it for this area. So if you were here in the St. John's metro area and so on, your municipal taxes is what was paying for St. John's Regional Fire Department and, hence, 911 and so on, in terms of that service.

Now, they might have been getting some money from the province for the Department of Health as related to the ambulance services and so on, but it was primarily funded that way. So I can remember at the time, a bit of the debate at the time was, why should we be paying on our phone bill? I get it now by paying my municipal taxes, I've got 911 and now I'm going to pay 75 cents so that somebody over in Central Newfoundland can have 911.

That was some of the debate that you had; I just remember that. We all agreed; it was voted for unanimously I think. The counter to that was, well, you might have a summer cottage, or you might be driving out the Trans-Canada Highway and so on, and if you need 911, so you are benefiting from it as well as everybody else.

So, at the end of the day, it was approved. I think everyone in the House kind of looking at the broader picture, we're here, as I said yesterday, to try to support each other and lift each other up in one province, and we did support it. And I remember the 75 cents, and that was a bit controversial again at the time. Because it's not just 75 cents per household, it's 75 cents per phone line. There are a lot of people who are not paying 75 cents a month. If you've got in a lot of families, we'll just say the husband, the wife and the two teenage kids, that's four cellphones, so that's not 75 cents a month; that's \$3 a month. Plus if you have a landline, you're paying again. Businesses who have multiple lines, they're paying 75 cents per line in that business for this. But that's kind of how it evolved.

But at the time the big selling feature – and I can remember doing the briefing at the time on it

and it was all about the reason for this was the Enhanced 911. Provincial 911 originally, and then the goal being the Enhanced 911. And that was kind of the big selling feature. This is where we start and then we'll get into an enhanced system for the whole province and that's why you're paying you 75 cents and so on. I think everybody supported that and I think everyone still supports that concept – I would say everybody does. Of course, part of that was the setting up of the 911 Bureau, if you will, reporting to an independent board of directors is who the bureau reported to and we have the provincial system. Which is basically the same call centres, just doing it for the whole province.

Now what's being proposed, of course, as we've heard, is we want to take that and fold it into government. Originally, when I heard that and even right up until about an hour ago, I was thinking that kind of makes sense, because it falls in line with what we were doing with the school board and the medical records and so on. We can find some efficiencies and so on; perhaps save a few bucks. Although I'll say in the briefing that I attended virtually yesterday, they said, well, there probably won't be any savings this year; maybe within the next year or two hopefully there will be some savings. Because by the time we do the merger and work out all the bugs, hopefully we can find some savings. So there were no concrete numbers or anything saying we're going to save this amount of money.

As I think about it further, which sort of I had this epiphany, if you will, currently the 911 system and the bureau is being funded by that 75 cents. I don't think the government are – the minister was saying –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Not a cent.

**P. LANE:** Not a cent from the government, no – not a cent from the government. So what efficiencies are we finding? If we had one entity of government being paid for by the government and you merged that entity in to another entity of government, paid for by the government, you find some efficiencies and say, okay, government found savings.

But there is no savings because this is not being paid for by the government. This is not costing

the government a cent. So all government is doing is getting their hands on the money and that's the issue. Government is getting their hands on the money. It is not saving the 911 system one dime. Not a dime. As a matter of fact, core government is now going to take on the payroll, the IT and all that kind of stuff.

So they're not finding efficiencies; they're actually taking on more work. That really doesn't compute. It makes no sense. But where it works for government is that they take on that little bit of extra work, but then they also take the 68 cents. I say 68 cents because 75 cents charged to every phone, minus the seven cents that we pay the phone provider for administering the fee. So it is actually 68 cents used to go to the bureau, now that 68 cents per phone is going to the government.

We have \$20 million in this fund and government now wants to get their hands – as one person said in an email, he wasn't very nice, he said their grubby paws was his terminology.

**P. FORSEY:** You said that.

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

**P. LANE:** The Member for Exploits said I said that. He said it, too.

Anyway, talking about they want to get their grubby paws on that \$20 million, not only is it the \$20 million, but I guess in perpetuity, they're going to get their hands on that 68 cents. Now, no doubt a portion of that 68 cents is going to maintain the status quo in terms of the operations of the system. But if you just do the basic math – I asked for the number yesterday but they didn't have it to give me. If we've managed to put \$20 million in the bank since 2015, which is seven years, quick math tells you – assuming it is all averaged out – that has grown by a little bit north of \$2.8 million a year, if you do the math on it.

In theory, next year there'd be, round it up, \$23 million, \$26 million and \$29 million and on and on we go. So that \$20 million is going in to general revenues; \$3 million a year on top of that, every year, is going in to that. That is assuming it doesn't increase, because I'm not sure under the current legislation and set-up if

that 75 cents is cast in stone or not. I don't know. I don't know if the 911 Bureau had the ability to up that amount or if it is just a simple 75 cents, end of story. I don't know. But one thing I do know, is once it goes to government, they'll have the ability to change that 75 cents.

Speaker, it's interesting because – I just want to quickly reference this. I'll just reference a story here on CBC, a recent one. I did an interview with the CBC about it this morning and, obviously, they contacted the minister as well, and towards the end of the article, it says: Possible fee increase.

“Lane is also concerned that the 75-cent fee will increase, even though NL911 has said it's enough so far to maintain the current basic 911 service while building the reserve to pay for future enhanced services.

“Hogan told reporters the fee will be reviewed.”

The minister said it will be reviewed. He's quoted here: “We're not sure exactly how much the next generation 911 program will cost, so when the money does come in we'll evaluate it, we'll work with CRTC to see what the cost will be.

“If the fee is too much we'll take a look at it.”

Now, I have a feeling that it's not going to be that the fee is too much. But here is the other piece, though: “If it's not enough we'll look at it.”

So that is opening the door, as far as I'm concerned, that the new 911 tax, Speaker, currently sits at 75 cents per phone line of everybody who has a phone in this province, business or person, but who's to say next year that 75 cent isn't \$1 or \$1.50 or \$1.75 or \$2. Now, I don't know what it's going to be, but it could be because the minister himself said they're going to review it. So the other main point here is that this money was dedicated funds. When people signed up for this – they never really have choice, but the impetus for doing this and when people signed up was you pay the 75 cents, the money goes to maintain the new provincial 911 and then the additional money – because I can remember when this was debated in the House we said 75 cents, we did

the math. We said there's going to be an awful lot of extra money here. They said oh, yeah, but that's going in our reserve fund for Enhanced 911.

We have \$20 million in there now that's going to grow, possibly, by \$3 million a year to pay for the Enhanced 911. But guess what's going to happen? That \$20 million and the \$3 million a year after that is all going into general revenues, they can spend it on whatever they like: more couches for the Colonial Building, who knows. Open up a few more offices in some more Opposition districts, who knows.

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

**P. LANE:** But the bottom line is that money can now be spent on all those other things and when the time comes along, Speaker, that we are finally ready and getting ready to move on with Enhanced 911 and the bill comes in, all of sudden, what's going to happen? Oh my God, we have to pay for this somehow; we have no money.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Just like the oil bill.

**P. LANE:** Just like the oil bill, yeah. We got no money. So what's going to happen? Up go the fees to justify paying for it.

I'm not saying the minister is not committed. The minister is saying that he is committed to Enhanced 911. I take him on his word for it, because despite the fact that we have our back and forth on a few issues, the election, different things like that, I still have respect for the minister. He's a smart guy. Good on him, no issue.

But when we talk about this stuff here, I don't have faith, not in the minister per se, but I don't have faith in the system, because I've been around here long enough to see commitments broken, whether they be in a red book, a Blue Book, whether it be on the floor of the House of Assembly, in the media, whatever.

We saw it here yesterday – I think it was yesterday – we were talking about the ATV helmets and clearly, everyone on this side of the House, for enclosed ATVs, we thought we had the commitment. We thought we did, but no.

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

**P. LANE:** Technically, I never said –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Stay relevant to the bill, please.

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

The point I'm talking about here is there's a commitment to Enhanced 911 and I'm just giving an example of where commitments have been made, or at least perceived, in the House of Assembly, and then the total opposite happens. That's the point I'm making.

This whole idea of trust me, doesn't work. We've been burnt too often. As I said in the House yesterday, I trusted the \$6-million man and look where that got us.

Even if we took them on their word, and, again, I'm not questioning the minister's word, I'm really not. Who's to say he's going to be the minister – we're saying 2025 – in 2025. Who's to say they're going to be the government in 2025. We don't know. I have no idea who the government is going to be, who the minister is going to be. So you're making –

**B. PETTEN:** (Inaudible.)

**P. LANE:** The Member for CBS says I got a good idea who the government is going to be.

But the point is, Speaker, that you're making a commitment for something that's going to be at least three or four years out. We're going to take the money, spend it now but when the time comes, we'll find the money and we're committed to doing what's right. But you're making a commitment for some future time when you may not even be around here to keep that commitment.

And the only guarantee, if you will – I suppose nothing in life is guaranteed only death and taxes but, beyond that, the only guarantee we can have that this money is going to be used in the way that it was intended to be used is if we maintain the fund.

Now, I have a little bit of concern even beyond the fund. I have a little bit of concern about – and it has been raised already – the focus, because 911 is very important. It is about safety and I do worry a little bit about folding this into Justice. Will this actually be a priority? Right now, you have a dedicated board. They are all about 911. They're experts in it. They're all about 911.

So when it goes in as just a division of Justice, will that have the same priority? That is a concern. It is a concern. But I could still live with it – I could still live with it. But what I can't live with and I won't support – and it doesn't really matter because as Tom Marshall so eloquently put it in this House of Assembly one time: Oppositions have their say; government gets its way.

Everybody knows that's the way it's going to happen here. You got the majority. So it's going to go through anyway. We know that. Assuming everyone is here to vote, it's going to go through. I've got a feeling you're going to need your majority on this one. I am just saying; just got a feeling.

But, at the end of the day, personally, I cannot support raiding that fund. It's like taking the cookies from the cookie jar; couldn't resist. The money is there and somehow we have to get at it. It was never put there for that. It was put there for a sole, specific purpose in good faith by the people who are paying that on their phone bill.

No different – and my colleague here from Torngat raised a good analogy. The pension fund – same idea. The pension fund was much larger, of course, but the same idea. People put money into their pensions and government had access to that money and they spent it on roads and schools and everything else and then, all of a sudden, we have no money. You got an unfunded liability. In order to fix it, public servants, people who had worked their whole life, ended up having to take cuts to their pension, work additional years added on to their years of service and everything else to fix what was done by governments of all stripes over the years – well, not all stripes, two stripes I guess – raiding the pension fund. Because it was there to raid.

