



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

---

Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 6

---

HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Monday

October 17, 2022

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

First of all I'd like to welcome a new Page, Damien White, to the House of Assembly this afternoon. Damien is from St. George's and is studying political science at Memorial University.

Welcome, Damien.

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

**SPEAKER:** I would also like to recognize Janie Dooley, along with her family and friends, who are watching our broadcast today from Clarenville Retirement Centre. Janie is the subject of a Member's statement this afternoon.

Welcome.

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

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Terra Nova, Topsail - Paradise, Torngat Mountains, Mount Pearl North and Bonavista.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

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

It's with great pleasure that I stand here today to recognize a stellar volunteer and cross-country skiing advocate in the Clarenville area.

Dr. Peter Cleary's love for the great outdoors was evident in his dedication to the Clarenville Nordic Ski Club. He could be found developing trails for novice cross-country skiers and ensuring the trails were safe for all to enjoy.

Dr. Cleary contributed many hours to cross-country skiing at both the local and provincial levels in various leadership roles. Pete, as he was affectionately known, was instrumental in the developing and the creation of trails so skiers could enjoy the beauty of the backcountry and take in the scenic views while enjoying the winter fresh air.

Pete's passion for cross-country skiing would see him eager to teach others, volunteer on hikes, coach racers, mark and pack trails down with his snowshoes. He could even be found with his chainsaw cutting up fallen trees for firewood.

His volunteer efforts were geared towards sharing his passion and dedication to skiing, and encouraging others to become involved. Sadly, Dr. Cleary passed in November of 2021, but there's no question that his legacy will continue.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Speaker, the Tickle Swim is a five-kilometre open ocean swim from Portugal Cove to Bell Island. The aim of the swim is to raise awareness and reduce stigma around mental health and mental illness in the province. This year the MUN Tickle Swim celebrated its 10th anniversary with 17 participants.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very proud to stand here today and congratulate sisters Amanda, Lauren and Morgan Dinn – my three daughters – who participated on September 19 and raised over \$6,000.

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

**P. DINN:** This is not the first Tickle Swim for Amanda and Morgan, as they participated in 2019.

This year's Tickle Swim was scheduled for September 17, but due to weather and the effects of ocean movements, it was done as a virtual swim, with some moving to ponds and indoor pools. Without hesitation, my daughters arranged to swim in Holyrood and, with the support of each other, jumped into the ocean five kilometres offshore and swam back to the beach, along with two other swimmers Dawn Curran and Jennifer Guy.

Mr. Speaker, I couldn't be more proud of their accomplishments.

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

**P. DINN:** Please join me in congratulating Amanda, Lauren and Morgan, and all who participated in bringing awareness to mental illness and the importance of good mental health.

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

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

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

Muriel Andersen was born on September 2, 1917, at Dunn's Island. She passed on September 19, 2022, at the age of 105.

Affectionately known as Aunt Mu, she raised six children, 21 grandchildren, 37 great-grandchildren, 28 great-great grandchildren, and we all called her Big Gram. She was only four foot 11.

She lived through two world wars, witnessed two pandemics, attended residential school and although widowed in her 40s, she kept her six children together by babysitting, making sealskin boots and translating. At the age of 12, she began work as a domestic. She took pride in her

work and, later, she would tell her grandchildren that the head of the household where she lived and worked always praised her by saying she was worth her weight in gold.

All her children say Mom focused on the good and endured the not so good. A small woman, her kindness and generosity will be remembered by all those who knew her.

Many comment on the politicians she raised; a son and two grandchildren as MHAs and a grandson and two sons currently sitting in the Nunatsiavut Government Assembly. However, her true legacy will be her resilience, her faith, strength and her kindness. She raised caring people. Her beautiful smile brought joy to all.

Please join me in applauding the life of my grandmother, Muriel Andersen.

Thank you.

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

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

**L. STOYLES:** Speaker, today I pay tribute to a neighbour, friend and a very proud citizen of this province, Reg Anstey.

As a resident of Mount Pearl and a champion for the fisheries and labour movement, Reg Anstey spent his life in public service as a long-time labour leader, serving on the executive for the Fish, Food and Allied Workers, known as the FFAW, and leading the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour as president until he retired in 2008.

Retirement didn't last long for Reg, as he was appointed to the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board – an organization that regulates the oil industry in this province.

