



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 2

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Thursday

October 6, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Just a couple of housekeeping items for Members. First of all, your microphones, we do ask that you try not to move them too much as it may interfere with the broadcast and that. But, if for some reason you have moved them or you do move them, before you stand to speak, we ask that you rise them back up in order to get good quality sound.

Also, we ask Members when you do rise to speak, give us a few seconds to adjust because, obviously, we're working in a different environment and our clock and for broadcast to identify Members and to see who is speaking at the time, it may take a few little extra seconds than normal. So if you wouldn't mind doing that.

I'd like to welcome everyone to the House of Assembly, Newfoundland and Labrador special sitting at the Colonial Building.

For 109 years this building was the seat of democracy in our province with the first meeting of our Legislature in this very Chamber on January 28, 1850.

Much significant legislation was debated in this space, including acts that provided basic infrastructure such as roads, bridges, lighthouses, wharves, war measures, postal services, water and sewer, railways and fire departments, helping to create the province we live in today.

The historical importance of the Colonial Building goes far beyond the Legislature. For instance, our province's first bank robbery occurred in the basement here in 1850.

The Colonial Building was also the site of the National Convention in 1946, which examined the conditions of the country of Newfoundland and eventually recommended Confederation with Canada

as one of the possible solutions in the 1949 referendum.

To mark the 25th anniversary of Confederation, the House of Assembly met once in the Colonial Building Chamber on April 1, 1974. An Act Respecting the Colonial Building was passed that day, declaring the building and the grounds as a provincial historic site.

The last time the House sat in the Chamber before opening the Confederation Building was on July 28, 1959.

At the closing session, Speaker J. R. Courage spoke these words: "There is sadness in going from here today. It is an historic chamber. Great events have transpired here, great debate have taken place here. Some of Newfoundland's greatest ... have thundered their voices on this floor."

Once again, Members of the 50th General Assembly, let our voices thunder on this great floor today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: In the galleries today, I would like to welcome Carol Hedderson, Christa Hedderson, Cecilla Edwards and Bill Mahoney. They are joining us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Also, in the public gallery, I would like to welcome Garry Knight who is also visiting today and subject of a Member's statement.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Baie Verte - Green Bay, Bonavista, Burin - Grand Bank, Cape St. Francis, Stephenville - Port au Port, Burgeo - La Poile with leave and also Harbour Main with leave.

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

B. WARR: Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the late Brad Noel, a well-known and respected resident of Springdale who tragically passed on September 10, 2022, at the age of 51.

Brad was the true meaning of what I believe God expects of people. He made time for everyone, regardless of their background, beliefs or path in life. He was a friend to all and welcomed people with a smile and a witty sense of humour.

I appreciated his insight and teachings, especially the time he spent pouring into the lives of young people. He truly made a mark on thousands of lives. I am proud such a man called Springdale his home, our district and the lives of people here were made all the richer from our friend, Brad.

Brad has given his family, his community and this province an incredible legacy of love along with a generous giving heart. May we all live by his Godly example and spread unconditional love wherever life may take us.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in extended sincere condolences to Brad's lovely wife Melinda, his mother Gail, his family, colleagues, students and all friends throughout our province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Nancy Miller, a teacher at Bishop White School in Port Rexton, is a proud foster parent who, along with her husband Jim, have fostered 14 children since beginning in 2016.

Recently, Nancy embarked upon supporting literacy in the Trinity Bight area by

registering for the Dolly Parton's Imagination Library. This past July, with the help of Fort Point Lions Club, almost 30 children from newborns to four years of age received their free books from the library. As Nancy stated on her Facebook post, "reading is one of the most important things you can do with your child."

Nancy also had her Grade 5 math class last year involved in collecting pop tabs for the Ronald McDonald House, with a goal of one million. The final total exceeded this and weighed 564 pounds, as she utilized this humanitarian activity instructionally in her math class. If you were to view Nancy Miller's Facebook page, you will find it very inspiring and community minded in its celebration of local events and activities in the Trinity Bight area.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in acknowledging and celebrating Nancy Miller's efforts in serving her community and school.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Speaker, today I am quite pleased to stand in this hon. House to congratulate government and all our hon. Members on both sides for their efforts in making Come Home Year 2022 a great success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: In the great District of Burin - Grand Bank, Come Home Year events were celebrated in fine style, with communities seeing high numbers returning to their hometowns. It was a time to relive the past and for us to look forward to the future.

Many of the events I attended were well planned and well attended. Events included traditional meals, fun-filled events, sports events, family gatherings, weddings and, of course, our trademark, traditional music,

was scheduled for all age groups and it was so nice to visit with people from here and afar.

Well done Newfoundland and Labrador! You once again shared our great culture and heritage. We all know there is no place like home. Our kindness, generosity and uniqueness were on full display. Hats off to all those who came home and to all those who made them feel welcome.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating all who celebrated and ensured a successful Come Home Year 2022.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Speaker, I rise in this historic Legislature today to recognize the constituent and my district's involvement in the space program.

From 1960 to 1983, the northeastern community of Shoe Cove, now within the Town of Pouch Cove, was the ideal location for a NASA tracking station, monitoring satellites and spacecraft. The site was chosen because of its location in the Atlantic, which would allow for the tracking of satellites north of 35 degrees latitude, as they orbited the North Pole. In addition to that, Shoe Cove station had the ability to communicate with spacecraft launched from both east and west North American sites and helped with several Apollo missions.

Mr. Garry Knight of Shoe Cove is one of approximately 18 men who worked at the Satellite Tracking Station from 1972 to 1984 for its decommissioning. Garry has many fond memories of working with the NASA Team, the fondest being in the radar room listening to a conversation between the crew of the Apollo 17, the last Apollo

mission in which humans walked on the moon.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking Mr. Garry Knight for his work with the Satellite Tracking Station and to congratulate him for being a part of our national history.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Today, I acknowledge the accomplishments of Robert W. Cormier from the beautiful and cultural community of Cape St. George.

Growing up in a passionate Francophone, Acadian and Indigenous family, Robert worked tirelessly to ensure that the heritage of this region was promoted and kept at the forefront for future generations. A community leader, Robert was instrumental in the formation of the Community Council of Cape St. George. In addition, he has worked for the economic growth of his region through his involvement with the Port Economic Development Association.

Robert has worked tirelessly for Francophones of Newfoundland and Labrador for more than 30 years. A founding member of the first Francophone association formed in our province in 1971, he is a principal promoter of the French language. As a professional, he worked to develop a French education system.

Robert's dedication and commitment to community and province has been recognized with many honours and awards: Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee Medal in 2012, the Prix Roger-Champagne, Ordre des francophones d'Amérique and Member of the Order of Canada.

We congratulate Robert Cormier on being invested with the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador and it was right here in this historic building on Tuesday that he received that honour in a beautiful ceremony here in this building. So, again, we congratulate Robert Cormier in recognition of his work in the preservation of the French language and culture.

Congratulations, Monsieur Cormier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Burgeo - La Poile, with leave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

The hon. Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and my colleagues.

These past two weeks have been devastating for the Southwest Coast. My District of Burgeo - La Poile was struck hard by Hurricane Fiona as many of you know. Many of our communities, including my hometown of Port aux Basques will never be the same.

The destruction across the region is incomprehensible, but we are a resilient people. We've seen what being a good neighbour means, we have supported each other and will continue to as we rebuild.

People have lost everything; one family in particular suffered the ultimate loss: a loved one. On behalf of all of us in this House and so many others, I extend condolences to the family.

As people pick up the pieces of their lives and memories created in buildings that no longer stand, we are reminded that it is not just drywall and wood that make a house; it is the people that make a house a home.

We have each other to lean on to work side by side to rebuild not just physical structures but our lives.

Speaker, the kindness and support offered during this difficult time has been overwhelming. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians truly have each other's backs, but we have also felt the support from across the country.

Thank you to everyone who has assisted. There are too many to name, but rest assured from the families organizing lemonade and cookie sales to corporate groups, to the everyday Newfoundlander and Labradorian, every single one is appreciated.

Thank you to the first responders, truck drivers, cooks, volunteers, town staff, provincial employees and everyone in between who has contributed to the response on the Southwest Coast.

Thank you to the Premier and my colleagues on both sides of this House for your support. The only thing greater than our resolve on the Southwest Coast is our pride for our community and we will channel that as we heal.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main, with leave.

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave has been granted.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

It is a distinct honour to rise in this historic Chamber to pay tribute to a man who

generally loved his family, community and province.

Tom Hedderson represented the people of the Harbour Main District for 16 years. First elected in 1999, again in 2003, 2007 and 2011, he served as Cabinet minister in six different portfolios. He loved this province and worked hard to make it a better place for all. In return, the people of Harbour Main and the province loved him right back.

Tom was an educator, principal and throughout his career he coached many sports teams and touched the lives of many youth. He was kind-hearted, sincere and would help anyone who was in need.

Since the age of four, I had the privilege of knowing Tom on a personal level. He became part of our family over 50 years ago, when he was 14, and began a courtship with my late sister, Rosemary. Together, they built a life and raised Christa and Julia, two beautiful, smart, independent, strong women, whom he adored.

Tom suddenly passed on August 8, and anyone who had the honour of knowing him will miss him dearly.

In the gallery today are his loving wife Carol; daughter Christa; sister Cecilia; and dear friend Bill. And watching us virtually from Houston, his daughter Julia, with four-day-old granddaughter Nora.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in paying tribute to a former Member of the House of Assembly and minister, educator, husband, father, grandfather, brother, brother-in-law and dear friend.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I ask all Members and guests who are able to rise for a moment of silence, please.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Please be seated.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And I'd like to echo the comments of my hon. colleague here in addressing communities impacted by Hurricane Fiona.

Speaker, on September 24, this province, and in particular the Southwest Coast, was changed by a historical and unprecedented weather event in Hurricane Fiona. The damage was devastating, horrifying and tragic. The sea, which has been such a significant part of the fabric of our province, breached our shores and stole homes, fishing stages, wharves, infrastructure and, most tragically, Mr. Speaker, it stole a life.

It's been nearly two weeks, and yet the hurt and the impacts of this storm are still being felt and understood. We expect the assessment of this damage will continue in the weeks and months ahead. However, as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are known for, we shall come out of this together. Unfortunately, we are no stranger to tragedy, and these events are becoming more frequent. But as we have done before following disasters, we will come together to support one another. Our government will be there for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that have been impacted by this horrific event, now and as we continue to ensure our people get the support they need.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this week the Canadian Red Cross started distributing funds on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to those

people who were displaced by Hurricane Fiona. In addition, we provided communities with a process to access funding required to start repairing and rebuilding their lives. Our government continues to work with the Canadian Red Cross to provide further assistance to residents and communities, as we will continue to support this effort and move forward.

The Incident Command Centre team that was established in the days following the hurricane remains on the ground to assist communities in the Southwest Coast. The team is led by officials with experience in incident response, and includes professionals from various government departments such as the Departments of Transportation and Infrastructure, Children, Seniors and Social Development, Justice and Public Safety, Digital Government and Service NL and Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, our hearts are with those who have had their lives turned upside down. We know the recovery will take time. The impacts are far-reaching with residents, municipalities, families, local service districts, businesses and non-profit organizations, all left to pick up the pieces. I want to assure those who are impacted that our government is committed to be there to support them throughout this long and extremely emotional and trying process and time.

Our province is strong and resilient. We will come together. We will recover. We will rebound and rebuild. Just like Newfoundlanders and Labradorians before us have always done. I would like to ask all hon. Members of this House to stand and join me in a moment of silence as we send our prayers and condolences for the loss of a woman, a wife, a mother, who was tragically taken from her family and friends.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Please rise.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Please be seated.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to thank the hon. Premier for the advance copy of his statement. I guess this is a bit off script, but what a historic and an emotional week this has been. We started off this week that our leader couldn't be with us, and these statements today and the heartfelt emotion, I think, it weighs heavy on all of us. It is not lost on me and I wanted to point that out that it's been a good week and a bad week, I guess.

Speaker, my colleagues and I join all Members in expressing our heartfelt concerns and prayers for those on the Southwest Coast, and indeed across Atlantic Canada and Quebec, who were impacted by the storm. Families have lost their homes and their livelihoods. Tragically, we've all witnessed the loss of life and no words can ease the pain and grief of the family.