Now we have the 911 fund and government sees that \$20 million and they can't wait to get their hands on it. And they can't wait to get their hands on an additional \$3 million a year that's going to come in – another source of revenue. So in that sense, if it's not directly going into 911 and guaranteed to be going into 911 and the fund is not maintained, then really all this is, is a tax. It is like the sugar tax. It is like the gas tax. It is like the carbon tax. Same thing; it's another tax. This is the 911 tax. That's what it is, once you change it.

So I'll implore the government – I'll say to the minister again. I did talk to the minister sort of to the side and he said that he was told they can't maintain this separate fund. That's what he was told. I would say to the minister go back again, talk to the Minister of Finance. Surely God, you're the government; you cannot tell me that there's no way you can protect that fund. I just cannot believe you cannot protect that fund.

If you need to put something in the legislation, put it there. If they're doing it in Nova Scotia to protect the fund, why can't we protect the fund in Newfoundland and Labrador? Why can't we?

So I say to the minister, if you could do that, I could support it. But without doing that –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is expired.

**P. LANE:** – I will not support it. I'm not voting for this bill.

Thank you.

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

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

Speaker, this probably comes down to a question of confidence and trust. Having been in the field 30 years or so, 35 years as a teacher, whenever I hear government talk about a sustainable fiscal future, about finding synergies, about integration, incorporation and using words of eliminating redundancies, of a transformation agenda, of streamlining services and finding savings, and how we need to broaden our minds

and broaden our perspective, you know that at some point that services are going to be cut, resources are going to fly out the door, hold on to your wallets and hold on to your resources.

I've yet to be part of any plan where that actually improved, and this is what it comes down to. Because let's face it, this is not being taken over or integrated to improve the model; it's basically status quo. That's what I'm hearing. That's the reason for it, to maintain it the way it is. It's not to improve. It's not that the independent NL911 is doing anything incorrect or mismanagement; they're doing a good job.

Secondly, I've heard the rationale that basically this, by bringing it into government, it will get us ready for their Next Generation 911 in 2025. And, if I heard it correctly, that the current board's mandate doesn't allow for that; it's simply to improve 911. I would argue that Next Generation 911 would be an improvement and would fit well within its mandate. A broad mandate gives it that broad ability to react and to be flexible.

It's also a not-for-profit. Now, one of the things I've argued here in that when it comes to some of the services that government provides, it probably should be put into the hands of not-for-profit organizations, because their main focus is on providing the service, not on making the profit. It's doing well. It's also about having a dedicated staff and dedicated resources, knowing where the resources come from and where the resources are going.

This brings me to one of my key concerns here. Since I've been an MHA and sat in on Estimates meetings, I've heard the terms of zero-based budgeting and finding efficiencies in every Estimates meeting and trying to figure out which employees or which public servants or which people are dedicated to doing what and where is the revenue going. My fear is, and the fear of an awful lot of people, that by bringing it in with other people you're now going to increase the workload.

We already know that government is already struggling to find people to fill positions. At some point, services are going to suffer. I've listened to the petitions on this side of the

House; we've heard the concerns around services. If it's not broke, then don't fix it.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Hear, hear!

**J. DINN:** I have to agree with the Member for Stephenville, there's no two ways about it. If this board were mismanaging, I would agree, but they are not. They are doing their duties.

I'm not confident in bringing a service in when the mandate here is about finding efficiencies. Efficiencies, how? Usually it translates to – from my world – finding ways of cutting human resources and finding ways for people to do more work, and not do it well because they're overloaded. That's what it comes to mean with me.

If you need to, increase the mandate at NL911 and increase the resources to them, if that's what you're concerned about. But we've seen far too many examples here of – this is the key source of my mistrust here. My colleague from Torngat Mountains actually brought up the Teachers' Pension Plan or the Public Service Pension Plan, as a fine example, Speaker, because it goes to the heart of it.

The fact is, up until about 2015, 2016, 2017, both plans, Mr. Speaker, were administered by the provincial government. I don't care what political stripe, but they were administered. Both plans were in a mess.

Atlantic Accord money was put into the Teachers' Pension Plan in 2006. In 2008, that money was wiped out just about. The plan hadn't been de-risked. I can tell you when I was president, that's what we undertook.

Now, in seven years since these plans have been taken, joint management, they are now overfunded, Mr. Speaker. That is the value of having a dedicated group, an organization looking at it and managing it.

My concern is that we'll see a repeat; that we won't be able to track where the money is going; that we won't be able to figure out if there are dedicated personnel to 911 or will they be split up or will we get any better service as a result.

We saw the integration of the four school districts, Speaker, in 2013, that was supposed to provide efficiencies, savings and put more resources back in the classroom. I would argue that was not the case. So the point it comes down to is it's about having that plan and having that rationale. There are far too many examples in history here, Speaker, that I would have confidence.

What I do believe is that as administrations change, as ministers change, that somewhere along the line the main motivation, the reason, the dedication, the motivation behind this, the rationale is going to be forgotten.

For that reason, I will not be supporting this. If I thought that the current board was inefficient, was mismanaging the funds and was not doing its job: yes. But I see no reason to support basically, what comes down to a \$20 million cash grab, for what?

With that, Speaker, I'll finish, and I'll leave it there.

Thank you.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on this.

I'm going to be speaking in a different capacity, in a few roles, and I'm going to upset one side and I'm going to upset both sides for what I'm going to have to say.

The first thing is when this was set up with the minister at the time, Kevin O'Brien, I was there, we sat down; we went through it. The cost is correct. The commitment then was that if there's going to be a surplus, and we don't know how much it's going to cost for the Next Generation, if there was surplus it would decrease the amount they'd be charging all the phone lines across the province. That was the commitment at the time by the minister. That's in the public domain. That's in *Hansard* here in the House of Assembly, also. That was the intent.

Before I get started, I just want to thank all the first responders across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**E. JOYCE:** There's no dispute about that. A lot of them are – the first responders are the firefighters, Duane Antle, the president of the firefighters association and all the firefighters across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, all the paramedics, all the first responders. I just want to thank them all because when we are here debating this bill, they are on the other end actually delivering the services to the people that are in need. So we have to recognize that the first responders are really the front-line people for all of this.

Back in my former day when I was the minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment, we were going to bring 911 into the department, I have to say, that was the plan that was set out; it never developed, but it was the plan. But there was only one condition that we had, the funds that we got from the phone lines, the surplus, be put into a fund not to be touched, only for 911. That was the commitment.

Now, there are other reasons people can say that they're going to not agree: efficiencies. I, personally, think it's better if it's under the department so when you have Fire and Emergency Services over here and you have everything under one so you could have everybody accountable and you can improve the efficiencies.

My problem with this here is that there will not be the money available for the Next Generation. That is my problem; that is actually my problem. If the money was committed in a line item, I could vote for this, I can actually vote for it. But it's not, so it would be difficult. I don't think I can.

I'll just give you some examples of why, Mr. Speaker. Last year, when we had the sugar tax, I went out there with the Government House Leader, the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board agreed to end debate on the sugar tax. Do you know why? There was an agreement by the President of Treasury Board, the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader, the Third Party and myself and



the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, that the \$3 million would be put into a line item. Every year it's going to be \$3 million and it's going to show where the money was spent.

I say to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, if we can do it for the sugar tax, why can't we do it for this? Because there was a commitment made, and *Hansard* will reflect and will show that the commitment was made last year to do that. So if anybody wants they can go back and check *Hansard* on it, they can actually go back and the commitment was made to do that. So now, they can say, well, we can't do it, it's got to go to general revenue or something along those lines, that's fine. That is absolutely fine, whatever.

I'll just give you some examples, Mr. Speaker, of why I have the concern about the fund. Carbon tax: we're collecting, what, \$80 million, \$85 million or \$90 million a year carbon tax that's supposed to offset and do some projects in the province to decrease emissions. Do you know how much money is spent on that a year? It's \$25 million or \$30 million, the rest – everything goes into general revenue. All that carbon tax fund goes into general revenue.

If the Minister of Environment needs any funds for a project, he has to go to Treasury Board and get the funds. The funds are not there for the carbon tax like it was set out to do. It's just not there. So when you stand up and say, well, it's going to be there. Well, the carbon tax is not there.

I'll give you another one: Vale. Back in 2015, when Vale gave \$30 million to the province for the four projects, when that money came in, it went into general revenue. To get money for the pool in Placentia, it had to go to Treasury Board to get approved from Treasury Board. Although Vale said here's \$30 million, when the money came in, it went to Treasury Board. It went into general revenue. And when it went into general revenue, for projects that had to be done, the minister at the time had me – I am just speaking on behalf of the fitness centre down in Placentia. We had to go to Treasury Board to get it approved because the funds weren't there because they were put in general revenue. I've been there with it.

So these are some of the concerns that I have with it. And I heard one of the Members speaking over there about creating efficiencies. We should have created efficiencies in the delivery of service and not the funds. Because the funds are coming from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador through their tax on their phone lines. So when you talk about efficiencies in government usually you say, okay, we can save some money. We can save money in a better way.

If we're going to do efficiencies in the 911 service through the Department of Justice and Public Safety, that means the funds that you're going to be using will go in general revenue and will not be used for the purpose. This is not in general funds for government. This was set up in 2013 I think it was.

**P. LANE:** '15

**E. JOYCE:** Set up in 2015 with the idea of having the taxpayers pay through their cellphones. So this is not the taxes you pay on gas. This is not corporate tax. This is not income tax. This is what was done, at the time, to give the service and people bought into it. There was a lot of confusion and there was a lot of debate. I know because I was a part of it at the time. I was in the Opposition at the time. How it was going to be set up – the board. I was actually in on a lot of those debates.

So this is my concern and why I can't vote for it is because I know once it goes into general revenue – there's no knock on the minister. This is no knock. This is how the government works itself. This is actually how the government works.

I've been there, seen it, part of it and fought for money that was supposed to be through the Vale, through the carbon tax. I've been there for all of that. The problem with the excess money that's going to be coming in for the next three, four or five years before we get the Next Generation, there going to another \$8 million to \$10 million.

So if the Next Generation and what it costs – if we have a surplus now, we're paying 100 per cent all the wages. We're paying 100 per cent all the rent that's needed across the province. For

example, 911 is out in the City of Corner Brook, down in the basement, paying rent to the City of Corner Brook. That's all covered. There's still a \$20-million surplus; all covered.