Reg served with other public service boards and committees over his lifetime. He was appointed to the task force to review workers' compensation, appointed to the Red Tape Reduction Task Force. He helped create One Ocean to promote dialogue between the oil and fishery industry. He created the Seafood Sector Council, representing Canada at the International Labour Organization of the UN in 2007 and he held the appointment to the province's Fish Processing Licensing Board in 2019.

Reg's greatest love, though, was his family.

He will be fondly remembered by his family, along with the citizens of this province, especially those he helped along the way.

Rest in peace my friend.

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

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

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

On Saturday, October 8 of this year, I had the privilege of attending the 100th birthday celebration of Mrs. Janie Dooley of Sweet Bay.

The recreation hall was filled with family on this joyous occasion, including many of her 31 grandchildren, 47 great-grandchildren and eight great-great-grandchildren. All she asked for her birthday was to receive 100 cards. To date, she is inching closer to 1,000.

Janie Dooley raised 12 children and provided much guidance for each, and it continues today. She worried about making ends meet with raising so many children and admits that there were many struggles throughout. She is a very spiritual lady who believes that through prayer many potential struggles were lessened or averted.

Janie lived in her home in Sweet Bay until this year when she decided to move to the Clarendville Retirement Centre where she enjoys the social interaction of many friends.

One of her good friends, Roger Fitzgerald, who served as her MHA, states: Janie is a remarkable individual who is the matriarch of a wonderful family.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating Janie Dooley for her dedication to family, perseverance and super-large abundance of spirit.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

**K. HOWELL:** Speaker, I stand today to congratulate the Town of Pouch Cove for being the first in the province to adopt a municipal code of conduct, as well as several other councils that have since achieved this very important milestone.

Working to reduce gender-based harassment and barriers to professional advancement are critical steps towards increasing diversity and representation of women in municipal politics.

To that end, the *Municipal Conduct Act* was proclaimed into force on September 1, 2022, providing clear guidelines on how to effectively address issues of conflicts of interest, harassment and bullying in the workplace. This legislation will have a tremendous impact for women and gender-diverse people who wish to run or work in local government.

Speaker, inherent in the legislation is the aim to reduce gender-based harassment,

ensuring that councils are more inclusive and reducing barriers to women, gender-diverse individuals and other marginalized groups entering politics.

The act and the municipal Codes of Conduct will result in improved respectfulness, professionalism and workplace safety and wellness in council chambers and municipal workplaces.

To assist municipalities, a series of information sessions are being offered this fall, both in person and virtually. I encourage councillors and staff to take part and to reach out to our department at any time for further information and assistance.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'd like to thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. Speaker, on behalf of the Official Opposition, and as the former mayor, I'd like to recognize my hometown of Pouch Cove for committing to the implementation of the Code of Conduct for its council members. They, along with other municipalities across our province, have taken the first steps to creating a more fair and equitable workplace for everyone.

Speaker, the *Municipal Conduct Act* aims to raise the standards of professional behaviour, curb the use of influence, enforce confidentiality and reduce harassment and bullying. Our caucus stands behind these goals and supports all municipalities as they strive to achieve them.

It is our hope that these changes will encourage more women, gender-diverse and marginalized individuals to seek public

office and work alongside their peers to build stronger communities.

Again, I congratulate the Town of Pouch Cove for leading the way in creating a respectful and diverse workplace and applaud all councils who have adopted a municipal Code of Conduct.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement. Legislation to combat the barriers women and gender-diverse people face is beyond important. It needs to be bold, innovative and robust and include input of all stakeholders to have the maximum effect for everybody.

We trust that government will start treating this, as well as other pieces of legislation that aim to make our society more equal, with the serious effort and considerations that it all deserves.

Thank you.

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

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

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

Speaker, the province is in mourning following the news that an injured worker from Come By Chance Refinery explosion

has passed away. No words can ease the family's grief and pain during this dark time and they remain in our thoughts and prayers.

Speaker, can the Premier update the House on the RCMP and Occupational Health and Safety investigation?

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

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

Of course I join the hon. Member opposite in expressing sincere condolences to the family of the lost individual. I spoke with the head of the union last night and expressed my condolences to their fraternity as well.

There is an active investigation. We will wait to see the result of that and then take the appropriate measures after that, Mr. Speaker.

Everyone who goes to work deserves to come home in this province, Mr. Speaker, and it is something we take very serious.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Premier, for that.