Speaker, the images and stories coming out of Port aux Basques are nothing short of horrifying, but so are the stories of courage, selfless sacrifice and of neighbours helping neighbours. But, of course, this surprises no one. Speaker, in particular, I'd like to note the leadership of Mayor Brian Button and his council and staff.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Very fitting, yes.

Mayor Button showed strong resolve in dealing with the initial emergency and the aftermath in the early days. His calm leadership should be a model for all other municipalities and a source of pride for us all.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I, too, thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement and join him in offering our condolences to the family who lost a loved one in this disaster.

We appreciate the announcements of support and commend government on its relief efforts. However, we are concerned that our province was delayed in providing EMO reports, in comparison to the Maritime provinces and relief package details. Furthermore, government must be proactive in identifying and helping other communities that are vulnerable to extreme weather events.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, 125,000 people and counting do not have access to primary care. Emergency rooms in every corner of our province are closing their doors; Whitbourne has been closed for over three months. The Premier says it is a global problem and not his problem.

I ask the Premier: Why has it taken seven years for your government to realize health care is in crisis?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We recognize that this is indeed a national problem, it is a provincial problem, it is local problem and it is one that we are addressing, Mr. Speaker. I have to tell you that since the pandemic has been coming to an end, we have invested significant efforts and resources in ensuring that the health care system in the province is responding to being modernized in an appropriate fashion.

Of course, I am sure the Member opposite knows that we have financial incentives to recruit and retain physicians: including \$150,000 for new physicians who open their practices; a two-year guaranteed income for new physicians starting their practice; an income guarantee initiative launched for new family physicians in exchange for two-year return-in-service; increased compensation rates for Category B sites, Mr. Speaker; eligible Ukraine physicians can receive up to \$10,000 –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

And emergency rooms are still being closed periodically, every other weekend, so something is not working.

Speaker, 100 years ago, Dr. Grenfell and his team travelled community to community to make sure people in rural and remote communities on the Northern Peninsula and

Labrador had access to health care. Today, rural access to health care is shutting down.

I ask the Premier: Rural Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are watching emergency rooms close and doctors leave without a replacement; is this your big reset?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me continue to tell you what we're doing to try to recruit people into the health care profession in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

We have a Come Home package that was recently announced by the Minister of Health, with the opportunity to bring people home. Including a \$100,000-incentive package for doctors attached to Newfoundland and Labrador returning home; \$50,000 for nurse practitioners; \$50,000 for RNs; \$50,000 for LPNs; \$50,000 for paramedics. Primary care continues to evolve, Mr. Speaker, and we recognize the challenges –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: I can continue, if I'm not interrupted.

The list continues, Mr. Speaker. This is a national problem. When you see it in all provinces across the country – Kingston closing its trauma room and Brampton closing its hospital – you know it's a national issue, but we are committed to local solutions that will ultimately refine and redesign the health care –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It is the only province where I seen the Premier and the Minister of Health get up and celebrate your failures. When you go to lobby at Confederation Building, you'll celebrate that we have to send people to Quebec to have cardiac surgeries –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: That's what we're proud of, and they are still lined up in the ER rooms.

Speaker, this is Mental Health Awareness Week and we all know how important it is to have a mental health care facility; but it's not bricks and mortar causing our health care crisis, it's the lack of recruitment and retention of professionals by this government.

I ask the Premier: When this facility opens, will there enough staff to operate it?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

If we could only learn to get along better, we'd probably reduce the length between the seats from 2½ sword lengths to two and maybe get a little more legroom.

I say to the Member that we are looking forward to the new facility being opened. In addition to the facility and providing the services that currently exist at the existing Waterford Hospital, there are a suite of other services that are going to be there.

The question that he asked is: Are there are going to be enough health care professionals? We are working (technical difficulties) including in this province, but we

have made great strides to turn that around, including the incentives that the Premier just mentioned a few moments ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Even if we did get along, I think we're close enough.

Speaker, ask anyone desperate for help with their mental health in our province what the biggest issue is, and the issue of wait-lists for access to long-term care are years long, that's number one. For almost two years, Kristi Allan, held a vigil calling for greater access to long-term mental health care while this government has sat on its hands.

I ask the Premier: Will he blame COVID for the total inaction on increasing access to long-term mental health care?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, maybe I should thank the 2½ sword lengths.

Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in the previous remark to the Member, we are looking forward to the new facility being opened that will provide not only the existing services, but an enhanced suite of services. The point that the Member raises, Mr. Speaker, on long-term health care, the former minister of Health, the Premier in this province had put in a number of measures and a number of initiatives to help with mental health and addictions. The wait times for mental health and addictions in this province has been reduced significantly over the last two years.

We've done a great deal, but we have a great deal more to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Liberals were very quick to take money out of people's pockets with the carbon and sugar tax, but finally admitted yesterday there was a cost-of-living crisis in our province. We, as the Official Opposition, listened to the concerns of the people of this province and advocated on their behalf.

Why did it take bad polling numbers for the Premier to take action on the cost-of-living crisis?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There's only one poll that count, these are, of course, with respect to cost of living.

Look, we all wish that we could address the external problems that are created by global inflation, but the truth is we can't control inflation, Mr. Speaker, we just can't.

What we can do is use what's in our instruments, so what's in our toolbox, to address and try to help people who are suffering locally, which is why we announced that yesterday, to support the hard-working women and men in the middle class.

That's in addition, Mr. Speaker, to the programs we've already announced earlier this spring including increasing the seniors' supplement, increasing the Income Supplement, home heat support, cuts on the gas tax, half the motor vehicle registration fees, rate mitigation to ensure electricity rates don't double, \$10-a-day child care.

We're just –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Premier's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I hope the Premier's there to help people in January and February when they can't afford to fill their oil barrel. That's the problem, government on the other side just don't get it.

Speaker, 90 years ago in this very building, with riots outside, the Liberals were thrown out of office. Do you know why? Because they ignored the people who were struggling.

As the cost of groceries skyrocket, as winter comes and home heating fuel prices hike, the seniors and families of our province are still being ignored by this government.

Why hasn't the Liberal government learned from mistakes of the past?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

This is a very important historic moment in this House and I'm honoured to be standing here answering these questions.

Allow me to correct the Member opposite, because clearly he's misunderstanding the thrust of this government and the work that we've been doing.

We have put out almost half a billion dollars to assist the people of this province in the last six months.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Speaker, all I can say is that is, on a per-capita basis, higher than any other place in this country. We are doing absolutely everything –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: We've addressed the high cost of home heat by having a home heat rebate. We've increased the Seniors' Benefit. I can continue on, Mr. Speaker, but I see I'm out of time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, the government here after seven years of inaction and ignoring the people of the province, they're going to see that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are tired of these continuous words and inaction.

Speaker, let's –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

One second, her microphone has just went off.

The Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Let's talk about how long it is taking this government to treat women fairly and equitably.

After mounting pressure from women and advocacy groups and following numerous questions in this House of Assembly, the Premier finally admitted that pay equity legislation is needed and Bill 3, the Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act will be debated.

Will the Premier ensure that stakeholder groups, such as the St. John's Status of Women's Council and the Board of Trade are consulted to ensure that this legislation is wide reaching, well resourced and proactive?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, I'd also like to recognize where we are in this very historic moment. It's easy to see, although we're here in this building, the tactics and the behaviour of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, still has not changed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: But what I will say is in the time when our province was arguably the richest in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador, when their government was in power, nothing was done to advance pay equity and legislation in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: But I am happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that we will be bringing legislation, of course, to this province in this fall. Of course, we'll be consulting and it will be a whole government approach. I look forward to bringing that good news very soon.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Speaker, we certainly look forward to that coming to this House.

Speaker, a constituent of mine recently moved to our province. He is a diabetic and he cannot find a family doctor. While he is on the collaborative team wait-list, he has

had to resort to calling his former doctor in Ontario and ask for an insulin prescription.

I ask the minister: How can my constituent receive proper diabetic care in our province?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We understand that there's a health care professional shortage in this province. We understand there is in every province in Canada. But, Mr. Speaker, we've put in place things such as 811, where individuals can call and seek prescriptions, Mr. Speaker, when they don't have a family doctor.

We are putting in place in this province a virtual care system, where individuals without a family physician will have access through virtual care; where emergency departments, Mr. Speaker, that may have a shortage in staffing from time to time will have access to virtual care. That RFP is now in the process of being reviewed and we'll have more to say on that very soon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would recommend that the minister call 811 himself or visit an emergency room. That is why people are there, they are not getting the service from 811.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I hear from people throughout the entire province every day talk about health care. As a matter of fact, residents of my district lined up last week for

two days – seniors, people with disabilities, people who don't have transportation who walked to get there – they lined up on steps outdoors. They lined up to get their name put on a list, not to see a doctor; to get their name put on a list in hopes that they would get a doctor at some point.

Mr. Speaker, I would like for the minister to tell us how he thinks that is acceptable.

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

T. OSBORNE: It is not acceptable. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to 811, we have just put in place additional nurse practitioners in that program because the wait-lists were too long on 811. That is an action that myself and the Premier and this government had taken, literally, just within the last two to three weeks. So there are additional nurse practitioners, Mr. Speaker, which should reduce the wait time.

In terms of the Collaborative Care Clinics, Mr. Speaker, and applying for those as we put Collaborative Care Clinics throughout the province and as we are able to recruit more health care professionals, people will have a better system of care, a team of care with the health care professionals ranging from physicians to nurse practitioners to nurses to pharmacists and social workers in those clinics, Mr. Speaker, so they have the continuum of care. If one of those professionals leave, they won't be left without –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

In July, the Premier invited out-of-province doctors to – and I quote – reach out to my office directly. If you have issues reach out to me directly. That's the type of priority we are placing on this.

I ask the Premier how many calls has he taken; how many doctors have received a callback; and more importantly how many doctors have a job offer?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, our health authorities and our Recruitment Office in the department are recruiting health care professionals on a daily basis. I know that the Member touted time and time again the numbers of physicians that were recruited in Nova Scotia, until he realized that Nova Scotia had more emergency department diversions than this province. We are actually fixing the emergency department diversion issue in this province.

But, Mr. Speaker, when you look at 600 in Nova Scotia over the last 12 months; in over the last three months, and that includes locums, full-time physicians and others, we have had over 200 in this province in the last three months, I will say, to the Member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: So there have been no job offers. Nova Scotia has 12 per cent without primary care providers. Newfoundland has over 25 per cent. Labrador, over 30 per cent. So let's talk figures.

Speaker, you can hear me, but are you listening – are you listening?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Are you listening to the people of this province? That's the problem.

Speaker, everyone is well aware of the roadblocks that Dr. Paul Hart faced while trying to volunteer on Fogo Island. The minister keeps pushing the blame on the college, but the minister appoints 40 per cent of the board.

I ask the Premier: When will you finally cut the red tape stopping doctors from practising in Newfoundland and Labrador?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're not going to comment on individual positions, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, there are issues surrounding individuals and applying. We recognize that. We've met multiple times with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador, the NLMA and Memorial University to have a better understanding of the red tape. And I can say to the Member opposite, stay tuned, because that's what's involved in Order 1 on the paper, in terms of revising the Medical Act.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

And it's patient care and safety that should be paramount, and let's do what we can to improve the health of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, instead of playing politics with it.

Speaker, let's talk about worker safety. First and foremost, our thoughts and prayers continue to be with their workers and their families that were injured on the job at the Come By Chance oil refinery.

On Monday, workers returned to work; however, the company has not publicly released the report of its internal investigation.

What specific actions has government directed to ensure a safe workplace?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First and foremost, we send our condolences to the families and the workers who were impacted at the very serious accident in Come By Chance.

Occupational Health and Safety did place a stop-work order at the facility, which was lifted last Friday. When a stop-work order is lifted, that means that Occupational Health and Safety have worked with the employer and the employer has satisfied all the requirements for a safe return to work.

So Occupational Health and Safety would've worked very closely with the employer, with the union to make sure that everyone is satisfied that there is a safe work environment. There is an ongoing investigation, Mr. Speaker, with many parties and third parties, but the safe return to work and the safe work environment is very important to everyone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

The government definitely has a role to play here so an accident like this does not happen again. We look forward to that report.

Speaker, one year ago, there were two fatalities on the Grand Falls-Windsor Highway, and it was the worst accident that first responders seen, and some of them have been on the job for over 35 years. Since that time, many close calls have been

recorded. I've sent all this information to the Minister of TI several times.

