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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

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The House met at 10 a.m.

**Resolution**

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

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

Admit strangers.

*“That is it is expedient to bring in a measure respecting the imposition of taxes on carbon products.”*

**Government Business**

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

**CHAIR:** Shall the resolution carry?

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

The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3.

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

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

I appreciate the opportunity this morning. As part of its election promises and in order to meet Canada’s greenhouse gas emission targets and work towards improving greenhouse gas emissions in the country and addressing climate change, the federal government implemented carbon pricing. That was back in 2016. At that time the provincial government, in discussions with the federal government, tried to minimize the impact on residents and maintain the province’s economic competitiveness.

**S. COADY:** He’s very quick this morning. Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider certain resolutions and a bill relating to the *Revenue Administration Act*, Bill 60.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the House do resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

So the goals at the time, in discussions with the federal government, were to maintain the competitiveness for trade and taxation; minimize the impact on consumers and vulnerable groups; recognize the considerable cost that we are already paying to decarbonize electricity; and to deliver meaningful reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

Now, at the time in discussions with the federal government, those were our goals and we were able to ensure that, for example, the carbon tax had a number of exemptions. Those exemptions included, for example, home heat. So there is no carbon tax on home heat. Fuels that were exempt for offshore petroleum explorations: for fuel sold on reserves, for fuel sold in sealed prepackaged containers, for aviation fuel, for gasoline use for electricity generation.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, ‘nay.’

Motion carried.

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

**Committee of the Whole**

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

As I said, fuels used for home heating, gasoline used for farming equipment, gasoline used for forestry activity, commercial cutting, harvesting logs, wood chippers, debarkers and silviculture. Gasoline used in a vessel or a boat by a fisher for commercial catching, gasoline used in a

We are now debating the related resolution and Bill 60, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act.

vessel or boat used for commercial transportation of fish and gasoline used in construction equipment for such purposes as rock crushing and screening aggregates, other than gasoline used in trucks, power shovels, tractors, loaders and drills. Gasoline used in manufacturing equipment and as a raw material in manufacturing, and gasoline used in equipment for exploration of a mineral. All those, we were able to negotiate with the federal government to be exempt from carbon tax.

Today, we are introducing amendments, as is required under the carbon tax requirements of the country, that we introduce amendments to the *Revenue Administration Act* to increase the tax rates for carbon products. We are fulfilling the commitment to the federal government, and it has been implemented in every other province in the country.

So to comply with the federal government requirements, which sets the price of carbon, Newfoundland and Labrador implemented a carbon tax, originally in January of 2019, and now we are required under this federal requirement to move the tax rate to \$50 a ton in '22-'23. It was effective May 1, and the change has already been implemented by the Public Utilities Board.

The requirements are to amend the *Revenue Administration Act* to \$50 per ton, as outlined in Schedule 2 of the federal *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*. Non-compliance would result in the federal carbon tax being implemented on those exemptions that I've just listed. So if this carbon tax is not implemented, this change in carbon tax is not implemented, it would eliminate all the exemptions that we have been able to negotiate with the federal government. So the exemptions on home heat, the exemptions on fisheries, on forestry, on agriculture, on silviculture, on exploration, all those would be lost and the federal tax would apply if we do not do this.

The provincial system currently includes exemptions not offered under the federal system including, as I said, home heating fuel, mineral and offshore exploration, forestry and other operations. It also includes broader exemptions on fishing, farming, marine and aviation fuel.

The carbon tax revenue will increase by \$30.6 million in '22-'23 and the increase is found in the budget Estimates book so I wanted to draw that to the attention of the House. The increase in revenue reflects the increase in carbon tax to \$50 a ton and increased fuel consumption as the economy recovers from COVID-19.

It is a very simple act but it has profound implications. It has already been implemented, as I said, all across the country in all provinces. Either those that have the direct federal implementation of the carbon tax or those who have been able to negotiate, as Newfoundland and Labrador has, for certain exemptions or changes to the carbon tax requirements.

This is important, obviously. The federal government has made it a key stake in addressing climate change and addressing carbon emissions in the country. They think it's a key component, of course, of meeting the requirements under the Paris accord and meeting some of the expectations that Canadians and, indeed, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have of making sure that we are addressing climate change.

As I said, it has already been implemented across the country. It has already been implemented in Newfoundland and Labrador in terms of the change at the gas pumps. But, today, we are bringing it through the legislative process and making sure that we have a robust debate on this particular bill, Bill 60.

I will say, again, that we worked very hard to ensure that carbon pricing did minimize the impacts on residents as best we could, while maintaining the requirement of addressing climate change. We struck an advantageous balance of making sure that we didn't impact home heat fuels, we didn't impact fisheries, forestry, agriculture and exploration, but that we were responsive to the federal governments requirements around addressing climate change. I think it does strike that balance and this is now the implementation of the requirements for the 2022 year.

On that note, I will listen to debate and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it.

Before I conclude, I will say, the additional revenues that we will gain from this tax this year has already been allocated and I believe my learned colleague, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, will go through where the monies are being allocated in the climate change funds this year. So when we get to that portion of the debate we will certainly hear how we are utilizing that additional revenue that are being garnered from here.

I can assure the people of the province, they're being put to good use to ensure that we do address climate change, that we do take that responsibility seriously and that we do address the concerns that we all have around the environmental impacts of fossil fuels.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

I next recognize the Member representing the District of Stephenville - Port au Port.

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

I don't know if anybody else feels the irony that I do today, that we're standing here this morning debating a bill to increase taxes, when we just had a budget delivered that promised no tax increases. A budget that says no tax increases and this morning I stand in the House of Assembly to talk about passing a bill to increase taxes. Don't see the irony in that at all.

Not only that, when I go through the bill, there are at least 20 different items listed in the bill that will result in tax increases. Now, we can talk about blame, and who's to blame for carbon tax, but I think the minister opposite of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills said it right when he referred to this on his *Open Line* comments as a sin tax. And that exactly is what this carbon tax is. It's simply a sin tax. It's meant to punish the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for using their vehicles to and from work, to and from medical appointments and just to be able to get where they need to go.

Those of us that live in rural Newfoundland and Labrador do not have the advantage of transportation such as Metrobus or subways or anything like that. We have to use our vehicles.

For many people, that is the only method of transportation they have, and right now they are feeling the pinch. As a matter of fact, I would argue, with a war and a pandemic that are driving inflation, the likes of what we have not seen in decades, this is no time for tax increases. This is not the time for tax increases.

So we can blame it on the federal government, you can blame it on whoever you want, but the bottom line is, this is not the time for tax increases. The budget promised us no tax increases and here we are this morning talking about a tax increase. That, in itself, should be of concern to everybody.

Right now, the people of our province are struggling with the impacts of inflation, they're struggling with the impacts of high costs and they're now struggling to pay an additional amount of money as a result of an increase in carbon tax.

It's interesting that the minister referred to it as fulfilling their commitment to the federal government. I would argue that we should be fighting with the federal government to defer this increase in carbon tax. That this fight should not be given up.

It's interesting that we certainly are in extraordinary times when you think about the impacts of COVID and the impact that has had in the last two years and how the federal government were able to step up with all kinds of COVID relief. We're waiving rules when it comes to helping people from war-torn countries, refugees come to our province, come to our country, but surely halting a carbon tax increase would be considered a measure that should be put in place now because the people of our province certainly need that.

I guess the biggest question that we have is: Does the government opposite support a carbon tax increase? Do you really support a carbon tax increase? You can say that you're forced to do it by Ottawa, but the fundamental question is: Do you support a carbon tax increase? The people on this side of the House do not support a carbon tax increase.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** It's as simple as that. We do not support a carbon tax increase.

The whole concept of carbon pricing in Newfoundland and Labrador is flawed. We do not have the alternatives to be able to switch from driving our vehicles. I'm sure lots of people in Newfoundland and Labrador would love to be able to park their cars in their driveways and have an alternative way to get to work, an alternative way to get to their medical appointments, an alternative way to do their shopping. But we don't. We don't have those luxuries. We are forced to use our vehicles. There are people who are commuting every single day to maintain their jobs.

I spoke yesterday in the House about the single mother making just above minimum wage who drives to work everyday 58 kilometres and the impact of gasoline increases in prices on her. There are examples that my colleagues have provided on the high cost of gas throughout this province, including the fact that we get many, many people from government Members' districts calling us and telling us about their own personal situations. So it's not just about the people on this side of the House. It's about the fact that everyone in this province is feeling the impact of high gasoline prices.

I can assure you, if you were to go out and ask the people of Newfoundland and Labrador if they supported a carbon tax increase, I suspect the answer would be no. As a matter of fact, I'm quite confident the answer would be no.

The next challenge will be will the people of Newfoundland and Labrador support a government who supports a carbon tax increase, because that will come. That will come. Change is coming. *CHANGE is in the air.*

I'd also suggest to you that the fuel inflation is disincentive enough; we don't need a tax to disincentive us from actually using our vehicles. People are now choosing not to take those trips. They are choosing to stay at home. You don't need an increase in taxes because of the high cost of fuel, the high inflation factor on fuel. The last thing we need is to have an extra tax added on.

Instead of looking for ways to increase taxes, we should be fighting harder to say no to the carbon tax increase. We should be standing up and saying no to the federal government, because if the federal government can spend billions and billions and billions of dollars on COVID relief, surely they can find a way to put a freeze on carbon tax. There is no need for this increase in carbon tax at this time. Absolutely no need.

Simply, what we're doing is fulfilling our commitment to the federal government. Not good enough. Not good enough.

We should not allow the federal government to control taxation in Newfoundland and Labrador. Yet, that is exactly what we have done. We have allowed the federal government to control our gas tax in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** You can say what you want, that's exactly what we've done.

The federal government says, no, you cannot lower your gasoline tax. Simple as that. Because if we lower our gasoline tax, we will be penalized. We will be penalized. That's correct. If we lower our gasoline tax, we will be penalized. That's the deal. We will be penalized.

We all know what the high cost of taxes, the impact it has on businesses and the impact it has on consumers. The cost of delivery of products and goods right now in this province has exceeded, I would suggest, levels that we've never seen before.

The fuel surcharge that's being applied is really outlandish, but they have no choice they have to try and recover. The cost of filling up a diesel, which is expected to go up again tomorrow, I heard. Those are things that are going on right now. There's no reason for an increase in carbon tax. None whatsoever. There is no reason for it.

People of this province are paying enough in taxes. At the same time, you can agree or disagree, but every time the price of gas goes up, you know you collect more revenue in HST – fact. Every time the price of a pop goes up or a bag of chips goes up or any product goes up, you

collect more money in HST. That's a fact. So you are benefiting from those.

Again, the fact that we're here talking about tax increases in a budget that said there's no tax increases.

**S. COADY:** No provincial.

**T. WAKEHAM:** No tax increases. No tax increases.

Well, you're arguing saying no provincial. Well, I'm sorry but the last time I checked it was the people living in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador who are actually going to pay this tax. If that's not provincial, what is?

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** That's provincial; we're here. We live here. We're paying an increase in tax. I'm not talking about Nova Scotia. That's what we're doing; the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are paying this tax, paying the tax increase. And the reality of it is, we're fulfilling our commitment to the federal government because we have no control of the gas tax anymore. We have no control over our provincial gas tax. That is exactly what has been said to us today. That is exactly what has been delivered.

Again, I ask: Do you believe in a carbon tax increase? Are you supporting – I ask the Members opposite – when you stand up to speak on this, are you going to stand up and say you support a carbon tax increase? Simple as that. Because I can tell you the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador do not support a carbon tax increase.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** As simple as that. And you can frame it whatever way you want, blame it on whoever you want, talk about it in any way you want, but, fundamentally, when you stand up to talk about this bill, I ask each and every one of you: Do you support a carbon tax increase? Simple as that.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Because we don't.

**T. WAKEHAM:** No, we do not. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador do not.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** And that is exactly why we are opposed to this and that is exactly why we are going to stand in this House and we are going to keep going and going and going and deliver the message because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want us to deliver that message loud and clear, whether we are delivering it to the people on the opposite side of the House or whether we are delivering it to the federal government.

But each and every one of you, when you stand up today to speak, ask yourself: Do you support a carbon tax increase? As simple as that, because the people in your districts want to know. They want to know whether you support it or not. And we will find out. We'll find out exactly. We will find out this afternoon. Maybe not this afternoon, maybe this evening. No, maybe not this evening.

**S. COADY:** Maybe next week.

**T. WAKEHAM:** It could be next week. Yeah, it could be next week, exactly. That's a good point. I am glad the minister agrees.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Or maybe by lunchtime, we don't know.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Maybe it will be withdrawn. They don't know. We don't know.

But I would argue, again, the scary part in all of this is where this carbon tax is scheduled to go. When you start looking at what we are paying now per ton and the projection of where this is going, that is very, very scary. Go back to what the current minister said: It's a sin tax. It was conceived – it's the wrong tax for Newfoundland and Labrador. I would suggest a lot of other provinces would say the same thing.

But, again, it comes down to what you believe in, whether you believe this is the right way. Do you support a carbon tax increase? Simple as that. Do you support a carbon tax increase?

We all believe environmental change is necessary, but there are different ways of doing it. I would argue, Member, that there are lots of different ways to do it. Simple question to you – you need to tell us; you’ve imposed the tax. It is as simple as that. You have imposed the tax. When we are sitting on that side of the House, I will gladly tell you how we are going to do it.

I can see my time is running out.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The Member’s time has expired.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Anyway, I look forward to all of you saying no to carbon tax increase.

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

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

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

We are here today to talk about the carbon tax. I know the Member opposite has just asked some important questions: Do we support carbon tax? It comes down to what you believe in. I would just like to correct some things for anyone listening and for Members opposite who obviously don’t understand what is going on here.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**S. STOODLEY:** The federal government has put this in as a tax policy. It is the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*. In 2019, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan took the federal government to court.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

We’re going to have some order here.

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

In 2019, Manitoba, Ontario and Saskatchewan took the federal government to court arguing

that carbon taxing should not be imposed and that the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* was not constitutional, Chair.

So, in 2019, those provinces took it to court saying that it was not constitutional. They were overruled by the Court of Appeal for Ontario, Court of Appeal for Saskatchewan. It was also overturned federally. I would like to quote a justice in saying, “... federalism is no constitutional nicety; it is a defining feature of the Canadian constitutional order that governs the way in which even the most serious problems must be addressed ....”

At all levels of our judicial system, it has been decided that it is the federal government’s prerogative to impose a carbon tax on the provinces. As the Minister of Finance has mentioned in this House many times, Chair, we have proposed our own Newfoundland and Labrador model of carbon tax, knowing that we would have to have a carbon tax model.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

I want to be able to hear the Member.

Thank you.

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

It is our model or if the federal government doesn’t like our model, they impose their model on us. So, Mr. Chair, we have negotiated with the federal government the current model that we have so that one of the big defining features is that there is no carbon tax on home heating fuel. If the federal government decided that they were no longer happy with the carbon tax that we had in Newfoundland and Labrador, they would impose their taxes on us that would not be of our creation and then that would result in an increased tax on home heating fuel.

I know the Members opposite are always asking for breaks on home heating fuel costs, and if we did not have this carbon tax regime that we currently and negotiated with the federal government, the federal government would be imposing an additional carbon tax on home

heating fuel, which I know the Members opposite would not want.

This has gone through our judicial system and it has been verified by the Supreme Court that this is not a provincial decision. The federal government has the constitutional authority to put this in place, so this is not a provincial tax. The federal government is imposing this on us. Mr. Chair, I just want to make that clear, for anyone listening and for Members opposite.

The tax policy around this is the federal government have put this in place to curb behaviour. That's kind of a policy decision that they've put in place. Now, obviously, with greenhouse gases and climate change, it's important, Chair, that we do curb our carbon emissions. That's really challenging in Newfoundland and Labrador. I do think that urban planning and urban design is a big factor in – I know the Member opposite talked about people need to have their cars, and I agree. In my district, Mr. Chair, some of my district is conducive to public transportation; some is not, the way our public transportation is structured.

In Mount Scio we have the area around the university, and there is excellent public transportation around that area. Students can get around. They can get to the mall, they can get to the grocery store and they can get to their appointments. People can get to work; it's great. Other parts of my district, Chair, we have Kenmount Terrace and Elizabeth Park in Paradise. Those areas are not as conducive to public transportation. It's more important, Chair, that people who live in those areas have cars, because they cannot rely on public transportation, unfortunately, which is something that we can certainly look at increasing investment in public transportation.

But in order for me to get more investment in public transportation, in Mount Scio, I also recognize that my colleagues who aren't as fortunate, or don't live in the metro region, it's more challenging to have public transportation in those areas. I know that public transportation is a big part of the carbon tax, which is why the federal government have decided as the tax policy initiative to tax fuels, because they want people to consume fewer fuels. They want

people to buy electric cars, walk and cycle, Mr. Chair.

I'd like to talk about, I guess, the urban planning element a bit more. If you live around the university and Mount Scio in my area, it's easy to walk to the grocery store. It's easy to walk to the bank. You can walk to work. I'm fortunate enough to be able to work, Chair. But if you live in other parts of my district, it's not feasible to walk to work. The way the subdivisions are designed, in Kenmount Terrace, you can't walk to the bank; you can't walk to anywhere.

So I think urban planning has a huge role in carbon tax, in our decisions of do we have a car, do we not have a car. A lot of those are municipal decisions. I do think that, as a province, there are legislative areas that we can influence that as well.

Chair, I used to work in Oxford, in the UK, and that's a really interesting city. They purposely have poorly designed roads and highly congested roads as a policy decision, because they don't want people to drive. The City of Oxford does not want people to drive in their city centre, so the roads are – there's a huge amount of traffic, but they have one lane, one way, very complicated, convoluted driving system.

They do not want people to drive in the City of Oxford. They want you to take the bus, they want you to cycle, there are excellent cycling lanes, but they do not want you – oh, I'm just getting a text message from a city councillor, someone who ran for city council I think, praising me in talking about urban design and the importance of that on carbon tax. So thank you in real time.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Someone's listening.

**S. STOODLEY:** Someone's listening, yes.

I guess just to talk about the specifics of carbon tax; I was having a chat with a constituent recently about the breakdown of gas prices, because I think it is really complicated. We'll speak about this also at a future time when we talk about the *Petroleum Products Act*, when I bring it to the House of Assembly, which is on the Order Paper, Chair.



So when we look at the price at the pump and the maximum price right now by the Public Utilities Board is 217.3, which is a lot. There's a lot of confusion about how the carbon tax works and all the elements that make up gas prices. The carbon tax is – for gas, what we're paying at the pumps – is 11.5 cents, Mr. Chair. Then there's the provincial gas tax, the federal excise tax, and all this, the breakdown is available on the Public Utilities Board website.

There's a zone differential, and there's a total allowed markup, Chair. So I think while we're here today talking about the 11 cents carbon tax, and you can agree or disagree with that from a policy perspective, but from a judicial perspective, it has been proven through the courts that we have no choice but to pay this. That's just a given, and it's not about whether I want it or whether the Members opposite want it, or whether the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want it, it's a constitutional – the federal government has put this in place as a tax policy, and the judicial system has decided that they have the authority to do that. So this is the made-in-Newfoundland solution that we've been able to negotiate with the federal government, Chair.

So the other element, which we're hoping to demystify, Chair, is the total allowed markup in the gas price, which at the moment the maximum is 25.93 cents. That makes up the wholesale markup, the retail markup, all the allowed servicing costs, Mr. Chair. While we do see where the carbon tax goes, and we see the makeup – the federal government has decided the amount of that – the total allowed markup is something that we do not have a good idea of how that arises.

So the Public Utilities Board works with the wholesalers and retailers and takes their costs and creates this total allowed markup, Chair. When we get to the *Petroleum Products Act* we're going to talk about that further. But I think all the elements of gas prices are really important to consider when you're talking about a carbon tax and the 11 cents that we're talking about here in terms of the range of carbon taxes that we're imposing.

So thank you very much and I hope that clarified a few things. This is not a provincial tax and this

is not something that we want to do. This is a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador solution, given the fact that we are constitutionally obligated to impose this tax as required by the federal government in the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*.

Thank you very much.

**CHAIR:** Thank you to the minister.

I next recognize the Member for Bonavista.

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

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

Let's hear from the Member.

**C. PARDY:** Just for the record, representing the District of Bonavista, we are in favour of reducing greenhouse gases. I think everyone in the Chamber is in favour of reducing greenhouse gases. The only thing we would disagree with is a carbon tax and how we get there.

My hon. colleague next door referred to it as a sin tax because we don't give people an alternative. So someone in Bonavista, they can't access an electric vehicle now. They can't access it because they're not available or, alternatively, they can't afford one. But we're still going to increase the carbon tax and create an imposition on them, but they don't have an option. That is the crux of what I would look at.

Newfoundland emits 11 million tons of greenhouse gases a year. That might seem shocking, but 11 million tons we emit each year. The world: 35 billion tons a year. So while we're 11 million, not to diminish it, in relation to the world, we're not a really significant amount of greenhouse gas.

I had a learned friend – and I won't use his name because he might not want me to use his name – and many of you would know him, he suggested reading on climate change and greenhouse gases a book by a gentleman named Bjorn Lomborg. B-J-O-R-N L-O-M-B-O-R-G and the title of his book was *False Alarm: How Climate Change*

*Panic Costs Us Trillions, Hurts The Poor, And Fails To Fix The Planet.*

Now, you might say who is this guy Bjorn Lomborg? Well, he is the president of the Copenhagen Consensus and he is a visiting fellow at Stanford University. So just the fact of being a visiting fellow at Stanford University one would say that he has a high degree of credibility. I just want to cite a few things from his book.

On May 17, we will have royalty visit us and many in the District of Bonavista are looking for that, but three years ago Prince Charles announced that we had 18 months left to fix climate change. And that wasn't his first attempt at deadline setting because 10 years earlier, he told an audience that he had calculated we just had 96 months to save the world.