Speaker, aside from the chaos in our school system caused by SmartFind, we've also heard from a number of teachers who are having problems getting paid. Many in early September, hires in replacement positions, have only been partially paid or not paid at all.

Speaker, what is the plan to get these teachers paid?

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

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

It is really important that the teachers of this provinces get paid and get paid promptly. We have worked to facilitate discussions between Treasury Board, who are responsible for paying, and the NLESD, who are responsible for the paperwork as employer, to make sure the employee has supplied the appropriate information.

As of today, there are no outstanding claims for payment by teachers with government. We have encouraged the NLESD to make sure their paperwork is prompt and up to date. Teachers in this province deserve to be paid on time, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** I'll remind the minister there are a lot of people not being paid from what we're hearing and we're hearing it from lots. I hope this is not another example of the Phoenix payroll system, that disaster. I guess this could be take two. Let's hope it's not.

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

**B. PETTEN:** They think it's funny that people are not getting paid, I guess.

In the middle of October, and according to the NLTA, schools have major staff shortages as it is and the minister cannot pay the teachers we have now.

Is this payroll mess related to the integration of the school district into the department?

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

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

Payroll functions were removed from the department some years ago and handed to the NLESD. It is not uncommon for the first

few weeks to have a mismatch between submission of claims because of hiring starts – if you start on a Tuesday you will not be paid that Wednesday but the following Wednesday. These are issues that usually work their way out.

The numbers involved are actually very small. We appreciate their challenge; teachers deserve to get paid and we're making sure the employer, the school district, pays its employees, the teachers.

Thank you.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** You know, Speaker, it's frustrating sometimes. We stand in this House, and I have been here for years with the minister opposite dismissing stuff, being very dismissive over serious issues. We hear it time and time again. This is another case.

People are not being paid. That's what we're being told. He can dismiss it all he wants. It's a minimal number, but one is too many.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, our office continues to hear from substitute teachers with concerns of the SmartFind system that our minister insists – quote – is working very well. Teachers are not getting calls, some are getting three calls for the same job and then they're being cancelled when they arrive at the school.

Speaker, is the Premier going to let this mess drag on for another seven years?

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

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

Again, selective quoting and misquoting. With regard to the teacher payroll issue, I agree, one teacher not getting paid on time is one too many.

With regard to SmartFind, I am pleased to report to the House that after discussions between the NLTA and the NLESD, which we facilitated, three significant changes have been made to SmartFind to address the top three issues that will deal with both the NLTA's concerns and the vice-principal's concerns and make sure that the students in this province have teachers in the classroom when they need it.

Thank you.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Incredible, someone is called out publicly in the House of Assembly and all of a sudden they've got all the answers and they're still not really doing a lot. I advise the minister to check *Hansard*. These are his words; we're not misquoting nothing. We've got this from *Hansard*: working very well.

Speaker, we've seen the crisis in health care caused by the former minister not so long ago and now he has the education system in turmoil.

Speaker, teachers are being offered an hours work at a school that is an hour and a half drive away.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Members find this kind of funny, Mr. Speaker, but I don't and I don't think anyone over here does.

We've heard instances where five teachers are cycling through a single classroom in a

week. No one takes the minister seriously when he says, quote: it's working very well.

Why do you, Premier?

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

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

Several things in no particular order. Firstly, no substitute teacher has opted out of SmartFind because they're having problems with it. That's information from the NLTA.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you for the protection, Mr. Speaker.

Part-time teachers will be given priority in substituting days in their classrooms later on, if such becomes necessary. Full day allocation will be made to one teacher. In the case of multiple consecutive days when they are aware of one teacher being away, these blocks will be offered as a single where at all possible.

These are the changes NLTA wanted; these are the changes the NLTA have got.

Thank you.

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

**B. PETTEN:** The reason they never opted out is because they've got to pay their bills, they've got to put food on their table. That's why they never opted out; they have no choice.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, the long awaited report from the Teachers Allocation Review Committee has confirmed what students, parents and teachers have been saying for years: classes are too large.

When can we expect to see changes on action on class sizes?

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

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

I'd like to thank the Teacher Allocation Review Committee for a sterling piece of very comprehensive work.

I would direct the Member opposite to the sentence before and the sentence after the piece about class size: Unless classroom composition is addressed class size will not, by itself, improve student outcomes. The last sentence after that was: If class composition is addressed, changes to class caps and size may not actually be necessary particularly in the older grades.