After a year of pleading with the minister, we just want to know specifically what you've come up with after the past year so this does not happen again. When will it be implemented? We need it done ASAP, Minister, because we cannot have this happen again. What is being done?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Any fatality on our highways is one too many. In terms of what he's specifically talking about, discussion is still ongoing. I only had a discussion this morning in terms of what is to be done there in terms of will we reduce the speed or will we change the signs. We're further looking at that certainly with safety in mind for the people that are travelling those highways. Hopefully, something will be reported sooner rather than later. So we're still looking into it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

Hopefully, we'll get an answer quicker than we are getting answers to these questions, that's for sure.

Speaker, let's talk about the safety of the people in our coastal communities. The people of Trepassey are being ignored by the Liberal government as the lower coast was left without protection from the hurricanes of Larry, Earl and Fiona.

Speaker, whether the Liberal government is removing an ambulance or delaying needed repairs to the breakwater, why does this government ignore the people of Trepassey?

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

E. LOVELESS: I take a little bit of exception, too, in terms of using the word "ignoring" Trepassey, because the Premier had touched based with the MHA, so did I. I was talking to the mayor today before I came to the House and we had a good conversation about what the long-term solution will be for Trepassey.

Never once did the mayor say that they were neglected or we're not concerned about them. We are looking at in terms of what the long-term resolve will be, will it be a phase-one or phase-two approach, but we will be there for Trepassey like we've been there for the southwest part of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I just hope that the Minister of Transportation will be there for the people of Fox Island River, too, who have been waiting for months to have their road repaired that was destroyed by a storm surge.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have spoken. They do not want a sugar tax.

So I ask the minister: Will you axe the tax?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I appreciate the Member opposite's question because it allows me to tell the people of the province, again, what the Canadian Cancer Society says, and I'll quote: "Sugary drinks are the single largest contributor of sugar in the average

Canadian diet.... Actions like these” – the implementation of a tax – “will help prevent more cancers and reduce the number of people diagnosed with the disease.”

Mr. Speaker, I ask the people of the province to make a choice; you can drink a sugar-sweetened beverage or you can choose something without sugar in it. We understand that this is for their better health.

I can also tell the Member opposite, any monies that we receive – and hopefully we receive no monies because no one is drinking sugar-sweetened beverages, but any monies received are going back to the community to help in school lunch –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister’s time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I would suggest that the minister read the Health Accord because nowhere in the Health Accord – not one paragraph, not one sentence, not one word in the government’s plan for health outcomes in this province does it say implement a sugar tax.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So will the minister do the right thing and axe the tax?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I tell you what the Health Accord does acknowledge and what we should all acknowledge; all you have to remember is one number, Sir, that we lead the country – we’re number one in the country in heart

disease, diabetes, obesity, stroke, amputations for diabetes.

So all we’re asking citizens to do, Mr. Speaker, is consider whether or not they consume sugar. Move their hands six inches to the left or right and take a different drink, Mr. Speaker. You don’t have to trust me; go read it in the British Medical Journal, which I challenged you before to do, Sir, and it is evidenced there that it works.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: It is still not in the Health Accord that sugar tax still makes everything go up; food gets more and more expensive. At the same time, so does the cost of milk, continuing to increase and forcing families to rethink their drink and to struggle to purchase these drinks for their children.

Why does the Liberal minister continue to ignore suggestions from dairy farmers to lower the cost of a staple food?

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

D. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, thanks very much for the opportunity to stand here today. I did a cross-Canada reference yesterday on the cost of milk. Newfoundland is not at the lead or the end; we are in the middle of the pack when it comes to the price of milk for two litres across this country.

The Member opposite should also know this: this government does not set the price of milk; it is done by a price marketing board. It is done by the dairy farmers themselves, Mr. Speaker, and these people who provide the milk for our province and across Canada, do so at a top quality that is second to none.

Their costs are going up: their labour costs are going up and their feed costs are going up. It's the cost of the business they do.

You should go out and visit these people and see the great work they do and the good quality of milk that goes on the shelves in our grocery stores –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

We've got no problem with the sugar consumption, which we think is a good thing to tackle, we just don't think that the sugar tax is the way of going about it. Will the sugar tax make us the healthiest province in Canada by 2030? Absolutely not. Show us the results.

Speaker, I'd like to talk about missed opportunities for growth. This historic Chamber has seen many discussions, debates, conversations on the wild fishery like cod, seals. They were probably pretty raucous, too, at that time.

Yesterday, in the Throne Speech, there was only one little glimpse, or breached comment, about or in reflection of the fishery. There's obviously no vision to unlock the potential of the industry.

I ask the minister: Why hasn't his government and himself taken action to grow our fishery?

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

D. BRAGG: Thank you very much.

I think the Member opposite for the question. Obviously, the Member opposite has not been following anything that our department has been doing. We have initiated the Fisheries Advisory Council that has all stakeholders within the industry, whether you're a harvester, where you're a (inaudible), whether you're a producer of this field. We have been engaged with our people for the last eight to 10 months and look forward to us bringing out our report in the coming days, in the coming weeks.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, government announced \$194 million for a one-time payment of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. DINN: Folks, self-congratulation is meaningless.

Speaker, yesterday, government announced \$194 million for a one-time payment of \$500 to help people of the province; \$10.5 million would cover the major repairs and renovations of the 120 vacant NLHC units across the province.

I ask the Premier: Could this government not have found an extra \$10.5 million to carry out these repairs, create employment and get these units back into the market and help resolve our housing crisis?

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

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

I note during the debate on the budget for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing

Corporation, we have allocated sufficient funds to do the repairs that the Member opposite has referred to. So the budget is there. We are making those repairs and they will be available for families in very short order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Mr. Speaker, as of at the end of July there were still 120 vacancies. I would be interested in knowing when this is going to happen.

Speaker, yesterday, I informed the House of the concerning numbers of survivors fleeing domestic abuse or unable to find shelter elsewhere.

I ask the Premier: How is government going to ensure that these vulnerable women get their cheques and not their abusers?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

Of course, these matters are always very important and deserve the attention as we see here. That said, there is significant funding that we support our non-profit as well as transition houses, which I work closely with my colleague, actually, whose department oversees transitional houses here in Newfoundland and Labrador. That said, we have also offered a domestic helpline for those fleeing domestic violence to call and to get the resources and the supports that they need.

But that said, we are constantly working and my office will certainly do everything they can to work with my hon. colleague the

Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

It is actually an honour to be the first Labradorian to actually speak in this House. So this is a –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. BROWN: I still live there. All right.

My first thing, I thank the minister for the answer, but how are they going to get their cheques is a very important question that your government needs to figure out.

Now, the next thing I ask, Speaker, we have paramedics that are walking off the job in Labrador because workplace conditions and a lack of workplace balance in this government is trying to recruit without addressing those actual issues.

I ask the minister: Where is the plan to address the issues that have been brought up by our currently working health care workers?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is an important issue. There are three ambulances that work in Central Labrador – two on a full 24-hour, seven day a week basis and one as an add-needed basis.

Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the shortages in Labrador. It is concerning to us. I know that NAPE has raised this previously. There is a working group between NAPE, their

members, the Health Department and others looking at this.

We just brought in place, just this week, the Come Home Year incentives to attract ACPs and PCPs. We are also working with paramedics on the Island to do shifts in the Labrador region.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Parents state that the teacher shortage in Nain hasn't been adequately addressed. Their children are suffering because teachers that were hired to teach them have been shuffled to fill other vacancies and students are left doing online courses in Nain.

I quote a parent: Teachers all circle around a single computer to do their CDLI courses; a single computer because the Internet is so slow. One computer for 12 to 13 students and it takes 15 minutes just to log on, if you can log on at all.

Minister, your office is aware of this. I have actual emails showing that, so please tell us why you think that this is acceptable education practice in 2022?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Great to stand in this setting and my first question in a brand new portfolio.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: So some firsts all around.

There are elements to the Member opposite's questions which I cannot –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HAGGIE: – answer, because I do not have the manifesto, the portfolio for Internet and broadband. Certainly, my colleagues here have been working on rural broadband strategies and there is significant money in partnership with the communities to address those, as well as whatever initiatives the NG might have.

In terms of teacher recruitment, there is a significant push to address the shortages on rural schools on the North Coast. We had a meeting with the NLTA yesterday about recruitment and retention and I look forward to being able to update the House on that.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Although we've had some great debate, unfortunately Question Period is now over.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

SPEAKER: I do have one.

Under the authority of subsection 23(4) of the *Auditor General Act, 2021*, I hereby table a report of the Auditor General, entitled *Nalcor Energy*.

Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to move the following resolution: Be it resolved by the House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREAS section 4 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* provides that on resolution of the House of Assembly, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall appoint a Child and Youth Advocate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Linda Clemens-Spurrell be appointed the Child and Youth Advocate effective October 25, 2022.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I give notice that I will, on tomorrow, move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 o'clock p.m. on Tuesday, October 11, 2022.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise and present a petition today. I will read the petition:

WHEREAS our environment must be protected and the *Environmental Protection Act* must be followed to ensure the safety of our environment for future generations; and

WHEREAS the World Energy GH2 has submitted a plan to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to build wind turbines in Western Newfoundland; and

WHEREAS the company director has stated publicly that government told the company to register only Phase I of the project; and

WHEREAS the company director stated that they need the three phases to make the project viable;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the hon. House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reject Phase I of the World Energy GH2 project and complete an environmental impact study on the World Energy GH2 project as one to ensure the complete project is evaluated and the environmental study is not circumvented.

Mr. Speaker, this is a petition that was brought forth. I had some concerns with the process. This is not about the final outcome. This is what we used to call in the Department of Environment project splitting. According to Mr. Risley, someone told him the best way to do it is put one phase in.

What I'm asking the minister, and I ask publicly, is to do the three phases. He's saying that he needs three phases to make it viable. So instead of saying just do one phase, which is the Port au Port Peninsula, and doing the buildings, do the whole project as one.

What happens – and this has always been the concern in the Department of Environment – when someone comes in and says just let me build a road to this area; well, why do you want the road? Once we get the road, we got to be allowed to continue on.

This is the concern of the people in Western Newfoundland that have brought their concerns to me: If the project is going to

stand alone – which a lot of people are open to it – let's do the whole evaluation of the whole project. Let's not take one piece of the project and say let's give you this and after you spend \$400 million or \$500 million then say, okay, now you've got to give us this no matter what. This is the concern.

This is what they call project splitting in the department, I say to the minister. I know when the committee sent out the review, what they stated in the review was that if the company feels that they need this here to make it viable. It doesn't say "shall." If they said shall review phase one and two, fine. But right now it doesn't say "shall."

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for a response.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I had technical difficulties here getting going. I thank the hon. Member for bringing the petition forward; I look forward to receiving it.

On August 5, we announced the environmental impact statement would have to be required to determine the proposal's suitability and significant environmental and social impacts that would affect the area. We've put that to environmental impact statement.

The department received several hundred project comments: some positive, some negative, some needing more information and various aspects of clarification during the project.

The EIS will allow us to give the public two more consultation opportunities to consult on the draft guidelines which have just been released, as well as the opportunity to consult on the full project response by the proponent when it actually comes in.

There will absolutely be no project splitting allowed to occur. The Member is correct; Environment has a strong standpoint on splitting a project. That will not occur. If the project can stand on its own based on the environmental impact statement, then it can stand on its own. But we're encouraging to provide all the information that's required to ensure the project viability of a project on the Southwest Coast area of our province.

I know the people in that area are interested in the opportunities that come along with that. But from an environmental standpoint, we want to make sure of due diligence. It's a legislatively governed process and we'll continue (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

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

WHEREAS the site is a world class facility with the potential to rejuvenate the local economy; and

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

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

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

WHEREAS the continued idling of this site is not in the best interest of the province;

THEREFORE we, the residents of the area near the Bull Arm Fabrication Site, petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to expedite the process to get Bull Arm Fabrication Site back in operation. We request that this process include a vision for a long-term viable plan that is beneficial to all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Furthermore, we request that the government place an emphasis on all supply, maintenance, fabrication and offshore workover for existing offshore platforms as well as any new construction.

Your Honour, I've been presenting this since 2019, with anticipation that this day would hopefully come at some point that we would be on the cusp of a Bay du Nord.