So the question is: If we're going to go another three or four years and we're going to have a larger surplus –

**P. LANE:** It's \$30 million then.

**E. JOYCE:** We're going to have \$30 million, why can't we, as committed by the minister at the time, which we agreed to if there's a surplus, why don't we, instead of 75 cents, bring it down to 65 cents, 60 cents, to pay – the idea of the fund that was set up – and there's a reflection in *Hansard* – was to cover the cost, not the surplus. I don't know how much the Next Generation will cost. I say to the minister, I'm not sure how much it will cost, but the intent that it would cover the cost.

If we're covering the cost now, and there's a \$20-million surplus, I don't think Next Generation is going to be \$30 million. I don't think it is. So if you're going to live up to the commitment that was made, when all the people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador committed to buy in to 911, I think the government should stand by that commitment, when people agreed, and Kevin O'Brien, the *Hansard* in here, and the public domain will verify that if there's any surplus, that there would be a decrease.

Mr. Speaker, that is my concern with the process. Going into the department, I can understand it. I agree with it, going into the department. I have no problem with that whatsoever. Because when you've got the full system of public safety in a department and you've got 911, it would make someone at least accountable, and you can see how you could improve the system within the department. I can see that.

I'll just thank the board members and all the staff who are manning the 911 phones and things like that in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. They're after doing a great job with it, and the board itself over the years has done a great job with it. I can see the concerns of the board, and sometimes you can understand

their concerns, but you can see how it could help out.

But for not designating the funds that were committed to 911, and we don't know when the Next Generation is going to come, and this fund is going to build and build and build and go in general revenue, and when it's time to come up with the 911 Next Generation and you've got to fight for it, what if you don't get it – what if you don't get it?

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador will be out of the system. We've seen not just this government, not just the previous government – I'm going back so many years – how many times did the commitment made by many governments, I'm going back to '89 when I first got elected – how many commitments were made and then all of a sudden, well, we can't afford it now. How many times did we hear that? Can't put the money into it.

So I implore the minister, find some way that you can make a line item that every year you can say here's – and just to give you an example. I'll say to the minister, in your own department, you look at fire trucks every year, \$1.8 million. Every year, that's guaranteed. But if you put a line item for 911 for \$20 million, next year it will come in \$23 million, and say every year that it's a line item, that that's the amount that's in that fund, I can support it. But if there's no line item in that there to make sure, I can't support it because I have this concern that it won't be done.

That's my few words on that, Mr. Speaker. I hope I gave enough of rationale of why because I seen it: Sugar tax, we could do it. The carbon tax is in the general revenue, not put through the \$100-million projects that they were supposed to put through. I heard earlier today the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port say we can help out. We can decrease the income tax enough for the carbon tax – offset the increase in some carbon tax. It could be done; other provinces did it.

You're not decreasing the gas amount, but you can decrease your income tax rate that the province can charge. Yet, we're not doing that because the carbon tax is good for the bottom line: for the Treasury Board. That's why it's not

being done. That's why the \$100 million is not being used for the projects. That's why we're not getting a decrease in the provincial income tax because it would decrease the bottom line. Although the money for carbon tax is supposed to be used for projects across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I challenge the Minister of Environment to show me where there's \$100 million worth of projects spent last year. He can't do it; it's not done. So that's my concern. That's my argument and I hope the Members opposite understand that, because I've been through it with three or four different projects. We had a commitment last year about the line items.

Efficiencies: I can see in the department where you have it all in the one. I can see that. I know a lot of Members here disagree with me on that, but I can see that. But we have to guarantee that when the Next Generation comes so we don't leave the people, the 911 people who are on the other end and all the first responders, that we don't give them the best available tools that we can get in Canada – right now, the best available tools in Canada so that we can make sure that the job is done properly and that they will end up saving lives.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm not sure where I'm going to start, but maybe I'll start with some thank yous first of all to – maybe I'm going to start with another point. You know, it's interesting sitting as an independent. I don't have nice key messages and sort of little bill files of nice little background notes prepared by researchers, and here's the points we want to put forward. Here are the points we want to counter and be ready for. It's just me, and my little team Anna Hutchings and Bonnie Learning and I thank them very much.

But it is interesting how people reach out to you. I hear, not just from my own constituency, but also from across the province with their

concerns. I would like to thank those that have done that. I would like to thank members of current board of NL 911 Bureau. My own colleagues from search and rescue, I spent a good decade with some of my good friends, participating as a member of that volunteer team in Happy Valley-Goose Bay and, as I said, many others.

What is interesting is how consistent so much of the concern that I have heard on this side. Even when I sat in my seat here today and I heard the Deputy Government House Leader say Bill 41 is on the Table. I was thinking, okay, is it just going to be yours truly or are there other concerns here. It is always interesting to watch and see how things develop and, sure enough, there is a lot of concern, not just here on the floor but across the province.

I'm just going to make a little light point, as my colleague did from Torngat Mountains. I'm going to start with a little *Jeopardy!* scenario. I'm going to start with the answer. So for \$20 million, here is the answer: A compulsory contribution to state revenue levied by the government on workers income and business profits or added to the cost of some goods, services and transactions. What is the question? What is a tax?

Frankly, folks, that is what I feel is now going to be happening. We have a fee we have been collecting for a very designated purpose. As the previous speakers here have indicated today, there was a clear intent. There wasn't just an assurance; there was actually a fund where the money has been growing.

I am well aware and have been a part of watching people be appointed to the NL 911 Bureau. They have been good people. They have been well selected and they have done a good job and there hasn't been an issue. They have now built up a great fund. We are now in an extremely good place for a province. Let's face it; we are the most indebted province in the whole federation of Canada. So to know that we have a very large, substantial fund, which is going to more than help and provide and ensure we have the latest approach, the best approach to responding to search and rescue, to responding to 911 in this province, that gives this guy, with

a fair bit of experience in search and rescue, a lot of comfort.

It was just a little while ago, I think just a couple weeks ago, I actually presented a petition to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety around search and rescue.

I will go on to my next point which is I heard this afternoon from the minister and I heard from the staff – and I thank the staff for the briefing yesterday – a reference to the need to do this as a result of the search and rescue inquiry that was released in December of last year.

This all goes back to a very tragic incident that has been spoken about by a lot of Members on this floor and a lot of people across this province, and that is what happened back in January 2012 with Burton Winters. I know I was sitting in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, some of my colleagues actually responded to that horrible several days were it was just amazing frustration and some of the confusion around it.

So out of that came the inquiry. The inquiry was completed by another guy who's a friend of mine, Jim Igloliorte, and in his series of recommendations, he put forward a couple that I tabled as a petition. And just to remind the minister, because Budget Day is coming up this week, one was on providing operational support for our volunteers, the 75 teams across the province, as well as providing counselling for some of the trauma that so many of them have faced over the years, not just in search and rescue but in, as my colleague said, all first responders in our province.

But to have reference to the search and rescue inquiry as to the rationale for Bill 41, I found myself, I said, wow, where is this coming from? So I had to do some digging. As most of my colleagues know, we haven't had a lot of time to prepare, frankly, it's been in the matter of hours, not days or weeks or months, as government has that advantage to set the policy – rightly so. However, I have learned that the reference to this inquiry recommendations stems from a reference from the Bay of Islands search and rescue team who made a submission during the inquiry about the concern around what are called Public Safety Answering Points, PSAPs, and it was referenced earlier by the minister.

Living in Labrador, I can tell you I was very close to what the connotation was at the time around Burton Winters. I'm not sure exactly what Bay of Islands was referring to, but I can tell you it refers to when a call comes in and there's a missing person, who do you refer it to? Well, there's a protocol written and it basically says the matter should be referred to the police department of jurisdiction. So whether that be the RNC, the RCMP – where I sit in Happy Valley-Goose Bay – the military, or other, that's essentially what's there now. I can tell with my experience with search and rescue, that's all understood very clearly.

I don't get how that situation relates to this situation of dissolving a board that's been performing very well, built up a fund, as I said, it's not just there for a rainy day, it's preparing this province for the next generation of how we're going to respond to what is probably, let's face it, the most critical emergency component of our society, that ability to respond fast and respond effectively.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The level of chatter is getting a little loud.

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

I also was provided – and I thank the board for doing that – a copy of a letter that was sent to the minister, an email on the 14th of December, expressing concern when they saw that recommendation and how their suggestion was that there was contextual issues here that, how it appeared in the recommendations for the inquiry and perhaps the rationale for why it was presented in the first place, really don't align. I didn't hear any alignment yesterday and I haven't heard any alignment here today. It really is a matter of following a protocol and making sure that whoever is answering that call when it comes in, that they refer it to the authority of responsibility, again, RNC, RCMP and so on. I don't see the need necessarily to collapse this.

That said, and what I wanted to put here on the floor is, I've learned as a scientist myself, as a consultant, worked in a variety of fields, I tend

to pay a lot of attention to people who've got the expertise. I really want to hear from them. If I got a concern about something, I'm going to ask a question. That's why I took the initiative to start reaching out to the 911 folks and other folks who are in the field. I have yet – in my last 48 hours – to find anyone who has any concern as to why this needs to be done. I've had nothing but suspicion, and that's why I start with my initial point around this wonderful fund that's sitting there, and I understand the fiscal crisis – the crise fiscale, as they say in French – that we are facing.

Folks, if that's what we're trying to do here, to get access to some cash, let's talk about it; let's put it on the floor. But I also like the suggestion – and I'm going to leave everyone with a couple of thoughts here. First of all, we have to make sure that our search and rescue, that our emergency response is not only maintained, not at that quality, it has to be enhanced. If bringing it into the department will do that, fine, I will wait and see how that would go. But I might put a suggestion on the floor to the minister, as has been done, and I look to the colleague for Environment and Climate Change, with the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council.

This is a group, an independent, third party group that provides advice to a government department, and I just wondered if it might be something that the minister might entertain was to also retain the services, at least for a period of time, so that the expertise sitting on this board – that have been working very well and very successfully – may continue to be availed of. Perhaps we do this permanently; I'm not sure.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

I'm focused, I'm going, but for the purpose of *Hansard*, it's good to have it clear.

So I'll put that on the floor for the minister's consideration and the department's consideration to continue with some semblance of ensuring that the expertise that we've

accumulated is not cast off. I think that is extremely important.

I think a second point that I heard here, that is extremely important, is the identification. As we tell people going forward – say this bill passes, say we now have, as I said with my definition, created the first tax, new tax of 2022, but that money is actually earmarked for something. There is not just a promise or an assurance, despite the goodwill and intentions of not just this minister but everybody else who would be in government right now.

Who knows what's going to happen and who knows what crisis is going to face us in the future, but I know this guy, and every other MHA on this floor, is going to be competing for that money in general revenues. We're all making our cases. We're all making our stands and to pit potholes against our ability for society to respond.