If he's going to cherry-pick, let him take bigger picks.

Thank you.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Mr. Speaker, with all due respect, I'll take no lessons from the Minister of Education in this House, anywhere in or out of this House.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Sorry, but no thanks. Thanks for the offer, Minister, no thank you.

Speaker, government has manipulated soft and hard caps allowing classrooms to



balloon in size. Our children will pay the price.

Are we going to wait another seven years or is the current system – and I quote – working very well?

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

**J. HAGGIE:** I'm heartened to see the Member opposite's interest in this report. It throws out challenges for the entire system: government, NLESD, NLTA, unions, managers and administrators.

In terms of the process that the Member opposite alludes to, we have arranged, as early as today, for the NLTA, the school district and the department to meet to begin working through the substance of what is a very meaty report: 186 pages, 90 recommendations. This process has started and we'll work together, because none of us can do this on our own. We need to sit there and collaborate and put the student first.

Thank you.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** It's good to see some of us are interested, Speaker. Too bad the minister never showed more interest before the last week.

Speaker, we are aware of numerous classrooms that have five, six and seven additional children over the recommended class cap. Government waited for years to ask for this report.

When will the Premier table a plan to implement its recommendations because it's needed?

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

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

Just to inject a little bit of evidence to this debate: 97 per cent of classes within this province are under the cap – under the cap, Mr. Speaker. Three per cent is too much, we're working on that. The process has begun. We need to do this collaboratively. Government cannot do it by itself. The NLTA cannot do it by itself, nor can the school district. We all need to be in the same room and that's happening as early as this week, potentially, and if not next.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Speaker, last week we heard yet from another family doctor who is leaving our province. Dr. Metcalfe quoted: "... the daily struggles and the inability to do my job and not (having) the tools to do my job."

I ask the minister: Why are doctors continuing to leave under this Liberal government's watch?

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

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

I know that the health authorities and the retention and recruitment office are working very hard to attract and recruit doctors. We passed legislation here just last week to do just that. There are issues within the health care system, Mr. Speaker, we're aware of that; in part it's because of a shortage of health care professionals, which puts pressure on all other health care professionals. We're determined to add to that pool of health care professionals to help them lift the load.

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

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you.

It's good to hear about recruitment, but this was about retention; keeping the people here that are here.

Also, we heard yet another paramedic that is leaving the province. Ms. Ashley Brenton said, and I quote, "There's literally no beds in the hospital, there was legit nothing we can do, everything's on diversion." This comes from a paramedic who says, "I live and breathe for EMS ...."

I ask the minister: Why are paramedics continuing to leave under this government?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, there are health care professionals leaving other provinces as well. There are health care professionals that are being sought out globally because there is a global shortage of health care professionals.

Often, Speaker, when you look at other provinces, we've seen interviews – I saw one on CBC a couple of weeks ago where there is a shortage of 65,000 health care professionals in Ontario. They say the working conditions have never been worse; that was a trauma centre, a major hospital in a major centre in Ontario, Mr. Speaker.

So there are issues in health care, we recognize that. We need to get at the workplace issues. We need to get at the retention and recruitment issues. We all recognize what needs to be done, Mr. Speaker, and we are working on it.

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

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

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

So this government is still in a holding pattern on retention; that's what I'm hearing.

Speaker, with mammography review now complete, what concrete steps is government taking to ensure this never happens again?

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

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

All images of patients have been reviewed, as the Member has indicated. This government acted very quickly in asking the health authorities to communicate to the public as quickly as they could, to give the assurance to the public that this was being worked on.

The review is still taking place on how and why this happened. Once that review is completed, we can get into the details of how and why it happened. But we are making sure that the units that images are being read on are all five megapixel for all ongoing image reviews.

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

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

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

The Breast Screening Clinic at Eastern Health is very short staffed to the point that they have to postpone appointments for months, in some instances not until April or May of next year.

With the anxiety created by the recent mammography issue, what is government doing to address these wait-lists?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, we are working on addressing all wait-lists in all disciplines of health because we understand the importance of health care to individuals in this province. And mammographies are no different. It is important that people get the health care they need when they need it and by the individual, the health professionals that are required to deliver those services.