I would, on behalf of the people of not only my district, but of the province – because we know this would be something that would be economically viable for the whole province. It would help our tradespeople. We'd have spinoffs to other work in the Kiewit facility in Marystown. There is a lot to this petition. We are on the cusp now and a very important part in our history. The reason why I wanted to present this petition today at the Colonial Building is because there are two ways of looking at this. We can either turn on the switch at Bull Arm or we can turn it off forever.

What I am asking the minister is: What is being done to ensure work for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians? And that any money that we're spending on a project as a provincial government comes to the benefit of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology for a response.

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank my colleague for the petition, which he has raised on numerous occasions, and for good reason because it is certainly a valuable asset to the province and to the people of the province.

The only two things I can say here today is I know the Member has been bringing it since 2019, but we all know that there's been some standstill due to the events of 2020 when we basically had a collapse of the industry. So some of the delay on that has been from forces outside of our control.

The other thing is that I agree with the Member, that we don't want to see a continued idling of the site, but what would be worse than that is a giveaway of the site. We have had plenty of interest expressed to us, but in many cases what's been offered is certainly not what we think is in the best interest for this asset, for the communities outside. So we're continuing to work this file.

I know it's sort of cold comfort for people that want to see it happen, and I get that. But, at the same time, what I will say is that the uptick in the industry over the last 12 months is certainly making it easier as we move forward and improving the value. We're going to continue the work forward, and we'll keep the Member and his communities advised.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

This is the reasons for this petition: The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador introduced a 20-cent per litre tax on sugar-sweetened beverages at a time when many families, seniors and residents of the province are struggling with the already skyrocketing increased cost of living in the province.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to encourage the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to cancel the sugar-sweetened beverage tax at the earliest opportunity.

Speaker, we, on this side of the House, all know the detrimental effects that sugar can have on the human body and the fact that people of Newfoundland and Labrador, perhaps, consume too much. But that doesn't mean that you're going to make them healthier by imposing a tax on the people; most particularly those who can least afford it.

What we should be doing is talking about education; talking about changing lifestyles; talking about providing people with an opportunity for clean drinking water. We already have more than 200 communities on boil orders. We have communities in my district with no water. So, yes, it is fine to say, choose another drink, but in a lot of cases that is not available.

So I would suggest that taxing people is not the way to make them healthier. If you want to make people healthier, promote the alternate choices but do not tax them to do it. That is not the right way to go.

As a matter of fact, when we reference over in England and what they did, they didn't tax the consumer. They taxed the companies. They went to the manufacturers and said if you don't lower the content of sugar in your drinks, we'll put an additional tax on you. It forced the manufacturers to do it.

We don't have that ability, as a province, to tell manufacturers how to change the content of their drinks. We don't have that, but we certainly control the idea of taxing individuals in this Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and that's just simply the wrong thing to do.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for a response.

S. COADY: I thank the Member opposite for the discussion and the petition. I tell you, Speaker, I think the most important thing that we've been able to do is to raise awareness of the impact of sugar, sugary sweetened beverages, and the impact on health for the individual.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, that the World Health Organization said – I'm going to quote – "Consumption of free sugars, including products like sugary drinks, is a major factor in the global increase of people suffering from obesity and diabetes." You heard the Premier talk about how we're number one in the country in those two areas. "If governments tax products like sugary drinks, they can reduce suffering and save lives." I'm sure the Member opposite would like to do the exact same thing to reduce suffering and save lives.

We are certainly focused on doing that in this province and one of the ways that we're bringing attention to this is by implementing the sugar-sweetened beverage tax. There are choices available to people but now they're going to make an informed choice, Speaker.

We've raised this issue. We've been able to make sure there's been an ongoing discussion around this. We're taking the monies, any monies that are raised and we're putting it back into healthy programs

to encourage either school lunch programs, the breakfast programs, the prenatal programs or the Physical Activity Tax Credit, all very important for the health of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

This is also a reminder that this is Seniors' Week, so a petition from Labrador West – the reason for the petition is: The need for seniors' accessible housing and home care services in Labrador West is steadily increasing. Lifelong residents of the region are facing the possibility of needing to leave their homes in order to afford to live or receive adequate care. Additional housing options including assisted care living 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 of our province are entitled to peace and comfort in their homes, where they have spent their lifetime contributing to its growth and prosperity; and

WHEREAS the means for the increasing number of seniors in Labrador West to happily age in place is currently not being met 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 for those requiring it.

Like I said, this is Seniors' Week, and once again the seniors continue to find that they are not adequately serviced in Labrador West. They don't have housing for them. They don't have home care. They don't

have an assisted living facility. While every other region in this province has the options for those things, we do not have those. Seniors in our region are suffering and more and more are leaving their communities to live in places that they don't even know, or have never spent any time in, because that's the only places where they can find housing or the care they need.

We have an ever-increasing amount of people with dementia. We have an increasing amount of people with Alzheimer's. Seniors that worked in the mining industry for many years with industrial diseases, these people are not being looked after in the region and once again we are asking the government to do the right thing and help facilitate this and help with the construction or the availability of these places in Labrador West.

Why should someone have to leave Labrador West, as a senior, when that's all they've known their entire life and move to somewhere on the Island that they have no connection to because the government doesn't see seniors the same way in Labrador West as they do in the rest of the province.

That is a fact. We are being left behind in Labrador West when it comes to seniors' care and it is growing and growing more.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, residents on Route 350, 351A and 352 in the Exploits District are concerned of the road conditions on their routes causing safety issues and damages to vehicles.

We, the undersigned, call upon the government to immediately have the road contracted to upgrade and improve these routes.

Mr. Speaker, I talked to the minister on a couple of occasions. Actually, I have went through three different minister to try to get some work done on Route 350, 351A and 352. That is in the zones of probably 50 to 80 kilometres – I'm not talking about the 100-kilometre zone, the TCH. There is work being done on that. I'm talking about the roads going through communities and to communities that is causing damages and causing obstructions. It's a very deplorable road.

We're trying to get some tourism attraction down there. We had the Come Home Year. I must say Come Home Year was good but it has caused a lot of damages, too. So much so that on September 8 – I have an email right here, it came in from one of the constituents and she lists off nine different people that had damages to their vehicles on those routes. One in particular had \$2,800 worth of damage. Another one over \$1,000 worth of damage. Another one \$900 worth of damages.

Mr. Speaker, if we wanted to get people down to those areas we can't be expecting drivers to go down there on those routes and be absorbing those types of damages.

Another just on her way to chemo treatment had to encumber \$300 worth of damages – on her way to chemo treatment.

This is very disrespectful about the roads in this area, Mr. Speaker. Even this year, to get them patched up and the potholes fixed, right up to last week and even this week, they're still trying to get that done. I think that's a bit late, way too late, this should be done in June so this stuff doesn't happen.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre and Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I'm presenting a petition to keep senior couples together in long-term care. It is a petition with over 100 signatures in this case. To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled:

WHEREAS senior couples should have the right to live together as they age; and

WHEREAS seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador have worked hard to build this province and deserve dignity and care; and

WHEREAS separating couples has a detrimental effect on their health and well-being; and

WHEREAS the province has a rapidly aging population, which is one of the most important challenges confronting government;

We, the undersigned, your petitioners, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to change its current policy of separating couples due to their differing levels of care in a publicly funded, universal, long-term care system and direct regional health boards to do the same and pass legislation to this effect.

It is calling for legislation to enshrine this so that it is not at the whim of a government to change policy or a health board to change policy, but it speaks to what we value. We speak the words of valuing our seniors and how they contribute to society. For many seniors, I know that being separated from a person whom they love, whom they have spent their time with for decades, in many cases, is traumatic.

So a person may be suffering from a dementia and maybe the spouse is not and maybe they need to be in long-term care, but the separation is still significant. So this petition is looking at keeping couples together and, Speaker, this will mean, yes, more resources. It means you are not going

to have people in long-term care facilities – employees working mandatory 20-hour shifts or having a minimum number of staff on the ward, but there has got to be some way of reallocating resources and reimagining the health care system that will allow for this.

We call upon the House to urge government to make those changes.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I am going to be a couple of minutes, so just let me move some stuff out of the way.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper first reading of Bill 3.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act, Bill 3, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act, Bill 3, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "Pay Equity and Pay Transparency," carried. (Bill 3)

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act. (Bill 3)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 3 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, Balanced Budget Act, Bill 4, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled Balanced Budget Act, Bill 4, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "Balanced Budget Act," carried. (Bill 4)

CLERK: A bill, Balanced Budget Act. (Bill 4)

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

When shall the said bill be read second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 4 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, Future Fund Act, Bill 5, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, Future Fund Act, Bill 5, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "Future Fund Act," carried. (Bill 5)

CLERK: A bill, Future Fund Act. (Bill 5)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 5 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, Bill 6, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, Bill 6, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act," carried. (Bill 6)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 6)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 6 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997, Bill 7, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997, Bill 7, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Education to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997," carried. (Bill 7)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Schools Act, 1997. (Bill 7)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 7 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Credit Union Act, 2009, Bill 8, and I further move the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Credit Union Act, 2009, Bill 8, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Credit Union Act, 2009," carried. (Bill 8)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Credit Union Act, 2009. (Bill 8)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 8 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, Bill 9, and I further move that the said bill be now be read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, Bill 9, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, that the hon. Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act," carried. (Bill 9)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act. (Bill 9) '

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 9 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act, Bill 10, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act, Bill 10, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act," carried. (Bill 10)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act. (Bill 10)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 10 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, Winding Up of Judgment Recovery (NFLD) Ltd. Act, Bill 11, and I further move the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, Winding Up of Judgment Recovery (NFLD) Ltd. Act, Bill 11, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "Winding Up of Judgment Recovery (NFLD) Ltd. Act," carried. (Bill 11)

CLERK: A bill, Winding Up of Judgment Recovery (NFLD) Ltd. Act. (Bill 11)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 11 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, Bill 12, and I further move the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, Bill 12, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act," carried. (Bill 12)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act. (Bill 12)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 12 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act, Bill 13, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act, Bill 13, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act," carried. (Bill 13)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act. (Bill 13)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 13 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Trading Act, 2019, Bill 14, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded by the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Trading Act, 2019, Bill 14, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Real Estate Trading Act, 2019," carried. (Bill 14)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Real Estate Trading Act, 2019. (Bill 14)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 14 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, Fair Registration Practices Act, Bill 15, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, Fair Registration Practices Act, Bill 15, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "Fair Registration Practices Act," carried. (Bill 15)

CLERK: A bill, Fair Registration Practices Act. (Bill 15)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 15 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 Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2, Bill 16, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2, Bill 16, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2," carried. (Bill 16)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 16)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 16 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, Aquaculture Act, 2022, Bill 17, and I further move that the said bill now be read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, Aquaculture Act, 2022, Bill 17, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Aquaculture to introduce a bill, "Aquaculture Act, 2022," carried. (Bill 17)

CLERK: A bill, Aquaculture Act, 2022. (Bill 17)

SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

S. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 17 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: It will be a busy day tomorrow, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 18.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that under Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on today, Thursday, October 6, 2022.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I wish to inform the House that I have received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

SPEAKER: All rise.

The following message is addressed to the hon. Minister of Finance:

As Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit Estimates of sums required for the public service of the province for the year ending 31 March 2023, by way of Supplementary Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of section 54 and 90 of the *Constitution Act, 1867*, I recommend these Estimates to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.:

Lieutenant Governor

Please be seated.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a Committee of Supply.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

Just before we get into the debate on the resolution and the bill, I just want to remind Members we're working with our clock back here today, so have patience with us and we'll get through this.

We are now debating the resolution and Bill 2, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Additional Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

Resolution

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

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain additional expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 the sum of \$194,000,000."

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Chair.

I very much appreciate it – I'm just going to move my chair in a bit. I very much appreciate the opportunity to stand in this very historic House. It is certainly overwhelming to think of the debate and the discussion that happened about our great country, the great debates that happened in this House, the historic and important debates, the building of this province, the building of our future, and even the debates around entering the wars and some of the

impactful moments in Newfoundland and Labrador's history.

I'm honoured and a bit humbled and overwhelmed to be standing in this House today. But today I stand to debate this bill that is asking for an appropriation that was not foreseen in the budget, because, of course, we have had additional revenues. So I'm going to talk a little bit about why we're having this debate today, what it means to the people of the province.