Maybe when the CRTC comes along and says, okay, we're ready, you can now proceed. Well, maybe the price of oil is down big time that year; maybe something else is upon us; maybe we just can't come up with the resources. So what do we do? We kick it out. We kick the can down the road a little bit.

I don't think so. And, I think, in fairness to every single person who has had a cellphone, a cellphone bill in this province since this has been enacted and has paid into a fund knowing that's what that money was going to, as my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands spoke about, that was the intent of the debate all those years ago. It's good to have that corporate memory to remind us all what this was all about and its intention. Assurances aren't going to quite cut it, but I can tell you, you can reach a lot of co-operation if we could get some of these things in place.

So I am just going to say one more time: Can we figure out some way to retain the services of the board and can we identify, earmark the intended fund that's sitting there to ensure it's not just a promise but it's actually written and kept in there?

Finally, I just want to say thank you very much, Speaker. Let's make sure that how we respond

as a society to emergencies in this province is highly enhanced.

Stay safe everyone.

Thank you very much.

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

**SPEAKER:** I see no other speakers, so 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.

Thanks to everyone for their comments and questions. I certainly listened to all of the questions and I hope that everybody, actually, in the beginning of my introductory remarks – I did provide some answers. So I think the answers should be listened to as well.

I think the most important thing is we have committed to doing Next Generation 911. In fact, the legislation mandates that the government continue to develop, operate and maintain the emergency 911 service in this province and that it will be flexible and responsive to changing technologies, which will, obviously, include Next Generation 911.

I want to thank all the speakers: the Member for Topsail - Paradise; the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs; the Member for Torngat Mountains; the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development; the Member from Harbour Main; the Member from Mount Pearl - Southlands; the Leader of the Third Party; the Member from Humber - Bay of Islands; and the Member from Lake Melville. I look forward to questions in Committee.

I will note that I heard a couple of times that if it isn't broke, don't fix it. But I would say that if it can be improved, then let's do that.

Thank you very much.

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

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

The motion is that Bill 41 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies. (Bill 41)

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 41)

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister for Justice and Public Safety, that the house now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 41, An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies.

**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 to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is 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 Bill 41, An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies.

A bill, "An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies" (Bill 41)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

The minister may have gone down through this, but can he describe exactly why this move is being made? What the benefits of it are, please?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Yes, I did go through this. Thanks for the question.

There are several reasons and most important is the safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I believe, and the department believes, officials in the department believe, that bringing in a facet of public safety in this province into the department to work with other entities that already exist in the department will mean that everyone is safer and this emergency

911 service will work more effectively and provide more safety for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We don't want NL911 being in the silo, where it operates independently and doesn't have the ability to communicate and talk with and build on the technology that exists within the department. Certainly, I've mentioned the province-wide radio system. There's been some mention about the funds being used for Next Generation 911. We'd have to – I have to see what the words were – beg or ask for that money in the future, but the alternative, of course, is to leave the money in 911 right now, let them do Next Generation 911, spend the fees on that that are being collected through people's phone bills and tax people in the province to build infrastructure related to radios. We would be duplicating spending on that.

I'm not sure why it would be good idea to leave 911 in a silo, when we can efficiently spend money and work together and jointly on those efforts to make sure that they work and save taxpayers and ratepayers in this province money.

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

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

Why is the minister proceeding with this legislation despite unanimous opposition from the current NL911 board?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you.

So we made a decision as a government that this was the most effective way and most efficient way and safest way for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to deal with the 911 system. That's why we're doing it.

I've met with the board on a couple of occasions and they've been in constant contact with officials in the Department of Justice and Public Safety to discuss the transition into government from a separate entity.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Has the department completed an analysis of savings, the exact savings that are anticipated? If so, can you provide this to the House? I'm looking at an analysis breakdown of the savings.

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

**J. HOGAN:** We don't have an exact breakdown, but there will be obvious savings when this entity is rolled into the Department of Justice and Public Safety. I reviewed in my opening comments this afternoon, some of those savings that will exist.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** In the briefing, officials noted that the current staff of NL911 will move into the department and they suggested that the staff could help with other areas of emergency service delivery. Will the job descriptions of the current staff change?

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

**J. HOGAN:** We anticipate a smooth transition and we'll work with the staff as they come into the Department of Justice and Public Safety. Certainly, we'll need individuals to enhance, improve and maintain the 911 system, but there are other options and other opportunities for these individuals to work within the Department of Justice, broaden their career and grow into public safety facets in the department that exist beyond 911.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** With respect to whether there'll be job losses, have you had any analysis completed with respect to potential job losses?

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

**J. HOGAN:** We don't anticipate any immediate job losses. The individuals at NL911 will come into the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

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

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

I'd like a clear explanation as to why the assets of \$20 million of the board are being brought in to general revenue instead of putting them aside in a dedicated (inaudible)?

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

**J. HOGAN:** So putting them aside, it certainly was discussed and we've heard questions about it, but putting them aside, it's just not how government works. We don't put money aside in the budget process. If we did that, we'd have money put aside for every department, we'd have bank accounts for every single department and then we'd have accounts within every department for every single thing that we do.

So we'd have money for the RNC staff, we'd have money for RNC cars, we'd have money for RCMP staff, we'd have money for RCMP operations, we'd have money for fire trucks and we'd have money for fire equipment. I shouldn't say money; we'd have bank accounts for all these things. We'd have hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of different accounts that are going to be allocated for budget purposes. We have a budget and the money comes out of general revenue and it goes to those things that we do in the budget, which you'll see on Thursday.

Another thing is that, as I've said, Next Generation 911 will not be available until 2025. So we would have to carry a liability of that expenditure for the next three years, and it's not an up-front cost of \$20 million. If it's even going to be that, we don't know what the cost is going to be. So we can't allocate a specific amount of money for a project that we have no idea what it's going to cost.

So there are all kinds of reasons we are not going to put that money aside into a special pot.



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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** So you referenced that there are eight other jurisdictions doing the same thing in essence, but Nova Scotia, for example, has a separate agency set up to manage the reserve fund. So why didn't you consider that route to go here?

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

**J. HOGAN:** It's a separate agency in Nova Scotia, as the Member said. We've decided not to have a separate agency. We're bringing it within the department, and the reasons I explained throughout this afternoon is that we want this entity, this facet of public safety to work with other aspects of the Department of Justice and Public Safety, specifically with regard to the province-wide radio system, which is why it's spelled out in the new legislation and it's not there in the old legislation.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Does the minister have an estimation as to what Next Generation 911 will cost to implement?

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

**J. HOGAN:** No, I don't have an estimate on that number.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** So the minister referenced the CRTC and that it has mandated a telecommunication company across Canada to update their networks to allow for Next Generation 911 service and that is expected to be within three years.

Can you please provide details of what your plan is to prepare Newfoundland and Labrador for this significant and important upgrade to its emergency services?

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

**J. HOGAN:** So there's a working committee at CRTC that we will participate in with regard to the Next Generation 911 plan. The individuals that come in to the Department of Justice and Public Safety who have already been working on Next Generation 911 will continue to work on it, and we'll do everything and anything we can to make sure that we follow the legislation, that we will follow the law of the land to develop, operate and maintain the emergency 911 service in this province.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** When we look at specific clauses, like 7(d) says that the minister shall ensure that the emergency 911 service is efficient and cost effective.

Can you please explain whether this clause, that emergency 911 service, must be cost effective? Would that give a future minister a reason not to implement Next Generation 911 and use the revenue for other purposes? Is that any concern for you at all?

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

**J. HOGAN:** I don't have concern. As I've said, I've committed and this government is committed to doing Next Generation 911. I've also looked at section 7(e) and I've said it a few times in the House that the minister is mandated to be flexible and responsive to changing technologies, which I would argue includes Next Generation 911.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** With respect to the advanced notice of changes in clause 12, the previous legislation noted that the emergency service provider must provide notice after a change, but this legislation says that advance notice to the minister shall be provided when changes related to the emergency response zones or operational procedures of the emergency service provider.

So I just want clarification: Can you explain why the advance notice of a change in the

emergency zone or operational procedure must be given to the minister or department?

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

**J. HOGAN:** I think it's a question why they have to give the advance notice of a change. If you continue on reading section 12, it's advance notice of a change to emergency response zones and the operational procedures of the emergency service provider. So the purpose of that is that the minister does want to know and the minister should know, when he or she is operating and in charge of 911, where the emergency response zones are so it's known who has to go to those response zones, and to know what the operational procedures are of the various emergency service providers throughout the province.

I would argue not knowing those things is a detriment to public safety. So knowing those things is enhancing and improving public safety in the province.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** So what happens if an emergency service provider, for example, a volunteer fire department, is not able to give advance notice because of their ability to provide service changes unexpectedly, which, of course, can happen in volunteer departments?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Sorry, I just ask the Member to repeat the question, if she doesn't mind.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** The example I'm using is what happens if you have an emergency service provider like a volunteer fire department and they're not able to give advance notice, because their ability to provide service changes unexpectedly, as sometimes happens in volunteer departments – so what happens if they're not able to give advance notice (inaudible)?

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

**J. HOGAN:** So the legislation mandates that that entity does have to give advance notice. I'm not sure why they wouldn't be able to give advance notice if their operational procedures have changed. It's not something that happens instantaneously. But this is another reason why we want to bring this entity within government. The Minister of Municipal Affairs spoke to this and regionalization and how her department can work with entities throughout the province in the municipalities to deal with these certain issues.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** So how much advance notice must be given?

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

**J. HOGAN:** It says shall provide advance notice. It doesn't set out a specific timeline.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** So with respect to the civic addresses, the text is, in essence, or essentially the same as the current legislation. But there are many municipalities in the province who have the same street names, like, for example, Main Street.

Will the minister or the department be asking municipalities to change their street names to avoid confusion for 911 operators?

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

**J. HOGAN:** No, and this is a problem throughout the country. It's either 50 per cent in Newfoundland, I believe, don't have civic addresses and it is a problem throughout the country, which the CRTC working group I spoke of are trying to address this problem, which is one of the reasons this Next Generation 911 can't happen next year. It needs to take time to figure out the civic address problem.

But to the get to the question – I don't anticipate anyone telling anyone what to call streets in various communities throughout the province. But whoever the minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs is, it is something that they can work with these groups to make sure that the civic address issue is dealt with to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are as safe as possible.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** My final question is with respect to the commencement of the legislation. So it's going to come into effect when it's proclaimed by Cabinet. What is the timeline for implementation of the legislation and the timeline to bring NL911 into the department?

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

**J. HOGAN:** I don't have a specific timeline for that right now. I wouldn't call this the first step; this is maybe the middle step. We'll get the legislation done and approved here in the House of Assembly – hopefully it passes – then we'll continue to work with the individuals at NL911 right now to transition into government.