That is something that this government has been working on very hard, Mr. Speaker, to improve health care in this province.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Unfortunately, Speaker, though, he did not answer the question with respect to the Breast Screening Clinic and what is he doing to address those wait-lists. It's causing considerable anxiety for many women.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, I've heard from constituents who are reporting long wait-lists and delays to have hip replacement surgeries. Some can barely walk and are in terrible pain waiting for a call that never happens.

In May, the Premier announced single-day outpatient procedures would happen as earlier as this fall.

It's mid-October, Premier: When can these constituents and so many other people expect this to occur?

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

**A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, this is a new program that's being introduced. There are some hiccups along the way. It's progressing, as I understand it, through Eastern Health. I'm happy to report that we're also looking at using other facilities –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. FUREY:** There we go.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I'm not having people chatting back and forth.

The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** I'm happy to report that we're looking at using other facilities as well, Mr. Speaker, across our beautiful province to ensure that people can get access to arthroplasty in a timely fashion, including sites like Carbonear and St. Anthony.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, *The Globe and Mail* asked survivors of domestic violence what they would do to prevent future abuse. One survivor called for education for boys on how to cope with difficult feelings and what a healthy relationship looks like. Just recently a local advocacy group stressed that education is key at an early age.

What steps has the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality taken to implement preventative education initiatives to address intimate partner violence?

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

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

We have within the K-to-12 curriculum age-appropriate material about behaviour and intimate partner violence, again, in an age-appropriate fashion. From the point of view of advocacy groups, I'm meeting with one this afternoon. They have a pilot in 30 schools and I believe it's being expanded by pretty well doubling it over the course of this coming academic year.

It is a subject we're aware of and we're building it into the curriculum in various ways.

Thank you.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, another survivor noted that women fleeing domestic violence often have to recount their stories and to relive the horrors when navigating red tape and government services.

What has this government done to implement trauma-informed training for all government employees that interact with the public?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member, of course, for always raising these important issues, because they are indeed important.

I'm happy to say – unfortunately, we need these services – over \$3.2 million of the budget in my office, which I represent the Office of Women and Gender Equality, goes to violence prevention work. At this time, Mr. Speaker, I also want to give the credit to our

community stakeholders who we rely on, who are the experts on the front lines providing these resources and these tools. We are working closely with them to support them in everything that we can do.

To also reflect the first question by the Member, what we have done as a government, we have a revised Harassment-Free Workplace Policy, improvements to occupational health and safety regulations and updated the *Family Violence Protection Act*, Mr. Speaker.

So rest assured we're going to do everything that we can possibly, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you so much.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

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

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

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

This province has the least stringent rules for legal name changes, which has allowed one registered sex offender to change his name.

Will the minister tighten up the rules to prevent registered sex offenders from changing their name from here on?

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

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

I guess, firstly, I can't fathom the rage and disbelief that I would feel if I was a victim and if I got a letter in the mail saying that the perpetrator had changed their name. I can't even understand what that must be like.

We are looking into this urgently. There are two provinces that have rules in place where sex offenders cannot change their name. The UK has been looking at this for a few years as well.

I just want to reassure the general public that you can't change your name and evade the law; law enforcement knows all of your names. But I certainly recognize the additional trauma that getting a letter in the mail like this would cause on victims. We are looking into it urgently.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister, but legislation should be put in place to protect the victims, not find a loophole for the assailant or the perpetrators.

The victim of this offender has spoken out publicly and is concerned that a person may change their name and evade tracking by the Canadian Police Information Centre, which registers all known aliases for a person convicted of a crime.

When will the minister make the necessary changes? Has her department looked at making these changes to prevent registered sex offenders from changing their names in the future?

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

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

I thank the Member for the question; it's very important.

I spoke with a victim last week and I cannot imagine how challenging a situation and how you have to relive that again, getting a letter in the mail saying your perpetrator had

changed their name. It's unfathomable, Speaker.

So we are urgently looking into this. It's not an easy – there are complexities. But I certainly am committed to finding a way to making sure that this doesn't happen to victims.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

And it's certainly about protecting the victim, for sure.

Speaker, the recent auction of surplus equipment and machinery was sole-sourced to a Vancouver-based auction house by Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, totally bypassing local companies.

I ask the Minister Responsible for the Public Procurement Agency: Why wasn't there a tender or RFP issued for this?

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

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

I don't have the particulars on that issue that he references, but I'll certainly follow up in the department on that and report back to the Member.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I would ask it again, we know. We have to take care of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first, and that's what should be happening here.