And just a couple of others ones before we go to talk about the carbon and this is related to the carbon.

In 1989, the head of the United Nations' Environment Program declared we had just three years to win or lose the climate struggle.

In 1982, the UN was predicting planetary devastation as complete, as irreversible as any nuclear holocaust. And that was by the year 2000.

The UN Environmental Program director warned that the world had just 10 years to avoid catastrophe. And he stated that in 1972.

Bjorn Lomborg states that: They were all wrong because the one critical part they were missing when they stated that was how we adapt human ingenuity. That means if we have challenges, we meet the challenge. If there is something that we find that is unacceptable in today's world, then we adapt. And we do that.

So when we talk about the carbon tax, as I stated earlier, we had stated that we have two options for the residents of Newfoundland – or in, say, the District of Bonavista, Newfoundland and Labrador – buy an electric vehicle, invest in the money to upgrade your home in order to charge it, but if you can't afford to do it, then that's a

problem. But we're going to roll out the carbon tax.

My colleague stated that we're now 11 cents, and 11 cents during an inflationary time is a significant amount. We all agree with that. At a time we find ourselves in now with 11 cents, we are in a significant position and it hurts. Who does it hurt? John Risley would say it hurts the poor – mostly, it hurts the poor. Those ones with a very low household income.

We should have waited for the ingenuity, and if electric vehicles rolled out that were cheaper than gas combustion engines, hey, you wouldn't need to be penalizing residents in Newfoundland and Labrador because they have an option to buy an electric vehicle, which is cheaper than a gas combustion. And that is what we would like to see.

One thing I would say to you, in 2030, the residents of the province, is that the federal government will be charging, then, \$170 a ton for carbon. Your carbon tax in 2030, if everything stays the course, will then be 37 cents a litre. Today, in 2022, it's 11 cents. In 2030, we will arrive at 37 cents a litre.

The last note I say, and I won't reference Mr. Lomborg anymore, but one thing he did mention, he mentioned an academic study. I mentioned that to the minister in Estimates and I'm not sure if he – he didn't disagree with it – the academic study of young people worldwide found that most suffer from eco-anxiety – most do. Two-thirds are scared and sad, while almost half say their worries impact their daily lives. He says it's irresponsible to be scaring our youth with the climate change.

I tell a humorous anecdote: My youngest son came home and he talked about climate change and he discussed with me – and, again, I am very sensitive and wish to reduce the greenhouse gases. I'm in favour of it.

He came home and, ironically, he came into my house and he had stated about people still burning oil. So I told him there are people burning oil because they don't have any recourse. They don't have an option. But then I slipped in the piece of information to him, that I'm on a street with 24 houses, on a subdivision,

and I asked him: Did he know that he lives in the only house that burns oil on the street? That was the reality. He didn't even know that he lived in an environment where we were burning oil. I would say, it is a big transition to change from oil into electricity.

Hopefully, I get a chance to speak again. I would like to look at the Canadian Provincial Energy Efficiency Scorecard that we can look at where we, as a province, fit in to that.

So, in conclusion, I disagree with the carbon tax, but I know it's not a provincial; I know it's a federal.

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

**C. PARDY:** I do think that we should be putting up stronger opposition to it, because we do know that we've got people hurting in Newfoundland and Labrador. They're hurting in the District of Bonavista. So I would we can unite, put up a stronger opposition to it and state that we all disagree with the carbon tax.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I now recognize the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

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

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**P. PARSONS:** It's always good to speak on behalf of the people of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave District. It's always quite the honour. No matter what the topic is, whether it's a carbon tax, whether it's any kind of tax, any kind of legislation that's passed here in this House. Of course we are debating this bill, Bill 60, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act.

I want to commend the Member for Bonavista and how he, unlike his colleagues, unfortunately, on the other side of the room, certainly outlined and recognized that this is indeed a federal

government tax that's imposed on not just Newfoundland and Labrador, but across the entire country.

So I appreciate that because, as we know, we have multiple levels of government here in Newfoundland and Labrador and across Canada. We've got our municipal, our provincial and our federal. I find it really hard and disheartening to sit here and listen when I hear Members talk about the federal taxes and painting them as if they're brought in by Newfoundland and Labrador, by MHAs in this House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador and we know that is not the case. We have to do our best – I think it is due diligence, to be honest, and to do what we can to come forward with the proper information and the proper details on how legislation is created and passed and who is responsible for it and what levels of government.

I certainly commend that Member for Bonavista for outlining that because we've seen it here throughout this whole sitting, through Question Period, about misleading information as if the government is responsible for gouging gas prices and taxes are the jurisdiction of the federal government. We know that is not the case, so let's all be clear on that and outline what the actual truth is, because it is not fair to mislead the public. We all know right now it is a hard time that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians facing, but not just Newfoundland and Labrador, we see it across the country, Atlantic Canada. I have talked to friends in Halifax just recently; they're all experiencing this. So this is not unique. The politicians in this House of Assembly didn't create this.

What I will say and what is also lost a lot and, unfortunately, the Members responsible don't take the responsibility for Muskrat Falls. We can't ignore the fact – I know they get upset and they don't want to hear the truth, but that is the case. The fact is if this government –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**P. PARSONS:** If this government did not intervene and do what we could to lobby the federal government to stop the power hikes – the rates on our bills, we would see – say, for

example, if Aunt Nelly and Uncle Joe got a power bill of \$400 monthly. If this government did not work tirelessly to lobby the federal government, it would have doubled to \$800 a month. Imagine that compounded on what we're facing today as residents in this province and across the country.

I find it really disheartening – my background as a former journalist, I reported facts. That is the mandate and the bias of any journalist is to report facts. Not to include opinions in their articles or their stories or their scripts. It is about presenting facts so the viewers, so the people in the province and across the country can make up their minds based on having all the facts.

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

**P. PARSONS:** I'm hearing all kinds of chirping again, Mr. Chair. I mean, we talk about a respectful workplace.

**CHAIR:** Yes, some order, please. I want to hear from the Member that has been identified.

Thank you.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Chair, for your protection.

Again, it is about presenting the facts. So stand up – and we all know; we can't ignore it. It is like racking up a credit card debt and just because you racked up the credit card, you flicked it off to the other people to pay it off; we still have to pay it off. It didn't disappear. It wasn't poof, be gone, like Harry Potter magic; it is still here to deal with, so we can't ignore that.

No one in this House of Assembly wants to see the prices that we're paying at the pumps, I certainly don't. I know my constituents don't. We hear from them on a daily basis, on all matters. So the Members say that we must not be hearing or our constituents are calling them. No, I can reassure everybody that my constituency office located in Bay Roberts is quite busy, and my CA is full tilt all the time providing them with the information. And people are calling and they're wondering.

But the fact is as well that we can't ignore that this is a federal jurisdiction tax. What has been

made clear is that if we don't impose our own approach to this tax, it's currently no carbon tax on home heating fuel, aviation fuel for flights within the province, fish processing, mineral and offshore exploration and government operations, including municipalities. The new carbon tax rates were effective May 1, 2022, and the rate change has already been implemented by the Public Utilities Board.

So if we were to opt out or go off the rails and not do this, the federal government comes in and taxes the home heating. Are the Members opposite suggesting that that's what happens to the seniors who are hurting? We know they're hurting; we're hurting.

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

**P. PARSONS:** But it's a fact – it is a fact.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**P. PARSONS:** We are a part of Canada; we joined Confederation. We all know that and we're happy to be part of this wonderful country we live in. This is a federal jurisdiction that has been imposed not just on Newfoundland and Labrador, but across Canada. So if we don't do what we can to mitigate the impact on the people living here, the feds come in and they do it differently, and the information, what we have, it would be much worse. Because right now, as we know, home heating oil is not impacted, and we know there are a lot of people still in this province that are still relying on home heating. And we hear the problems that they're facing and the challenges that they're facing.

So we have to do what we have to do. We don't have the option to say, nope, not happening. We have to work with it, but we have to protect the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I sincerely believe that we are doing the best we can with the options that we do have, again, keeping in mind rate mitigation that we have to eat for breakfast, lunch and dinner every day. And those are the facts.

To get up and wipe your hands clean and say it doesn't exist anymore, oh, the past is the past. Now, it's not that long ago; it's only several

years. But the fact is no matter what we do, no matter what we implement, no matter what programs we bring in or what initiatives we take in our budget, we still have this looming debt that we can't ignore.

Again, the credit card analogy is the perfect analogy. Someone goes and racks up a card and they said, oh, I can't pay it now, but they're going to flick it off. Mom and Dad are going to pay it. But you know, it's still there and still have to be paid.

But I also want to talk about what initiatives have been brought in for *Budget 2022*, the measures that are being taken, that is within the control of all Members here in this House, and the government, of course. The elimination of 15 per cent retail tax on home insurance for a year, that's going to help, and those were measures that we can control. We can't control the gas prices. We can't control the world private markets. We know what we are seeing.

A 50 per cent reduction in registration fees for passenger vehicles, light duty trucks and taxis for a year. That's a significant help. I know when I go to register my vehicle that's going to be a help to me. It's going to be a help to my neighbours. It's going to be a help to my constituents. Unfortunately, it's not going to fill up their tank but it is certainly going to help in the overall costs.

Lower cost for child care from an average of \$35 per day 18 months ago to \$10 a day starting in January 2023. Now I know for a fact, I have received good feedback from constituents in my district and community stakeholders that I deal with from my portfolio, that this is certainly an awesome initiative for quality \$10-a-day daycare. That's going to help.

The fact is it will help moms and women get back into the workforce and not have to settle for those part-times jobs where we see where they are not making the amount the money that our male counterparts are making. It's these barriers that have prevented women for years and years and years. But we are taking concrete initiatives to help and to support women, especially, in venture capitals that the government has invested in.

The prenatal infant nutrition supplement increasing from \$100 to \$150 per month for low-income pregnant mothers and for their families with children under age one. A one-time payment provided during the month of the baby's birth increasing from \$100 to \$150. Now, you tell me, Mr. Chair, who is not going to be happy about that? You know, these mothers not going to happily take this support.

Metrobus here in the metro region, passes for Income Support clients in St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise expanded to seniors who are receiving Guaranteed Income Supplement, youth in care, those receiving Youth Services programming.

A 10 per cent increase to Income Supplement; 10 per cent increase to Seniors' Benefit; a one-time benefit for Income Support; assistance, of course, to change from oil to electric home heat; electric vehicles charging infrastructure; and rebates for consumers.

We are going to see these initiatives ongoing because we have no choice. I mean, no one wants to pay increased taxes. I can't see any resident in the world, in North America, who wants to pay more taxes, but, unfortunately, the reality is that is how we pay for our hospitals, our schools and every service that we receive and what we can provide for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So on that note, Mr. Chair, I see my time is winding down. I get it; I think we are all on the same page here. It's a hard time and I want to make sure that my constituents know it's not lost on any of us, but we are dedicated to doing everything that we can to help mitigate the negative impacts on people here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I look forward now, Mr. Chair, to listening to the rest of the debate.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I next recognize the Member for St. John's Centre.

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Sweden: Sweden's carbon tax is \$140 per ton of carbon pollution. They've had a carbon tax since 1991. Since the carbon tax was introduced Sweden's economy has grown by more than 100 per cent. That country recently ranked fourth in the world in terms of economic competitiveness.

I'm listening to the debate and I'm thinking of the saying I heard many, many years ago that everyone wants to go to heaven, but no one wants to die to get there. That's what I'm hearing here, because somewhere along the line I'm hearing we all support the reduction of greenhouse gases, we all recognize the climate crisis, we all want to do something to avert climate change, but not this.

Well, where are the solutions? I do know that if you look at it a carbon tax is one of the most powerful incentives that governments have to encourage companies and household to pollute less by investing in greener technologies, and adopting greener practices. The carbon tax puts a monetary price on real costs – and there is the key word – real costs imposed on our economy, our communities and our planet by greenhouse gas emissions and global warming they cause.

We are assuming for a minute that climate change, the increase of greenhouse gas is cost neutral, that is does not cost us, that we are not already paying the price, that we will not be paying more. It's costing us. We're just not seeing it at the pump as such.

I'm hearing here, well, none of us support this, but this is imposed on us by Ottawa. Let's own up to it and say if we believe that we've got to avert this, if we believe that climate change is real, that we are indeed facing a crisis, that we need to make sure that this world is protected for our future. We are stewards of this planet, we are not owners of it, but we are stewards. I want to have a world that my grandchildren will thrive in.

So to me it's not supporting government, it's supporting an initiative here that is – unless we've got something better, I haven't seen it. I haven't heard it. Give it to me and we'll talk about it. If we're going to go with a cap and trade system where we're going to set limits, then show me what it is. Show me these things

that are going to work, because, I'll tell you, I'm seeing plenty of evidence.

Last year, I fished on the Gander River in July and every person who fished there said this is the lowest we've seen it. We have August conditions on the Gander River in July. Think about that. You could walk across the Gander River in places in the first of July.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** The year before it was flooded (inaudible.)

**J. DINN:** I thank the Member for pointing that out, because that is the issue with climate change, the unpredictability, the wide swings. Thank you for that piece of evidence. Thank you for bolstering my argument. That is the issue here.

So everyone wants to go heaven but no one wants to die to get there. I guess it comes down to what do we believe in, because in the last few years, think about this, we've had Snowmageddon, we've had atmospheric rivers – never heard that term before until a few years when it washed out the Trans-Canada Highway and all of a sudden realized just how vulnerable we are to supply chain issues. The ferry can't get across the Straits to supply us food. Every case it has an impact on us. It's costing us already.

Health and liveability: It's clearly stated in the Health Accord that climate change has real costs to health. We're paying a cost already. Do I necessarily want to be paying taxes? I don't know, but to me taxes are what I pay to have the services I need. But I also believe that if we're not careful we're going to see challenges to our fisheries. It's going to have a deeper economic impact than any carbon tax. Then we're going to be struggling because that's the one thing about politicians, all of us, we try to kick things down – we make our decisions based on the election cycle. This is not a popular decision, I will admit to that.

But somewhere along the line, either we believe it or we believe it's made up, it's meant to create anxiety. It's meant to do nothing more than that. We believe it or we don't, because if anything else, the weather has become a lot more predictable.

I had one person write to me saying: Jim, all these measures will not save a few glaciers melting. Now, if that's all it was, just a few glaciers, that's all I'm out to protect, just a few glaciers from melting, then we're going down the wrong hole. To me, glaciers are the canary in the coal mine. We're seeing the warning signs all around us.

1973-1979 during the oil crisis – 1970 is when the compact car started in North America. My first car was a Pontiac Parisienne, a tank of a vehicle. We talked about eight cylinders, 454 four-barrels; they're muscle cars. But with the Arab oil embargo, guess what spurred their – that's when the fuel efficiency measures started and you saw the changes in the automobile industry.

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

**J. DINN:** What I'm driving now is right, but I will pay the tax and the gas on that. That's the price I'm paying.

But I will also say that right now, I've already started making this –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**J. DINN:** I've already put the measures in. My next vehicle will be electric; house will be converted to electricity. Because I know it's coming – I know it's coming. But I'm not going to complain about the price of filling up my truck because I made the choice to buy it.

And just so you know –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

I'm going to hear from the Member identified.

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

**CHAIR:** Order!

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

And just so you know today, folks, you're welcome to join me. I cycled in. I'll be cycling back.

Eleven billion dollars profit from BP, \$9 billion from Shell, and we're worried about here – the bigger issue is we need to be looking at the oil companies. And hopefully, as I understand, there's going to be plenty of opportunity to speak later tonight, and that's good.

But let's talk about solutions. There are more cars in Newfoundland and Labrador than there are people. That was a fact (inaudible). You got more cars than people in this province. And we talk about choice, and you're right. At one time we used to have the CN Roadcruiser service; lost it. DRL took it over; gone.

We have no regional transportation, so that anyone who is unable to drive has no way of getting around this province, except maybe the private taxis, the vans. We have no system. If anything else, we've pumped more money into twinning highways and everything else to make it easier to use cars. We have done nothing to develop a regional transportation system, like they have in other jurisdictions in this country, that would make it more efficient for people to get around. At one time, you could get out to the Gander River on the train. You can't do that.

But we've made choices in each case along the way to make it more difficult. Eco-anxiety: I'll compare that to nuclear anxiety. Because during the 20th century I would say the big issue that people had there was whether we were going to make it out of the 20th century alive, we're that close to a nuclear war. But guess what happened? There was a move afoot then to disarm and to stand down. Because if you look at it, at that time, our method of protecting each other was mutual assured destruction. That was very real.

McDonald's used to serve its burgers in Styrofoam packs until people said it contained CFCs and it affected the ozone layer. Until people starting thinking we want it in paper. We want to get rid of it. They got rid of the use of Styrofoam. That was a grassroots approach.

I will suggest here that we're on the cusp of where we need to start looking at how are we

going to solve this issue. I do believe that we provide help to anyone who needs it. There has got to be a short-term solution to this, Chair. You have to protect people now, but we've got to have an eye to the future of this province and this planet.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I now recognize the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and Labrador Affairs.

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

It's interesting debate we're having here in the Legislature this morning. It's a heavy topic. It's not an easy one, but I can tell you, and I will, over the course of the next 10 minutes a couple of things. None of them will be a surprise to you, coming from Labrador as well. Some examples of how climate change is real, and to talk about this being imposed by the federal government and the choices that we were left with, and how we tried to navigate, through that, the best deal possible for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I remember back when I was in municipal affairs and environment, back in the spring and summer of 2019, and you go into a department and as a new minister you start getting briefings in the first week. When the briefings started on climate change, there were two or three key messages that I took away, that I still recall today. One was that you will see the weather getting wetter, warmer and windier. We've certainly seen that.

My hon. colleague for St. John's Centre mentioned the ferry in the Strait of Belle Isle, and we certainly have our challenges there with increased wind and ice coming down through in the wintertime.

Often, when I am travelling through my district, and I pop in and see – my colleague just mentioned earlier Aunt Nelly and Uncle Joe. Often, when I pop in and see someone, they'll say, my dear, we've had some wind this winter. Blows a storm. Years ago, we never ever had this. So all these little conversations from our elders that have so much knowledge and that

have seen a lot of changes through the years, Chair.

Sometimes Members opposite will get up and say: We're getting calls on the cost of living; we know you're getting them, too. Yes, we are getting them, too. I guess I'm someone truly, truly humbled that I've had very strong support in my district, in a by-election, a hotly contested nomination, and three general elections, strong support. When you represent people in a small district – yes, it's spread over a large land mass, but small in numbers, you build relationships with people.

I'm not going up and down streets knocking on doors and passing in literature. I know when someone's having a 50th anniversary. I know when someone is celebrating a birthday in the family, or I know when a new, even family pet comes in oftentimes, because those are the relationships I've built. Do we care about those people? Absolutely we do. You know, as parliamentarians here in this House, and as representatives of our 40 districts, I think we all want what's best for our people.

We've seen the substantial increases in the cost gasoline and home heating, and we know this is a serious and difficult situation that is impacting people. I also will say I understand that the Opposition has a role to play. I was over there for two years, and I'll tell you, there was no one who spoke – I was on my feet every opportunity that I could get. I spoke with passion when I was up. But, at the same time, when you come over and you sit on this side and you have to put together a budget and we start that months in advance of the budget, there's all these tremendous needs that come in and you want to balance it out.

I know sometimes we get hammered for mentioning Muskrat Falls. I don't think we debate any longer the merits: Was it good? Was it bad? It's just a fact. It is a fact that we have to take half a billion dollars when we start at the table and we have to park that, to mitigate the rates so seniors can keep the lights on in this province. Then we have almost a billion dollars that we have to park for interest and other things.



So there are lots of challenges. At the end of the day, the cost of living is top of mind for all of us. In this budget, it's already been outlined here this morning, that we did put a number of mechanisms in place to try and help. As we get the fiscal state of our House in order in this province, we will certainly do more, Chair.

I want to talk for a minute on the impacts of climate change, and how real it is. I represent, and was born and raised in Labrador, grew up in an isolated community. Since 2001, we now have a road connection. We live off the land in a very big way; not as much as years ago. I think about the isolated Indigenous communities in Northern Labrador, and whether I'm up there meeting with the elected – whether it's the Inuit AngajukKâk and the Inuit community governments, whether it's with Nunatsiavut, one of the things I hear all the time is the impacts of climate change.

Northern Labrador don't have a highway, yet, like we do in Southern Labrador and in other parts of the province, but we do maintain about 700 kilometres of groomed trail. Just next week, I have a meeting set to meet with leadership in the Torngat area. The topic and why they reached out to me is to talk about climate change and its impact. We're actually having to change snowmobile routes. This is how their goods are brought in during the winter. This how people move to and from communities. This is how they still go out on the land and that's their dominant choice of diet. I do believe that no one would argue that it's probably the healthiest diet.

Climate change is real. Polar bears: I represent a little community, Black Tickle, and we have polar bears that go through all winter long. With the change in the sea ice and things, it's impacting polar bears. I have a sister in Alberta, I have a mom in BC, they've been going through the fires, the flooding, it's been a really, really terrible time.

So there are all kinds of examples. I don't know anybody who will stand here today in this House and would argue that climate change isn't real. It's certainly having a serious impact in northern areas. So we know, Chair, that the federal government have set a price that emitters must pay for each ton of greenhouse gas emissions that they emit.

In this whole process, the end goal, at the end of the day, is that businesses, consumers and individuals right down to your recycling and things, as the previous speaker just talked about, business and consumers will take steps such as switching fuels or adopting to new technology to reduce emissions.

I can tell you the change of thinking even in my own home from a few years ago when we would take a can and discard it in a garbage container and not think twice. The changes in the little day to day. That is the direction that we need to move, everybody needs to play their part.