I'm asking and imploring the Members of this House to support the opportunity that is presented here today, to be able to provide an additional quantum of money in these very extraordinary times in which we're living, these difficult times from the cost of living perspective.

I'm pleased to be able to say that in Newfoundland and Labrador, since the budget was passed, we have had additional revenues and those additional revenues you're going to hear a full accounting for those additional revenues when we have the financial update in the coming weeks. But even simple math will let you know that we had projected in budget that we would have \$86 per barrel oil. We now know, this many months later, that the average has been about \$102 and with that, as I have said in budget, as I have said time and time again, for every dollar increase in the price of oil, we receive an additional \$13 million. So simple math will tell you that we have additional revenues and the government is asking this House for an appropriation so that we return that money during these extraordinary times to the people of the province.

I think that it is responsible and wise to do that based on the measures and the concerns that have been expressed on the cost of living. But I will say to the people of the province and to the Members here today, of course, this is one of many programs and expenditures that we have made to assist the people of the province

this year with the cost of living and the extraordinary times in which we find ourselves.

We've done things like: increased by 10 per cent the Income Supplement, which is costing us about \$6.8 million this year, and that's permanent. We've increased the Seniors' Benefit by \$6.5 million, a 10 per cent increase, which is permanent. We've lowered the cost of child care, of course, it will come to be \$10 a day by January of 2023. When I started here in this House of Assembly, I think the cost of child care was somewhere in the \$40 range and we have been able to now move it to \$10 a day.

These are big programs that assist the people of the province that ensure that the cost of living is addressed here. We've done things like increase the Prenatal Infant Nutrition Supplement program. We've implemented the bus pass. Those are longer term things that we have done to help address the cost of living.

Some of the shorter term ones the people of the province would know, for example, we have now a home heating supplement program that people can apply for, that if you are heating your home with furnace oil, for example, you are able to make an application to receive, if you are earning under \$100,000 then you'll receive \$500 for that and anywhere between \$100,000 to \$150,000 it is a scale that goes down to the lowest amount, which I think is \$200.

I will provide a number if anyone is having challenges; you have until end of November. It's 1-844-729-4645, if you need any assistance with this program.

Of course, we've also, for example, temporarily eliminated the retail sales tax on home insurance. That's costing the province about \$37.8 million this year. This was all in the budget, of course, previously announced. A 50 per cent reduction in registration fees for motor vehicle registration. All of these things have been

previously announced, but now we find ourselves with the good position of having additional revenues based on – I'll say, as I did, simple math will tell you where some of those additional revenues are.

But there are other additional revenues that we're finding as well and we need an appropriation. So the purpose of today is to say we need an appropriation so that we can be able to return to the people of the province \$500 per tax filer if you earned an adjusted income of under \$100,000. If you have an adjusted income of between \$100,000 to \$125,000 it's scaled to \$250, if you're at that maximum top end of \$125,000 adjusted income.

So I will say to the Chair and to the Members gathered here today, here's an opportunity for us to be able to provide some support during extraordinary times. I think it's responsible for us to do so.

I will tell this gathered, esteemed Assembly here today that we have put in place – and I have mentioned this in the House of Assembly before – a very robust, strategic plan for financial responsibility and prudence. Within that plan there are a number of categories. For example, there's prudent fiscal governance and that's things like making sure we have controls on our expenditure, making sure we have accountability built into spending of public funds. We've tabled in this House balanced budget legislation. We've embarked on modernization and transformation within government. All those things help us to ensure that we are very much focused on financial responsibility.

We've also done things on debt management, Chair, and I think that is really responsible for this House, for the finances of the province. We've debated legislation in this House that allowed us to increase sinking fund performance, which helps us to pay down more debt. We have done things like improved our liquidity position – very, very important. We all know the serious

challenges that this province has had in liquidity. So we've improved our liquidity position, which is very much important.

You will have seen the results of our robust program that we have, ensuring that the bond-rating agencies have now placed this province on a stable footing, which is very important. In the coming days or weeks we'll be debating the Future Fund, which again speaks to our responsibility on making sure we can pay down and manage our debt.

So the goal here, of course, the goal that we all want to have in this Legislature, I would say, is that we want a stronger, smarter, self-sufficient and sustainable province. I've said this repeatedly that that should be our goal. By doing that we want to make sure we are always focused on the cost of borrowing, we're always focused on prudent financial management, but we also have to respect and understand that these are challenging times for the people of the province.

Understanding those challenging times and receiving the additional revenues that we have received this year, with full disclosure of those additional revenues in the weeks to come when the financial update is here, but even understanding that we received additional funds because the price of oil has been much, much higher in this year than the 11 forecasters had indicated.

I will say, Chair, I think it's the responsible thing to do, to return and help the people of the province. This is, as you know, temporary and one time, because we do have these additional revenues that we can return to the people of the province, but I think it would be very important to the people of the province.

I listened with intent during Question Period and I thought it was interesting, Members opposite, including the Opposition House Leader, shouting about you need to listen to the people of the province – you need to listen. I say to the Member opposite, we

have been listening. I think they've been a little tone deaf of all the programs that we have put in place to support and help people during these very, very difficult times.

I implore the House to give us the appropriation. In a normal environment we would have this debated; there would be an appropriation in budget. We did not realize we would receive this revenue, therefore, we are asking the House today, if granted, then we will start immediately to work towards getting cheques in people's hands. We've said by year's end, by Christmastime, that we will do that. Nobody will have to fill out any kind of applications. It will be based on the 2021 income tax data.

If you have not yet filed, because some people have said they have not yet filed their 2021 income tax, I say please do so. You have until December 31 to do so. For those that say they probably would be unlikely to have their 2021 income tax filed, I do say that most people will file that because that, of course, is how you also receive your rebates for your HST. So those who are lower income, that would be one mechanism for them to receive that funding. So I implore them to, if they haven't filed, to please do that so they can receive those revenues as well.

Thank you for the opportunity. I know my time is drawing short; I'll be here to listen to debate. But, again, I think it's the responsible thing for this House to do, to provide this additional revenue back to the people of the province during these uncertain times.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

Before I start, I want to recognize again the significance of this building that we're in today. In reality, think about going back for a second, because I want to allude to what my colleague for Bonavista asked in Question Period earlier.

Yesterday, we heard the Throne Speech, a Throne Speech that was very light on the fishery. There was no plan for the fishery; there was no talk of a plan for the fishery. Yet, here we stand in this building today, many of us descendants of people who came to this province of ours because of the fishery. That's what brought us here. I would suggest that's what this building was built on, the back of the fishery. So it is very important that no government ever, ever forget how important the fishery is to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: People talk about giveaways and talk about the fact that the Upper Churchill contract was the biggest giveaway in the history of our province. I would argue, as well as others, that in 1949 when we decided to hand over management of the fishery to the federal government that was a bigger giveaway and it has caused us more trouble to this day.

We have an opportunity coming up in 2041 to do something about the Upper Churchill contract and I am sure all Members share that opinion. I also believe that all Members share the opinion that we need to have more say in how our fishery is run in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I also want to reference 1932; there was a riot in this building. The people were rioting because of the hardships that they were facing. The reason for that was because of economic situations, but as the Premier alluded to this morning in his answers to the questions, these were global issues: inflation and cost of living. But people of the

province back in 1932 expected their local government to do something about that and today the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – despite it being a national issue, despite it being a global issue – expect their government to do something to help them out.

Now, there are three words that have been used by this government in the last seven years on many occasions: blame, no choice and temporary. We applaud the measures, but the fact is as a province we have a structural deficit problem. We have a structural tax problem. We have a structural problem with service delivery in this province, whether it is health care or government services. So it's time to stop just being temporary, which is what has happened for the last seven years: temporary solutions.

What happens when you rush to make decisions? I'm glad that the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are going to benefit from additional income coming to them, but I also have to think back to the budget that was presented way back in April when we talked about the five-point plan. We pointed out at that time that it just wasn't good enough. The people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador spoke out and said it just wasn't good enough. Because of the efforts of the people on this side of the House, government was forced to take action.

For the first time in our history, I believe, a budget got changed after only three months. A good thing, we applauded the government for taking that initiative and doing that. We all expected action but we were significantly disappointed that it is only now that cheques are starting to roll out for people to help pay off last winter's bills for oil and heat and now we're about to enter a new winter with additional costs for people.

Now, here we are again today with an additional temporary measure – not because it was planned but because it was

the pressure from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people on this side of the House who demanded additional measures for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So, yes, we are going to support this measure, but, again, I have to worry about when you rush to implement a measure such as this there are obviously going to be challenges. Some of the challenges and shortcomings we have heard from people already. The fact that two income earners making \$90,000 each with no children, with a total family income of \$180,000 will be eligible for \$1,000 while a single earner or a single mother with four kids making \$125,001 will not receive a cent.

So there are gaps on the family income side of this that need to be addressed. That doesn't mean that this is still not good news for people but it means there are gaps that need to be addressed. Gaps like that example that I just said need to be fixed.

I also wonder about the cost of how this program will be delivered. The minister alluded to the fact everybody is going to get a cheque, but think about that for a second. We are going to go back to sending out a cheque. The cost of sending out those cheques, I would argue, individually, will amount to somewhere in the neighbourhood of over \$300,000. Surely, in 2022, we could find a way to do this that doesn't cost us \$300,000 or more in order for us to get this money in the hands of people.

Again, I go back and argue there are people, as the minister has just alluded to, who perhaps didn't file an income tax in 2021. So how do we track those people? How do we find those people that really need that income, that money in their pockets?

There are other people who have called us to talk about the threshold. Is it too high? Should it have been lower, then more money given to people that make a lot less

than \$100,000? Those are questions that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are bringing to us and that is why I talk about them here in the House today.

This is exactly why when you rush to introduce something, sometimes there are lots of gaps that need to be filled in. I raise those questions in the House today so that, hopefully, the minister and her officials can work on solutions so that nobody gets left behind.

Reach out to those people who perhaps didn't file an income tax. Maybe the 1-800 number that the minister alluded to will help solve that issue, I don't know, but it needs to happen. Because, at the end of the day, we need to continue to allow people to receive the benefits that their government promises.

I also find it somewhat interesting going back to the word "temporary" again, so let's think about that: temporary measures – and unfortunately, as I have said, this has been the trend. So right now the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are benefiting from temporary measures. They're benefiting from a gas tax decrease that will expire on April 1. So, as of April 1, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will start paying another eight cents a litre at the gas pumps, because that will expire. On April 1, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will now see an extra 15 per cent added to their insurance bill, because that will expire.

These temporary measures, while we may be grateful that they're in place, are not the solution. They are not the solution. Long-term planning and if better management had taken place in the last seven years, we wouldn't find ourselves in this position, but it hasn't happened. It has not happened and it will not continue to happen. So what's the solution to the people in cost of living by this government? Sugar tax. Let's add another tax. As if the people of Newfoundland and Labrador really needed another tax at this particular time in our history. It's just what

the doctor ordered. I'm going to cure you of all your ills, Chair –

AN HON. MEMBER: If you got a doctor.

T. WAKEHAM: If you got a doctor – I'm going to cure you of your ills because I'm going to impose a sugar tax on you. That's going to modify your behaviour and you will no longer need to see a doctor. You will no longer need clean drinking water. This is what the problem with these taxes is. This is what these taxes are, nothing more than –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

T. WAKEHAM: Nothing more than a tax on the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who cannot afford it.

AN HON. MEMBER: There's change in the air.

T. WAKEHAM: That's exactly right, my colleague from Conception Bay South. That's what the budget said, change was in the air, and we know change is in the air. Some people in Newfoundland and Labrador are talking about it and they're talking about a sugar tax. They're telling you – and you know you're hearing it. Every single one of you on that side of the House cannot stand up and say your constituents support a sugar tax because if you can, I would suggest to you that there's some swampland in Florida that could be bought. I think for a minute if either one of you could stand up and say your constituents support a sugar tax, then stand up when I sit down because there's no way that is just coming from this side of the House. It's impossible from this side of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

T. WAKEHAM: It's a problem throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. So we will

stand and speak for your constituents. We will stand and speak for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We will continue to do this until the people of Newfoundland and Labrador get the support they need. Axe the tax. If we have such increase in revenue that we're able to give away \$200 billion, then let's axe the tax. Take the next step: Axe the tax. It's a simple gesture.