Speaker, what happened to local preference again? All the bidding fees, buyers' premiums and sellers' commissions will now be sent out of province.

This government just doesn't get it. We just saw the scathing Auditor General review on spending –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** – and contracting practices.

Have we not learned anything about sole-source contracts?

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

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

I'm happy to speak to this particular situation. In this case, Nalcor did or Hydro auctioned off a significant surplus of equipment coming from the Muskrat Falls Project.

The reason that they went with Ritchie Bros. in this particular situation is that given their national status and international status there was an opportunity to expose this equipment to far more than in this particular case.

I will point out that they have used a PPA process over the last number of years, and the company in particular actually didn't win a number of those bids.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Give them a chance, I guess.

Speaker, at the municipal administrator's conference it was noted the cost of asphalt has increased by 42 per cent this year. Many town roads are in deplorable condition – an embarrassment during Come Home Year.

Has the minister considered the difficulties towns are facing and changing the formula to allow additional support from the province?

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

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

And indeed when you talk about the Come Home Year, I believe from the reports that we see across the province that it's been a good Come Home Year.

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

**E. LOVELESS:** And in terms of the road infrastructure and the challenges that are faced by municipalities, we do take it very serious. I've had many conversations around the challenges that face municipalities, and I'm looking forward to the MNL conference this year, attending it and having –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I will not have Members taking back and forth.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you for that protection, Mr. Speaker.

Again, it is a serious question because it is a serious issue that's facing municipalities and it's facing the provincial government as well. We look forward to working with municipalities to find a resolve to this –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, just for clarification, I didn't complain about Come Home Year. There were many good celebrations. It was the state of the roads that were in the province that were an embarrassment, but I do –

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

**J. WALL:** – appreciate the answer the minister gave with respect to looking forward to that conversation.

Can the minister advise this House the number of municipalities who have adjusted their capital works plans because costs have skyrocketed?

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

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

I don't have a particular number, how many municipalities, but again we're working with all municipalities in terms of the challenges that they face, and we recognize that. There have been a lot of conversations ongoing in the department around that issue, and we look forward to working with municipalities so we can lessen their strain and stress on their system as well, the same as ours.

Thank you.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, during the Agriculture Expo this weekend, which the

minister also attended, I talked to one young farmer who told me with the high cost of operations he doesn't expect to make it through the next couple of years.

What would the minister say to this young farmer?

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

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

I can't believe the Member opposite asked that question. We actually milked a cow together out there this weekend, Mr. Speaker.

I went to every single booth at that exhibition. I thank everybody for being out there. I talked to young farmers. I talked to old farmers. I talked to the industry players out there this weekend, Mr. Speaker. He may have spoke to one, but none came to me and I spoke to all. So if there's one farmer in particular who is out in Grand Falls-Windsor this past weekend at the stadium that needed assistance, that needed to talk to me, give him my number; the Member opposite has it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, we are in danger of farmers abandoning the industry, which threatens our food security, and threatens to drive prices even higher. I've spoken with many farmers in the same situation.

I ask the minister: How will he ensure local farming operations aren't shut down for good?

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

**D. BRAGG:** Mr. Speaker, that is a terrible statement, a terrible question from the Member opposite. We can't thank the people in this province for the work they do, the grassroots people who work with their hands, Mr. Speaker, who is turning the soil to put food on our tables.

We are doing everything we can to promote this industry. We have a CAP program and a PAAP program and we have a supply of farm equipment, Mr. Speaker, which they can get a loan of for a small price.

We're doing all we can. We give subsidies, this year, for fertilizer and limestone, Mr. Speaker. We are helping out this industry. And, again, I say to the Member opposite, give them my number – give them my number.

**SPEAKER:** The time has expired.

The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

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

Speaker, the National Housing Strategy is a \$270-million, 10-year plan to address supply. However, the strategy is back loaded for the last three years to do builds. We need these new builds now. The province and the federal government can unlock funds to get those new builds happening.

I ask the Premier if he will commit to immediately unlocking the necessary provincial funds and insist that his federal counterpart do the same so that we can get these new constructions started as soon as possible.

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

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

The National Housing Strategy, which the province is a partner, is spending over \$345

million over the next seven years to build and sustain affordable housing in this province. What we are focused on right now is immediate action. We are building and will be building new units here in the city. We're expanding our Rent Supplement Program and we're maintaining and improving our housing stock.