One of the things I want to say, Chair, is when Ottawa began talking about a carbon tax we had many, many conversations – many that I was a part of. I'm sure you were too during your time in Municipal Affairs. There were several options on the table. Every province is different. What works for one province doesn't necessarily work for another. We're a small population, 526,000 people spread over a very large land mass. There are lots of big pickup trucks. There are lots of big industry here that have sustained us through the years.

So we wanted a deal at the end of the day that was best for the people that we represent. And when we look at what some of the other options that other provinces chose, this was the best for Newfoundland and Labrador. We felt that we had the best deal. It's already been outlined, the areas that we now have exemptions in.

No carbon tax on home heating fuel. At this time, when the cost of living is so high, we don't need a tax on home heating fuel. When I think about the cost of flying, how COVID has impacted and really decimated the airlines and we're working our way back and the high cost of flying right now. Currently, there's no tax on aviation fuel for flights.

Fish processing: In the district that I represent, we have five processing facilities and having this tax break, all these things that are so meaningful and they're so important, Chair.

People say stand up to Ottawa. And this might seem like a funny analogy, but my mind went back to we had a Westie for a long time, and if you know about a Westie, they're the size –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

Just a little difficult to hear the identified MHA.

Thank you.

**L. DEMPSTER:** A Westie is about the size of a loaf of bread. And we'd always stop for a break coming through the mountains in Wiltondale and there was always a horse there. The minute we let our Westie out, it would just go. In his mind, I think he thought he could take on that horse, really and truly. It was always quite humorous. He was about the size the horse's head.

We can stand up. We have stood up. There was much, much, much negotiation back and forth. This is a difficult one. On one hand, climate change is real, you can't argue, the facts are there. On the other hand, we're in a very challenging spot. I mean, two years ago who thought we would go through COVID? Look at the tremendous cost that that has been in our province and around the world.

It's a difficult time, we have to find our way through, Chair, and we will always do the best that we can with what we have for the people of the province. I think the message here is: Had we said no, we would be in a much worse spot than we are today.

I thank you for your time, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you very much.

I now recognize the Member for Terra Nova.

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

The intention of the federal government is to increase the price of fuels, that is how, just like a sin tax, you dissuade people from burning fuel and from creating carbon emissions. That is the federal strategy. Former federal minister and current Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, that's the quote that he had on VOXM last week.

Basically, he said, government is trying to price people out of being able to live and they're okay

with that. The problem is we are okay with that. We sit here and we talk about this tax – we call it a tax, we call it a sin tax, we call it a carbon tax, we call it a provincial tax, we call it a federal tax. I'm going to call it exactly what it is: it is a Liberal tax.

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

**L. PARROTT:** And it is Liberal tax that doesn't have to happen right now.

Now, I agree, maybe we're not in control but we ought to be yelling and screaming at the federal government and trying to tell them that the timing for this increase right now is not acceptable. They can delay it; they have that power. They are not going to do it if we're not asking. They are not going to do it if we're not asking.

What really bothers me about this is how disproportionate it is across the province and nobody is saying a word about it. You come to St. John's and seniors can get on a bus and they can go to a grocery store or a hospital or wherever they need to go. But I can tell you, my constituents that live in Petley on Random Island, they have to drive 300 kilometres to go to their doctor.

Think about that, they pay carbon tax on that fuel. The lowest income people in the province pay disproportionately more in order to get everyday services. How can we be okay with that? It makes no sense. These people have to drive to a doctor or a grocery store. They drive multiple kilometres in order to do anything on a daily basis. And guess what? Every litre of fuel they pay their 11 cents. And guess what? It's going up and it's going up substantially.

The current Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality made a comparison between Muskrat Falls and carbon tax and Ottawa and federal and the funding that was going there, the \$500 million – she made that comparison. Ottawa's 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan applauds the conversion from fossil fuels to hydroelectricity as a good thing.

Let's be clear, Ottawa supported Muskrat Falls from the very beginning and, as a matter of fact, they made it happen. If Ottawa wasn't involved

in this national project, it never would have happened – ever.

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

**L. PARROTT:** It is true.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Perhaps when you stand up and speak you can explain how we would have done it without Ottawa. I would love to hear that.

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

**L. PARROTT:** You'll have the opportunity.

We sit here and we are talking about an increase in tax, whether it is provincial or federal or it's coming from a different country, it doesn't matter, the increase affects the men and women in this province that we're here to represent. We ought to be telling our federal partners that we don't want it right now. It doesn't work right now. The timing is absolutely terrible.

In the same breath, we are trying to increase industry. You think about things like mining, the Bull Arm facility and other issues that are going to end up paying way more because of this. How do we attract business if it is too expensive to be here? Newfoundland is already disadvantaged by being on an island.

I say all the time that we need made-right-here plans and this government says that this carbon tax is a made-right-here plan and they negotiated it, but let's be realistic. We are not attached to the Mainland. The cost of everything here is way more.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Labrador.

**L. PARROTT:** Labrador is attached; I agree. Not necessarily always passable, but the reality of it is the fact that we pay more means we ought to be treated different. We pay 11 cents in carbon tax. We don't get it all back. Think about that. If we were getting our transfers from Ottawa that we should be getting on a regular basis – we are not talking about \$10,000 or \$100,000 or \$1 million. We are talking about billions and billions of dollars that have been withheld for a long time.

Now they want more tax. Guess what? So they can take more of our money and invest in green technology. I firmly believe that the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology would be – he is out there now, as is everyone in this House, looking and meeting with companies about renewable resources: hydrogen, wind, everything we need. We ought to be captains of our own ship. Ottawa is dictating how we are going to do this.

You think about, you know, we are talking about all these renewables and what is going on. Interesting news article this week about the cost of cooking oil. Now, think about this. Immediately the blame goes to the Ukraine. Well, I will ask you a question: When we transfer from our carbon economy to biodiesels and we start utilizing those same types of fuel sources that are used in cooking oil as fuel sources for cars and planes, what do you think is going to happen to the cost of living? What do you think is going to happen to the individual that's got to go buy canola oil or sunflower oil? No more deep-fried fish in Newfoundland. You won't be able to afford it – true story. Who's doing that?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Out of order on that.

**L. PARROTT:** Out of order, no doubt.

But just think about what is going to happen to the cost, and nobody is having this conversation. The problem with a green future is we have to look into the future, too, and we make decisions today that don't necessarily serve us well tomorrow. When we start the production of all of our biofuels, it is going to drive the cost of everything else through the roof, make no mistake about it. A cost that people already cannot afford. A cost that people cannot afford right now.

We have men and women in this province that are struggling every single day. Now, it is great. The carbon tax is not on home heating fuel. You know what? There shouldn't be any taxes on home heating fuel. There shouldn't be a tax on any electricity. I understand the fiscal situation we are in, but what we don't understand in this House is the dire situation that people are in that aren't in this House. People are hurting in ways that we do not recognize. An increase in carbon

tax, or any tax, the upcoming sugar tax – that's two taxes in a budget where there was no going to be no new taxes, or increases in taxes, are hurting people in ways that we need to recognize.

Nobody in this House has said eliminate all of this. The timing of this is just terrible. The timing, at a time in our life – probably the worst fiscal state we've ever been in, and certainly on the border of a recession, I would argue, and here we are saying we're going to increase, and we're okay with it. No, it's not our fault. It's our federal cousins who are doing that. We're not doing it. We are actually doing it.

If we're not doing it, we're not standing up against it, which is just as big of a problem. We have an opportunity in this House to come together, unite and say we believe that we need to make a green transition. Make no mistake about it, I've got two small children – like the hon. Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, I grew up in Labrador. I can tell you the stories that I see. There's zero, zero, zero question that climate change is real. I can tell you as a boy growing up, my dad didn't put his boat in the water until the end of June, because there was ice on the lakes in Labrador West. Well, now people are in that lake in May, every year – not some years, it wasn't an anomaly.

Climate change is real. But I can tell you something else, what Newfoundland does to climate change and the 11 cents, how this affects the global economy, is miniscule. The reality of it is we have a Muskrat Falls Project, Churchill Falls, Bay d'Espoir. We've got a renewable resource, biofuel refinery coming online. I think we are very good stewards of the environment right now. I believe we're growing pretty quickly. I think we have a long way to go, but I can tell you what else, the 11 cents isn't going to put us there. That 11 cents in someone's pockets so they can go get groceries or pay their bills, that will help a lot more, I can guarantee you, there's no question.

We talked about – and not a slight against the Member earlier who talked about going to the Gander River fishing, but think about being able to go to the Gander River fishing and recognizing the water levels, but now reverse the role, and think about living in Gander Bay and

not being able to afford to come to St. John's to see a health care professional. Imagine being out there with cancer and having to buy gasoline, and you can't afford to do it. Imagine having a minister looking at you and saying, our MTAP program is perfect, 20 cents a kilometre, after 1,000. It's not means tested, but it's perfect.

Think about that, and that's the situation that people are in in this province. This carbon tax timing is not even suspect. It's absolutely pitiful, and we all ought to be fighting back against it. Whether it's a provincial initiative or a federal initiative, that doesn't mean we can't stand up and be counted and say that we don't agree with this.

Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'm sure you'll hear more from me later on.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I now recognize the Member for St. George's - Humber.

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

It's great to have an opportunity to speak in this House on this motion. I've been listening to what other speakers have had to say and I'm finding it's quite interesting. It's a very good debate. We're hearing some constructive ideas and some constructive solutions, and it's very encouraging to hear some of the things that people are saying.

The last couple of years we've been through, it's been a rough time for many people. We've had one thing on top of the other. We've had COVID, which has had a serious impact on our economy, which has caused individuals to have many problems. That, as well, has had an impact on society in many ways in terms of mental health and things like that that has become evident. More recently, on top of this, we've had the invasion into Ukraine by Russia, which has thrown the world economy into a tailspin again, causing an increase in fuel prices around the world.

So this is a global problem, and it's one thing on top of the other that we've been facing. So it's

many challenges that we're having. I was interested – this debate is about the imposition of the carbon tax, which the federal government has applied all across Canada, and that's what we're debating today. I guess the starting point for that debate is: Do we believe that climate change is a fact? Do we believe that it's actually happening? Do we believe that it's overblown, as some Members of the House have implied, or do we think it's a serious challenge that we have to work with other nations in the world to address?

That's the issue, the starting point for this debate. Do we believe that we can do anything constructive here as a province towards dealing with the climate change issues that exist? Now when we hear about this issue and this question, a lot of people look to things that are rather remote from us. We talk about the shrinking ice caps some people have mentioned and we hear reports of forest fires in places around the world. We hear that places around the world, the heat is going up to the point where some cities in the world may be uninhabitable at this point or in the next few years.

We see this evidence that climate change is real in other places, but I would submit that we also see it here in this province. For example, on the West Coast this winter, this fall, we've seen some severe weather conditions. We've seen roads washed out; we've seen situations that we haven't seen, weather conditions. Those things come with a cost as well. It disrupts people's lives, it disrupts the economy and it costs more to repair and put in place these things that are happening. So we have to look as well at the cost of not doing something about climate change in this province.

Another thing that I've noticed in my district as well is that we're seeing coastal erosion in some places. Last year, we had to replace a road in Flat Bay. I know the same situation exists in other districts as well. The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port has a similar problem in his district where the road is near the ocean and it's falling over the bank. I know some people's houses are close to the banks and are in danger of falling over. These are real things that we have to deal with as a province, right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I think these are

things that we have to realize and we have to realize that there is a cost to these things.

In times like these I think we have to move – when we have a challenge like this that's so big, so enormous and so controversial, really, in the way we approach it and the way we deal with it, we have to put our sort of normal politics aside. We have to stop looking at this from a point of view of, okay, we can point the finger at who caused this problem and not deal with the issues that are about. We can try to score political points based on a crisis, or we can actually have some constructive debate about solutions and how to find solutions to the problems that exist. So those are things that we need to do.

Some of the things we have to – and I think we all would agree in this House, and I listen to what people have said and I certainly listen to what people have said in my district as well. I think it's fair to say that the burden of solving the issues of climate change should not fall on the poorest people within our society. I think we as a government, and we as a province and a society, need to think about how we can address these problems without imposing the burden of this on some of the people in society who are already disadvantaged.

When I look at some of the things that are being done in this most recent budget, I look at some of the things that are being done to mitigate the impact of some of these cost increases on individuals, I think that's the right direction to be going in and I think that's a very positive approach. In terms of dealing with this problem, this crisis, I think we have to look at both short-term and long-term solutions in the way we deal with this, and the way we mitigate the impacts upon people.

Some people have talked about the impact of moving towards electric cars. That's one of the incentives that have been supported by this government. I think there's a strong case to be made that we're just in the early stages of bringing electric cars to this province. I think there's certainly a strong case for providing incentives for people to purchase cars, to put in place the infrastructure needed to have electric cars. So I think those are things that we need to be addressing.

As well, if you look at the impacts of fuel prices on foods and things like that, I think in this transition that we're in we have to look at other solutions to those problems and transitioning to locally grown foods in this province. I think we have to do things that help people grow – make us more sustainable as a province in terms of what we are able to grow in this province. Rather than shipping food from halfway around the world, we have to look at how we can grow things here in this province and how we can do that efficiently.

In the fishery it's interesting. I visited the Marine Institute a little while ago with the Minister of Fisheries. We looked at some of the research they're doing up there in terms of fishing and how people are able to catch their quotas efficiently. I was interested to see the things they are doing in terms of fishing gear and how they can make pots more effective in catching crab and things like that, so that fishermen and women can catch their quotas more efficiently.

So those sorts of transitions are happening. They're important. My time is running out. I may have an opportunity to talk on this motion later on today.

Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you to the Member.

I now recognize the MHA representing the District of Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, it is always good to get up here in the House of Assembly and represent the people of Exploits in my district. Only this morning, actually, I was on the phone with two constituents from my district. They relayed to me that: Pleaman, we just can't take any more. We can't absorb any more. What will we do? How are we going to make it? We just can't take any more. I don't even know if I am going to get to work this morning.

This is sad. This is just what I heard this morning. People can't absorb any more. Now, we are looking at staring down another tax and it is just another tax. The reality is it's just another

tax, something that my constituent, the one who can't even get to work this morning, got to bear another cost again tomorrow or the next day, whatever.

So they just can't afford to go any further with this. It's impossible to even think that we can impose another tax on those residents that can't even get to work anymore. This is not reality anymore. We're driving them to poverty and that's not the way this is supposed to be. Whether it is coming from the country, coming from the feds, coming from us, this is not the way it is supposed to be. We have to make this different. We have to do for these people what we need to do.

This carbon tax is not right at this moment. I don't know if it will ever be right, but it's not right at this moment to impose that tax on those people that cannot afford the day-to-day items right now, especially fuels to go wherever they like.

I heard the comment: we could walk to the bank. Go out in my area, go out in my district and tell somebody down in Leading Tickles that they have to walk an hour and a half to get to a bank, or wait until they get an electric car. Electric cars are probably years out. So they still have to be burning fuels until they're able to get that electric car for years out. They can't walk. They can't get an electric car so they still have to be using gasolines and fuels to get to that bank.

I'm not just trying to make political points here. This is facts. This is facts in my district. I see it every day. To go to a doctor in my area it's an hour and a half away. They have to go an hour and half away to get to a doctor most times. So now we're going to impose another tax on them. This just don't work. It's not adding up here and I can't agree with this carbon tax right now and I certainly won't. I will be opposing this carbon tax.

Only the weekend I had some conversation with some farmers. I know the minister got up and said we're protecting the farmers, we're protecting the forest industry; we made a great deal for those people. They're still paying double for their fertilizers. That's not going to change. That carbon tax is still going to add – probably put the fertilizers up even more. That's

not supporting our farmers to a great point. That's still putting their fertilizers way out of whack, and that's where the cost comes to our tables. Again, right to the end-users who can't afford it right now.

With regard to parts and new equipment for the farmers, parts and new equipment are gone up 40 per cent. Maybe the fuel that you're going to give them to put in, maybe you did do a little deal on that one to save some tax on the fuel that they're going to use in them, but they still have to buy that equipment. They still have to fix that equipment. In order to get that in, that's a cost to them, extra cost, 40 per cent to get there. So what you're going to save them on one end, you're going to grab back on another end. It just don't add up, it really don't.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Pay me now or pay me later.

**P. FORSEY:** Pay me now or pay me later. You're exactly right. So they're still getting it.

So when you sit there and say that we've made a great deal for our forest industry, great deal for our agriculture and food, then it doesn't seem like all that great of a deal. So I don't know how you can say that we need to pay this and that you agree with this, at this time, to force the cost to go back to the end-user to our plates, to our mother's and father's plates, to some relative, to some friend of ours that can't even afford to do it right now. They're going to food banks to do it. So it's not such a great a deal to the farmers right now that's going to pay on the back end. Like I say, that drives the cost right down to every one of our plates and that's very, very unfortunate.

Other things there like we're hearing all the time that people can't buy food and can't buy milk now for their children. We've talked about another tax, the sugar tax. They can't buy milk now for their children, so what are they going to do when the sugar tax comes in or the farmer has to put that milk up again, another cost. They're up 8.4 cents now – yeah, 8.4 per cent, really. So now they have to put this up, because all this drives the cost up to the end-user.

So how can we tell parents or tell children to eat healthy, to move to healthier diets, which goes

to, again, the medicare. It's in the plan for the health care, to eat healthy to save on medicare.

All this has to cycle down through. So as the farmers have to put up those increases, especially dairy farmers, for the cost to children and this is going right to the end-users, and they just can't afford it anymore, they just can't, to impose another carbon tax on top of that right now.

I know you say you're trying, but you're not trying hard enough. We need to go back to Ottawa, we really do, and say we just can't pay this carbon tax.

Our fishing industry, of course, they still have – everybody has to buy equipment, everybody has to get parts in and the fuels that they use – yes, I can see a change probably in the fuels, they will get a little break on that. But that is not what's saving the price to our end-users right now to the people in our province.

When people can't afford to get from one destination to another, we're just creating stress on them. It's putting them in poor conditions. We have a society that we're creating stress and it's not healthy. It's not healthy. Cost is a big factor in our health conditions. Cost is a big factor. When you can't afford something for your child, when you can't even afford to get to the doctor to get your medicines, or probably right now you can't even afford to buy the medicines. That is all a cost of the fuels, the taxes, the taxes, the taxes, that we're putting on people.

I heard another Member say that we can make political points. This is not political points. These are people's points. These are the people that I'm talking to every day. These are the people that I talked to over the weekend, the farmers, who said about their fertilizer. The farmers who said about their equipment costs, 40 per cent. These are the people that I was talking to this morning that couldn't get to work.

If you think it's political points, then you're dead wrong. You're dead wrong. I'm here to bring issues of the people of Exploits to this House of Assembly and I will do that. I will continue to do that. When they tell me that they

don't agree with something, then I don't agree with it.

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

**P. FORSEY:** So, right now, they do not agree. They do not agree with your carbon tax. They do not.

I do not agree with your carbon tax. It's something that has to be addressed. We need this addressed. People don't need this. We can't have this right now. They don't want it and we can't have it. We can't drive people to poverty. It's not even the lower incomes anymore; we're driving people at medium incomes down to poverty. Let's take a stand here. We've got to take a stand and that stand is in Ottawa.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**CHAIR (Reid):** The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

**P. PIKE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's great to be able to speak today on the *Revenue Administration Act*. I think our government has worked really hard in the last number of years to advance the seriousness of climate change and to curb greenhouse emissions as much as we can. But we also have to minimize the effect it's having and the impact on consumers and industry growth.

I mean, we only need to watch any channel on our TV and it's no problem to see the effects that greenhouse gas is having globally, not only in this great province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We were very lucky as well to put in a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador plan for climate change. This protects us against a federal backstop, which would have resulted in residents paying higher taxes.

Mr. Chair, I just looked at the cost of home heating fuel across our country and I took one example out just to show the impact that our homemade plan here in Newfoundland and Labrador has had on our carbon tax. The cost of home heating oil in Toronto yesterday was 255.7 cents. They have the federally imposed

backstop. The cost of home heating oil in St. John's, Newfoundland, yesterday, was 233.9 cents. This is because of our made-in-Newfoundland plan. It helps address the cost associated with home heating oil.

That's very important for us, and the fact that this government over the last three years has implemented that plan. Again, it's resulted in savings to our residents. People talk about not implementing the carbon tax, or as I like to call it, the pollution pricing act, or pollution pricing. Because the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act* was challenged as being unconstitutional by three provinces: Saskatchewan, Ontario and Alberta. And the ruling was that Parliament does have the jurisdiction to enact this law as a matter of national concern, under the Peace, Order, and good Government clause 91 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*.

If we were to not initiate the *Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act*, if we weren't going to comply with that, then we'd be forced and face the federal backstop. Of course, that would put taxes on various needed items, off-grid electricity generation and so on. But one of the ones I want to talk about would be that it would also put fuel tax for municipalities. Now, being involved in municipalities for 28 years, I know the struggle that towns are going through, especially when it comes to infrastructure needs and trying to promote their town as a place that people can live, work and live with a sense of harmony and growing up in their own communities.

It wouldn't be prudent for us to add an additional tax to municipalities. Our homemade plan is very effective in that we don't have to do that. It helps municipalities. We talk about taxation, we talk about property tax and we talk about taxes for services in municipalities. A lot of Newfoundland and Labradorians living in rural Newfoundland are paying very high taxes, as well as in the urban areas. We can't afford any more. This province, this government, has worked to make sure that there are no more taxes, or extra taxes given in municipalities. We're trying to survive.

If you look at the impact that Hurricane Larry had on my district – I live in a district that has not all, but 95 per cent of the communities in my



district live right on the water. They're right on the coast. The damage caused by Hurricane Larry and the continuous damage we've had over the last number of years due to climate change has broken away any of the infrastructure that was in place. I remember back in the '70s there were projects that people worked on and they built breakwaters. All those are now gone. The cost of putting back this infrastructure is through the roof because now you need either cages or you need armour stone to do so – very costly.