That \$9 million you're going to collect, do we support programs like Kids Eat Smart and those other programs? Absolutely, we do. Do we believe they should be funded and have increased funding? Absolutely, we do. But you cannot tax people and make them healthier. It is not the way to go. The people in Newfoundland and Labrador simply have said no to the sugar tax. I know that your constituents have said no to the sugar tax. So let's all agree and stand and say, before we leave the Chamber, no to the sugar tax because that is the way to go. Let's make an amendment right now to the sugar tax.

Chair, as my time expires I want to – we need that sugar tax gone. We will support the motion. There's no doubt; we will support. Any time we can put more money back in people's pockets, we will support it, but we raise the concerns that it's a temporary relief and people of our province will need more than just temporary relief. I simply ask that the government start by eliminating those taxes that we don't need, and sugar tax is one of them.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: If you could just hold for a second, to get the clock straightened.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just going to stand and have a few words on this motion put forward here today about it.

I heard the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port talk about the sugar tax. The thing that concerned me most about the sugar tax, forget the tax that was coming in, but last year there was a stalemate. The government was bringing in the sugar tax and the Opposition wasn't giving in to their sugar tax. Myself and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands went outside with the Opposition House Leader, with the President of Treasury Board, the Minister of Finance, the Government House Leader and the Leader of the NDP and what we agreed to at the time – this is where I have the concerns – was that the money that's collected – which was, at the time, \$3 million and now it's gone up to \$7 million to \$9 million – what was agreed to at the time was that it would go to an educational program. That was agreed. It would go to the Heart and Stroke. It would go to diabetes for junior diabetes. It would go to an education program.

We had an agreement. I brought forth the proposal, myself and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands. The proposal was that there would be no existing government programs; let's get past this stalemate. What happened, the Minister of Finance, the Government House Leader agreed to that. You agreed to that. Now, when you take the funds and put it back in general revenues and not use it for what you agreed upon, this is why people like me and others on this side got to ask questions.

S. CROCKER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Pardon me?

S. CROCKER: No question.

E. JOYCE: Oh, sorry about that.

S. CROCKER: (Inaudible) reinvest the money.

E. JOYCE: Yeah, you reinvested the money but it's general revenue. It wasn't for education – and this is the point about the sugar tax. It was for education so people could learn the ill effects of sugar in their drinks.

It's done; the diabetes education of Canada, junior diabetes would love to be able to do an education program across the province to the youth. That's what we agreed upon.

The money now that was taken from the sugar tax, which could have been a great program – Heart and Stroke was another one that we brought up and there were others. There were three that were brought up. The Minister of Finance at the time made a commitment outside with – the Opposition Government House Leader, the Government House Leader, the Minister of Finance, the Leader of the Third Party and then the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands. She made an agreement that she would have in the budget a line item where the money went, a million dollars to each program for an education program.

We were led down the garden path on the sugar tax. It's sad. It is actually sad because if we had to take that fund and then use it on an educational program – it may take a year, it may take two or three years to see the benefits. But bring that to the youth, bring that to a family so that you can say, okay, here are the ill effects. Maybe you won't get everybody, absolutely not. Because people can't afford to buy milk, people can't afford to go out and buy the proper food. They just can't afford it. It's so expensive, they can't.

But I can assure you and I know from experience that when you start at the youth and you bring the youth up and educate the youth, they're the ones that are going to tell their mom and dad, no, I don't want that, I

want this one. I know from experience that's how it was done.

We missed that opportunity I say to the government. This is why I have to ask questions. Every time I see something coming forward, here's what we're going to do, this is why we have to ask questions.

I was there. I brokered the deal and it was a good deal. It would have made a bigger difference than taking and putting it in general revenue, I can assure you of that. Because if your intent was to stop the people from using sugar in their drinks, you missed the mark, Minister.

That was the deal that was struck, we shook hands, and when you have a gentleman's agreement that you come back in the House and we all agreed to something, and that agreement is broke, excuse me, but I will have to ask questions the next time. It's sad, it's sad.

If you go back to any program that we look at, education is the key, promotion is the key to healthy living, healthy eating, exercise, participation, healthy living. That is the key. Not take it and put it in general revenue. I had to put that on the record.

I would say it was sad, actually, when I seen the budget and this was out. We even named the three or four programs that was going to be used.

Just on this program alone, yes, I'm sure everybody in this House is going to vote for it, but the issue I have with it, and got a lot of calls, a lot of calls and a lot people emailed, is if there's a person here making \$90,000, his or her spouse is making another \$90,000, they're going to get \$1,000. Some senior on \$18,000 a year is going to get a less amount than those two individuals.

I know the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port brought it up, instead of hastily making an announcement about two hours

before this House opened, if you had to sit down with the Leader of the Opposition, if you had to sit with the Opposition critic, if you had to sit down with the Leader of the NDP and say, okay, what can we do? What's a good plan that we can put in place to help the most vulnerable people in our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador? That's what should have happened and, then, we wouldn't have the debate.

If we had to sit down and all agree, government sit down with the Opposition and the NDP, well, you know what would have happened here today? The minister would have gotten up and spoke, the Leader of the Opposition would have gotten up and spoke, the Leader of the NDP would have gotten up and spoke and it would have been all voted on and the people of the province who really need it – who really need it – would have been helped much, much more.

So when government – from my experience, like with the sugar tax – when you say we want to be inclusive, they are just words. We want to be collaborative, that's just words. We want consultation, that's just words. But when you want to start consultation, let's mean it. We can help people.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Pardon me?

I never heard you.

That's what needs to be done. If you are going to say we are going to collaborate and have consultation, let's do it and we would come up with better solutions for the province.

Because I have been on both sides, government, Opposition, independent and Opposition again. I can assure you what you learn over the years and the experience you pick up is that everybody in this House has a good idea. We all got good ideas. We

can all find a way that we can all work together to make it better for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That is the point here today, to walk in and say, okay, here's what we are going to do. Boom. Write a news announcement, another press release, another press conference. Yet, the people who are most vulnerable could have been helped more.

This is where collaboration comes in with government. This is where collaboration comes in. I'm sure we are all going to vote for this, but in the future – in the future – if we're going to say that we're going to help people out and we're going to all work together, let's do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Continue.

E. JOYCE: Thank you.

This is such a serious issue because there are people out there who are making \$18,000 to \$20,000 a year or \$25,000 to \$30,000.

Just for information for the people in this province: if someone in this province applied, a senior applied for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, which a lot do for assistance, once they get past \$32,500, they're not eligible. They are not eligible. So there are people that we should try to help a bit more.

I will take my seat, Mr. Chair, and I will just ask the government, in the future if you're going to do something that we're going to do it as a group to try to help the people, there are great ideas on both sides. If you make a commitment that you're going to do something, stand by the commitment, unlike what you're going to do with the funds from the sugar tax.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Chair.

I'm very thankful that I have the opportunity to speak on this bill today. I think that it's important to acknowledge, for my perspective, some of the concerns I have already heard from women in our province about this cost of living relief.

The question which I must pose to the minister today and to the government is whether they went through a Gender-Based Analysis Plus analysis? So what does that mean? It means we need to understand what, if any, considerations were given to equitable distribution of these monies.

Chair, it appears at first glance that there was no Gender-Based Analysis Plus done here with respect to this announcement. Why do I say that? Let's look at what the impact of this bill will be. Let's look at a single mother who has two jobs. She's struggling to afford milk for her children's breakfast. She gets less than a two-income family who lives comfortably and doesn't have any children and isn't concerned about where their next meal will come from. It should be noted that the majority of single-income households with children are women.

So let's think about that, Chair. For example, how is this looking? What does it look like? We have a single mother with two children making \$50,000. She will get \$500, but a two-income family will get more than this single mother. So clearly there has been no gender-based analysis. This is not a fair distribution of this money. It has a detrimental impact upon women in this

province. So please show me, if there's something I'm missing here, how this analysis was done. Please do that.

What this bill does, in fact, Chair, is it doesn't acknowledge the significant stress that women in our province are under when they're trying to buy nutritious groceries, for example, for their families. It doesn't acknowledge women who may have made more than \$125,000 in the last tax year, and may be out of the workforce now because they may have to assume elder care responsibilities or child care responsibilities. That's a whole other issue when we get to child care and the number of women that have had to stay home and out of the workforce because they cannot access child care in our province. One point that was made, as well, by the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, he acknowledged the impact that this has on seniors. It's the same kind of impact of what we're seeing with women.

So, Chair, I'm concerned about this. I have to wonder could this \$200 million have been better allocated, fairly allocated. That's what we're talking about here. We're talking about fairness. We're talking about equity. We're talking about equal opportunities for women as well. So if a proper gender-based analysis lens had been applied and carried out on this bill, then we would see a different impact than what we're going to see now.

It also says to me and to our caucus it is evident that little planning has gone into this bill. They certainly didn't reach out to Members in the Opposition to consult or to engage us in any type of attempt to find the best legislation possible. Yet we hear from the Premier – we heard from the Premier yesterday – saying how he wants to work together with the Opposition. Well, this certainly is an example of where he's not doing that and those are just words.

We in the Opposition are getting tired of those words. We are getting tired of those platitudes. I assure you that the people of

Newfoundland and Labrador are also getting fed up with this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So, Chair, again I bring this to the attention of this hon. House. I ask that question to the minister and to this government: Was there any Gender-Based Analysis Plus done on this bill?

It is clear to us at first glance that it hasn't been, but again, we ask that question. Please, if that is the case, show us, but we can see that the impact has been very detrimental and will be for women in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Opposition – temporary.

B. PETTEN: Yes, that's right. Trust me; no one wants to see the other fellow back more than me.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's hard to keep stuff on this desk too.

It is a pleasure to get up and speak on this resolution, I guess, or bill. But the bottom line is it is a measure to take the heat off government and to try to give the appearance that you're doing something to help people in this province.

Certainly, 392,000 people are getting money. I would hazard a guess the majority of those people are happy they're getting the money, but it's not going to solve the problem down the road, it's not going to solve the problem next month or the month after. Even when you get into the winter months it's going to get worse. This morning driving in – the price of gas and the price of home heating oil went up last night just on the heels of this announcement yesterday.

We've said in this Chamber – not in this one, but we're going to say it today. We've said in our House many times it has to be something that's sustainable, that's long term. It needs to be more structural.

Yesterday when I heard it –and there were a lot of things on the go during the week, as you know. We heard there was an announcement coming at 11 o'clock, I believe. I think the Government House Leader actually told me – we were at something before, but he told me there was an announcement coming at 11. So when I heard the announcement, the first thing I could think of was it was almost like the awakening. They woke up. Hang on; it was like sugar plums dancing in your head. We got millions of dollars; let's figure out what we're going to do.

I won't use the word but they say you fire what you can at the wall and hope something sticks. We're giving out cheques today, so we'll live in hope and we'll wait and we'll wait and maybe next month there will be another option. But until you get something sustained, you can do all these tricks you want.

This trick – this thing an hour before the House opens; no one has time to process nothing. You're over to the media centre with a full entourage making these announcements. It is a pattern. We've seen this over and over again; it's nothing new. They don't like me saying it. A lot of times in this House I tend to irritate the government on the other side, but that's fine. I told the Premier yesterday in a joking manner, this is my trademark. If I never made a jab at you, you'd wonder what was wrong, so I guess why disappoint.

That stuff don't go unnoticed by the general public. The best example – and it's (inaudible) piece of advice too. It caught me off guard. I was on vacation and I came back. I had basically 95 per cent of all this checked out. I took a break with my family. It was long overdue.

I went up to get a coffee at Tim Hortons and three or four ladies come over to talk to me. They knew my wife, actually, and I knew them a bit; they are constituents. They were talking very pleasurably and I was waiting to order my coffee. Out of the blue they brought up the sugar tax. I was after hearing all – honestly, I was on vacation; I never really caught up on much of the debate about the sugar tax. To be totally truthful, I heard some of it. When they talked about it, they brought up the sugar tax as being what were they thinking. This is going to be the end of them. I mean, where are their minds and on and on and on.

I just stood back and listened, I never provoked it. I could have put some gas on their fire, but I listened and when I listened I realized, do you know what? That's exactly what's wrong: government aren't listening.