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

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

I just have two questions coming out of debate. It was mentioned many times that currently the service is not funded by government, NL911. So when you say savings are being incurred, how are they being incurred?

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

**J. HOGAN:** The question is the 68 cents that is being collected right now by the board, that will now be collected by government. But certain things that the board are doing, our government will be able to do so the efforts aren't duplicated. You don't have to pay for things twice: that's how you save money.

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you.

I don't understand where paying twice comes from. We are currently paying into that system right now and you're saying there is going to be savings. So where are the savings?

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

**J. HOGAN:** I don't understand how someone doesn't understand how not paying for things twice is not saving. It is. I only bought my house once, I didn't buy it twice; I only bought my car once, I didn't buy it twice. So when individuals come into the department they can use things that are already here within the department, they don't have to have third party contracts to do that. They can avail of services that already exist within the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

More importantly, which I spoke about earlier, is the infrastructure. I don't think that taxpayers and ratepayers in this province paying the rate of 75 cents should have to pay for infrastructure twice. So, again, why would we pay for something twice when we can pay for it once and use two services on the same infrastructure system.

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you.

With the NL911 right now, currently, who's paying for the infrastructure?

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

**J. HOGAN:** The operation of the NL911, right now, is coming from the 75 cents.

**P. DINN:** (Inaudible.)

**J. HOGAN:** I'll try it again.

This is not just about 911, Chair. This is about a broader public safety initiative. One of the

public safety initiatives that this government plans to do is the implementation of a province-wide radio system. That will require infrastructure. We have to pay for that infrastructure. Taxpayers will pay for that infrastructure. Part of that infrastructure can be used for NL911.

If NL911 does it on its own, in a silo, the 75 cents collected will be used to pay for that. Taxpayers' money will be used for the radios. If we bring them together, we can piggyback on the infrastructure; we don't have to do it twice.

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

**P. DINN:** I'm not sure if he's getting the question here, because you have an agency that is operating now, an entity that's operating and doing quite a good job at it and dragging them into a department, and they're saying it's tax savings.

I don't see it. I don't understand how you can take an entity – I don't pay for my mortgage twice. I understand that. I'm not paying for my house twice. But if someone's driving a car over there – someone not connected to me, not connected – I pay nothing on that car, yet I want to use that car. How is it dragging that car into my household going to save me money? I don't understand that.

Anyway, what happens to the publicly funded NL911 fund once it's placed in general revenue?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Sorry, I didn't hear the question, unfortunately, Chair.

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

**P. DINN:** This is a pretty important piece of legislation and having the Member over there making amusing comments is unwarranted.

So I'll be quite clear and I'll ask the question in the Queen's language: What happens to the publicly funded NL911 fund once placed in general revenue?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Once placed in general revenue, it is in general revenue.

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

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

So what he's telling us is that the \$20 million –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

I can't hear the Member speak.

Thank you.

**P. DINN:** What he's telling us is the \$20 million that is currently held by the NL911 drops into general revenue and that's it. We don't know if it's going to be used for the purpose it was collected or not.

Now, if I'm bringing forth a bill on this and there's an amount, whether it's \$1 or \$20 million of the public funds that was collected for this, I would know exactly where it's going, other than it's going in general revenue.

So what will the money be used for? Will it be used for enhancements down the road?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Yes, the money will be used for enhancements down the road. In fact, it will be used for developing, operating and maintaining the emergency 911 service as mandated in the new legislation.

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

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

Just for clarification, the \$20 million will be solely used to establish the Next Generation 911?

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

**J. HOGAN:** I don't know how much the Next Generation 911 project is going to cost. Nobody knows how much it's going to cost. If it's more than \$20 million or less than \$20 million, I can't commit to that \$20 million being used exactly for that.

Again, the definition has been broadened. The fee collected does not speak to just 911 telephone services. So the fee will be collected and will be used to ensure that this legislation is followed.

I've committed and this government has publicly committed to doing Next Generation 911. I can't pay of it – the Minister of Finance can't allocate that money on Thursday in the budget because the project is not ready yet.

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

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

One of the questions I have regarding this transfer really is about the acquired knowledge; 911 is a very important service and very skilled, knowledgeable employees are working there currently. When we look at the knowledge transfer of these three technical staff that will go into the department, does government intend to add additional responsibilities to these employees that could distract away from their primary function? Also very important is will these employees be able to stay within the department, or will their knowledge be transferred to other employees and then eventually they will be laid off or lose their jobs? That is something that would be of concern when you're transferring into a new department.

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

**J. HOGAN:** The employees will be asked to come into the Department of Justice and Public Safety. We will use their knowledge and expertise to continue with the operation of the 911 service.

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

**L. EVANS:** Okay, so what we're saying is that their primary responsibility will continue on with the job that they're having right now. So they won't be burdened with additional responsibilities that would dilute their ability to do their job. Also, they'll have job security where that knowledge that they have will be valuable in terms of job security.

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

**J. HOGAN:** They will be brought in. We want their expertise. We want their knowledge. That's what they're being brought in for. That's what they're going to be asked to do. Someone needs to operate and maintain and improve this service over time. I would prefer to have individuals that know how to do that.

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you.

So will there be layoffs?

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

**J. HOGAN:** The individuals are being brought into the Department of Justice and Public Safety; they're not being laid off.

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

**L. EVANS:** The department stated they want to integrate 911 services with search and rescue services, as well as the forthcoming province-wide radio project. So will responsibilities of these systems be placed upon the current PSAP offices?

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

**J. HOGAN:** The PSAP offices are separately contracted entities with 911 right now, and then when the new legislation comes into force

they'll be contracted through the Department of Justice rather than (inaudible).

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you.

What plans, if any, does the government have to – sorry, I already had that question answered.

Are the mobile crisis response teams included under the umbrella for the emergency service providers that can be engaged by the 911 operators?

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

**J. HOGAN:** So I'll have to get the answer to that question for you. I'm not sure exactly if they're included in the emergency response providers or not.

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

**J. HAGGIE:** (Inaudible) call 911 and require a mobile crisis response team, that is covered at the moment. There's no intention from our point of view to change that.

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

**L. EVANS:** No further questions.

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

**E. JOYCE:** I'm just going to have a few small questions. I tell you, Minister, a concern that was brought up when it was reviewed before, I'm just going to bring this to your attention, is that when the 911 services go into the Department of Justice and Public Safety and they become public sector employees, the issue you're going to have – and I'll just bring it to your attention now – is that once they become that position, other people can bump into that position, seniority, and you have to be careful of seniority and the expertise in that department.

That's just something I'll bring to your attention. Because once they're into government if someone has five years more experience and a job comes up, they can apply for the job and do they get automatically bumped if there's a layoff because they're lowest on the scale. You have to be careful of that because that was one of the concerns before. So I'll just bring that to your attention on that.

The second thing is – and again, this is my biggest fear – the funds every year now if it goes on for the next five years or three years, five years or six years, and it's going to increase, there has to be a way – and I'll give you an example again. In one of the departments, there's approval every year to give grants to a certain number of volunteer organizations. It's approved. So every year, a line item is the money for the grants for a lot of volunteer groups in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So there is a way to do it; I'm just asking government to find a way. I'm not sure if it's under Seniors and Social Development, where there are grants – every year there's a certain amount of money. It's a line item, and every year they know what they're getting. It's a five- or six-year, seven- or eight-year program where it has to be changed.

But there is a way to do it, to put it in a line item. Government has done it before. They are doing it now with those volunteer programs – which I think is great to do, so that they know they've got stability in the funding. So there is a way to do it.

So I'm just asking the minister to bring that back to Cabinet.

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

**J. HOGAN:** There will be, if there's not right now, a line item in the budget of the Department of Justice and Public Safety for 911. It's just that the budget line won't have the full amount of \$20 million, I guess, in there for next year. Because the \$20 million is not going to be spent next year. So whatever is going to be spent as we move forward towards Next Generation 911 will be a line item in future budgets.

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

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

A few questions; I want to first of all go back to the aspect of consultation, because I have heard two versions of when consultations occurred.

I would ask the minister, when did he and/or his staff actually sit down and meet with the bureau?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you.

I don't have the exact dates in front of me; I can get them for the Member. I certainly had two Zoom meetings with the board, that I can recall, and as I said, there have been ongoing discussions between the department and the board.

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

**P. TRIMPER:** I think that the key point I'm trying to make, and I should have perhaps made it in my question, Chair, is that according to what I'm hearing from the board, is that they were informed – consulted – only after the department had made the decision. They didn't know this was coming.

To talk about transparency and working together and so on, I just find myself – there seemed to have been an agenda in place well in advance of those running what was, I think we can all agree, an extremely successful, well-run, very professionally represented entity of how society responds to emergency calls in this province.

They are unanimously, not just a few of them – every single member of the board is opposed to the move that we're discussing here on the floor today. So I put it to the minister – and I asked the same question of staff; they did not have a good answer. Certainly one that didn't jive with what I've been told. I wasn't there, but I can tell you if the board was here right now, they would inform you that they were not consulted or

informed until after the decision had been made, after the gig was up.

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

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

So, again, I don't have the dates in front of me. I don't know if there was a follow-up question there or just a comment that you weren't sure about the timing of it. I don't have the dates in front of me when I met with the board on those couple of occasions.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Chair, just a couple of quick questions. The 75 cents that's currently being collected now, where will that go once this change happens?

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

**J. HOGAN:** That money will go into general revenue.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** When the money goes into general revenue, will we see a budgeted item for that revenue?

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

**J. HOGAN:** I'm not the Minister of Finance. I'm not sure of that. But I'm sure that if questions are asked about how funds come into government, including taxes, et cetera, et cetera, we can allocate for how we got that money.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** When the 75 cents is collected and goes into general revenue, I'm asking if

there's going to be a budget item in the revenue section of budget for this particular fee that's being collected.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you for the question.

I'll check to see if there will be a separate line item. My understanding is there would be because it is a receipt to government, but I will check that.

There is new activity added to JPS Estimates for NL911. I would assume there will be an Estimates line as well for the revenue, but I'm checking on it.

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

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

In the same light, can you give us some idea of what you plan on spending the 75 cents on? It's going to be collected as revenue; is there a planned expenditure for that revenue, for the 75 cents?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Certainly, one of the largest things that we will be spending the money on, largest thing, is what the money has been saved for and what we've committed to, which is Next Generation 911.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Just one more follow-up.