How do you do it? You have to do it through the Municipal Capital Works projects that are available, which do provide 90-10 funding, 80-20 funding, 50-50 funding and so on. However, communities are having trouble, now, making that transition to doing that kind of work because of the infrastructure they have in the ground with water and sewer and so on.

Climate change is certainly affecting all of us. We need to do something as quickly as possible if we are going to survive in this province. We are an island, weather impacts us; we need to find a way to protect ourselves.

I totally agree with the Member for St. George's - Humber, as well as the MHA for Bonavista, when they talked about working together and talking about the effects of future generations. Most of us have children and grandchildren and we want them to live in a world where they feel safe. A lot of the things we do today will impact how their lives will be in the future. We need to work together, both sides of this House, to make sure that we reduce greenhouse gases and that we control climate change.

We need to make sure that there is no political obstruction in this important time in our history. We know that the price of pollution can have a very strong impact on reducing our emissions.

Mr. Chair, thank you for the opportunity to speak to this today. I'll leave with 25 seconds on the clock.

Thank you.

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

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

**P. TRIMPER:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I do believe I'm going to need more than 10 minutes to speak to this particular bill, so let's get started. I'm not sure where I'm going to begin, but perhaps I'm going to start with just some comments on some of my colleagues here that I've heard on the floor. I'm going to grab a little background on Mr. Bjorn Lomborg.

Just for the record, I have great respect for this guy from Bonavista, but I have to just read this into the record. First of all, he's not a climate scientist or an economist. He has published little to none peer-reviewed research on environmental climate policy. His extensive and extensively documented errors and misrepresentations, which are aimed at a lay audience, follow a general pattern of minimizing the need to cut carbon emissions. He's out there constantly, like the former mayor from this city used to do.

He does not deny the physics of the greenhouse effect, but he does like to cherry-pick his information, backed up by his own hypothesis. If you do a quick search on his name, it will show the many different examples in which his research is severely flawed, as are his conclusions. He has a Ph.D. in political science, not environmental science or economics. On that point – and thanks Anna for digging that up for me – this really cannot be a political discussion. It cannot be tied to a particular party or party policy.

I want to go back seven years, when I sat on that side in that corner and was pleased to serve the province as the minister responsible for Environment and Climate Change. My critic at the time, the Member for Conception Bay South, used to ask me all the time about carbon pricing and carbon taxes, why are we doing it, why are going there. I said take a look. I kept sending him little messages, and I would still refer him and his colleagues, and anyone else who's feeling this is not the appropriate way to go, go have a look at anything to do with the United Nations and the IPCC. The United Nations on climate change, about carbon pricing. I said take a hint – and you need to tell your colleagues in

Ottawa – carbon pricing has been recognized by the United Nations as the most effective way to deal with this issue, from a decision-makers capacity.

The problem that we're having, of course, is we have this inflation, we've got these escalating gas prices, but I can tell you, there are some 47 countries right now with carbon taxes in place, another nine are looking at it. There are another 64 countries who have carbon pricing initiatives and these are primarily emissions trading.

I was very proud to represent our province down in Mexico some five or six years ago explaining and looking at the different strategies. So guess what? The majority of the world is pricing carbon and dealing with it.

As some of the Members said, this is an issue that maybe we should just kick down the road a little bit, but I can tell you that if you watch Greta Thunberg and the millions of youth around the world, they are screaming at us, please do something now.

Everyone keeps saying this is the wrong time. Well, I can tell you, it's already too late. And I'm sorry to keep picking on my colleague from Bonavista, but he was talking about timelines. You know, the thing about those timelines, they are warnings, they are targets for schedule for action. But I can tell you, because of the fact that we missed them, we are already, unfortunately, dealing with irreversible change.

I want to remind my colleagues – and this is a sensitivity with yours truly and I would suggest my colleagues from Labrador – we are not an island. We are an island and a massive chunk of land called Labrador. And I can tell you, if you want to come up and have a visit – this morning I did an interview on caribou and the pre-leading story was the fact that the sudden runoff, that is just unheard of, has wiped out a culvert and interfered with operations on the Trans-Labrador Highway.

Like, what is going on? No rainstorm, just sudden heat; it was 24 degrees there yesterday. I was snowmobiling on Sunday. I went from snowmobiling to 24 degrees in four days, and a massive runoff. I can tell you, listen to the

canaries that are Labrador. Because I can tell you, the coal mine is in trouble.

I wanted to go back; I missed the point about the eco-anxiety. Yeah, there is a lot of eco-anxiety. I can tell you, we need to start thinking seven generations out. We need to start thinking about what our kids are going to be facing.

You guys have heard me this week; I've spoken about some of the predictions. Our own government officials – these are government documents that sit with the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, you go online, you look at the provincial document, 28 years from now it will be 6 degrees warmer – this is on average, by the way – during winter then pre-industrial levels. We are cooking already.

I heard the Member for Terra Nova say in his childhood he remembers you couldn't get into the lake until late June. Well, you can get in there now in May. It is happening and moving so quickly. Glaciers have disappeared. My friend from Labrador West just reminded me of Dr. Way's research. It is a serious problem and we've got to get at it.

I also want to go back with a little history, just to throw on to the floor. In 2016, I served as the provincial Climate Change Minister. I found myself in Montreal with the federal government and all of the counterparts across the country and we were doing the final crafting of the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change.

I can tell you, we were down to the short strokes and this was after – this isn't a political swipe at anything, but I can tell you, the federal Liberals came in in 2015 and that was after many years of no leadership at the federal level. I have heard a couple of you mention that so much of the challenge in 2015 was that because there was nobody going on in Ottawa with a leadership role, each province and, frankly, many of the territories, all took their own strategy, whatever suited them that worked.

So when we were coming to the table, all through 2015 and 2016, working on this Pan-Canadian growth document, everybody had a different perspective. Saskatchewan was into

sequestration. BC, by the way, had already had a carbon tax in place since 2008. Some were making progress, some weren't, but we all were dragged in through the realization that we had to do something. The Paris COP22 was happening and the world was really starting to wake up.

So here we were in our typical form, and those who have ever had the opportunity and great honour to sit at a FPT table, it is a great honour to represent our province at the national level. So I sat there and I was there with – I have to mention their names because they are key people in this whole discussion and, in particular, Jackie Janes was – for those of you who have ever met her, she is probably one of the most brilliant minds we have ever had in this province to deal with this issue. She was with me, along with Emily Timmins and Colleen Janes was back as the deputy back in St. John's. That was the team that went representing Newfoundland and Labrador, but I can tell you when we got to that table, other jurisdictions were coming up to us and seeking our advice. And Jackie, I have got to tell you, we were a small but mighty team and we could hold our own at that table.

So we are here and, I can tell you, we are just like – I'm thinking we had two to three hours left before we pinned it, and Saskatchewan was the holdout. Were we going to get them to sign onto this document? Nova Scotia had some concerns because they had already invested. Some other provinces had made some big moves. Could we find the wording? And I have got to tell you, we were almost there.

At 11 o'clock, I looked over at the federal minister, Catherine McKenna, she was looking at her watch, and we were kind of noticing this, it was quite obvious. At the same time, Emily Timmins was behind me and she taps my shoulder and she says: Minister, the prime minister is on his feet. He's speaking about carbon pricing. And 30 seconds later Minister McKenna, she gets on her feet and starts speaking and they delivered the same speech.

I am giving you this story because I want you to know there was a battle, because that speech, that position that the federal government put out at that time, did not recognize any of the exemptions that we now enjoy in this deal that the minister read to us this morning

**AN HON. MEMBER:** That's when you walked out.

**P. TRIMPER:** That is when I walked out. He's remembering.

This was not an easy thing to do. There is nothing more proud than to, at the end of a two- or three-day session, stand in front of your flag and properly and proudly say: Yes, we are here to represent.

I called the Premier. I said: Wow, what they are proposing – and I put a little piece in front of it, but, oh shoot. I asked Jackie to go over and I said: Can you confirm with the minister's office that all those communities on diesel, our offshore oil and gas industry, our marine systems, how we get all this goods and freight to our province, surely to goodness these must be exempted? I remember her coming back and saying: No, Minister, not at all. We had to walk out of the room, Nova Scotia joined us and Saskatchewan and we had to start this whole thing all over.

Those were rough, tough months over that next year, but I can tell you we finally got to a deal. So while this is frustrating, there has been a big fight that's gone on behind the scenes. This is part one of my talk. I look forward to speaking again.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

Mr. Chair, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that we do now recess.

**CHAIR:** It has been moved and seconded that we now rise the Committee.

**S. CROCKER:** Apologies, Mr. Chair, I got one step ahead of myself.

Mr. Chair, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that the Committee rise and report progress.

**CHAIR:** It's been moved and seconded that the House does now rise and ask leave to sit again.

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 (Trimper):** Order, please!

I recognize the Member for St. George's — Humber and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**S. REID:** The Committee has considered the matters to them referred and directed me to report that progress has been made and ask leave to sit again.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole has reported that they have made progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

**S. CROCKER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

**S. CROCKER:** Presently.

**SPEAKER:** Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again presently, by leave.

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

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

I'll make another attempt. I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now recess.

**SPEAKER:** This House now stands in recess until 2 o'clock.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

In the Speaker's gallery today, I would like to welcome Clement O'Keefe, who is the subject of a Member's statement this afternoon. Mr. O'Keefe is joined by his daughter-in-law, Margaret Hatfield.

Welcome.

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

**SPEAKER:** In the public gallery, I like to welcome friends and neighbours of the late Freddie Walsh, who is also being recognized in a Member's statement this afternoon.

Good afternoon and welcome.

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

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Conception Bay South, Harbour Main, Exploits, St. John's Centre and Placentia - St. Mary's.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

Speaker, the 34th Annual East Coast Music Awards were held last weekend in Fredericton, New Brunswick from May 4 to May 8.

I would like to give special congratulations to four amazing talented artists from Conception

Bay South. Our very own Justin Fancy received the Fans' Choice Entertainer of the Year. Folk duo Kirsten Rodden-Clarke and Jordan Coaker, better known as Quote the Raven, received Contemporary Roots Recording of the Year for "Can't Hold the Light." Mallory Johnson received Artist Innovator of the Year and Fans' Choice Video of the Year with Twin Kennedy for "Wise Woman."

Mallory Johnson has been turning heads in the country music scene and song-writing community for years. She is currently in Nashville working on a new studio album. Both Mallory and Justin Fancy have attracted national and international attention through their music. Justin launched his career in early 2020 and has quickly become one to watch on the music scene.

Quote the Raven are a Folk Pop/Americana duo who recently released "Can't Hold the Light" record. This is a summation of journeys that the pair has experienced over the past three years.

Speaker, Conception Bay South is extremely proud of these talented individuals and their accomplishments. Congratulations to all the nominees and award winners to the East Coast Music Awards.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

The Girl Guides of Canada is an organization that teaches young girls and women to challenge and empower themselves, meet new people, have fun and become key influencers in the world.

Girl Guides has recently recognized a constituent in the District of Harbour Main for her dedication and contribution to the organization by volunteering with them for the past 50 years.

This past September, Ms. Lillian Fowler of South River was honoured by the Girl Guides for this amazing achievement. She has volunteered in the capacity of leader, district commissioner, area commissioner and trainer. Lillian has made a significant difference to thousands of young girls and women throughout our province in places like Forteau, Mary's Harbour and towns like North River, South River and Clarke's Beach, just to name a few.

The United Church in Clarke's Beach has allowed the Girl Guides to operate out of their hall for the past 32 years. They meet every Monday night, and Lillian says they have not missed a night in 32 years. Even during COVID, they still met virtually.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in acknowledging and thanking Ms. Lillian Fowler for her leadership and dedication to girls and women throughout our province.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Today I rise and recognize the volunteer work of Mr. Shawn Dalley of Botwood. Shawn joined the Botwood volunteer fire department in 1994. During this time, Shawn served as regional chair with the province, deputy chief and chief for 13 years.

Shawn was remarkably committed to his position as fire chief and served with dedication and pride for the betterment of his community. As of March 1, 2022, after 28 years of volunteer service, Shawn has retired from the Botwood volunteer fire department.

Speaker, I would like for all Members of this House of Assembly to congratulate Mr. Shawn Dalley on his retirement and wish him a happy 50th birthday today.

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

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

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

“Never worry about numbers. Help one person at a time, and always start with the person nearest you.” Mother Teresa’s words describe Freddie Walsh, who was the Mother Teresa of St. John’s and the last monarch of Walsh’s Store.

Small in stature but large in generosity and kindness, Freddie was more than a shop owner: she was mother and grandmother to the community and changed the lives of many.

Freddie died on April 18. Those who knew her best, speak best to their loss.

“If it wasn’t for this lady, I’m not sure how my father and I would’ve got by.”

“She taught me what it was like to truly be kind and how to help someone without getting anything in return.”

“I could go on forever about how amazing Freddie is and never give justice to how much she helped others and how much she is loved.”

“There are people, I’m sure, that ate just because of Freddie.”

“I love this woman to the moon and back.”

“I had no idea how important a corner store could be before I moved to this area.”

I ask Members to join me in honouring the life of Freddie Walsh.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary’s.

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Speaker, on May 7, Mr. Clement O’Keefe celebrated his 100th birthday.

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

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. O’Keefe, one of eight children, was born at Southeast, Placentia

to David and Mary O’Keefe. His sister Evelyn King still resides in Southeast. Mr. O’Keefe spent his early years in Southeast and today resides in Freshwater, Placentia Bay, where he has lived for 70 years.

On January 19, 1943, Mr. O’Keefe married Sarah Cunningham from Argentinia. Together, they had 15 children: three girls and 12 boys. Mr. O’Keefe worked as a stationary engineer at the Argentinia naval base for 56 years. His hobbies include dancing, darts, card games, watching hockey – especially the Montréal Canadiens –

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

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** – and a daily drive.

Clem, as he is known, has a zest for life, family and friends. He enjoys helping others and attending community events. He is often heard telling stories from back in the day and loves singalongs. Without a doubt, he is considered one of the best dancers in the Placentia area.

Mr. Clem O’Keefe has 34 grandchildren, 38 great-grandchildren and 3 great-great-grandchildren.

Please join me as I wish Mr. Clement O’Keefe a happy 100th birthday.

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

**SPEAKER:** Happy birthday, Mr. O’Keefe.

Sixteen children, that kind of reminds me of my family; I’m the youngest of 15.

Congratulations, Sir, I wish you many more years of happiness.

Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you.

Large families seem to be the theme here because I’m the youngest of nine children.

Speaker, I'm pleased to inform my hon. colleagues today of a significant accomplishment of the workforce at the new adult mental health and addictions hospital, which is currently under construction.

When we announced in 2020 that Avalon Healthcare Partnership had been selected to design, build, finance and maintain the much-needed facility, we were confident in the jobs and economic benefits that would be created for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Speaker, since the start of construction, the percentage of hours worked by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on that site has been 98 per cent.

In January, February and March of this year – wait for it – 100 per cent of the hours worked on the site were by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Speaker, we can all take great pride in the considerable skills and knowledge of the women and men of the local construction workforce who are so key to these critical infrastructure projects.

Recently, I had the pleasure of seeing what the inside of the new hospital will look like when I joined the Premier and Minister of Health and Community Services on a visit to mock-ups of the patient room, therapeutic quiet room and nursing station.

Construction of the new adult mental health and addictions hospital is on schedule and I look forward to it being completed in late 2024.

Speaker, our construction projects are leading to employment and improved services for residents of this province. This year, through *Budget 2022*, we are investing \$567 million in infrastructure and we look forward to this investment paying similar dividends for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

I'd like to thank the hon. minister for the advance copy of his statement. Speaker, I take little comfort in hearing the minister proudly boast about the employment on a government project, when we saw plane loads of workers from Quebec and other provinces arrive and work on the new science building, the new acute care hospital in Corner Brook and the new long-term care facility in Central Newfoundland. We know the absolute mess we have in the Gander and Grand Falls-Windsor with those facilities delayed over a year and marred by 4,000 deficiencies, and the minister's own department were project managers over it.

I do applaud the minister for committing to review the fiasco with the new long-term care facilities. I sincerely hope the mistakes and incompetence will not be repeated on the adult mental health and addictions facility and the new sole-source blank-cheque penitentiary.

Thank you very much.

**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. The Third Party looks forward to every construction project that employs locally and benefits communities in this province as much as possible, especially this type of infrastructure. That's why we encourage the government to avoid using P3s to build public infrastructure in the future. Such projects are costlier in the long run, lack transparency, undermines risks and results in less community input and control over them. The people of this province deserves better from their government.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

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

Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to celebrate Newfoundland and Labrador's music industry.

Newfoundland and Labrador's musicians received 44 nominations this year and brought home 11 awards from the 2022 East Coast Music Awards held in Fredericton, New Brunswick.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Congratulations to the nominees and the winners: Quote the Raven, Justin Fancy, Mallory Johnson and Twin Kennedy, Kelly McMichael, Rube & Rake, First Light Fridays, Greg Smith, Cecil Johnson, Yvette Lorraine and Gordon Quinton. You are making waves around the country and around the world. We are so proud to call you our own.

The East Coast Music Awards are the premiere music event for the East Coast music industry and the conference of choice for artists and industry professionals. It is a non-stop music celebration, recognizing the very best the East Coast music community has to offer – and this year was certainly no exception.

The enthusiasm surrounding these awards has been felt here at home. We want to harness this enthusiasm in order to continue to foster the relationship that we have with our vibrant music industry and encourage the many economic and social opportunities that exist for the music industry throughout the province and the country.

It is Come Home Year in Newfoundland and Labrador and we know that our music tells a story and draws visitors here. Under the Cultural Economic Development Program over \$1.9 million will go directly to local artists. We have provided \$100,000 to MusicNL to fund the Community Presenters Program, which will help not-for-profit organizations cover the costs associated with hiring musicians.

Thank you again to our musicians and our industry for the great ambassadors they are for our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Speaker, our province certainly has a rich culture, as we discussed in Estimates. We have artists in each and every corner of the province who delight residents and visitors alike with their time and talents. In my District of Bonavista, tourists often get to hear local musicians and delight in hearing them perform.

On the occasion of the 2022 East Coast Music Awards, I would like to offer sincere congratulations on behalf of the Official Opposition to those from this province who have been nominated and who won awards. You are indeed making waves around the globe.

As a province, we are all very proud of your accomplishments and are happy to support your musical dreams and ambitions. You are a bright spot on our province's heritage landscape.

I look forward to hearing more success from our local artists, artisans and heritage performers over the months and years ahead.

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 an advance copy of his statement. The Third Party also congratulates this year's ECMA winners and nominees, recognizing the contributions they made to our culture and tourism industry.



We call upon government to continue investments in the arts and culture sectors to make sure culture is more accessible both for tourists and residents year-round from Torngat Mountains to the shores of Cape Spear.

Thank you, Speaker.

**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.

When it comes to the cost of fuel, the Premier uses the PUB as an excuse. When it comes to the rising cost of groceries, the Premier uses international events as an excuse. When it comes to the sale of assets, the Premier uses the Rothschild as an excuse. When it comes to our failing health care system, the Premier uses the Health Accord as an excuse.

When is the Premier going to stop using excuses and start taking care of the people of this province?

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

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

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

I don't use any excuses. In fact, we are making decisions based on evidence, different than what has been done in our past. Whether that is with respect to position of our assets, the position of our future health care provisions and a sustainable system to meet the demands of the general public, Mr. Speaker. But we are taking a different approach – one that is based on evidence; it is based on advice.

We have provided a lot for the people of the province. Most recently, \$142 million in the

budget, combined with \$500 million – that's \$642 million provided for the cost of living, Mr. Speaker. So I believe we are doing a good job and will continue to do more.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador would argue and think differently. You are not doing a good job because it is not going far enough to help the people here.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, food costs in Labrador are too high at the best of times, in particular along the coast.

Why is the Premier turning his back on the people of Labrador who cannot afford to buy food?

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

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

Again, with respect to the cost of fuel, it's a complicated issue that extends well beyond our borders, Mr. Speaker. It is driven largely by the geopolitical forces at play in Europe – all of which is beyond our control. We are providing for the people of the province whether it is through the \$142 million of immediate relief, different than some of the provinces, Mr. Speaker.

By the way, that is the full quantum of what we would have collected with the gas tax, Mr. Speaker. So we are redistributing that to everybody in the province. We continue to look at creative ways to continue to recognize and provide for the anxieties of people. But \$642 million this year alone is a nice amount of money.

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

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

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

The Premier is aware that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people on this side of the House have outlined ways that they could address the cost-of-living crisis that people are facing in Newfoundland and Labrador to help the people of this province.

Speaker, the Liberals have not done anything to specifically help Labradorians afford the soaring costs of living. Coastal Labrador freight transportation rates were last updated in June 2020 and diesel fuel has more than doubled since.

Will the Premier do the responsible thing and guarantee that the people of Coastal Labrador won't have to face a significant increase in food transportation costs coming this year?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, and Labrador Affairs.

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

I thank the hon. Member for the question. There is no doubt that those are very challenging times that we are navigating our way through, exacerbated by COVID, exacerbated by the war in Ukraine.

With the budget brought down, Speaker, there was a number of mechanisms that were put in place. We value the seniors in our province. There is a 10 per cent increase in the Income Supplement, income support in April, and the tax break on insurance and on vehicles, Speaker.

As for the rates for transportation, the previous colleague for Torngat, he was very successful I believe in negotiating transportation rates down 40 per cent of what they were, and that was significant, Speaker. Last year we had the highest travel and freight moveage that we've had in our history, and we'll continue to do what we can for Labradorians.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

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

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

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

The Liberal government is out of touch with the struggles that the people in our province are facing. A five-point plan was released just to say we tried. But this simply isn't good enough.