So all of that is happening at the present time. If we can free up funding, we will and we'll apply that to more affordable housing units in the province, hopefully, in the very near future.

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

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

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

A lot of people can't wait seven years. They're going to be homeless this winter.

So winter is coming. I ask the Premier: Will this government commit to having all NLHC units in need of repair and currently vacant, as a result, ready for people to move in before the end of this calendar year?

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

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

In terms of vacancies that we're addressing, literally, as we speak – we have roughly 272 that are open for new tenants to move in or will be ready very shortly. We have approximately 34 units that we are repairing and getting ready for households to take over. They will not all be done by the end of December but we will have most of them done by the middle of next year.

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

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



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

I quote: We have a fiscal reality to live in. Those are the words from the minister when I asked why pay legislation wasn't a priority for this government. However when we asked this morning we were told there was no cost analysis done to implement this act.

So I ask the minister: Is she confident this will be effective legislation or is she just responding to public criticism?

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

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

I'm delighted that we are able to introduce this afternoon – or I'm assuming this afternoon – the pay equity legislation. I think it's a very positive and progressive step forward. It's one that we've been anxious to do for quite some time. I think that we should all in this House support this legislation.

I will say, Speaker, that we've had Job Evaluation Systems since 2015 for members of the core civil service. There are four key elements of that, that are part of the pay equity system. So the analysis, of course, indicates that we will have to change some of the Hay system, but for 85 per cent of the civil service it will remain with the Job Evaluation System.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

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

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

**L. EVANS:** I quote: We're more focused on getting it done right than getting it done quickly. Another quote: The provincial

government has done a tremendous amount of work. Another quote: I'm committed to doing everything I can. Those are quotes from ministers when asked to explain why we are the only Atlantic province without pay equity legislation. This morning when I asked why this legislation lacks consultation, the response was we can amend it later.

So I ask the minister, which is it? Was this legislation rushed to save the government the embarrassment or will this legislation improve pay equity?

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

**P. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, thank you so much.

I thank the hon. Member, of course, for raising this important topic and it's a good day for Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**P. PARSONS:** We are making history today for the first time, no other administration before now, and I am very proud that my team and I here, and this Premier, will bring in a bill, An Act Respecting Pay Equity for the Public Sector and Pay Transparency for the Public and Private Sectors.

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

**P. PARSONS:** This is a strong first step and I look forward to collaborating, of course, with stakeholders so we can put forth the absolute best legislation for the women and gender-diverse people and marginalized groups here in our province, Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Quick question. No preamble, please.

**J. BROWN:** Speaker, it's embarrassing that I have to continue to get up in this House and remind the Liberal government of discriminatory policies surrounding MTAP. In my district, I have an 85-year-old cancer patient who was referred for a dementia test. MTAP is not covering her medical travel. This senior is out thousands of dollars by following her doctor's orders.

Why does this health minister, like the one before him, continue to discriminate against Labradorians?

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

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

What I can say is that the department is looking at the MTAP program, looking at what is equitable under the MTAP program, Mr. Speaker. We understand that there are some issues, such as the Member has raised. These are issues that we are looking to address in being equitable to all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motions.

### **Notices of Motion**

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

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

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that

this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 18, 2022.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

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

I move, seconded by the Member for Ferryland, BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House express to the Government of Canada its strong opposition to unilateral fisheries management decisions and demand the establishment of a joint Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador joint fisheries management board to give our province a direct say in the management of our most historic and important resource industry.

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

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

The aforementioned motion will be the motion that we will debate Wednesday afternoon on our Private Members' Day.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

### **Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given**

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

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

I may have misspoken in a response to one of the questions from the Member for CBS. If so, I would like to correct the record. If not, then no harm done.

I believe when I referenced the fact that no substitute teacher in this province had opted out of the SmartFind system I referenced the source as the NLTA. It is in actual fact the NLESD.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

I'm going to read, again, the prayer of petition.

WHEREAS our environment must be protected and the Environment 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 1 of the project; and

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

THEREFORE, we petition the 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 1 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, I stand again today – and I heard the minister's statement, just last week, where he said he didn't tell the company, so someone told the company to split it up. Who was it? Who in this government is telling this company to split it up so you can get it through the system? Who is it? If it wasn't the minister, which I take at his face value that the minister is being honest and it wasn't him, there is someone in that government telling this group: put in Phase 1, get you buildings built, we got to give you the rest.