The money that has been collected that we have talked about already is something around the \$20-million mark. In addition to that, though, we're now going to be getting anywhere from – I have heard numbers from \$2 million to \$3 million, annually, collected through this 75 cents. So I am asking specifically what will happen to those particular funds that come in and how much money is actually going to be allocated out to the 911 system?

It will be interesting to see exactly what this is. Is it a tax or is it simply transfers from one service to the other and the money is used specifically for 911? Or is it in actual fact going to be considered, what my colleagues have said here, a tax?

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

**J. HOGAN:** The money will be spent on operating emergency 911 as we continue to go forward. Of course, money will be spent on 911 as it upgrades and does the large upgrade in the next several years in the future.

In the legislation, of course, as it exists now, and as it will exist if this passes, the fee can always be revisited and re-examined. So if more money is coming in then needs to be for service, we can look at that. If not enough money is coming in for the service that needs to be provided, we can look at that as well.

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

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

I would like to pursue this idea of efficiency as the rationale for why we are doing this. So I had a question of the staff the other day, Minister. I wondered if somebody has provided an update, but I was curious as to what is the cost of the specific board, not the paid salaried members but those who volunteered as chair and the board members representing various parts of this province. Did you manage to find that answer?

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

**J. HOGAN:** If you are speaking to the board that is appointed under the Independent Appointments Commission, they're a tier one board and how much they are paid per meeting throughout the year is publicly available information that I don't have in front of me.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Chair.



Does the current legislation that sits with the board, right now, guard against this fund being used for anything else besides 911?

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

**J. HOGAN:** The legislation as it exists right now, says: “The corporation may use the funds for the following purposes: (a) developing, establishing, operating and improving the emergency 911 telephone service; (b) the operations of the corporation; and” – which won’t exist anymore, so we don’t need to spend money on the corporation that doesn’t exist – “paying for costs associated with administering the fund.” Which I would argue we don’t need to pay for that cost anymore because it will go into Department of Finance which already has the ability to administer funds.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister.

Just for clarification, does the new legislation guard against this fund being used for anything else than its intended purpose?

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

**J. HOGAN:** I’m trying to find the funding section.

It might not be in the same language, but, again, I will refer to the fact that the minister can collect the funds and the 75 cents can obviously go up and down through the regulations. It will be used to, as outlined in section 5, develop, operate and maintain the emergency 911 service.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister.

This is Next Generation, the current board were poised to have Newfoundland and Labrador the first province to enter Next Generation 911, which is quite an accomplishment and their hard work shouldn’t go unnoticed.

So my question is: Will Next Generation 911 service be implemented immediately when it’s available, like the board had originally poised to do?

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

**J. HOGAN:** So the plan is to implement it and work with CRTC and work with other provinces to proceed with Next Generation 911 when it’s ready.

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

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

Minister, I hate to keep harping on the money, I know that’s what we’re all harping on here, but it is an important point.

You say, Minister, that you’re changing the nature of what the money can be spent on. That’s what I’m understanding; I’m just looking for some confirmation. Because, right now, it’s for the 911 telephone system, but I think you said now it’s the 911 system, minus the word telephone or something to that effect.

Could you confirm if that’s what’s happening?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Yes, I can confirm that. The new definition is emergency 911 service, as opposed to emergency 911 telephone service, which was in the old legislation.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, on an earlier question.

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

This is to the Member opposite who asked about where the revenue line item will be. Revenue will come into the current account in the fines and fees, similar to the Motor Registration, for example, so it will be under fines and fees. It won’t be under a separate line item as such.

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

**P. LANE:** So, Minister, with that new, broader definition that exists, does that mean – I'm just curious because if we're talking 911 service and it's not the telephone system, so ambulance is 911 service, fire department is 911 service, police are 911 service; so for argument's sake, could the government say, okay, well, these volunteer fire departments over here, they want some new bunker clothes, someone wants a new fire truck, potentially around – I'm not going to say election time, but anyway, skeptical minds might say – so we have some extra money now, we can dole out a few extra fire trucks, equipment and so on, out of the 911 fund because that is emergency services, it's not telephone system.

So what I'm trying to understand is the broadness that you are describing, that's pretty broad, 911 service, that includes all the fire departments, the ambulance departments, police departments, all the equipment they have and everything else. So, theoretically, you could say let's start buying bunker clothes for all the volunteer fire – not that that's a bad thing or they don't need them, I'm just trying to understand, could that money be then used for those types of things?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you.

No, it doesn't include all that. The definition is there in the new legislation of what emergency 911 service is. It means the province-wide emergency service established under the former act that connects a person to emergency service providers through a Public Safety Answering Point. The new broader part of this definition is this: and includes the province-wide radio communications network to be used by emergency service providers. It doesn't talk about what the Member was asking about.

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

**P. LANE:** Fair enough. No, I just wanted to get clarification on that.

So, Minister, if it's really for the communication system, the Enhanced 911 and so on, and I don't want to put words in your mouth, but I think when you started the debate a few hours ago, I thought I heard you say – it was difficult to hear – the estimated cost was \$7 million for the Enhanced 911. Again, I'm not putting words in your mouth.

Can you clarify on exactly what you said in your notes you were reading there at the very beginning as to what the estimated cost of the enhanced system is, or at least what it is right now, or your understanding of what it's going to be?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Yeah, thank you. So I'll read out the notes that I had. I said the cost for implementation of the Next Generation 911 system is unknown at this time. We are estimating it to be in the range of several million dollars.

**P. LANE:** Seven million?

**J. HOGAN:** Several.

**P. LANE:** Several, oh, okay. Okay, thank you, I thought he said seven. Several, okay.

So I guess my point is, I suppose, \$20 million is several million dollars and that's going up by about \$3 million a year. I know my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port was asking about this. The \$3 million that we're talking about here right now, that \$3 million is over and above paying for the existing cost.

So that 75 cents – or I should say 68 cents because seven cents is going to the phone provider. So that 68 cents, after that is collected, currently, and those bills are paid to pay for the provincial 911, all the staff, everything else that's there, over and above that, there's about \$3 million a year left over. That's what's been building this pot up to \$20 million.

So really, we're talking about the \$20 million going into the general revenues and then every year, thereafter, is another \$3 million. So if, for argument sake, you get the Enhanced 911 and

maybe it's \$15 million – I don't know what it is. But whatever it is and now there's been enough money collected to pay for all that, then are we going to stop charging people on their cellphones or are we going to reduce the amount so that it is just covering the cost of running the system and that we're not going to keep getting an additional \$3 million year over year over year for an enhanced system that we already now have, if you know what I'm saying.

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

**J. HOGAN:** So that regulation can be changed, the amount that's collected. I would suggest that we can always continue to look at how much money is needed for the emergency 911 service that's set out in the definition there. If more money is needed, the regulation can be changed to increase the fee. If fewer dollars are needed, the regulations can be changed to reduce the fee.

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

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

Just a couple of follow-up questions. The transfer of the \$20 million, this change will happen in the 2022-23 fiscal year?

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

**J. HOGAN:** I will proceed with the transition as soon as we are ready to do it. I don't know if I can commit to 2022-23, but when we get this legislation passed then we'll certainly take the next steps to move towards the transition.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So the follow-up question becomes: The \$20 million will come in and where will that be identified – we've talked about the \$3 million going into fines and fees. When the \$20 million is transferred, where will that show up to in the budget?

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

**J. HOGAN:** I'll have to check with the people in the Department of Finance to get that answer for you.

I can tell you one thing: It doesn't come into the Department of Justice and Public Safety, though.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** No, I don't imagine, but I would ask this question, though: Given the fact that you will not spend – and you've identified this – \$20 million in the given year that it does come into government – because this will be one-time funding coming into government – what do you plan on spending the remaining portion of that money on? If you're not spending it on 911 because you don't need to spend it, you're bringing it into revenue in one year, what do you plan on spending the rest of that money on? If it's 2022-23, what would you spend it on? That's what I want to know.

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

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

I will say that the minister has answered, I think, that it may or may not come in the '22-'23 year but there will be a new activity added to the JPS Estimates to make sure that we have that line item there. As the minister indicated, that doesn't necessarily mean it's coming in in '22-'23. It's just that we're preparing for that. We're still debating legislation. It will be the following year that it would show up in the Estimates book.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So if I'm understanding correctly from the minister, the budget will not contain a line item in '22-'23 for the \$20 million coming into government?

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

**S. COADY:** I will confirm that, but as the minister just indicated, we haven't actioned this as yet. We're still debating it in the House of

Assembly. I'll talk to my officials and make sure that it's not there, but I do know that we have an activity for JPS for 911. Whether or not that \$20 million is embedded, I'm not quite sure at this point, but I will find out.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** My last point then: I'm sure we'll be glad to ask those questions in Estimates to find out exactly where the \$20 million is and what the plan is to spend it.

Thank you.

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

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

Question for, I guess, the Minister of Finance. I am just wondering why is it that we can't – I asked the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and he said we couldn't, or he was told we couldn't. Is there a possible way, if the will was there, that you could take that \$20 million and put it in a protected fund and the additional money, the excess funds that are coming in from that phone fee, that that can go into a fund so that it's there – the answer of we can't do it, I just find it difficult to believe that we have a government and a huge bureaucracy and everything else and it's not possible for us to have a separate fund to protect that money.

Just because we don't generally do it, or we've never done it or whatever, doesn't mean we can't do it. I'm just trying to understand is it that you're saying it can't be done, or government has just decided it's not going to be done?

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

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

In the first instance, if we set it up that way, in the next three years, of course, we would have to have a liability set up as well, just because of the way when the money is going to be used and utilized for the service. So I have been speaking with my officials and that is what I understand. We would have to set up a separate liability and

that would mean a liability on the books of government, which skews it a little bit.

Whether or not in future – I mean, you can appreciate the amount of pots of funds that there already is throughout government and setting up a special purpose fund for that amount of money is problematic. That is not to say that into the future we may be able to do it or not, but I would be concerned about taking it for the next three years because it would show as a liability on the books of government. And that is not what any of us would want to have because it is not really a liability at this point.

You can easily, I think, in Estimates, find out where the money is and how much is being spent on the service of 911. That should be clear in Estimates and I am sure, as the Member a few moments ago said, you'll be looking for it in Estimates.

Thank you.

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

**P. LANE:** I thank the minister, but I guess the problem that I've got is it is fine to say that we can see where it went in and where it is spent, but my contention is that it shouldn't be spent. That is the issue. It is not where it was spent and how it was spent; it shouldn't be spent.

When we get an Enhanced 911 system, then we take the money out that we have been – for layman's terms, we have been saving our money. We set up a bank account to save up for 911 and that money has grown year over year. When the time comes that we're going to purchase that Enhanced 911 system, we take the money out of the bank. To say that we're going to put it in and then you'll see where we spent it. Well, the argument is that you shouldn't be spending it.