I ask the Premier: What do you tell the people of the province who can no longer afford to drive to work?

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

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

I wish I could tell them that we could spend \$500 million in other ways every single year, year after year. No one wants to talk about it, Mr. Speaker, but it's the harsh fiscal reality of the province. We're providing \$2,400 per year to every household to mitigate rates. That's to keep businesses affordable. That's to keep home heating affordable. That's something that they don't want to acknowledge and I appreciate that, given the history behind the Muskrat Falls initiative, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

It just reiterates exactly what we're hearing from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, is that the Liberals are out of ideas. Their plan just doesn't go far enough.

Premier, why don't you admit that after one year into your mandate, you are out of new ideas and are failing to listen to the people of the province?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this and thank you for the question.

I mean, we have incredible number of ideas. I believe the first question addressed how many ideas we have and we're taking those ideas more from a conceptual perspective and putting evidence behind them so we're driving the correct decision-making process, Mr. Speaker.

We may be short on political rhetoric, but we are strong on policy, Mr. Speaker. That's why we're driving the evidence-based decision-making that is required for the sustainable future of the province, and I won't shy away from that.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, concepts don't pay the bills for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; it doesn't give them access to medical care; it doesn't give them access to employment, Mr. Speaker. We need tangible programs and services that work for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Speaker, the former Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association president, Dr. Lynette Powell, stated today that with the gas price crisis and the health care crisis – quote – it feels like the perfect storm. Patients can't afford to receive the health care they desperately need.

Yesterday the Premier said: How much is enough? Premier, when people can receive the health care they need, it'll be enough. When parents can afford to feed their children, it'll be enough. When people can afford to heat their homes, it'll be enough.

I ask the Premier: When will you finally act and deal with the crisis to ensure people have enough in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

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

It may be easy political rhetoric from the Opposition to assure people that they can promise everything, Mr. Speaker –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** – but frankly, given the fiscal restraints of the province, Mr. Speaker, we can't be making knee-jerk, myopic decisions based on political rhetoric or based on Twitter. We are engaged with the NLMA. We're engaged with them for future –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** – sustainable options for our health care system. They were fully involved. There was a health care accord that was launched with their involvement, and we're all partaking in it, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the Opposition was kind enough to partake in it.

We recognize that these are not just short-term issues; we want to address them. We had to develop short-, medium- and long-term strategies to make sure we're developing a sustainable health care system for our future, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, to hear the Premier talk about the real concerns of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as political rhetoric is just not good enough – it's just not good enough.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance said – and I quote – we are doing everything we can to address the cost of living in the province. But the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are telling us something different.

So I ask the minister: Do you believe the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador need an increase in carbon tax now?

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

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

I tell you what they don't need is they don't need to have carbon tax levied on their home heat. That's the thing they don't need, and by moving forward with the implementation of the carbon tax –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** – which every other province in the country has, we are ensuring that the federal backstop, the federal imposition of carbon taxes in this province, we can exempt – and I read it out this morning – home heat. We exempt fisheries, forestry and agriculture.

I'm sure the Member opposite is not suggesting for a moment that we should allow that to happen and allow the carbon tax on these very vital things for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I think the minister misunderstood the question. I simply asked if she believed that the people of the province would want to see another increase in carbon tax.

The minister said in her Budget Speech there would be no tax increases this year. So why are we in the House of Assembly today debating a tax increase to increase carbon tax?

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

**S. COADY:** I thank the Member opposite for the question because it's an important question. As I've said repeatedly, there are no provincial taxes in this budget, and I think that should be celebrated, to be quite honest with you.

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

**S. COADY:** Because I can tell you that, over the years, there have been plenty of times when this House of Assembly has had to debate a budget with tax increases.

This is a federal government tax. It is a required tax on the people of the province for carbon. It is the federal government's policy towards addressing climate change. What this government has been able to do is to negotiate with the federal government to have these vital exemptions: home heat, fisheries, forestry, agriculture and construction.

I am sure the Member opposite does not want carbon tax levied there.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, again, it is interesting to hear that there are no taxes included in the budget, but we sit here in the House of Assembly today debating carbon tax. We know there is a sugar tax coming on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The fact of the matter is that no matter who puts the tax on, it is the people of the Newfoundland and Labrador who are going to have to pay it and they're looking to their government for some help.

As the price of gasoline increases, so does your revenue from HST. So I ask the minister: Will you commit today that any additional revenue you receive, because of increases in the price of gasoline, that you will rebate that back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker, for the question.

It is an interesting question because I know the Member opposite used to work in the Department of Finance so he should understand how HST works. If you looked at the last years

Estimates, which I am sure everybody in the House would have done, and the 2021-2022 Estimates and you compared them to 2022-2023 Estimates for HST, they're the same; there is no big increase in HST.

In years down the road, as the HST system catches up, because it is a federally harmonized tax, there may be some increases, but we will be looking at how the economy is doing in the province. If there are additional revenues, perhaps we can do something in the fall, because we know how important home heat is and we know the people of the province are challenged by that.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, this government missed an opportunity in their last budget. They had a windfall of over \$70 million, which they chose not to share with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. So what I am asking now, again, the minister just said that they'd look at doing something maybe in the fall.

Why wait until the fall? Make the commitment now. Make the commitment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that you're going to do something in the fall. Make that commitment but do it now.

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

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

**S. COADY:** It is really, really interesting – and I didn't want to go down this road when the Leader of the Opposition started talking about the ways the Opposition would be able to provide funds for cost of living. We provided \$142 million, the entire amount and then some, that we get from the provincial gas tax.

The Member opposite is referring to vacant positions; he wants to eliminate those vacant positions. He wants to eliminate jobs, Speaker, and we're not prepared to do that.

If we do have additional revenues, we will consider what we're able to do this fall.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, the government is just not doing enough.

This week I was contacted by a person in my district who wrote: The cost of gas and other fuels is beyond acceptable and those costs are impacted other products and services, like food, for example. She also wrote: Everything is going up except for wages and salaries. My mother, she said, a single woman, now has to decide whether to eat or have heat. This is not rhetoric, these are her words.

So will the Liberals finally give up their excuses and help people in this province?

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

**S. COADY:** Indeed, as I've said in this House and I'll continue to say it in public, these are challenging times, these are very difficult times for people, especially with the increasing cost of fuel and the cost of living. We recognize that, that's why we've provided \$142 million to assist in that. We increased the Income Supplement and we increased the Seniors' Benefit.

This is happening around the world and it's very, very difficult. I can tell you I checked the price of gasoline in the United Kingdom, I think it's almost \$2.63 Canadian. In British Columbia, it's \$2.21 Canadian. This is not Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have provided additional supports; we're prepared to do more, if we can.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** And I repeat, Speaker, they need to stop with the excuses. These are real people who are suffering right now.

When I called this lady and spoke to her she was so upset. She said her mother is contemplating giving up her car, her very source of independence, because of rising costs. This lady lives in a rural community, there's no public transportation.

I ask the minister again: How will this senior get to the grocery store and her medical appointments?

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

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

These are not excuses. I'm merely pointing out that this is a global phenomena. We have provided \$142 million. This is borrowings that we have to make – that \$142 million – and our children and our grandchildren are going to have to pay it back.

I understand and I have a great deal of concern for the people of the province. But I also have a great deal of concern for our children and our grandchildren. We are working within the fiscal envelope that we have. We've provided all of the provincial gas tax back to the people of the province. We're looking at ways we can help, especially as we move to the fall with home heat.

But what I will say to the Member opposite is this: we'll do everything that we possibly can do for the people of the province.

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

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

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

So far it's been an abysmal failure. I guess we'll have to wait and see; so far no good. All we hear is \$142 million – not doing the job.

Speaker, the recent extension to the bus pass program does nothing to help seniors and those on low income in most of the province, including my district. Gas prices have skyrocketed, and people cannot afford to take taxis to critical medical or other appointments.

Speaker, why is the minister turning his back on seniors and low-income individuals in my district and rural Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

I guess I take issue with the premise of the question, because we are working with seniors across the province, certainly in the St. John's metro area. We've extended the program, the bus program for people on GIS. We're working with various communities, whether it's Clarendville or Stephenville, in providing community bus transportation services. So we are working with seniors and we are supporting seniors across the province.

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

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

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

I'd like to ask the minister: Where's the Metrobus in CBS or Holyrood or Harbour Main? Where's the Metrobus? It's in St. John's, Paradise and Mount Pearl, but there's more to the province than those three areas, Minister – disgraceful.

Speaker, specifically in my district, Metrobus does not operate, to educate the minister, and residents have been denied access to the Medical Transportation Assistance Program.

Again, why is the minister picking and choosing ways to help?

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

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

If you look at Conception Bay South, as an example, we would like to work with that town, if they are prepared to implement a bus service for the town. I would certainly encourage them to work with the City of St. John's to expand Metrobus out there and, as a result, we would extend our program. That offer is out right across the province.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** That's not going to work very good in Arnold's Cove, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, I'll quote from the minister's press release. "... individuals will have the opportunity to avail of affordable goods and services, connect with family and friends, participate in community activities, attend medical appointments, and for some individuals, create easier access to the labour market."

Speaker, I could not agree more. When can the residents of Conception Bay South expect to get this?

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

I think the simple answer, Speaker, is when the Town of Conception Bay South and any other town will implement a bus program that we can support through our bus pass program.

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

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

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** No problem, thank you.

I guess the residents in the Ferryland District will walk to the Goulds to get the bus, I guess.

Yesterday, the minister announced a review of the public utilities legislation. With gas prices now hovering around \$2.20, will this review result in lower gasoline, diesel and home heating fuel prices?

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

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

I'm very pleased that the Member for Ferryland has received his speaking privileges back, so I'm glad to hear a question from him today.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Yesterday we were very pleased to announce changes to the *Petroleum Products Act*, which I hope potentially we'll be chatting about today in the House of Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

We recognize the process with the Public Utilities Board is not perfect, and we want increase transparency and make sure the people of the province understand what makes up all the markups in our petroleum pricing that we pay at the pumps.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

I'll tell you one thing, they won't keep me quiet, no matter how long they shuts me down, I can guarantee you that.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Speaker, it's fine the government is doing the review, but the people of our province need action now.

Will the review of the PUB result in paying less for gas prices this year, yes or no?

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

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

I hope the Member opposite is going to be supporting the *Petroleum Products Act* that we'll be chatting about later today. We are changing the process to increase transparency, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that the Public Utilities Board has to tell us all of the elements that go into the markup –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. STOODLEY:** – how they calculate it, and make that information readily available to the public, in addition to having public hearings and providing the public with regular reports.

So I hope the Member opposite supports the legislation that we've brought forward to the House.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

If you can do it right now to help the people of the province, then we will support it. Thank you so much. So will you do it?

Let's look at the review. Are you going to do it, yes or no, and get it done now, not later?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do think the Member opposite is confused, because yesterday we talked about a review of the Public Utilities Board legislation under my colleague the Minister of Justice and Public

Safety, but we also announced and gave greater detail about the bill we'll be debating this afternoon, which are changes to the *Petroleum Products Act*, which will in the very short term improve the transparency and increase the information that is available to the public, so that they have a much better understanding of how the Public Utilities Board makes decisions and what goes into all the elements of the pricing, particularly the markups.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, on Monday, the minister said that we are a long way from our milk supply drying up. However, I want to read this letter, a quote from a dairy farmer to the federal minister. Quote: Without financial intervention, the collapse of many family-owned-and-operated farms is imminent.

I ask the minister: Why are you forcing farmers out of business?

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

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

I guess I ran out of time when the question was asked earlier in the week, and we do support our farmers. Directly, approximately \$11 million of taxpayers' dollars go right back into the farming industry –

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

**D. BRAGG:** – in different types of grants and programs. I encourage farmers at this time when we are feeling some turmoil in our world, not just in our country or province, in our world, to reach out and apply for these grants and take advantage of them while they are still there.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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



**P. FORSEY:** The farmers are still saying it is not enough. The farmer also quoted: Unprecedented cost increases that farmers are facing, there will be very few farms left to pass down to our generations.

I ask the minister: Why don't you have a plan to secure our food supply?

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

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

Again, Mr. Speaker, I go back to our grants and our subsidies that we offer. We have a CAP program with the federal government. We have a provincial program, PAAP, Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program that farmers can reach out and apply to.

We realize this time – fertilizer is one example where price has gone up. That's a world crisis that has caused fertilizer to go up, not a provincial one. But, Mr. Speaker, the theme across the way it sounds like a James Bond movie – *The World Is Not Enough*. Whatever we do is not enough. We are doing what we can with the taxpayers' money we have. We will make every effort to help every farmer that we possibly can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Maybe the minister is not listening, Speaker.

I have a letter here from a farmer sent to the federal representatives and it is cc'd to the Premier and the minister. Here's a copy of it right there. I would like to table it.

Speaker, another dairy farmer was interviewed this morning and said that if they don't get additional support – quote – we are going to lose our farms.

I ask the minister: Is there an emergency funding program coming for farmers?

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

**D. BRAGG:** Speaker, we are in conversation with our federal colleagues and we are talking about a new CAP program. That should be unveiled in the coming weeks or days. I am going out to meet with the agricultural ministers in Atlantic Canada on the May break and we are going to talk about challenges in the farming industry.

Collectively, we will offer up where we can, whenever we can, but we are looking forward to a reaching out and talking to every farmer who faces a crisis or a time of turmoil in this time, I guess, in their working career.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Primary and elementary grades where our refugee children attend have class sizes over the class cap. Many students require individualized attention and this is a disservice to our students and their teachers.

Will the minister commit to placing the necessary extra teaching resources in these and other schools to reduce class size and ensure students get the supports they deserve?

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

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

There are only 2 or 3 per cent of schools in the province that are at the class cap; there are none over the class cap, Mr. Speaker. The school districts, if a school or a class goes over the cap, they'll split the class and create two classes. This is not accurate information that is being put forward by the Member today, nor was the information on Chromebooks yesterday. It's a pattern in this House, Mr. Speaker, where the Member puts forward information that is not accurate.

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

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

**J. DINN:** I would say, Mr. Speaker, the teachers quoted today in *The Telegram* would disagree with him.

Teachers say they are woefully undermanned and the current EAL model is one of the worst.

I ask the minister: Will he take steps to put into place the necessary human resources to address the shortcomings identified in the article?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I previously asked the Member for details so that we could find solutions. Sadly, the Member is more interested in play politics than finding solutions.

What I will do today is ask the teachers that were quoted in the article to contact either Mr. Stack or me directly so that we can find solutions, so that we don't have to go through yet another day of playing politics instead of finding solutions to these localized issues that are certainly not system wide.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Speaker, the minister obviously has no idea what it is to teach and learn in a large primary and elementary classroom. So I am prepared to get my paperwork in order and offer to teach a primary or elementary grade for a week, if the Minister of Education will join me.

I ask the minister: Will he accept my challenge and join me? We'll co-teach, either in the fall or in the spring.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** This invitation, Mr. Speaker, is coming from an individual who wanted to split classes into going to school one week and out of school for two. When we started the pandemic, he wanted to have split learning. Mr. Speaker,

I'll take no lessons from that Member, but I will ask again if he will provide the information on these localized issues.

If somebody was taught in a broom closet, which I find unacceptable – hard to believe, but unacceptable – but if that happened, Mr. Speaker, I want to find a solution and it is incumbent on that Member to stop playing politics and provide the information.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Speaker, the solutions were provided to this minister in the beginning of the two years because they had no solutions.

So I will ask again: Let's get a taste of reality; will you join me, we'll co-teach so you can fully have a first-hand experience of what it is to be in a primary and elementary classroom that's over the limit? Simple question; there is the challenge.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, again, the English School District, the Francophone School District and the chief medical officer of Health all put forward solutions at the beginning of the pandemic. Those solutions actually worked because we followed the plans and the plans worked.

The alternate solution put forward by the Member, Mr. Speaker, was to have split learning, which we tried and parents were against it, educators were against it. The very people that that Member purports to lead and represent were against it.

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

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

**P. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, while we're all very cognizant of our province's fiscal situation, the reality is that due to forces primarily outside of government's control, the price of home heating fuel is simply no longer affordable for many

people in this province. And while I acknowledge the benefit that rate mitigation negotiations have brought to electricity users, this does nothing to address the real struggle for people who heat their homes with furnace oil.

I therefore ask the minister: Will you please consider – or should I say, reconsider – implementing a temporary income-based home heat rebate program to assist low- to moderate-income families who are really struggling to heat their homes during these extraordinary times?

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

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

Very good question, very timely one, and the answer is yes.

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

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

**P. LANE:** I thank the minister for the answer and that's good news for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**P. LANE:** Mr. Speaker, while I certainly acknowledge the actions taken by both our provincial and federal governments in lowering the cost to families for regulated daycare, as well as the province's investment into early childhood educators, the reality is that there are still many families in our province without access to a child care provider. This obviously impedes their ability to work, as they only have so much paid leave and not all families have extended family members to help out.

I know I've heard the minister say he's hopeful this situation will improve in September, but that does nothing to help families between now and then.

So I ask the minister: What additional steps are you going to take to improve access to much-needed child care services in this province?

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

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

I thank the Member for his question, because it is a legitimate concern. It's a very legitimate issue, Mr. Speaker, and we are working hard to expand the access to early learning and child care.

The Premier, Mr. Speaker, when he first became Premier of the province wanted to make early learning and child care more affordable. We've reduced the fees to \$25 a day, now to \$15 a day. That has put additional pressure on the accessibility because more people can afford early learning and child care.

So we've opened up additional seats in our post-secondary, we're introducing a wage grid to ensure that early learning educators are receiving the pay that they deserve and should be recognized for the important work they do. We are going across the province, Mr. Speaker, looking to encourage more home-based operations.

There are a number of issues, which I obviously don't have time to get into today, but it is a legitimate issue and it deserves the attention.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### **Tabling of Documents**

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

**P. FORSEY:** I want to table this document, Speaker.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** The Member needs leave to table documents. Does he have leave?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Yes.

**SPEAKER:** Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, I'd like to table this document. It's a document concerning the farmers and the cost of production that they're having in our province. It's what we've been hearing the last few weeks: high cost of fuels and the cost of grains and fertilizers, all that sort of stuff.

Those farmers have written a letter to the federal minister. It's been cc'd to the Premier and our provincial minister, but the minister seems to say that he's seeing nothing or hearing anything from the farmers.

Anyway, I'd just like to table this.

**SPEAKER:** Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

#### Notices of Motion

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

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

I give notice that I will –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the protection from my own, I think.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That notwithstanding Standing Order 9, on Tuesday, May 17, 2022, this House shall meet at 3 p.m. for Routine Proceedings and to conduct Government Business and, if not adjourned earlier, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

#### Petitions

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

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

These are the reasons for this petition:

WHEREAS the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are paying record high fuel prices to fuel their vehicles and to heat their homes; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador failed to implement the home heating fuel rebate to offset home heating costs; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador failed to address the rising cost of living by tackling the cost of fuel.

THEREFORE, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately address the rising cost of fuel by reducing the provincial gas tax on tax to immediately address the rising cost of living by implementing a home fuel heating rebate and to cancel any further increases in the fuel taxes in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, this petition was signed by people all over the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, many of them whom actually reside in districts held by Liberal Members at the moment. So it is not just one area of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that is concerned about the high cost of living, by the high cost of gasoline prices, by the high cost of home heating fuel.

One of the things in this petition talked about immediately addressing the rising cost of living by implementing a home fuel-heating rebate. Now we just heard the minister say she is prepared to implement a home fuel-heating rebate. If she is prepared to do it, then I am simply going to say: When will it be implemented?

But that is what we need to know. That is what the people want to know. They want to know that there will be a home fuel heating rebate program coming for them. So that's the real answer that they are looking for.

This petition, as I said, represents people all over the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and I call upon the government to take the action necessary.

Thank you.

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

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

Approximately 100,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador live with mental illness. Only about 40 per cent of people affected by mental illness and addiction seek help. Seventy per cent of mental illness develops during childhood and adolescence and most go undiagnosed. And less than 20 per cent receive appropriate treatment. Emergency and short-term care isn't enough and it is essential more long-term treatment options are readily available.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide access to long-term mental health care that ensures continuity of care beginning with psychiatric and neuropsychological assessments being more accessible to the public so they can access proper mental health treatments and supports on a regular and continuous basis.

I've presented this petition, or spoke on mental health many times in this House. I've gotten many responses, all on what's being done and I don't think we're arguing that. There are programs and services out there that are offered. The staff of the minister's department, Health and Community Services, gave us a wonderful overview the other day of the programs and services that are available to those suffering mental illness. However, the fact remains from people with lived experiences, they are still lacking the long-term continuity of care treatment.

In fact, when I spoke to the 811 line and I spoke of some actual issues with it that were brought to me, I was accused of fear mongering. Now just within five minutes, I got handed another email from another resident, speaking to the 811 line. So they're crying out. I'll just quote: I called 811. I was not directed to anyone nor any voice telling me if this was a mental health issue to press a telephone keypad number to receive assistance. I was given a voice message to call the crisis toll-free number.

So when people are reaching out and telling us that, then there's an issue. Again, I'm not arguing that the programs that are out there are not sufficient; they are for what they're there for. But we still have issues; there are still people falling through the cracks, and mental health care is too critical to ignore.

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

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

I was pleased to see the Member opposite at that mental health and addictions technical briefing. He must have missed the bit when we talked about the Flexible Assertive Community Treatment teams and the assertive community treatment teams. Their mandate is to provide long-term, community-based support for people with mental health or addictions problems.

You do not need a referral to access a FACT team. You can get to them through 811. You can directly self-refer. Those supports are in place, there are 1,100 clients being serviced currently and there is capacity for at least another 700 on our existing teams currently in place.