You don't solve obesity and diabetes and heart disease and everything in the province by taxing someone. The Premier got in his spot today and told us that it's because of that, he's brought in a tax so people will stop drinking those drinks. I mean, respectfully, the man is a doctor. He is a smart man, there's no doubt, but that is not a very smart comment to make, Mr. Chair. People know the difference. People can't afford healthy choices, Mr. Chair.

That's the problem. It's not about going and drinking a can of Diet Pepsi over a can of Coke. That's offensive, actually, and that angers me to play with people's intelligence. I'm no doctor but I'm not stupid and comments like that make me feel stupid, if I'm going to believe it. I think we have a smart electorate out there to see this stuff.

You go and you look at the labels into Walmart – I was in there the other day – Rethink Your Drink. I think that's what it's called. I had to ask twice because it's that good of a slogan. Really? You're going in and you're buying drinks and they got this label stuck on there that's telling you and putting the gears to you, all the while

inflation is sky high. Then you got the Premier of our province, a doctor, that's telling us the reason he's doing that is to keep us all healthy. It makes no sense. You're all going to stay healthy because we're all going to die of starvation because you're not going to be able to buy nothing.

They gave out a \$500 cheque yesterday because everyone's hurting. All the while you're hammering them with a sugar tax, you're hammering them with carbon tax; everyone can't afford to buy gas. Now there was some reduction on gas; that's extended. We fought to have that. That's something else, while on it, government likes to take credit for all the good things.

Last spring in the House sitting – and they may not agree but there are people over there that knows that it happened – we negotiated during the carbon tax, we refused to let the carbon tax go through, we were willing to filibuster it as long as it took, we didn't care. I remember my comment to the Government House Leader was that we'll stay here until July if we had to because we could just keep going unless you bring on closure. It was agreed upon, through the powers that be and a lot of negotiations, that they would introduce the relief to people with gas on gas tax and they'd bring in something in the fall for home oil rebates. That's exactly what happened.

Now, yes, they're in government, they had to bring it forward, but they brought it forward so we could agree to the carbon tax. We never agreed to it; they let it pass so we wouldn't filibuster it. Because at the end of the day, government does have the ability to bring closure. So we said, do you know what? A half loaf is better than none at all. So we reluctantly agreed to let the carbon tax go through on the premise that people are going to get help, and that's what happened.

But do a lot of the people out there really know that? I mean, I've heard it in the Speech from the Throne, I've heard it

probably today; I hear it every other day: all these relief measures government brought in. A lot of those relief measures were thanks to the Opposition, Mr. Chair. It was thanks to this side of the House that brought that in. It's not that you're worried about everyone's health and everything else; it's all about the dollar.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, he was right. That conversation did happen. My memory was all the monies that would be collected would be reinvested into healthy food choices in the youth and education. It was \$8 million to \$9 million. Now it's going to general revenue. We were going to be provided a yearly list of where the money goes. Haven't seen anything yet. But we go in and we see the price on the bottom of a can of Coke: Don't drink that Coke, that's going to save your life.

B. DAVIS: Pepsi's local.

B. PETTEN: Then I hear the Minister of Environment and Climate Change over there telling me Pepsi is local. So he thinks this – I mean, the people of this province think that's funny or it's this great idea that Pepsi's local and you're going out to pay taxes.

You all have constituents, Mr. Chair, and everyone in this House has constituents that are paying this tax. They're paying the tax on gas; they're paying the carbon tax. No one appreciates it; no one likes it. But you have to be fair and balanced. So you're going to bring in a \$500 rebate. You're giving it in one hand and taking it out in the other. Government gets back a big portion of that \$500 they're supposed to give out to people yesterday that's tax free.

So when you look at the \$500, Mr. Chair, what about the homeless? What about the people who didn't file their income tax last year? There are a lot of low-income people out there who don't submit income tax for whatever reason. We know that. I'd say if

we look at a percentage, it's a lot of them. Where are they in the mix?

What about the single mother? There are lots of them around, too, that are just over the threshold with four children. They're getting nothing, or may get \$250. But you have lots of households with \$200,000 getting a thousand dollars, with probably no children. What assessment was done?

To that point, the Member for Harbour Main, me and her had a discussion about this yesterday, and what she said to me made so much sense. She said there's no planning.

So when I say to the awakening, they opened their eyes yesterday morning and all they could see was \$500 cheques, it's like the awakening. "I Can See Clearly Now," Mr. Chair. I can't sing the song, but I can see clearly, we have an answer, we've seen it, there's an awakening.

So we're getting to the Media Centre as fast as we can before we go to the Colonial Building to listen to the other crowd beat us up again. We got the answer; we got it solved.

Now, nobody knows, nobody has a clue how they're going to solve it, nobody has a clue how they're going to get the cheques out. All the staff are over there are scratching their heads: How are we going to figure this out? We have the problem solved.

Give me a break, I guess is the best way to describe it. I know the Government House Leader is constantly trying to throw me off, and the Minister of Finance is agitated, but do you know what? When I see that, Mr. Chair, my job is getting done. I guess job well done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: But one thing I will leave on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: I wonder how are they going to provide these cheques when they don't provide cheques anymore?

My only solution is they're going to make a one-off to get 392,000 cheques in the mail, because it's going to make for a lot of nice photo ops.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

I'm not going to be redundant, so whatever has been said before I'm not going to dwell on that too much, but I just may touch on a couple of things.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

C. PARDY: Within the school system – and I think the hon. Member for St. John's East will agree – we often looked out for and give extra care for those who were the most vulnerable within the system. I think that was deeply entrenched in teachers, that we looked after those that were in the greatest need or those that may have had the greatest deficit in learning. There were many students in the school system that really needed our help minimally. That's just the way it is.

If we look at our district, we'll find that there are a variety of needs. My colleagues have stated that when you roll out with the \$500 – and any time you put money in people's pockets, it's a good thing, and I would say, it

is a good thing. The only thing I would say is that there are some who will benefit from the \$500 but shortly after receiving it, they're going to be back in the same place they were previously. That's what would beg the question: What ought we be doing differently?

The significant difference would be that you need a plan. So you roll out a plan, conversion from oil to electricity: \$5,000 rebate. Nobody received that \$5,000 rebate unless they made over \$250,000.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: The hon. minister says that's not true. But I would say that government does not know who received the money, the \$5,000. The minister at Estimates said he didn't know what the household income was when they were giving out the \$5,000, and that was what was stated at Estimates.

I would say to you, very few in the District of Bonavista could afford the \$5,000 because there had to be additional money for them to do the conversion and they never had the money.

So I would say to you, whether it is \$250,000, \$200,000 or \$150,000, I know that many people in the District of Bonavista could not afford it. So when we talk about a plan, we need to make sure we have got a detailed plan.

I would say, following me now, someone is going to be mentioning poverty reduction. Will the \$500 make a significant difference to 21 per cent of our children living in poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador – 25 per cent if they are aged six and under? Some would say, where is the poverty reduction plan from the government? Could the \$200 million be part of the poverty reduction plan? Good question. Could that be part of the plan?

My hon. colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port started off talking about the fishery.

There is no plan for the fishery. We leave it to the fishery to churn along as they normally do, but we have no plan to grow the fishery. It is a resource that this hon. Chamber discusses lots, but we do not have a plan. Crown lands, we don't have a plan. I would say that. Air access, we many not have a plan.

But I want to share with you two situations before I end. On May 12, when we did the Income Tax Act, I had asked the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board – there was an increase in \$82 million in the personal tax line in the Estimates. The minister's response to that, at the time, was: "First of all, the \$82 million is the personal income tax that was mentioned by the Member for Bonavista that is not rate related. It is more related to a stronger household income and the strengthening of the economy," – which is good – "the strengthening of the employment numbers and that is what we are expecting to collect ... more in the personal income tax. That is a very positive, a good indicator of our economic resurgence."

The only thing I would say to you, what was missing, probably, on that – and the minister will speak to it when she wraps up the session – is that effective January 1 of 2022, every tax bracket in Newfoundland and Labrador, in our tax system, beyond \$135,000, I think, or slightly more increased. We added three more brackets to our taxation system in order to add more tax.

I would suggest to you, while we are talking about oil revenue, where the \$200 million is coming from, it is quite possible that due to the changes in the income tax and the personal income tax, that is creating a lot of revenue. The minister will speak to it after. So if \$82 million from January to budget time March, you extrapolate that over the full course of a year, that's a fair amount of revenue that's coming in from the three upper brackets.

One would say where do the doctors in Newfoundland and Labrador fall? Well, I would say the doctors in Newfoundland and Labrador would fall in those three upper brackets that we added. How do they relate to the rest of Canada? The upper bracket, the highest one we've got without mentioning numbers, we are the second highest in Canada on the top one. The second highest tax bracket, we are third in Canada. The first one we added on the tax bracket, we are fifth, so we're in the middle of the pack.

I would say is it conceivable that we had a lack of planning in that, that we may have adversely hit the medical doctors that would be getting the salaries and the tax bracket, where they're getting taxed more than what they would be in other provinces. Again, the minister will speak to it when she stands and probably shed some light on that.

To end in my final time, I just want to mention two viewers from the District of Bonavista who are watching.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I want to say hello to Phyllis Cuff – just two right now because I don't have a lot of time – and Sandra Cooper who are watching today. They're watching with interest as to what I would say in representation for the District of Bonavista.

Two short stories I want to share with you, two little anecdotes. It's important to have a plan. It's important to have a poverty reduction plan. So I want to give you two situations and I don't want to drill down on any names.

One lady, who is 52 years old and on social assistance, wrote me last night from the upper part of the district. She starts off with a fairly lengthy note. She said: I don't know why I'm writing you because I don't have any faith that anything will come out of it, but I don't know where else to go. She says when her child leaves her household – her

husband passed away 12 years ago – she fully realizes that she’s not going to be able to afford to stay in the house she’s in. She’s having her rent paid for, but the rest of the money, because of the child tax benefit, she can scrape by and make ends meet, but when the child leaves the household she admits that she’s not going to be able to do it. She’s going to have to move out to find something that would be more affordable for her.

Lastly, I would say, let me tell you about this lady. Her mother was her caregiver. She’s a 59-year-old from the lower part of the Peninsula. Her mother passed away earlier this year. The house is in great shape. She worried about how her daughter was going to be able to function, because they just barely made ends meet. Here’s what she gets. To fill up her oil tank is \$900. That’s redundant, but that’s what it is. So she’s got oil. She doesn’t have any wiring for electricity in her house. She receives \$605 per month.

If you live in your own house, you don’t get any more than what you would if somebody is renting and they get their rent covered. So how do you expect somebody who’s living in their own house to be able to manage the house with only \$605? I would say to you, it’s practically impossible. The people who are hurting before the plan, or without a plan, they still hurt after the \$500.

CHAIR (Trimper): Thank you.

C. PARDY: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: I’m sorry, I would remind all Members to play stay relevant to the resolution that we are debating.

Thank you.

L. EVANS: I don’t know if this is relevant, but the first thing I was going to talk about is, in my district, I talk about hardship and I talk about cost of living and struggles people have and the relevance of this actual opportunity to be given \$500. But, before I speak about that, I wanted to talk a little bit about the damage done by Hurricane Fiona.

People in my district are people of the sea, Inuit of the sea. We live by the sea and a lot of times we die by the sea. I was in my hometown of Makkovik when we watched the hurricane unfold, coming up towards Newfoundland, then when it got to Newfoundland, the Southwest Coast. I have to say, even though we’re the most northern part of the province, looking down at the most southerly part, southwest part, we were all touched and we were all concerned. We were all deeply saddened to see the tragedy of the houses being destroyed. We know what that means. Lives are destroyed and they have to be rebuilt.

It was good to see the Premier down there and the different ministers supporting them, and the federal ministers as well, because when such tragedy unfolds there is no politics involved. There are no parties; there is no difference between federal or provincial. So it is pretty good to see that people are being helped and it’s very important to acknowledge that because we’re all in this together.

Now, just looking at what this is going to cost the province, I know we talk about \$194 million and the way it’s been distributed. Already there’s been some criticism. A family of two affluent people, where one is making \$95,000 and another person is making \$124,000 in that household; they can get as much as \$750. They feel entitled because everyone is

struggling with the cost of living. But when we look at a single mother or a single father who is supporting three children, they're entitled to the \$500.