So the whole purpose behind what I am trying to say here is: Why can't we just leave that as is? Why can't we just leave that fund that currently exists and leave it alone? Have the bureau report to the Department of Justice and Public Safety and everything else, make them Justice employees and whatever you're doing, but leave the bank account alone. Set up under the existing

structure, call it something else and just leave the bank account alone.

Surely, God, there must be somebody with financial knowledge that has the ability to figure that out. That is the part that I just can't seem to get my head around, why we can't do that. If we're not going to do it, then naturally, on this side of the House for sure, that is why we're being skeptical about it. Because \$20 million is there and it is going to be taken, and it is going to go into general revenue and it is going to be spent. It is not necessarily going to be spent on what it was intended to be spent on. Then next year the budget comes, or the year after, and there is no \$20 million. It's gone. It disappeared. That was a one-time thing.

Every year, after we pay our expenses for 911, staff and the centre that we already have here, based on past performance, there's going to be an additional \$3 million, roughly, left over, year over year over year, and that additional \$3 million is going to keep on going into the general revenues. You can say what you want: it's a tax.

There's no other way to put it. Call it a tax, call it a fee, it's certainly not a 911 fund. That's the problem, Mr. Chair, that I have with it. I know other Members have that same concern.

I'll leave it there. I really have no other questions because I'm pretty sure how this is going to go in any case.

Thank you.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just going to have a few words, no questions. I'll just go back with the history of the 911. When the 911 was set up it was an arbitrary number that you were going to put on the phone bill. It ended up being 75 cents for the phone bill, for all phones, cellphones across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The intent then from the minister at the time, Kevin O'Brien, was that they weren't sure how much it would cost to have a 911 system, pay the employees, rent and other things across the

province. The intent was, at the time, to evaluate it after three or four years to see if you could decrease the fee on the phones. That was the intent.

So if we just go right now with the funds that you've got, the \$20 million fund that you have now, which is more than enough for the next three years, the Next Generation was only, I think, \$2.7 million or \$2.8 million, that was the estimate – I don't know what it is now – but that was the estimate, it wasn't up to \$20 million, it was several, \$2 million or \$3 million dollars.

The intent was – and this is something for the government to look at – if you take that \$20 million, which is a surplus – of the 75 cents of all the other it pays for the, for example, all the wages, benefits, it pays for rent and other things. So the intent wasn't just take the money now, put it in general revenue, and say okay let's keep collecting the money.

So I ask the minister if he would go back and look when it was originally set up, it was set up at this fee, but if we didn't need that amount, they would lower the fees on the phones. That was the intent. That's why we've got such a surplus. Now, we don't need that surplus now, over and above all the wages and all the equipment and all the staffing, there's a \$3 million to \$4 million surplus per year, which would pay for the Next Generation, just one year would pay for that, and then for the next two or three years, if you need a little bit of cushion in the department, that's fine.

My suggestion to the department is to go back and look at the original mandate. The original mandate was to supply the services with this fee, but if this fee was too much, you would decrease it; if you needed more, you would increase it. But the arbitrary number set up at the time by Kevin O'Brien was to say it's no good for us to say if you only need 10 cents on each phone, well we might have to come back the next month and say, no, we need 30 cents per phone or 40 cents. So they put that high number in to ensure that they had enough. But if it's too much they would decrease it.

I ask the minister to go back and review the initial legislation that was done, because I sat in this House and that was the commitment that

was made and that was the idea behind it. So I'm not debating the \$20 million surplus, I'm just saying the intent was to decrease the amount on the phones per month to individuals across the province.

The second thing I bring up – people talk about efficiencies. I don't think efficiencies will be in government because it's not going to cost the government any money. But where there will be efficiencies, and I'll just give you –

**P. LANE:** Cost them money.

**E. JOYCE:** What?

**P. LANE:** It's going to cost them money.

**E. JOYCE:** Well, the 911 will pay for it. But here's a suggestion that was put in and I was pushing for it for a while, I'll just give you one example of how you could save funds from the 911 system and give it back by a decrease in the phone bill, not to put it in general revenues, in the phone bill.

You take the City of Corner Brook, there's rent from the 911 now being paid for the City of Corner Brook. They're also paying them a fee to oversee the 911. The suggestion at the time, and we were trying to get it pushed through, was put the 911 where it should be, in the RNC building in Corner Brook. No rent, have the RNC be the overseers of 911. If you do that you would save a lot of funds and be able to decrease the amount on the cellphones that you're charging each individual in this province.

So there are ways for efficiencies, but the money shouldn't be taken in and still keep the fee high so that the money is going to come in and go into general revenue. Because every year now, after this \$20 million for the next budget, every year there's going to be \$3 million put into general revenue year over year over year from the cellphones.

I ask the minister – and I know I'm repeating myself and it is 5:30 – go back and look at the original mandate. The mandate was if there's a surplus, decrease the amount you charge on the cellphone service.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** I'm recognizing the hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

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

If I can, Chair, with regard to the forthcoming province-wide radio project, do we have the staffing in place, or an estimate of staffing, or the resources we'll need to have that in place?

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

**J. HOGAN:** No, I don't have that information right now. That's something that we're working towards and something that we can provide at a later date, when the contract is ready to go, when we take the next step towards the province-wide radio system.

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

**J. DINN:** With regard to search and rescue services, are we looking to hire staff on, I guess, or to enhance the services? Is there a shortage or vacant positions?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Sorry, is the question is there vacant positions within the Department of Justice and Public Safety for search and rescue?

**J. DINN:** Yes.

**J. HOGAN:** So it's not my understanding there is. The search and rescue is mostly performed by groups throughout the province. NLSARA is the sort of global entity that we deal with regard to search and rescue.

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

**J. DINN:** So here's my concern: there are going to be no layoffs. Now, the question that my colleague from Torngat asked, will any of these people be laid off? They're going to be brought into the department; they're not going to be laid off. I guess it comes down to future attrition. I mean, attrition is the word, but here's my concern. Right now, we've got seven dedicated

people to 911. We don't have, yet, the number of people lined up for the province-wide radio project or how many human resources we're going to need or otherwise.

My fear is that we've got our five ready-made people there who deal with 911 will now have – we won't have to hire as many for the province-wide radio project to make it effective because we'll have these people and we can more or less increase their responsibility. I'm assuming that if we had maintained two separate entities, or 911 as a separate entity, these five people would be dedicated to 911 and we'd still have to hire, I guess, we'd still have to be looking at putting the human resources into making the province-wide radio project.

That's the issue, the concern as to how the creative human resourcing of this is going to unfold. Because I'm assuming, then, that if we bring in the province-wide radio project, we're going to actually see a significant increase in staff. There's no guarantee here.

So maybe there won't be layoffs, but basically, it's a creative a way that we won't have to hire as many people to do the job to begin with and we're still coming back to the existing people who will have the extra resources.

Guys, it's no different than bringing in full-day kindergarten. Great initiative, but you took the resources out of the rest of the system to make it work. You took 140 teachers out of the system. Hey, we brought in full-day kindergarten but you stripped the resources. That is the MO of the government on this side.

So my concern is that we make sure that if you're going to bring it in, you're not trying to do it on the cheap and say it comes down to a savings. I've been down that road before.

The other concern I guess is – and I don't know if I heard this or not; I want to make sure – will there be a dedicated line-item budget that shows money in from the 911 fee and money out? Or is it, as I think I heard it said, going to be part of fees and fines? So we won't be able to tell, really, what's coming in and where it's going.

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

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

As I've said previously, it will go into fees and fines. The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port also asked if it would be reflected in this year's budget Estimates and the answer is yes. We do have a line item there for that. But I want to remind everyone in this House that it was already consolidated in our books anyway because it is an entity of government. I know that you're thinking about it as a separate, but it was certainly always embedded in the financials of the provincial government because it is an entity of the provincial government.

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

**J. DINN:** I'm not going to ask a question on this, but I am going to make a comment with regard to paying for things twice. There is no paying for anything twice here because if that's what it's about, there would be a full rebate, I guess, of the 75 cents to everyone if we're trying to find efficiencies. The fact is the NL911 is paying for itself. If it's being rolled into – as I heard the minister talk about, well, we won't have to pay for the administration or the operations of the board. Well, the government is not paying for that to begin with. So there's no paying for it twice.

I'm trying to figure out who is paying for it twice. The only people I can think who are paying for it twice that we're worried about then is about the consumers: you and me. So in that case then if that's the main reason and it's being rolled into it, we're still paying the 75 cents on the fee and we're still paying for the other – we're still paying twice.

So where is the savings to the consumer? To me, I think it should automatically be, tell you what, guys, you're getting back 50 cents on that so you don't have to pay. We'll just pay for what we need, but that's not the case. The fact is paying two separate entities or roll the entity into the department; we're still paying the same 75 cents. There's no savings; we're still paying for it twice.

I don't follow the rationale there. What it comes down to is that the only people who are going to

(inaudible) there are no savings to us, but it's going to be tremendous savings to government.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you.

When it said that government is not paying for it – the people in this province are paying taxes to the government to pay for services that they need. It's the same people who are paying the 75 cents on their phone bill. So to say government is not paying for it is true, but someone is paying for it, and those people care that they're paying for it. It's only 75 cents a month on their phone bill, but it does add up. People have more than one phone. They have cellphones in their houses, throughout their houses. They might even have one or two landlines in their houses. So it could be \$3, \$4 or \$5 a month for each household. When we say we'll save people from paying for it twice, it's the fact that the people paying those rates on their phone bills won't have to pay for the same infrastructure that taxpayers are paying with regard to the radio project that's coming into JPS right now.

If we can combine those, we can use the tax money for something else, like schools, like education, which I think is important to the Member who just spoke, or we can reduce the fee that's being charged, the 75 cents, so there can be savings to people who pay and people who care about having to pay things that aren't necessary.

Thank you.

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

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

It sounds like the real plan here is to get access at the 75 cents so you can use it for other projects, not just 911. I understand that.

The next question I have is you talk about the \$20 million coming in and putting into general revenue. I have a copy of the consolidated revenue fund in front of me – and it might be a question for the Minister of Finance – in the statement of financial position, under the

liability section, there is a significant deferred revenue.

I would ask the question: Is there any reason why the \$20 million couldn't be brought in and put in under deferred revenue until such time as you are ready and more ready to talk about implementation of where you go with Next Generation? I don't know if that's possible. I just ask the Minister of Finance that question.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

I'll have my officials check into that, but I will say, as the budget is only within 36 hours I don't know if they can make any changes to that. It would have been part of the consolidated revenue in any event. As an entity of government, it would have been part of our consolidated revenues in any event.