With reference to the 811 line, 40 per cent of the calls to 811 in the last two weeks have been of an information or a routine nature. Those people who identify as having mental health issues or requiring symptoms amount to 59 per cent and they were all triaged, Mr. Speaker. Those calls are documented. If the Member opposite has the time and date of that call where the person was inappropriately managed, I can investigate it.

Thank you.

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

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

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

The reason for this petition: The need for senior accessible housing and home care services in Labrador West is steadily increasing. Lifelong residents of the region are facing the possibility of leaving their homes in order to afford to live or receive adequate care. Additional housing options, including assisted living care facilities, like those found throughout the rest of the province for seniors has become a requirement for Labrador West. The requirement is currently not being met.

WHEREAS the seniors in our province are entitled to peace and comfort in the homes where they have spent their lifetime contributing to its prosperity and growth; and

WHEREAS the means of increasing the senior residents of Labrador West to age happily in place are not currently available in the region;

WHEREUPON we the undersigned, your petitioners, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to allow seniors in Labrador West to age in place by providing affordable housing options for seniors and assisted living care facilities for those requiring care.

Once again, I bring this petition to the House of Assembly. Just to make note, some of the signatures on these petitions are people that I grew up around, seniors that I know now. Many of them have been a part of my life. Some were teachers; some worked in the grocery store and some of them on different committees or coached any kind of sport or things like that. These are people that have contributed their entire life to making Labrador West the place that it is today. And it's a great place, wonderful place to raise your family. Lots of opportunity, lots of everything like that. But there's just nothing there for seniors, and that's the problem.

These people have contributed a massive part of their life to the region and right now they do not have access to adequate home care. They don't have access to personal care facilities. There's a wait-list for long-term care. If you meet some

certain thresholds, most times these people are having serious discussions with their family about having to leave a region that they spent their entire life in.

Where else in this province right now, other than maybe Torngat Mountains, but other than that where else in this province do you have to sit down and have a serious conversation about moving 1,000 kilometres away because you grew old? That is the thing there. And that's the thing that it's scary for the residents of Labrador West. That they spent their entire lives in a region and now, in their retirement and their later years, they can't enjoy their children and they can't enjoy their grandchildren's company because they grew old. And that's the sad part of the reality of it is right now in Labrador West.

So, once again, I ask for serious consideration about seniors' care in Labrador West because it has become a serious, serious problem right now for seniors.

Thank you.

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

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

This has something to do with science, but I'll get into that in a little while ago. This is a repeat petition, and I'll give you a little anecdote to share why I want to bring it up again a second time to the House.

There have been many incidents of vehicles being damaged by potholes within the District of Bonavista, leading to frustration and added cost of living for residents and visitors. Many of these potholes remain unaddressed for lengthy periods of time after damages occurred and notification of the danger was communicated to TI.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to accept liability for these damages and/or repair these holes, alleviating the danger for drivers in a far more urgent manner.

Mr. Speaker, my wife had called me to the living room on Easter Sunday. She referenced my neighbour, who is in his mid-70s, with a wheelbarrow going down the street. Keep in mind, not many times you would see that. This gentleman, GP from George's Brook-Milton, one of my neighbours, which I had no knowledge of, was going down to repair a hole on the main road going to Random Island so the family, when they came to visit in the afternoon, wouldn't do any damage on the hole that was there.

Every time I was leaving my street, we would circumvent that hole. I probably should have taken the initiative earlier to do something about it, but I talked to a member of the local service district in Newmans Cove yesterday and he had said that hole that was there, which was rather deep, remained unfilled.

I know the complications in doing it, and I have the utmost sympathy. The only thing I was saying I was hoping – and this is where the science comes in and the ingenuity – is that we ought to have a system or something better that would make sure that residents that travel our roads in Newfoundland and Labrador ought not to be facing these potholes when they're discovered.

There ought to be something done to make sure that they don't pass in the following days or weeks and have to, possibly, do damage to their vehicle. That might not be a tall order, but one thing I had mentioned before – in the 15 seconds – was that even the grey trucks that went, had a load of class A that was in the back, could shovel a few in the pothole.

I don't know if there's safety issues with that, but that is one that keeps coming up in my district.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you.

I say to the Member, in response to that, that 71-year-old man is a good man, no doubt about it.

I'll tell you what I'll do – I don't have it here with me, but I'm going to table a letter that explains when, how and why you should fill a pothole and it was by the former minister of Transportation that is now your leader. I will be happy to table it for you and let you have a read.

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

### Orders of the Day

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

**S. CROCKER:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000, Bill 54, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000," carried. (Bill 54)

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 54)

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

When shall the said bill be read the second time?

**S. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 54 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety:

THAT, in accordance with Standing Order 8(8), notwithstanding the Parliamentary Calendar issued by the Clerk for 2022 or any Standing Order to the contrary, the Parliamentary Calendar for the fall 2022 sitting of the House shall be modified as follows:

AND THAT this House will meet in accordance with the daily schedule prescribed in the *Standing Orders* as follows:

From October 3, 2022, to October 20, 2022, inclusive; and from October 31, 2022, to November 10, 2022, inclusive;

AND THAT the week of October 24, 2022 shall be a constituency week.

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

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.

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, second reading of Bill 52.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that Bill 52, An Act To Amend The Petroleum Products Act, now be read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 52, An Act To Amend The Petroleum Products Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Petroleum Products Act." (Bill 52)

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

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

I am very pleased to open debate on Bill 52, An Act to Amend the Petroleum Products Act.

The *Petroleum Products Act* first received Royal Assent in this House on May 24, 2001, introducing the regulation of fuel pricing to Newfoundland and Labrador. Fuel pricing regulations has been in place for over 20 years in Newfoundland and Labrador and it also exists in all of our Atlantic provinces.

Bill 52 is about improving the fuel pricing process within the current regulatory regime. The regulatory regime provides stability, although, sometimes right now, it doesn't seem that way. It provides transparency, this bill which we are trying to improve on, and provides a level of certainty of price adjustments and protects consumers from uncontrolled changes and ensures that prices are fair in rural and remote areas of Newfoundland and Labrador.

When the first bill for this act was introduced in the House of Assembly on April 9, 2001, it was in response to the many presentations that government had received from formal advocacy groups, as well as feedback from the general public regarding fuel pricing related to price fluctuations being endured by consumers at the time.

The purpose of the bill debated in 2001 was to ensure a level of transparency for when fuel prices rose and fell and to provide



Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with a level of certainty and predictability for a prescribed time outside of when there would be price adjustments.

The 2001 bill established an independent Petroleum Products Pricing commissioner with authority to set maximum wholesale and retail prices in a manner as prescribed to ensure a balancing of the competing objectives of consumers, retailers, wholesalers and independent operators.

In 2004, this was revisited, Speaker, and the commissioner was replaced by the Public Utilities Board, kind of the structure that we currently have in place at the moment.

So since that time, the balancing of competing objectives is still a critical element of the fuel pricing mechanism to ensure people and businesses throughout Newfoundland and Labrador have continued access to a steady supply of petroleum products. The components of fuel price, subject to the board's authority, are prescribed in the petroleum products regulations.

This includes the benchmark, which is pricing determined by an external source. This is a company called Platts US Marketscan, an internationally recognized, used and accepted source for fuel pricing information. Platts are also used by New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. And the markups to reflect various costs, including transportation, volume of sales, distribution, storage and inventory turnover rates as necessary to get the fuel to the people of the province. So these are important, the crux of the mechanisms that make up our fuel pricing at the moment.

The regulations also allow for establishing different price zones within Newfoundland and Labrador to accommodate unique aspects within the province. So neither the board, nor the petroleum products legislation have a role in the taxation components of fuel pricing. It is the board's mandate to set the maximum price for selling petroleum products. A supplier or retailer may sell it at a lower price, should they do so.

And this is why we see, generally on a Thursday, the price is higher and then during the week it goes down a little bit. That's because the

maximum price comes out on Thursday, generally, and then during the week some retailers reduce the prices.

When price regulation was introduced in 2001 maximum prices were adjusted monthly. In November 2006, the board moved to biweekly adjustments. In January 2010, the board moved to weekly adjustments, consistent with the other Atlantic provinces.

So the board makes regular weekly maximum price adjustments for all products every Thursday at 12:01 a.m. and the maximum price – I recently learned this, Mr. Speaker, it might be interesting to anyone listening – is determined using the average of the Platts US Marketscan for the preceding seven-day period, up to the Tuesday of that week. So they take the average from the Platts over the past seven-day period, up to Tuesday, and that is the price for that Thursday at 12:01 a.m.

The board also has the authority for intervening adjustments in extraordinary circumstances in response to significant volatility in commodity market pricing. I know we have seen that used a lot lately. Between January 2010 and February 2022, the board used this intervention authority only one time. So for the first 12 years that this new regime was in place, they only used this intervening adjustments once. Obviously, we have seen that a lot more now, Speaker. During the recent unprecedented volatility in commodity pricing, the board had to intervene at least eight times.

Speaker, there is no doubt that the process to determine fuel pricing is complicated, with very complex calculations, and takes into consideration many factors. Factors such as transparency, delivery and storage, these all affect prices within the Newfoundland and Labrador market.

In general, Newfoundland and Labrador would experience higher transportation costs, as we are further removed from the sources of fuel supply. This is a key contributor to the prices in the province being higher than in the Maritimes. While oil is produced here in our offshore, it is traded in the global market and shipped outside the province, including to the US and Europe. While previously some had been refined at the

Come By Chance refinery, the refinery ceased crude oil refining operations in March 2020 and with the ownership change in late 2021, the facility is now being converted to renewable fuel production.

It is also not realistic to expect uniform pricing throughout the province. Different areas of the province require variation in pricing due to various factors, depending on location and the continued year-round accessibility. Transportation costs would be higher or could be higher in those areas that are further from ports where the fuel comes into the province.

So some areas, such as in areas of Labrador, due to the remoteness and sea ice conditions have no fuel deliveries during the winter. Retailers would purchase large volumes in advance of the winter period. Therefore, fuel pricing will continue to reflect pre-winter prices and not be subject to fluctuation in other areas of the province in which fuel shortage volumes are continuously replenished at varying prices.

The regulations account for these differences. There are 26 zones and subzones established within the province and pricing is determined accordingly for each. Global factors have a significant impact on fuel pricing, as we know, as does all prices in general. This is clear from the impacts on pricing resulting in the COVID-19 pandemic and obviously now the recent Russian invasion of Ukraine.

These global factors influence supply and demand, which is the base economical determinant of pricing. An increase in demand or decrease in supply results in price increases, and the opposite in decreased prices.

Speaker, as when this legislation was first introduced, we are obviously – I know all my colleagues are hearing concerns from consumers and advocacy groups around fuel pricing, transparency and extraordinary adjustments made by the Public Utilities Board. So I really do understand how completely frustrating it is for people, things have been going up and down; recently, yesterday prices went up a lot, and who knows what's going to happen tomorrow. Today is Thursday, in addition to the extraordinary prices, there will be another change today.

Another area I know for frustration for a lot of people is the five cents that's added on within the wholesaler markup right now, as a result of the request from NARL a year and a half ago.

So, Speaker, we have listened to these concerns and one of the main purposes of Bill 52 is to improve the transparency in the fuel-pricing process. Specifically, the bill will require the Public Utilities Board to make available to the public the maximum wholesale and retail prices; the minimum and maximum markup between the wholesale price and the retail price; and the procedure for determining adjustments to the petroleum base wholesale and retail price.

By making this information clearly available, people in the province will be able to see what is making up the fuel prices being paid at the pumps. People will be able to see, it'll be written down, the procedure used by the Public Utilities Board to make fuel adjustments.

Having access to this information will improve public awareness and knowledge of the processes and may answer questions that were previously unanswered. Speaker, there may be future opportunities to enhance transparency through the publication of additional information by the Public Utilities Board. In recognition of this, the bill will also provide government with authority to establish further requirements for the board to publish additional information to improve the public's knowledge of the fuel-pricing process.

So government will continue to monitor the fuel-pricing process to ensure an appropriate level of transparency. And while the board currently has information on its website, the key information regarding fuel-pricing process is not readily accessible by the public. With these new requirements, the board will make this critical information more accessible.

Speaker, Bill 52 will provide government with increased opportunities to ensure appropriate pricing formulas are being used, and that appropriate costs are assigned to the respective components of the fuel price. The act currently only allows me as a minister to require the Public Utilities Board to complete a review of the benchmark price. The benchmark price is the same benchmark price used in all provinces in

Canada, so that ability provides little value right now when we look at the total price at the pumps being charged.

However, the benchmark is used as a prominent pricing source throughout the world and by all Atlantic provinces. In addition now, Bill 52 will allow me to direct the Public Utilities Board to review not just the benchmark, but any of the pricing components, including the various markups being charged. And I would say the markup is the area the least understood by consumers, and directing a review, the subsequent information from a review would provide clearer understanding of these markups.

Bill 52 will also increase opportunity for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to have a voice in the fuel-pricing process, as the review of regulated prices would be open to public hearings where concerns and opinions could be expressed directly to the Public Utilities Board.

Speaker, as you can see, these amendments to the *Petroleum Products Act* will not only improve transparency, they will help increase public awareness and contribute to greater understanding of the fuel-pricing process.

Yesterday, my colleague, the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, announced that government is reviewing the legislation applicable to the Public Utilities Board over the next few months. Given the strong consumer protection and industry regulation of the Public Utilities Board, this review is extremely important to ensure the procedures and practices of the Public Utilities Board, including the legislation, are up to date, reflect best practices and achieve its objectives in the best interest of the people of the province. Information gathered during this review will help determine policy direction for any potential legislative amendments.

I'm very pleased to bring Bill 52 forward to my colleagues today. We are aiming to demystify the gas-pricing process for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and get a clear understanding of the cost inputs that particularly make up the markups that contribute to the gas prices that we see at the pumps.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

It's certainly a privilege to stand in this House and be able to speak again to represent the District of Ferryland. Thanks again to the constituents for voting me in.

First of all, I'd like to recognize and thank the officials in the Department of Digital Government and Service NL for providing our caucus with a briefing of the bill. It certainly goes over well to be able to get some information on it.

Digital Government and Service NL is one of the departments with the most legislation. It seems like we have debated a lot of legislation over that department in the last number of years. Some I agree with and some I've raised concerns about and questions about, but regardless of the amount of work done by the officials it has been a tremendous amount of work done.

Hopefully, when we debate this, when we make an agreement, it's either going to be in legislation or regulations that they stick to what they're going to do this time and review it and we'll have some say in it. We had some say in it the last time, but it changed in regulations. Hopefully, when that comes up this time, we'll have some say and it will be able to stay the way that we, I'm going to say, debated it or planned it, or have a look at it, not the way some of the other legislation has gone.

This bill we are debating today makes the changes to the *Petroleum Products Act*. For anyone at home listening who may not be familiar with this act, it governs how the price of motor fuel and heating fuel is established. Essentially, it is the act which the PUB follows in pricing these fuels.

The bill before us stands to do three things. First, it aims to increase the transparency behind the pricing of fuel products. Secondly, it gives the minister the authority to order reviews in how petroleum products are priced. And, thirdly, it

allows the minister to direct that a public hearing occur and a review that she orders.

What is important to note, especially for motorists watching, is this bill will allow a review of how gas prices are set. And I'm sure the general public when they – I just listened to the minister and her opening remarks. She said it's been changed eight times, I think, since they started the fuel pricing increases. Normally the prices change on Thursday and people – I'm not going to say they look forward to it, but they're sort of sitting and listening and they listen to the radio if they're going to fill up their vehicles. If they're not going to fill up their vehicles, they'll prolong it. If the gas goes down, they'll wait until the next day.

But what happens is – and I don't know if that can be coordinated. I'm sure the PUB are doing what they have to do, but they're coming out with a price increase today; there's another increase coming tomorrow. Then next week there might be an increase from the PUB or – well, they've done it eight times and it doesn't seem to coincide with Thursday.

If you did it on Thursday and it all went together maybe it might have been – it's not any easier, but it will sound easier. If it goes up 17 cents today and eight cents tomorrow then 25 cents on the one day, it is what it is, but we are hearing increase after increase after increase. And it's still going up, but maybe they can coordinate that and that's something that, with a review, that maybe can happen, but it's something to consider, I would think.

It's just the mindset of people. We have an increase tomorrow, which is normally Thursday, like I said, and then we're going to have another, or the PUB will have a look and we don't know what day it's going to be. It could be on the weekend. Here's somebody saying there's going to be a 10-cent increase tomorrow, 11-cent increase on Wednesday.

So it's something that we certainly should look at and hopefully coordinate. I don't know if that can happen, but I think it's not going to make it any easier on the people if the price is going up for sure. But, psychologically, I think it might be a benefit, that's all. Just something that we can throw in there.

We are in a debate and in legislation, so we're throwing out stuff that hopefully people are listening to on the other side and maybe take into consideration that when you do a review that maybe that can happen; it can all happen the one time. But happening two or three times a week is really hard on the mentality of all people in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. So it's something that, again, it's not what we want to see, but it's an increase. Let's make it happen once, not three or four times a week.

I'm hopeful that this bill will eventually result in lower gas prices, but that is uncertain right now. Right now the people in this province are hurting. I have an email here from a lady the other day. She filled up her oil barrel last week, \$800 or \$900; it's gone up to \$2,000 now. Where does it stop? And this is where it's very important. So this review is going to come up – how long is a review going to take? That's one of our questions. That's something that we're asking. If this is going to take five or six months, it doesn't help the people of the province today. They're looking for relief somehow for the next few months with this market as volatile as it is.

We seem to blame everything on COVID. I know COVID is not over, but we're all back to work. There are people back to work; life is starting to move on. We wear our masks, we do what we have to do and the people are still using blame for COVID. Yes, it is. All the infrastructure or all these businesses are all back up and running. Are they at full capacity? I'm going to say pretty close to it. If they weren't at full capacity, at least around here – and I know sometimes this is not affected here, but most of the businesses around here, they're back in order. So COVID excuses have to die somewhere along the way. We have to move on past it. We really have to move past it and it's something that we have to stop harping on.

We know the war over in the Ukraine is certainly an issue and there's no doubt about fuel supplies. It is certainly an issue. We can't deny that. That is certainly a fact. But somehow the government in this day and age, the way we are – we're talking about a budget and we're bringing up people's requests to us on emails, that we have to give them help. They are really hurting.

I know you hear that over there, I know you do, but they need help now. This review is going to happen, and I'm going to say it could be five or six months, it could be longer, who knows.

We're hoping it's going to be quick, but it's not going to help us in the next three or four weeks. We have Come Home Year coming.

I spoke to a lady the other day. They're coming to Trepassey. Her restaurant is booked up. Come Home Year is a big item, no question about it. I'm sure all the districts, they might not have Come Home Year in their districts – I have four in my district – but they have all kinds of events that they're bringing people into their communities. They might not call it a Come Home Year, but the whole province is having it.

Let's give them so relief. Some people are staying away because of fuel prices. Yes, I know it's not your fault, but we can help alleviate. We can help alleviate some of these issues for the people of the province. We really can do something with the taxes, supposing it's for two or three months. We can be able to give the people a break, hopefully that this gets back in order. Hopefully this war ends and we get back to some type of normalcy for people.

We don't want to be listening to that no more than you do, there's no question, but we really have to help the people of the province. This is the reason for this. What I'm talking about is how quick it's going to be done and that's the issue.

We'll have some questions on that, obviously, but right now it's what we need. We need help now and the people need the help right now. That's what we've been asking. That's what we've been really pushing on because that's what we're hearing. It's something that we certainly have to get at.

I hope the minister, as I said, can outline the time frame that we're talking about here. If we pass legislation today, when will the PUB start a review? That's a good question to be able to know, when this comes back and you're going to be able to speak to it. How long will the public hearings take place? How long will the review take? How long until the PUB gives the minister a recommendation?

If we speak to them or you speak to them, how long before they get back to you? I guess what I'm saying to you, Speaker, is if this House passes this bill today, how long until motorists see relief at the pumps? That is the bottom line here that we're asking: How long before they see relief at the pumps? That's an important question; gas is over \$2 a litre right now and I get questions every day from people about that.

People need to see a price decrease and I just spoke about it; they really need to see a price decrease. We all do; not only the people of the province, we all do. We've all got our own personal vehicles home that – we all have to pay. Everybody's got to pay. I know that we spoke about farmers here today; we spoke about fisheries and all those people that are using fuel. Even though there's no carbon tax on it, they're still paying more for fuel and it's costing them a fortune. The price of everything has gone up. There's something that we can do with fuel; that is the main concern of the people of this province is, certainly, fuel.

While this legislation may help in time to help reduce the price of gas, or at the very least provide improvements in how gasoline and how other fuels are priced, it can only do so much. This bill will not result in less taxes being charged on gasoline, diesel and other fuels. Only the Finance Minister has the ability to change those taxation rates. Perhaps the people of this province and motorists would be better off if we're debating a resolution for the Finance Minister to lower taxes charged on gasoline.

But the Finance Minister hasn't brought in that resolution to the House, so here we are debating a bill from the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, which may or may not help the price of gasoline right now today. Also, I'd have to wonder, is the Public Utilities legislation review just intended to make a distraction away from the tax increase.

The Minister of Digital Government and Service NL said: I completely understand how frustrating it is when the fuel prices rise and fall, and how frustrating it is to not be able to access a transparent breakdown of what makes up the price of fuels. If passed, the changes we are introducing to the *Petroleum Products Act* will lead to better information for customers.

But what about addressing the ones that cause the fuel prices – the tax increase imposed by the government? Addressing how frequently and transparently fuel prices are raised misses a key point, that's one of the things that are driving the increases in this government policy. We really need to get down to be able to help the people. We really have to sit back, look in the mirror and help the people of the province today, this week and next week before we finish at the end of May or June, whenever it is. We really got to get help for the people.