A lot of people will question that but at the end of the day, for my district, I have to say we've had a hard summer. The PUB froze the fuel and the oil all summer. For us, that \$500, whatever you want to call it, will be really greatly appreciated and welcomed in my communities. What a lot of people don't realize is that we didn't realize there was going to be a price freeze on our gas and our fuel to be able to allow us to go out and get food, hunt and fish and to collect berries.

I was in my district the last week of September on Wednesday the 28th. I was driving around with a friend of mine and we went to the gas station. All summer the gas in my district was frozen at \$2.457 a litre. All summer, as we watched the price of gasoline go down, go down, go down, come up a little bit, go down, go down in the rest of the province, in my district it was frozen at \$2.457. So keeping relevant to this bill, the opportunity for people in my district to get \$250 to \$500 given to them is really going to help a lot, especially if it can come close to Christmas.

But on Wednesday the 28th in my community of Hopedale, filling up at the gas station there, there were people there who had gas cans to go off in their boats to hunt and fish. On the 28th, people in my district all over were paying 78.9 cents a litre more than the Avalon. That's almost 79 cents.

We're not talking about convenience. I talked to a woman in Hopedale. She works with Health; she has a good job, her husband works as well. She told me, Lela, I haven't even been able to go off berry picking. So if she's impacted, if her household is impacted, you can imagine people on low income or income support, what they're struggling with.

So it's really, really important. There's a lot of irony here. I'm sure the chatter is going to pick up now because I'm just going to talk a little bit about where I'm standing. I'm barely five feet. When I sit I can barely see over the desks in this Colonial Building. I stand up; I'm very, very small. But I have to say standing here in the Colonial Building, it means a lot to me. It really, really does.

Because, for me, I had mixed feelings about the name of this building that I'm speaking on a bill, so I'm keeping relevant to the bill. For me, when I look at this I struggle. Right now, I talk about paying 79 cents more a litre in my district, but on the most northern tip of Newfoundland, if you gassed up before you went over to Labrador, you saved yourself 55.2 cents a litre more than Labradorians in the Straits, because they were frozen too – 58.2.

Sticking relevant to the bill, the people in Southern Labrador are really going to appreciate that \$500 as well, because that's going to be able to help them get ready for Christmas. I'm sure people with such high costs of being able to live, support their families and maintain their houses will appreciate that \$500.

It's a one-time payment, but when you look at the struggles that we face as Labradorians, it's daily. A one-time payment is welcome. There's an old saying we learned in school: You don't look a gift horse in the mouth. So we're definitely not going to complain about getting that \$500. Another issue that a lot of people do struggle with in my district is amenities and also food. So this \$500 or \$250 for people who are making a bit more income is going to be greatly appreciated.

So I think, staying relevant to the bill, people will be a little bit disappointed though. When we look at all the costs we've incurred since this government took away that freight boat from the Island that allowed us to get food, household amenities, building materials, equipment, snowmobiles and ATVs, things

that are important to our lives, \$500 really don't make up for the loss of that service. It's very, very important to us to make that distinction.

When you look at the cost of that to the entire province – and a lot of people are fairly well off – we're looking at \$194 million. I wonder how many years could we have had that freight boat on that would have helped our people.

I just look at a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. People will celebrate that day. I couldn't do a post; I couldn't even do a picture because the place I was staying in Hopedale, the Internet was so slow. I did three videos; I couldn't upload any of them. I cropped them down. I still couldn't upload anything. So I actually really couldn't post on social media how I was celebrating the Day for Truth and Reconciliation.

One of the things that came out of truth and reconciliation, of children being harmed and then to continue intergenerational trauma because there was never any real help given to them – one of the things that came out of that was in order for true reconciliation, yes, we had to have action, but the action had to make sure that the economic marginalization of Indigenous people, especially Indigenous communities, wasn't allowed to continue.

When I look at my communities in Northern Labrador – and I have looked at all of Labrador – economic marginalization is our greatest barrier to true reconciliation. When you look at economic marginalization and how that unfolds, right now for us it's through colonialism, the policies. So it's really ironic that little old me from Northern Labrador is standing in the Colonial Building, the second Labradorian to ever speak in this building.

I speak in a building that's called the Colonial Building. Sadly, we had an opportunity to change the name; we did not. But I have to say, in some ways I can

actually support not changing the name of this building because we're holding Parliament – when I'm facing across the aisle – a party, a government, that actually holds tight to colonial views, colonial policies and enforces them and robs my people.

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. EVANS: Keeps them actually down –

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. EVANS: – economically marginalized and that's –

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

Thank you.

The next speaker, I now call upon the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, I want to talk a little bit about priorities, because any time when we've brought up issues, or where we need to spend money or where we need to invest, the answer invariably is that's fine, but where are we going to get the money to pay for it? That's the answer. That, to me, is the lazy excuse for not doing anything.

Yet, we've got \$194 million for this that I didn't hear that question, where are we going to get the money to pay for it. Didn't hear the same question when it came to the Rothschild report, but we find money. We find money for priorities, Chair. We find money for what's important.

Now, the Minister of Finance talked about the many measures to help people with cost: Seniors' Benefit, child care, prenatal, bus pass, Home Heating Supplement, the elimination of the retail sales tax on home insurance – that's if you have a home, of

course – registration fees and so on and so forth. Housing for sure is a big cost facing people. No doubt the return of \$500 to people in the province on a sliding scale is going to be well welcomed. All you had to do was tune into the news and you would find many happy faces.

In some ways, it's like winning that \$50 on a scratch ticket, forgetting the fact that you probably paid \$300 to win that \$50, but hey, it's a bonus. I'm not knocking it because for some people that \$500 could come in handy; however, if you have exorbitant personal debt, if your rent has just gone up by several hundred dollars a month, it's not going to go far.

The minister spoke about the opportunity to provide support in extraordinary times, and talked about a strategic plan, fiscal prudence and debt management. In spite of this, because we had this windfall, this surplus, the responsible thing was to return it to the people of the province. Now, I have heard my colleague from Bonavista talk about long-term solutions; I've heard a few Members speak about this. That's what it comes down to, about planning, investment and where our priorities lie.

I've spoken here about housing, about the cost of emergency shelters, not only to government but also to the people who avail of them. We have spoken here in this House and the Health Accord about health outcomes, the social determinants of health. Certainly, having stable, safe housing is one of them.

We have spoken about the women in shelters. When you look at this – and I think my colleague from Bonavista would agree – insecure, unstable housing is going to make for a very poor learner in school. It's going to make – well, you need to be reaching out to them and often you don't even know this.

But think about the women who are in a shelter, the children who are coming from where their home is not secure, where food

is not secure, the disruption to their education, the trauma that they endure. A number of issues – a lot have been brought up – cheques in peoples' hands. How will we make sure that vulnerable women will get them and not their abusive partners? I think the Minister of Finance has said that this is something we're going to look at. We commend her on that, but let's get to it.

Many of the people in my district have no address and they haven't filed tax returns, so I don't know how we are going to get it to them. But I run into them on the street in my district as well; they have the coffee cup out but they're in need of more than just \$500.

We also know that – I reference the PROOF report – people who rent are most likely to be food insecure; are most likely not to be able to put food on the table. So it comes down to what's the long-term plan and not a one-off.

Earlier today, when I was speaking about the units available, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development spoke to the fact that the 120 units across the province that are in need of major repairs will be taken care of. If I may, Chair, just so we have an idea of what these numbers are, on the Avalon Peninsula, 28; Corner Brook, 45; Gander, 4; Goose Bay, 4; Grand Falls, 4; Marystown, 30; and Stephenville, 5. This is from information that was provided to me by the department and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing in July.

But here is the thing; in the note it says that during 2022-2023, approximately \$15 million will be invested in maintenance, repairs and modernization improvements to NLHC units, which includes \$1 million to address major repair vacancies. The numbers I just quoted to you are the major repair vacancies. This is why I don't have a whole lot of confidence that these units will be up and running in the time they have. By my estimation, based on what we've asked, major repairs count anywhere from \$50,000

to \$80,000 per unit, so on the outside \$10.5 million.

I'm a little bit concerned because we've heard how supports are put in place only to find out that the reality doesn't match up with the rhetoric. With that in mind I'm going to propose an amendment in Bill 2:

I move, seconded by the Member for Torngat Mountains, that the Schedule is repealed and the following substituted: The amount voted in the subheads of the following heads of expenditure of the 2022-23 Estimates is increased as follows: Head of expenditure under the Department of Finance, 1.3.01, Cost of Living Rebate 09, Allowances and Assistance, that the Supplementary Supply be \$183,500,000, and that a new heading be put in place as well; head of expenditure under the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, under Housing Operations and Assistance, Supplementary Supply, that an amount of \$10,500,000 be supplied; and that the extra amount to be voted, the sum total will be \$194 million.

Seconded by, as I said, the Member for Torngat Mountains.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Committee will recess to consider the said amendment.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

I ask the Members to take their seats, please.

The Committee of Supply have reviewed the proposed amendment. We find that it is not consistent with the principle and expands the scope of the resolution. It is therefore not in order.

The Member still has time remaining, if he so chooses.

J. DINN: We're going to support this motion because it's still (inaudible) –

CHAIR: I'm sorry, the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

J. DINN: But I will go back to it and I will support this: it's putting money in people's pockets. I still think it's absent of a long-term plan to address the issues of poverty. I really do fear, Chair, that this winter we're going to see an awful lot more people who are out in the cold and we're going to be spending more money on emergency shelters, if we can find them. This would've been a way to at least start addressing the underlying issue.

I will say this, in speaking to workers in the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, people who worked on these units; they would probably share my lack of optimism that these units will be repaired in a timely matter. That's my concern, is in our time, in trying to get people housed, it's not a fast moving process. There is a tremendous shortage. Landlords are evicting people, sometimes by jacking the rent up so that they have no choice but to move, because they're looking at turning them into Airbnbs and renovating them and getting more rent.

So the fact is, I really do believe, if you want to deal with the issue of poverty, if you want to help people, let's invest in housing. It's going to benefit all of us, because it means that there are people that are not traumatized, not dealing with mental health issues and they're going to fall into the justice system or the health care system, so that's one way I think we could have a long-term solution to this.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further speakers to the resolution?

Seeing none, is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Additional Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service." (Bill 2)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Clause 1 is carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

CLERK: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, the Schedule carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray additional expenses of the Public Service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

CHAIR: Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The preamble is carried.

On motion, preamble carried.

CLERK: An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Additional Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March

31, 2023 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The title is carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report that we have adopted without amendment a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report that they have adopted without amendment a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

Is it the pleasure of the Committee 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 (Warr): Order, please!

The Speaker recognizes the Chair of the Committee and the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted without amendment a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that the Committee have adopted without amendment a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

S. CROCKER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the resolution be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain additional expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 the sum of \$194,000,000."

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member of the House of Assembly for Mount Pearl North, that the resolution be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

"That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain additional expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2023 the sum of \$194,000,000."

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

S. COADY: Thank you Speaker.

I moved, seconded by the Member of the House of Assembly for Burin - Grand Bank, for leave to introduce the *Supplementary Supply Act, 2022-2023*, Bill 2, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Minister for Finance and President of Treasury Board shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Additional Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service, Bill 2, the Supplementary Supply Bill and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister for Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Additional Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 and for Other

Purposes Relating to the Public Service,” carried. (Bill 2)

CLERK: A bill, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Additional Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 2)

On motion, Bill 2 read a first time.

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

S. COADY: Thank you.

I move, seconded by the MHA for St. George’s - Humber, the *Supplementary Supply Act, 2022-2023*, Bill 2, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now 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.’

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Additional Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 2)

On motion, Bill 2 read a second time.

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member of the House of Assembly for Placentia - St. Mary’s, that the *Supplementary Supply Act, 2022-2023*, Bill 2, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Additional Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service. (Bill 2)

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

On motion, a bill, “An Act for Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Additional Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2023 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order paper. (Bill 2)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

Before I move to adjourn for the day, I would like to thank the House of Assembly staff and the staff at Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation. There has been a tremendous amount of work that has gone into getting us to this place where we are.

Except for the uncomfortable chairs, I think it's been a great day here in the Colonial Building where folks before us had not sat for 63 years, with the exception of one time.

So all that said, we'll be back after a long weekend. I want to wish everyone a great Thanksgiving weekend, and we'll be back at the Confederation Building in the Legislature on Tuesday.

I now move, seconded by my colleague, the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

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.

This House stands adjourned until Tuesday, October 11, at 1:30 p.m.

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