But I understand your point you're trying to make is could we put it into a separate deferred revenue to be reflected in a different way in the future, and that's what I'll ask officials if that's possible at this point.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** That's exactly what I'm asking, Minister, is that this revenue can be protected. It can be protected by putting it in a deferred revenue account until such time as the government is ready to actually use it towards Next Generation. And so hopefully that can be done.

Thank you.

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

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

I want to go back to what I was speaking about earlier. I'm trying to also identify the efficiency. When I look at the difference between what we have now and where we are looking at going, it essentially comes down to, as the minister said, the board. We have tier-one appointments, so we



have allocated remuneration set up for each of those members to attend a board meeting. It's a nominal amount of money; I think it's in the vicinity of \$100 per member and \$140 for the chair. It's something in that realm.

And given over the last two years their travel expenses to actually meet have been by Zoom, with the exception of, by the way, their first meeting with the minister when they found out that this was happening, was, I'm told, on the 27th of February by Zoom. That's how they learned that they were going to be dismissed. We haven't even had to incur travel costs for this board.

So the great financial advantage here or efficiency seems to be the loss of having experienced, professional members of this province represent us on this board that have been carefully selected through the Independent Appointments Commission. That seems to be what we're saving a lot of money on.

I guess to sum it up – and yes, it's sarcastic, but it's a little bit how I feel – the result of Bill 41, we're getting rid of an extremely well-performing professional board. We are growing core government. We are taking a fund that's been set aside for a very important future response for how society can respond to emergency calls in this province. We have jeopardized our relationship in a business transaction with every single cellphone user in this province. They paid a fee; we told them it was going to be used for this. Well, guess what? It's disappearing. And we've now created a fee or, as I said, a tax for a service.

So I think that's what we're doing here. So that's great.

Thank you.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Public Safety, that's actually what I want to talk about, Public Safety. I've answered a lot of questions about the money. Where's the money going? What are you spending the money on? Why are you trying to save money? How much money are you going to save?

Those are all important questions, and the part about the money is not why we're doing this. The reason we're doing this is to bring 911 into JPS, where we have an Emergency Services branch. Bringing it in will ensure that people in this province are safer when it's operating together with other parts of the Public Safety.

Are you going to save money? I'm going to answer the questions. Are we going to save millions of dollars? Probably not. But we're going to save some money. How? Well, we're not going to pay for rent. We're going to have efficiencies within the department for payroll and things like that. We're not going to spend extra money on infrastructure when we don't need to.

That's great, that's a bonus. Big picture: people are going to be safer. That's what we're doing.

If I really wanted to save money, I'd say we're not doing 911; we're not doing radio; we're getting rid of the cops; good luck everybody.

Thank you.

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

**P. TRIMPER:** Safety, as always, has to be the number one priority. Absolutely, every time, and as the Member for Tornat Mountains said in her opening remarks, that's what she commented on, was it being a priority, but, frankly, it's been missing from the rationale as to why we're doing this.

I wanted to say, again, with my own knowledge of search and rescue, with the feedback that I've had over the last 48 hours, of other people who have been contacting me in the last three or four hours while we've been sitting here debating it, these are all experts who are dealing with this system now.

I go back to the inquiry that was referenced in the briefing that we had from the department, where they indicated that one of the key rationales was one of the outcomes of the search and rescue inquiry that was issued in December. The fact of the matter is that is really confusing the experts in the industry right now because

they're saying that bears no resemblance at all as to what's going on here with Bill 41.

So I hear safety, I see safety; I don't see it necessarily being what's asked for here. As someone said a few minutes ago: If it isn't broke, at least in this aspect, why are we trying to fix this?

Thank you.

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

**J. DINN:** So let's ask about safety because I haven't heard it from the government side as to the main rationale. Is there something in how the NL911 board is operating, in how they're carrying out business that is jeopardizing the safety of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? Because that would make sense.

So that's the question that it comes down to; if it's about safety and we're throwing that out there – and to me, Chair, if it came down that in some way this board was negligent or was not doing the job – it's a professional board, they've done their job well – I need to know, if there are concerns here that are motivating this, then outline the safety concerns that maybe we should all be worried about. But if that's the rationale, then that should have been front and centre.

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

**J. HOGAN:** I mean the rationale – the bill speaks to safety. The bill speaks to what the purpose of emergency 911 service will be going forward. I spoke to it this afternoon and I said that I didn't want NL911 to exist in a silo as opposed to working with other facets of Public Safety. Obviously, anything we're talking about, working together I think for the greater good is always better than everyone working independently. This is what this accomplishes.

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

**P. LANE:** Mr. Chair, I wasn't going to speak anymore to this, but, b'y, I got to tell you, this got me kind of a little bit riled, too, now.

Again, I got to understand the safety piece, that wasn't something that I gleaned from any of this. Am I to understand, based on the commentary from the minister, currently, we have a 911 Bureau, from all accounts they are all professional people and they're doing a professional job. They have professional people on the board of directors that is running it, that is managing it. There are no concerns about it, but somehow we're going to make the system safer because now, by bringing it under, people can talk to each other.

So am I to understand that someone from Justice or the police or whether it's the ambulance service or the fire department, they're not able to sit down and have a conversation with somebody at the 911 Bureau? The only way that we're going to have communication and people are going to have collegiality and work together is if they all fall under the Department of Justice and Public Safety.

We're going to wave a magical wand: yesterday, you didn't get along, but today you're in the Department of Justice and Public Safety and it is all kumbaya and we're safe, but before that, we weren't safe. I just don't understand it, Mr. Chair.

To my mind, it's all about a new revenue stream. I cannot emphasize that enough. It's about a new revenue stream. It's about \$20 million, one-time cash, and \$3 million a year in general revenues. I know we're desperate for money, I know we're desperate for money. But let's call it what it is. Let's just be honest about what we're doing and why we're doing it.

We're in the hole, we need money; we need as much revenue as we can find and, as far as I'm concerned, that's what it's all about, but let's call a spade a spade. I mean, that's what we're doing. To suggest that this is about safety.

As my colleague from St. John's Centre said, tell us right now what is happening with the 911 system that we have, provincial 911 system that is not safe, that's putting people at risk. Tell me how, all of a sudden, just because these same people – we're not talking new people, we said the same people. We're going to take these people who are working in Corner Brook tonight, down in city hall tonight, and they're working down at – I think they're at Central Fire

Station still, for 911 here in this area, and once we make the change, they're still going to be working, same people, doing the exact same job, only difference is now instead of reporting to the board, they're reporting to the Department of Justice. All of a sudden, by that one stroke of the pen, everything is going to be perfect, we're all going to be safe. We're all going to work together and everything is hunky dory.

I'm not trying to beat up on you, Minister, I'm really not and I know you're doing what you have to do there, but it just doesn't make any sense to me. It defies logic to my mind. Maybe it's just me, I don't think it's just me, but I feel like it's just not a logical argument.

Unless you can say to us that there's something we don't know about, that the current system of 911 is failing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, that the board are all incompetent. They don't know what they're doing. There are people dying because of all kinds of shag ups on the 911 lines or whatever, if that's what's happening, we need to know. But that's not what I'm hearing. What I'm hearing is everything is going great.

All professional people, doing good work and everything is running fine; everything is within their budget. They have a surplus of \$3 million a year; everything is working as it should. Now we're going to change all that. Now we're going to, suddenly, because we can't justify the money argument, now we're going to lean on safety. It's going to make us all safe somehow, as if we're not safe right now.

There's something, Mr. Chair, not adding up. It's really not adding up. I'm left with no other conclusion than to go back to the money. They say follow the money; go back to the money. This is all about getting our hands on \$20 million and \$3 million every year after in a new revenue stream.

We talk about efficiencies. This is not creating an efficiency for government because, if anything, you're taking on more work. Right now, they're not part of the department. Right now, the people in HR and IT and everything else in the government now don't have nothing to do with these people at 911. You're actually increasing the workload. You're giving them

more work. It's getting bigger not smaller, so there's no efficiency there.

It's not as if the government was funding the 911 centre and then they were also funding the Department of Justice and so on, like with the school boards. The government is funding the schools and the school board and they're also funding the Department of Education. You bring them together and you create efficiencies, because government was paying on both ends.

But government is not paying a cent for this. So you're taking on additional expenses. You're not saving anything. There's no efficiency but what you are doing – and let's call a spade a spade – is you are creating a new stream of revenue of around \$3 million a year, after you get the big windfall of \$20 million. That's what's happening.

All we've been asking for is, let's protect that \$20 million. Let's make sure it's spent on what it was intended to be spent on. If the money that's being collected off people for the purposes of 911, if we have excess funds, there's a surplus, then let's adjust the bills accordingly for the people who are paying for it, which, according to my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands, that was the intent from the beginning.

I don't know why we wouldn't do that. Well, I do know why we would do it because, again, it comes down to you're seeing another revenue stream, and I get it – I get it. Like I said, I understand where we are financially. But be honest about it and say that's why we're doing it. Say that's what it's all about. But trying to defend it, it's like you're defending the indefensible as far as I'm concerned.

Anyway, I said it was my last time I was going to speak the last time. This really is my last time, but I had to get it off my chest.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**CHAIR:** Division has been called.

I summon in all the Members.

**Division**

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

All those in favour, please stand.

**CLERK (Hawley George):** Lisa Dempster, John Haggie, Gerry Byrne, Tom Osborne, Siobhan Coady, Pam Parsons, Sarah Stoodley, Andrew Parsons, John Hogan, Bernard Davis, Derrick Bragg, John Abbott, Elvis Loveless, Krista Lynn Howell, Paul Pike, Scott Reid, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Lucy Stoyles.

**CHAIR:** All those against, please stand.

**CLERK:** Barry Petten, Paul Dinn, Tony Wakeham, Chris Tibbs, Loyola O’Driscoll, Helen Conway Ottenheimer, Joedy Wall, Pleaman Forsey, Jeff Dwyer, James Dinn, Jordan Brown, Lela Evans, Eddie Joyce, Paul Lane, Perry Trimper.

**CLERK (Barnes):** The ayes: 18; the nays: 15.

**CHAIR:** The motion has passed.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 through 28 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 28 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 28 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.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act Respecting A Province-Wide 911 Service For The Reporting Of Emergencies.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

On motion, title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**CHAIR:** Carried.

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

**CHAIR:** The Deputy Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 41.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report the bill.

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 of the Whole.

**B. WARR:** Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 41 without amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole has reported that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 41 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third on tomorrow.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, that this House do now adjourn.

**SPEAKER:** The motion is that this House do stand adjourned.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

This House stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.