I'd like to take a moment to drive a little bit of this legislation; the act has being amended to increase transparency. These amendments will require the PUB to make public more details about the price of fuels. The board will have to make public the maximum wholesale and retail prices, the minimum and maximum markup between the wholesale and the retail prices, the procedure to determine adjustments to the petroleum board base wholesale price and retail price and any other matters prescribed in regulations.

Transparency is a good thing; I don't have any concerns about this. I believe that motorists should know where their money is going; absolutely we should know where it's going. The bill I previously mentioned will give greater ability to the minister to order a review. Currently, the legislation allows the PUB to review on its own motion the maximum markup between the wholesale and the retail price. The minister has the ability to direct the PUB to review the pricing mechanisms for the benchmark prices. But the minister cannot direct the PUB to review the markup between the wholesale and the retail.

This bill will give the minister the ability to request that the board review the sustainability of the pricing mechanism for benchmark prices, the maximum markup between the wholesale and retail prices, the different maximum and wholesale and retail prices for each and the different maximum wholesale prices within a zone to ensure they are justified. When you were speaking, Minister, on your first notes, I think you said there were 26 zones and subzones. That's a lot to take in when they're looking at those prices, so certainly a review would be warranted on that.

The minister would be able to direct the PUB to hold a public hearing as a part of the review, directed by the minister. When the minister makes such a request, the PUB will provide the minister with the recommendations. I'd like to talk about this part of the legislation: The minister will be able to direct the PUB to conduct a review. I assume that this will be done.

The minister will receive the recommendations from the PUB. I wonder if the minister will commit to making them public, not like our Rothschild report. Will you commit to making them public? That's one big issue here – and it's not an issue, it's something that I'm just wondering, we throw that out there, if you're going to make this public or we're going to hide it?

I also note that the PUB – because right now looking back at it, you look at the PUB increasing prices. Really outside of a few people that are watching this, the general public really doesn't understand, and sometimes nor do I, the price of gas and how it's all affected. We need to be more transparent and certainly get that out there for people to see.

I also note that it is the PUB who will conduct a review of the PUB's own pricing mechanism. I don't discount the capability of the PUB, but I do know that there are other price-setting experts in this country, some of who watch our gas and fuel prices. So I hope that they are engaged in the process and they have great expertise that we can learn from.

Also, in my closing comments I will say that – and I'll go through some mandate letters that they're supposed to be commanded by.

About the board itself right now, the board is an independent quasi-judicial tribunal constituted under the *Public Utilities Act*. Created by statute, as you said, in 1949, the board is comprised of four full-time commissioners appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, including the chair, chief executive officer and vice-chair.

The *Public Utilities Act* gives the chair and the chief executive officer the full authority for the overall operation, management and financial administration of the board. The board's

functional organizational structure consists of regulatory and legal services and corporate services.

Regulatory and legal services oversee the board's regulatory mandate with responsibility for coordination and management of applications, research, investigations, compliance monitoring, financial technical reviews and customer complaints. Corporate services is responsible for the management of the administrative functions of the board, including finance, communications, information technology and human resource services.

The board is funded through assessment charged to regulated industries or companies on a cost-recovery basis from applicants, parties involved in a specific proceeding and/or investigation. In accordance with sections 13 and 14 of the *Public Utilities Act*, the board levies an annual assessment to regulated entities to cover its estimated general operating expenses for the year. Assessments to each regulated industry or company vary depending on the actual allocation of work performed by the board in the year.

Public hearing and investigations funded outside normal budgeted activities on a cost-recovery basis in accordance with applicable legislation under section 90 of the *Public Utilities Act* details the cost which may be recovered incidental to a matter.

The mandate and the line of the business for the board is responsible for the regulation of the electrical utilities in the province to ensure that the rates charged are just and reasonable and the service provided is safe and reliable. In 2004, as you had mentioned earlier, the board assumed responsibility for regulation of maximum prices for the petroleum board products in the province in accordance with the *Petroleum Products Act*.

The board is also responsible for the supervision of rates charged by automobile insurers for the various automobile insurance coverages, limited regulation of the motor carrier industry in relation to certain passenger and ambulance operations, as well as conducting hearings and other required activities under the *Expropriation Act*.

The board's jurisdiction is defined by the following legislation, which it administers: the *Public Utilities Act* RSNL1990, the *Electrical Power Control Act*, the *Petroleum Products Act*, the *Automobile Insurance Act*, the *Motor Carrier Act*, the *Expropriation Act*, *An Act to Amend the Electrical Power Control*, the motor vehicle transport act, and the *Public Utilities Acquisition of Lands Act*. These all fall under the responsibility of various departments of government, including the Department of Justice and Public Safety; Digital Government and Service NL; *Automobile Insurance Act*; *Insurance Companies Act*; *Petroleum Products Acts*; and Industry, Trade and Technology, *Electrical Power Control Act*

To deliver its regulatory mandate, the board conducts public hearings, technical conferences and stakeholder meetings, compliance moderating audits, detailed technical financial reviews and investigations.

Hearings held by the board in the discharge of this mandate are quasi-judicial in nature and are conducted in accordance with the provisions of the *Public Inquiries Act* and the board's regulations – Newfoundland Regulations 39196. Orders issued by the board have the force of law and can only be appealed to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland, Court of Appeal.

So in my closing commentary I will say this. I am glad to see that finally one minister on the Liberal side is trying to do something. I am going to say three, probably, are going to be involved about the high cost of gasoline. The people in this province need the Minister of Finance and the Premier to stop ignoring the people and take action to lower the price of gas and heating fuels.

The people of this province need action and we need action today, so please listen to them.

Thank you.

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

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

I would like to speak to these amendments for this legislation this afternoon. I will just follow

up on the Member for Ferryland's comments right there because I agree with some of the comments that he had this afternoon. You know, the amendments to this legislation clearly is not going to fix the price of gasoline for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians this afternoon, but it is one thing that we can do today to try and deal with this issue in the medium and long term.

Certainly, if there is anything that government can do – and if Opposition can support it as well that would be great – to show the people of the province that we are all together on this issue and the cost of living in the province. If there is something we can do, I think we should do it and we should take those steps.

It might not be a huge step. It might not be a quick fix or anything like that but it is something that we can do and we should do all that it is in our power to address the cost of living and specifically the cost of gas in this province. If this is something that will alleviate that in the future – whether it be next week or next month or maybe even when we are all gone from here – I think it is a good thing that we are doing it. I commend the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL for taking that step here this afternoon.

Because we all do know that the cost of gas is hitting everyone. I do hear the Members talk about calls and letters and emails they get from their constituents. Yeah, we get them, too, absolutely. Let's face it; we are all driving cars, too. Some of us farther than others. I'm lucky enough that I don't have to drive very far but I have still go to fill up – what's that?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** You can walk.

**J. HOGAN:** Yeah. Well, I think we are on Windsor Lake right now, aren't we? So, yeah, I can walk but I don't. But I do fill up my car as well. We all have things to do on a daily basis. I have to drive kids around and I have to get groceries. I do have to come and go from work and go around the province as well as a minister in this province.

So we all feel the pinch and it is not pleasant. It is not something that any of us are happy to have to address but I do hope and I think that

certainly the Member opposite acknowledges that this is one small thing that we can do here this afternoon to try and deal with this issue, as I said, in the medium – maybe short term and definitely medium and long term.

Why I say that is, of course, that the goal here with these amendments is to increase transparency in the fuel pricing process. We've had lots of debate in the House over the last week or so about who is responsible for gas prices and we've talked about the war in Ukraine. We've talked about government. We've talked about what government can do and certainly we've talked about the Public Utilities Board.

It is the Public Utilities Board, as we all know – it should be very, very clear, it's the Public Utilities Board that sets these prices that we end up paying at the gas stations. But what we don't know is all the details surrounding how they come up with their numbers. Not that we question the work that they're doing, but we don't know the details of the work that they're doing.

The changes proposed in this bill will allow the minister to request a review of any component of the regulated price, which includes the wholesaler and the retail markup costs. Now there were some comments about when this is going to come into effect. I think everyone would know that once this bill receives Royal Assent, if it passes, then immediately the minister will be able to take the action as outlined in this legislation.

Of course, what the minister can then do is to request that the Public Utilities Board review what I just talked about, the suitability of the pricing mechanism for benchmark prices, the maximum markup between the wholesale price to the retailer and the retail price to the consumer, or the different maximum wholesale and retail prices that a wholesaler and a retailer may charge.

Once that request is done, another thing that can happen is the minister can also request that a public hearing take place with regard to how these costs are calculated. Right now, that doesn't happen. It's sort of like going down to court and shutting the doors and crossing your



fingers and hoping your lawyer comes out and tells you whether you won or not. That's how the Public Utilities Board is sort of working right now. The goal of this is to make this more transparent so we can see the work that they're doing, we can have a hearing if someone needs to ask questions about how they're coming to these conclusions. That will bring clarity to the public and the government and Opposition about how these prices are being determined.

As I said yesterday, when we were speaking to certain members of the media, we don't know what we don't know. So we don't know that information right now, and maybe when we do have that information, we'll be able to take a second step and deal with the pricing of gas. That's something that I look forward to when these amendments pass, and if the minister decides to proceed with the public hearing on these issues.

Again, as I said, I think government has an obligation to do anything it can, certainly within the fiscal envelope that we have and the legislative opportunities that we have. This is one of those.

Another thing that we're doing, as well, is a broader review of the Public Utilities Board. That would include if anything might come up with regard to this legislation, we can bring forward amendments when the Public Utilities Board review is complete. It also involves reviewing the electrical utilities regulation in this province, which is also a thing that's related to the cost of living as well. It's not just gas, obviously, that people have to pay for; it's their electricity bills as well. That will be reviewed and the Public Utilities Board structure itself will be reviewed.

What is the right number of commissioners that should sit on a Public Utilities Board? What is the right number of years their terms should be? What is the right expertise these individuals should have? Is it legal, is it engineering, is it electrical regulation, is it gas price expertise? All these things we need to look at to make sure that this province is in line with other jurisdictions in this country, other provinces and even other jurisdictions that have this sort of regulation in place.

It is important to note that this was a – the review of the Public Utilities Board and the Electrical Power Control Act was a recommendation from Justice LeBlanc in *Muskrat Falls: A Misguided Project* report. I think it's good that we're following through on his recommendations. It is very good, important; a lot of work went into that inquiry. Certainly, some positives come out of it in terms of lessons learned and ways to go forward in the future on how we conduct public utilities in this province.

Speaker, having said all that, I look forward to this legislation passing and being a small step towards gas price transparency in this province. I look forward to the review of the Public Utilities Board and associate legislation as we work towards that. Hopefully within several months we can, if necessary, bring forward legislation in the fall.

With that, Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to these amendments. I commend the minister for bringing this forward as quickly as she could to address the problem that we're facing, and that the rest of the world is facing as well, with regard to gas prices.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I just wanted to focus on one aspect of this bill and it's actually not the bill, but it's the Public Utilities Board. Just some recent history in the Lake Melville area, which is part of what is called Zone 12 in terms of how the Public Utilities Board looks at the provision of gasoline across the province.

In Zone 12, mercifully – and perhaps it's a bit by luck but it is the situation – I would suggest we probably have the least expensive gasoline prices for motor vehicles not only in the province but maybe in the country. I just checked and I think we're at \$1.621. We're about to get a real shock thought when the *TUVAQ* – this is the fuel tanker – arrives. That

could be any time in the next two to three days, so folks are bracing.

The cost of living in Labrador is exorbitant but every now and then we find ourselves in these circumstances. What I wanted to provide by way of background is that I think it was 2.5 years ago I appeared before the Public Utilities Board. Fuel in Upper Lake Melville and on the North Coast of Labrador arrives by tanker. It typically arrives in the spring as ice conditions permit, and then the price would be set based on what that wholesaler is able to provide and then sell to the retailers, who in turn are having their prices set. Then in the fall, the price is set again with the arrival of the last tanker of the year.

What was happening – and one will recall the battle in fuel prices, gasoline prices; again, something well beyond our control, between Saudi Arabia and Russia. This was about 2½ to three years ago. What we found was that the prices were actually going down. Labrador was trapped. At least those of us who receive fuel in a sort of isolated context a couple of times a year, we were still paying high prices.

Then, suddenly, there was a correction and, wow, did it cause chaos in the Upper Lake Melville area. So I went before the Public Utilities Board and convinced them to recognize the fact that the fuel we receive by tanker is essentially isolated from these market conditions. I sure wish we could say the same for the entire province, but the fact is that we are no longer able to refine our fuel here and other issues around the provision of the support commodity. Of course I can use the same text around diesel, home heating fuels and so on, but I'll just focus on gasoline. That's one that we see every day, most of us.

So we've been fortunate in that time; gas prices tend to go up quickly and fall slowly. That's also a frustration of the consumers. I just want to say, when I've been able to interact with the PUB, it has been a productive conversation and a productive outcome; however, I also welcome the changes. I feel they will be very useful.

There needs to be transparency in what we're dealing with and people have a lot of questions. I hope the debate – we've had some this morning and certainly this afternoon – will

provide some of that. It's important that we understand what's going on and we ensure that we as a Legislature, the government who's calling the shots and the PUB who's setting these prices, are working in a manner that we all understand and we can support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's all I wanted to say.

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

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

I'm happy to speak on this bill today, especially given the state of the prices of fuel being \$2 a litre now in terms of gas. So I think it's really timely to be speaking on this. This bill, Bill 52, involves the *Petroleum Products Act*. That bill in essence is important because it governs how the price of motor fuel and heating fuel is established. So that has relevance for us. When we look at this particular act, it involves the PUB; it's the one that the PUB follows when it is pricing fuels. That is important for us to keep in mind when we're looking at this legislation today.

When we're examining legislation, I think it's always important to look at what the purpose or the intent of the legislation is, Mr. Speaker. In this case, I think that three objectives really have been identified by government with respect to this piece of legislation; the first involves transparency. My colleague, the Member for Ferryland, clearly outlined some of the things that are important to understand about the transparency behind the pricing of petroleum products.

Of course, no one would disagree with having legislation and with having things more transparent. We're always urging government to be more transparent when it comes to their legislation and when it comes to their policies that they put forward. That's obvious, that anything that furthers that objective of transparency is one that we would believe in.

I think the second objective is really the most important one in terms of this legislation. What it does is it gives the minister the authority to

order a review of how petroleum products are priced. I'll get to explaining my point on that further, but I'll also mention the third objective, which is to allow the minister to direct a public hearing and that occur in a review that she orders, possibly. So that also is the third piece of this legislation in terms of the objectives.

I'd like to go back to that second objective, Speaker. I think that one is the key here. The second objective is to give the minister the authority to order a review of how petroleum products are priced. Why is that important? Mr. Speaker, because I guess what it is – and for people viewing and for motorists in our province who are viewing here today, how gas prices are set is what we're talking about here. This isn't going to change overnight and I don't think anyone expects that to happen. But what this second objective really does is it will allow a review to take place. It will put in place a mechanism so that the minister and the government has that ability or that discretion, if you will, to have a review put in place.

So hopefully, this legislation, this bill, will eventually result in lower gas prices – hopefully. But again, I'd like to qualify that because that is uncertain. We don't know if that's going to happen. It provides a possible mechanism where that may happen. But there are many questions that go along with that consideration. Many questions to consider.

First of all, one of the biggest ones: How long will it take place? I mean, we don't know how long that process will be. As I said, it's not going to happen overnight, but we don't know how long it will be.

So when the Minister of Justice and Public Safety said this is not a huge step, he was right on about that. It's clearly not a huge step at all. Now, is it a step? Yes, it is a step, but again we don't know if this legislation will reduce the price of gas. It's possible. It may happen – maybe not. There's now a process in place that, perhaps, may allow for it.

We can hope that that will happen. Maybe it will provide improvements, and that's a good thing, if that happens. Maybe improvements will take place as a result of this legislation, and improvements in how gas or other fuels are

priced. It's possible. We don't know. It's uncertain, but it may happen.

So what we don't know is if the legislation will reduce the price of gas. We don't know if it will provide improvements. We're hopeful that it will happen, but we don't know. What we do know, though, Mr. Speaker, is that this legislation will not result in less tax being charged on gas, diesel and other fuels. That is really what the people of this province are concerned about right now, Mr. Speaker.

We do know that this legislation will do nothing in terms of providing less tax being charged on gas. That's not going to happen. We also do know that this government has the ability and the Finance Minister, in particular, has the ability to change taxation rates. We know that to be true. So we do know that, and we also know it would, in my view, be better – we would be, the province, and the people of this province, would be better served if we were debating a resolution here from the Finance Minister to lower taxes charged on gasoline.

That, in my view, would be the better thing that we would be doing here this afternoon is debating a resolution like that instead of the one we are now.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** But as they say hope spring eternal. We hope that this may – will – result in some improvements sometime down the road.

I just wanted to make those comments today. That concludes my speech.

Thank you.

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

I next recognize the Member for Terra Nova.

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

I'll take a few minutes just to talk to this bill. I'll echo what my colleague just said. It's a welcome start to see the transparency. Obviously, it doesn't go far enough, but it is a first step and it's a first step that's probably long overdue.

The Member for Lake Melville referenced reaching out to the PUB. I just want to read a couple of letters into the record. I wrote a letter to the PUB last summer. It was in response, obviously, to the five-cent increase from the refinery.

Basically, the letter said: “I write today after reviewing the above interim order” – which was Order P.P. 52(2020) – “of the Public Utilities Board which on October 29th, 2020 implemented, on an interim basis, a 5 cent per litre increase in gasoline and a 4 cent per litre increase in diesel, furnace oil, and stove oil.

“The order of the Public Utilities Board states that the order was made after receiving a request from NARL Marketing Limited Partnership and after receiving additional information from NARL Marketing Limited Partnership, Imperial Oil Limited, and Irving Oil.

“Given the impact that this fuel increase is having on the people of the province and given the Public Utilities Board’s reputation for making information public and readily available, I am asking that the Public Utilities Board make public the submissions and information received from these three companies referenced in the Order.

“I believe that the disclosure of such information is in the public interest as consumers are now paying more for essential fuel purchases. As this is an interim increase in price, the disclosure of such information would also ensure that the order is rescinded as soon as possible.

“I thank you in advance for consideration of this request.”

So I received a response a week later. It was pretty quick actually. The response came from Sara Kean and said: “This is in reply to your letter of July 21, 2021 in relation to the interim increases in the wholesale mark-up for gasoline of 5.0 cents per litre and for diesel, furnace oil and stove oil of 4.0 cents per litre in all zones on the island approved by the Board in Order No. P.P. 52(2020) effective October 29, 2020. You ask that the Board make public the submissions and information received from NARL Marketing Limited Partnership, Imperial Oil Limited and

Irving Oil Limited as referenced in the Board’s order.

“While the Board operates on the principles of openness and transparency there are circumstances where confidential information from regulated entities is filed and considered by the Board in its decision-making. In this case the application and supporting costing information from NARL Marketing and the additional costing information subsequently reviewed was filed with the Board on a confidential basis due to the commercial sensitivity of the information. The Board accepted the request for confidentiality on the basis and therefore cannot release the requested information.

“The Board has requested additional information from NARL Marketing Limited Partnership with respect to the costs of importing all fuels to the island portion of the province which, along with the status of standby operations, will help any further decisions on the continuation of or adjustments to this interim increase.”

Mr. Speaker, transparency is incredibly important, and I think having done an extensive amount of work out there, understanding that the original request did not come from Irving Oil or Imperial Oil, it came directly from NARL. They came in after. It really shocks me that it was approved to start with.

I say that because North Atlantic always shipped in goods – always. They shipped them in; they shipped them out. If you look at what they bring in, if you look at a ship coming in with, I believe the number is somewhere around 53 million barrels, and if you equate that out to how many litres that is and it’s five cents per litre, that’s what they’re saying was the increase in cost in shipping, which is incredibly high, in the millions of dollars. I find that very hard to believe. Because when you look at the New York Harbor benchmark prices, that indicates the cost included in that already.

Now, Imperial Oil and the other company always managed to bring oil in and they didn’t need that five cents. So I believe that the government really needs to find out how long this is going to last. We need to be upfront and honest with the public, because it’s one of the biggest things we hear from the public. This is a

cost that the public is concerned about and they pick on it all the time.

I just want to put into perspective what it means, what we're paying. It's interesting that the Minister of Digital Government and –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Service NL.

**L. PARROTT:** – Service NL – thank you – indicated that the board has no role in taxes.

So I have two vehicles, a little Honda CRV and I have a pickup truck. My pickup truck takes 120 litres. So I just wanted to put into perspective what that means. The total tax per litre right now on \$2.17 is 63.89 cents. Just about 64 cents we pay in tax on \$2.17 per litre. That means, on 120 litres, I pay \$76.67 cents in tax. That's a lot of money. But I'll dig down a little further.

On a litre of fuel right now, we pay 28.34 cents in HST, provincial. We pay 11.05 cents in carbon, arguable, provincial or federal, based on where the money goes back. The next one, provincial gas tax: 14.5 cents. Then the federal excise levy: 10 cents. So I'll put this in perspective, for every tank of fuel that I put in my truck, I pay \$34.01 in HST. I pay \$13.26 in carbon tax. I pay \$17.40 in provincial gas tax and I pay \$12 in federal tax.

Now, as the Member from Harbour Main said, we need to find a way to lower costs. Very important. I just outlined exactly how we can lower costs. Government has at its levers, HST, provincial and I believe a portion of the carbon tax if argued the right way. But that's not what we're debating here today, but, obviously, we're paying a whole lot of money in taxes when it comes to fuel.

Now take into consideration what that cost of fuel means to everything else that we do in this province. That's only gasoline I'm using as an example, diesel is actually higher when you think of the cost of diesel. Then when we think of the cost of diesel and we start talking about tractor-trailers and ships and everything else, airplanes. Everything that comes in here is shipped, obviously. So that price carries on down. Then on top of that, trucking companies are now charging somewhere around an 85 per cent fuel surcharge – 85 per cent fuel surcharge

on goods and services that come to the province. It's astronomical. I believe four years ago, the fuel surcharges were somewhere around 35 per cent. Eighty-five per cent.

Now, that's not just an increase of 50 per cent. It's an increase of 117 per cent, I guess, in my head, but it's not just about that increase. What you've got to consider is that's an increase of 85 per cent on fuel that's doubled and tripled. You've got to think about that, okay. So now you think about, we've gone from a 35 per cent fuel surcharge to an 85 per cent fuel surcharge on a much higher cost. It's affecting people and we need to find a way to do it.

This particular bill, obviously, is a good start. It is a good start. I encourage people to try and understand exactly how we get to these prices, and there's no question, there are lots of different things around the world that are having an effect on the cost of fuel. There's zero question about it.

If you look at Labrador and you look around the Island at how it's done, and the different areas, it's important that we protect areas. There's no question; we have to do that. But the reality of it is we also have to protect the people that live here. Part of that is to look at broader legislation with regard to the PUB.

The PUB has nothing to do with taxes. We heard the minister say that earlier – nothing to do with taxes. As a matter of fact, the benchmark price based on \$2.17 is \$1.27. On top of that \$1.27 is your 63.89 cents and a 25-, almost 26-cent markup – 25.93 cents is the allowable markup.

Now, oddly, sadly, industry, in most cases, marks up to the max and there's an elimination of competition. Obviously, a part of that is just because of the nature of the beast and the fact that everyone is getting their five cents to ship stuff in. I believe that they're making a lot more money now than they ever did. You have to understand the five cents is being applied to companies that never asked for it – submitted information but never requested it. Five cents a litre, it's a lot of money. If you think of five cents a litre on 120 litres, it's \$6 every time I fill up. If you're towing a trailer or you're trying to live, if you're coming across Canada, it's a lot of money.

Anyhow, the reality of this is it's going to lead into some further – obviously, the minister said – investigation into the legislation. I asked him across the hall here earlier how long he thought it would take. He said somewhere in the vicinity of five months, so next September hopefully before there's a review completed and we can get moving forward. But there have to be levers today that government can pull to lower the cost of fuel. A part of that has to be a way to look at the provincial gas tax, 14.5 cents a litre; the provincial HST, 28.34 cents a litre and, obviously, I still think of the carbon tax.

I don't have much else to say on this bill. I think it's a good first step. I applaud government for trying to do something. But I will say, as the theme of the week is, I think it just doesn't go far enough. I think we have to find a way to go further.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Speaker, I'm going to support this bill. I suspect everybody will. The thing I like about it is that it provides more openness and transparency. We hear those words kicked around in this House of Assembly an awful lot; doesn't always happen though. We talk about it, but it's not necessarily reality.

I will say that this bill, assuming that it goes through and it's followed the way it's written here, that we will indeed see some more openness and transparency, as it relates to the Public Utilities Board, as it relates to the calculations that are being used on petroleum products, and to be able to communicate effectively to the public, more effectively, just exactly how they've arrived at the numbers and the prices that they have.

So I see that as a good thing. Now, will it result in lower prices whenever a hearing does take place? Because in addition to the transparency piece, it provides the minister with the ability to call public hearings on any proposed increases

and so on, or do reviews, I should say, do reviews of fuel prices and so on. We understand that that's going to happen and this legislation will allow that to happen.

It will really be the review itself that will have the impact – potential impact I should say – on fuel prices, not this piece of legislation that we are debating here today. This gives the ability to allow that to happen. So it's all sort of part and parcel of the bigger picture, but simply passing this piece of legislation doesn't change anything tomorrow as far as fuel prices go, and it's important that everybody realize that. But it will give the ability to have those hearings, to have those reviews and to have more openness and transparency as it relates to those reviews now and for people to have a better understanding of how we arrived at the fuel prices.

I mean, I have to be honest, I've tried going in on the PUB site and looking at the numbers and so on, it's pretty convoluted, I have to say, it's pretty convoluted. I can't understand half of it. Some of it I kind of get, but other parts of it, I have to be honest, it's very complex, above my pay grade so to speak.

So it would be really good if we had that process where it would be a better explanation as to how they arrived at all the numbers they did. I would like to see, even, opportunities there for – I don't know if it is specifically outlined in here, but I guess it could be in the regulations. As opposed to just simply doing a review and having explanations when prices go up and down, I would like to see something included in the regulations or a policy at least, how they do it, that there would be more opportunities where the PUB would appear before the media, as an example, and the media or other people would be able to ask them questions. Something similar to what we see with the COVID briefings or whatever where we could, from time to time, have members of the PUB actually answering questions from the media to justify or explain how this works.

It's one thing to say we're going to produce more documents with more detail or whatever. That's not necessarily going to help people understand. There's a lot of misinformation out there I would say, Speaker – a lot of misinformation from people. Some of it, I think

people honestly don't know. Maybe some of it is just thrown out there for other purposes, to confuse people or to paint perhaps an unclear picture for whatever reason. But I can tell you that there definitely needs to be an education process for everybody as to how all of this works.

As other Members have talked about, taxation and tax, no doubt, is part of what's driving fuel prices. Obviously, government cannot control geopolitical events and so on like what's happening in Ukraine. We all understand that. There is this whole supply and demand thing and we've seen that manipulated for years and years, when you look at OPEC and how much oil they release, how much they hold back and everything, just to drive their prices so that the rich or the filthy rich can get even richer. Which is unfortunate. I don't know how you ever control that.

But there are a couple of other things there and that is (a) the taxation, and (b) the markup in terms of what the retailers can sell it for, what is their markup. I'd like to know what the markup is from a retail point of view, say, in Newfoundland compared to Nova Scotia. I continue to see people posting things in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and so on that even if you took that 5 cents that was thrown on because they have to bring fuels into the province – even if you eliminated that five cents, it's still substantially less to purchase fuel in, say, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

You see that lots of times and I've often wondered why would that be. Because if the world – if the base price is the same, in terms of the price of oil and so on, and we're allowing the additional five cents because we're bringing it on to the Island, then why is there such a big disparity between Newfoundland and Labrador's price versus other jurisdictions? Is it that we're charging a lot more tax? Is it that the retailers are allowed to realize a greater profit margin than they are in other provinces? I'm really not sure.

I'm sure there are people who know the answer to those questions. I don't know it. But it would be great to have a system where we could do that review and we could make sure that things are being done fairly, that we're being treated

fairly compared to other jurisdictions and that it could be explained to the general public in a way that everybody can understand.

The only thing that I don't see included in this bill that sort of comes to mind and I'm sort of wondering about – and maybe the minister will be able to sort of comment on that – I would have like to have seen something here as it relates to the Consumer Advocate. Because when it comes to electricity prices, we know whenever there is any kind of – any time Newfoundland Power or NL Hydro, whatever, looks for an increase and they have a hearing, the Consumer Advocate is automatically an intervener. He will actually intervene in those hearings on behalf of the general public. That's who he's there to represent.

In this case, Mr. Browne would be intervening on behalf of all of us, on those applications by Newfoundland Power and by NL Hydro. He would challenge, perhaps, the rationale as to why they are looking for these increases. He has done that on a number of occasions. I think he's done a pretty good job.

If the minister is going to call a review and it's just a review by the PUB and so on, I would like to see – if it's not the case, I don't see it here, so maybe it is automatically the case. I don't think it is. I don't think he currently gets involved in fuel prices, just electricity to the best of my knowledge. I don't see it in this bill but I would like to see a process, for example, whereby if we're doing this review, that Dennis Browne, who's our Consumer Advocate, would take part in this review on behalf of consumers to make sure that this is being done fair and square and we're all being treated equally.

I would have liked to have seen Mr. Browne, as an example, when NARL put in that request for that additional five cents, which was supposed to be temporary – and some of us at the time, I think, jokingly, said: yeah, temporary, right. It'll never be temporary; it'll never come off again. We were right.

I would have liked to see Mr. Browne, as an example, this Consumer Advocate – that would have been a place where he should have intervened. He should have intervened and he should have been able to, on behalf of the

public, a man who has the knowledge, ability and so on – for him to have the ability in that particular case to tell us and to represent the public and say: Is that five cents indeed justified? Maybe it should be two cents. How do we know that the real cost is not three cents or two cents, but they said we'll throw two or three more cents on to it, into the kitty, and we'll come up with some lame excuse as to why we need it.

Who actually picked that apart to understand exactly those additional costs and if that five cents was justified or not. Nobody – I'm not saying nobody; the PUB looked at it, but how much was it scrutinized? Were they solely focused on the consumer? They're more or less focused on the legislation. The PUB's role is more about the legislation. They're not solely focused on any one party, being the consumer.

Mr. Browne is focused solely on the consumer. That's why every time, as I say, when Newfoundland Hydro or Newfoundland Power puts in an application increase, his focus is on the consumer. He's the one who starts picking everything apart and starts challenging assumptions and numbers and everything else. In many cases, he's come up with some pretty good arguments as to why increases were being sought that truly were not justified. He should have been doing the exact same thing when it came to that increase by NARL and he should be involved in this review.

When this review happens, whenever it is, Dennis Browne, in my view as the Consumer Advocate, should automatically be part of that, with a sole focus on the consumer. I don't see that here in this bill, as I said. If he's there already by default and I'm not aware of it, and the minister can say to me: Yes, don't worry about it, Paul. The Consumer Advocate, he's already here. He's going to be there, perfect. But if it's not, then that is something that I think is missing from this piece of legislation that I would like to see amended and put in there, that the Consumer Advocate would be part of this process on an ongoing basis.

Other than that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the time. I'm finished my comments.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

I next recognize the Member for Labrador West.

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

I appreciate the comments from my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands. I agree, the Consumer Advocate should definitely be a part of the fuel pricing. At least keep an eye on it, on behalf of the residents of this province, just like he does with insurance rates and electricity. So it is something missing and I agree that we should see that in there. He does represent the consumer and the population is the consumer. The residents of this province are consumers of energy, both fuel and electrical.

Other than that, these are some welcomed amendments, I agree. There are some changes there. We want to see the math is basically what we're asking as a population. We want to see the math when they change the fuel pricing, when they work it out.

There are some challenges, we know. We have to look at the North Coast of Labrador and Labrador West who gets their fuel by rail, Lake Melville who gets theirs by boat and then the rest of the province who gets it in large bulk by boat; there are different aspects of this province. But we would like to see the PUB's math and we want to be able to say if we have the ability to go in – and I'd like to see the Consumer Advocate be able to tell the PUB: Can you double-check your math. Can we see how you did that? How did you come up with those numbers? It would be a benefit to the people of this province to actually have a bit more information and just know is the math good? Is this how it's going to work out?

There are times when, obviously, distributors and retailers do go back to the PUB and make submissions PUB based, asking for freight costs and other transportation costs or things like that. Sometimes it would be nice to have the Consumer Advocate or the minister's office be able to say, check the math. Is that legitimate? Is that what we want to see?

So I do agree that it's good but I would also like to see the Consumer Advocate a part of this, because it's the only thing with the PUB that



he's not part of, and that's fuel pricing. An interesting thing is other jurisdictions do have their Consumer Advocate as part of the fuel-pricing process.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** They do?

**J. BROWN:** Yes, they do. So it would be interesting to see that we also do the same thing here in this province. With that, I look forward to Committee.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no further speakers, if the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL speaks now, she will close debate.

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

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

I just want to thank everyone for their comments. A lot of really good discussions today. I'd like to thank the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, the Member for Lake Melville, the Member for Harbour Main, the Member for Terra Nova, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and the Member for Labrador West. Apologies if I missed anyone.

A few questions have come up, so I'll just address those now, but happy to answer as well any other questions during Committee – oh, and the Member for Ferryland.

Sorry, I missed the Member for Ferryland. So I just wanted to thank him for his feedback as well.

In terms of the timeline, Speaker, as soon as this passes and receives Royal Assent – we do have regulations. They are drafted. So that should be a week or two, maybe, to get the regulations. Then the first day or two we will have a letter go out to the Public Utilities Board requesting a review.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order please!

**S. STOODLEY:** I think we still need to exactly work out what the first thing we would direct them to do would be. I do want to, I guess, acknowledge that based on the legislation, this is giving us a lot of power to direct a lot of things. So we're going to have to see what we're going to ask for first. I don't want to ask for 50 things all at once, and public hearings and all that, because you know what, I think that would extend the timeline.

We're going to have to strategically work out what to ask for when, just to make sure that they prioritize as the government wishes them to. My anticipation is that it would not take too long, and whatever we would ask them would be a priority as it is their legislative responsibility to deliver that to government.

I guess some Members here have talked about making the review public, so it would be delivered to me, the minister, and we would release as much information as we could. In terms of commercial sensitivities, we'd have to work with the Public Utilities Board to review that. I do want to acknowledge though that if, for example, we were considering additional changes to the legislation as a result of a report, then that might become part of a Cabinet decision, in which case those documents wouldn't then be available. In general, we would make the results of the report available. They would be subject to the ATIPPA legislation as well.

I do want to just clarify. The Member for Terra Nova talked about transportation and the markup. So in terms of the price breakdown, as is on the PUB website at the moment the average New York Harbor price is just that, it's the base price. That does not include any transportation from bringing it to where it's landed in North America to Newfoundland and Labrador and to the pump.

All of those transportation costs are built in to the total allowed markup, which, one, in particular, I personally – that's kind of what I'm thinking may be the first one that we would direct a review of. The total allowed markup also includes the five cents from NARL, but we'll reflect on that further. So the total allowed markup also includes any transportation costs

that would not be in the New York Harbor benchmark price.

The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands talked about if we could ask them to appear before the media. I think the challenge here is that they are quasi-judicial. So, for example, we have residential tenancies adjudicators there. They're in a similar legal capacity, so they make decisions that are binding because we want to try and take the political involvement away from these processes. So it would not be appropriate for a residential tenancy adjudicator to, for example, go in front of the media and answer questions. The same reason our Supreme Court justices, for example, are not interviewed by the media. They don't provide that kind of information to the media.

I'm prepared to talk to the media about the results of the reports that we get and the results of this legislation. Then my colleague, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety – we can talk about the review of the Public Utilities Board. I know we have lots of gas price consumer advocates who can speak about things and the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology talks about what's going on globally with the oil and gas industry.

I guess in terms of the Consumer Advocate – I think that was raised by a few of my colleagues; I know that the Member for Labrador West raised this. In the auto insurance act and the Public Utilities Board act, those include provisions for Consumer Advocates specifically for insurance and electricity. So the Public Utilities Board pays those advocates and their costs get billed to the industry.

That's not something that's in the legislation today. Our plan is that this legislation will deliver the transparency that we needed. But it's certainly something we could look at in the future, inserting an additional Consumer Advocate into this process, as there are for other Public Utilities Board processes.

Overall, I just want to thank everyone for their feedback and comments, and happy to answer any additional questions in Committee.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 52 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Petroleum Products Act. (Bill 52)

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

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

**S. CROCKER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Petroleum Products Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole, presently, by leave. (Bill 52)

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

**S. CROCKER:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Whole to consider Bill 52.

**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 the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**SPEAKER:** All those against, ‘nay.’

Motion carried.

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

**Committee of the Whole**

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

We are now considering Bill 52, An Act To Amend The Petroleum Products Act.

A bill, “An Act To Amend The Petroleum Products Act.” (Bill 52)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

**L. O’DRISCOLL:** I just have a couple of general questions, then I’ll get into a couple of the clauses.

Why are these legislative changes being considered now by the House?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you for the question.

So I think, as a government, we recognize that the volatility of the fuel prices at the moment are very challenging for people, and it’s not always obvious why prices are going up and down. We recognize that this is a big problem for consumers. This is a very reasonable step that we can take to improve the transparency of the gas-pricing process to give members of the public a greater degree of confidence that they understand all the inputs in what they pay at the pumps.

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

**L. O’DRISCOLL:** Has the PUB asked for them?

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

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

My understanding is that this was not requested by the Public Utilities Board, but my team has worked very closely with them in developing this legislation. So they are aware of it and there is nothing outstanding that, for example, they have requested we include that we haven’t. We have worked with them very collaboratively on this.

Thank you.

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

**L. O’DRISCOLL:** Have consumer groups asked for this?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** To my knowledge, I guess, there has been no consumer group asking us to do what is in the legislation here, no.

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

**L. O’DRISCOLL:** Have retailers or wholesalers asked for this?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** To my knowledge no one has asked for this except, as a government, this is what we think is a positive step forward that we can take to improve the transparency of the gas-price process. And also, you know, this kind of forces the Public Utilities Board to relook at all of the components of their pricing because they are going to have to make them publicly available and so they are going to have to – when we see those components we can then have a conversation to say: Are these reasonable? Is the distribution cost reasonable? Are all of the inputs reasonable?

So my understanding is no one has asked for this. This is just something we put forward.

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

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

This legislation will give the minister the ability to direct the PUB to review how gasoline, home heating fuel, diesel, et cetera, is priced in the province.

Does the minister intend to direct such a review?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Absolutely. Within a day or two of the regulations being published in the Gazette, we would direct a review. We haven't determined what exactly we would request first, but absolutely.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** The legislation points to regulations; nothing that the PUB will have to make public information prescribed in the regulations. Are the regulations ready and can the minister provide it?

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you.

The regulations are drafted, so we don't need to now go and draft them, but they do have to go through the Cabinet process and then be published. I can't say exactly how long that would take.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Can you provide them once they do become available?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** When they are publicly available, I will provide them.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** The PUB's website is outdated and information is often hard to find there. What will be in place to make sure that the information the PUB is directed to make public isn't hiding on their website or hard to find?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** I think the changes that we are proposing in the legislation and, in the regulations as well, will be explicit in terms of what information they have to make available. I think, you know, we will certainly work with them in the spirit of making them readily available that they not be buried on their website.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Chair, I'm just wondering what section – where are you now? Are we going right to 8.1, or just asking questions right through? I'm just wondering where you want –?

**CHAIR:** For clause 1, you're free to examine any part of the bill.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Okay.

Will the minister commit to making public any notices she receives from the PUB about a review? And it's important that the public know what the PUB is doing, not just the minister.

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

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

In terms of making things public, I kind of spoke about this when I was closing debate. My intention is to make things public, and the reports will be subject to the ATIPPA legislation. If there's a recommendation in a report that we feel requires legislative change, or we want to action that, that then becomes part of the Cabinet process, and then that document would be subject to Cabinet confidentiality. Our intention is to make the reports available to the public, bearing any commercial sensitivities that we have to strike out or something. We do that in conjunction with the Public Utilities Board, likely.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I think some of these have been answered, but I'm just going to read them out so I'll have them in *Hansard*.

Does the minister intend to direct the PUB to conduct a review, and if so, when?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** My intention is that once the regulations are published in the Gazette within a few days we would – as early as we possibly could, we would direct a review.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** How long do you think a review should take?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** I can't say. We would work with the Public Utilities Board. It would depend on exactly what we asked them to do, what kind of resources they had available. My anticipation is that it wouldn't be too long.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Will the minister direct the PUB to hold public hearings on the matter?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** We will definitely direct public hearings. We haven't yet worked out what we would ask for first and, second, I don't want to ask for 100 things at once and 50 public hearings, because then that would take too long. There is cost and all that associated with public hearings and reviews.

We're going to try and be strategic about what we request and when in the public hearings, but we will certainly request public hearings. I don't know if that will be first or second.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** My last question is: Will the minister commit to make public the PUB's recommendations that occur because of the ministerial-directed review?

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

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

So my intention is absolutely to make them public. We would have to work with the Public Utilities Board to remove anything that's commercially sensitive. For example, I know some companies don't want other companies to know exactly how much certain things cost them. We'd have to look at it with that light. They would be subject to the ATIPPA legislation. And, as I mentioned, if something comes up in a review that requires legislative change or, as a government, we would like to make legislative change, that could become part of the Cabinet process, in which case we would not release that report. But my intention is to release most, if not all, reports, yes.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I next recognize the hon. Member for Labrador West.

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

I do want to say a couple of things there. Like we said earlier, we talked about the absence of the Consumer Advocate, myself and my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands also mentioned the same thing, so we do want to put a friendly amendment in to this, to have that added.

Clause 2 of the bill is amended by renumbering clause 2(1) as clause 2(1.1) and by adding immediately before that the following: (1) subsection 8.1(2) of the act is amending by inserting immediately after the word "retailer" the words "or the Consumer Advocate appointed under section 117 of the *Public Utilities Act*."

This is seconded by my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**CHAIR:** Sorry, I need to remind the Member that we have to complete clause 1 before you can submit the amendment.

Do you want to finish your remarks in this time?

**J. BROWN:** (Inaudible.)

**CHAIR:** Okay, thank you.

Any further speakers to clause 1?

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clause 2.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 2 carry?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** I'll repeat everything, again, what I just said.

Clause 2 of the bill is amended by renumbering clause 2(1) as clause 2(1.1) and by adding immediately before that the following: (1) subsection 8.1(2) of the act is amending by inserting immediately after the word "retailer" the words "or the Consumer Advocate appointed under section 117 of the *Public Utilities Act*."

It is seconded, again, by my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** I thank the hon. Member.

This House stands in recess while we consider the amendment.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** We are back.

I'm going to recognize the hon. the Government House Leader.

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

Mr. Chair, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that the Committee rise and report progress.

**CHAIR:** It is moved and seconded that the Committee rise and report progress.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Deputy Chair of Committees.

**P. TRIMPER:** Speaker, I report that the Committee has made progress and ask leave to sit again on Bill 52.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed him to report progress on Bill 52 and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

**S. CROCKER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

**S. CROCKER:** Presently.

**SPEAKER:** Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted.  
Committee ordered to sit again presently, by  
leave.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government  
House Leader, that this House do now recess  
until 6 p.m.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

This House is in recess until 6 p.m.