I guess that is why the Chancellor of Germany and the prime minister was down because they got that guarantee. It is wrong.

I say to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, out in the Port au Port Peninsula, as we speak, they are offering \$10 million to the communities. In the Humber - Bay of Islands, where Phase 2 is supposed to happen, there haven't even been notification that they're going ahead with it in Phase 2.

The minister stated, just last week, that he guaranteed there was going to be an impact study, if they need it. I ask the minister again: Why don't you put in the environmental impact study, into the review, they shall review – shall review – Phase 2 and 3 along with the GH2 project for Phase 1? I ask the minister why don't he do that?

There are people in Humber - Bay of Islands that says, no, that's not happening. We're told it's just out in Port au Port Peninsula. It's wrong, it's absolutely wrong.

I could tell the Minister for Environment and Climate Change, just remember what happened to Muskrat Falls when they walked in one day and said here's what we need; they said we got to do it. No, no, you've got to sign off on it. You have access to that information; you know what happened.

I'll say to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, this will fall on your shoulders because I guarantee you that if you don't include the three projects, you're circumventing the system and, Minister, you're a part of it.

Thank you.

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

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The Witless Bay Line is a significant piece of infrastructure. Whereas many commute outside the Avalon on a daily basis for work, as well commercial, residential and tourism growth in the region has increased the volume of traffic on this highway.

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

Speaker, again, I'll keep this topic out on top. It's a very important piece of infrastructure. There are eight or nine kilometres left. We have both ends that have been paved. I think four kilometres on one end and another six or seven on the other end, but in the middle it's not fit to drive on.

I said last week when I did the petition, anyone that comes in to the House of Assembly, instead of going out the Trans-Canada, come in and drive the road just to experience it, then you'll know what I'm talking about. Because as a MHA, when somebody calls you on a district issue, you always want to go out and visit and see what they're talking about. It makes it a

whole lot easier when you're trying to understand. But when you drive it, you'll understand.

When I get calls from truck drivers that are hauling crab across Witless Bay Line, people that tow mobile trailers across, motorcycle drivers. They're all calling or they have called or when they see it they bring it up all the time. The road is terrible in the middle – terrible. There's no good in having both ends done. It's terrible in the middle and it's a danger. When you're driving that road, you're hauling across the opposite side of the road so many times it's unbelievable.

I'd love for the minister to be able to have this in his budget for the upcoming spring.

Thank you.

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

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

We've just addressed this in question period, but it's a very important issue. These are the reasons for our petition:

Newfoundland and Labrador has the least stringent rules in regard to legislation on name change, specifically in relation to name change of people on the sex offenders list.

Again, I know the minister gets it and I'm glad that the attention is going to be paid to it. But we talk about the assailant here, the perpetrator, it's a man with a lengthy record of abusing women in Newfoundland and Labrador and Ontario and he's now legally allowed to change his name. That's a loophole in the system that should have been tightened up or found before now, but we have the opportunity now to put in legislation that would actually impact the victims.

In one case, he was convicted of holding a box cutter to his girlfriend's throat. He choked her, punched her and then sexually assaulted her. We do not believe in the Official Opposition that this person should have the right to change their name.

It's not just for the victim in this particular circumstance. For full disclosure, this victim is a family friend of mine. I've spoken to her many times over the past week about this, and she has to live through this again. We think that legislation should be tightened up and it could be.

One of the victims has said: I now know he's changed his name, but the rest of the world doesn't. That is the issue, Mr. Speaker. How many other people are going to look at this man and take his word upon face value, not knowing his past history? We believe that it can be tightened up. Alberta and Saskatchewan are the only ones where you cannot change your name once on the sex offenders list. We'd like to see the same right here in Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure this victim (inaudible).

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: to urge the government to take immediate action that will help ensure the protection of vulnerable women throughout Newfoundland and Labrador by tightening legislation that would not grant registered sex offender's anonymity in regard to a legal name change.

We'd like to see that sooner than later so it doesn't happen again. Our thoughts and prayers are with every victim that's gone through this.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

The reasons for this petition:

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

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

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

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

And yes, once again I bring this petition to the House because I have to remind the House and the government that we have nothing, zero, zilch, nothing. There is nothing in Labrador West in place for seniors, especially those requiring care. We have little to no home care as it is; we have little to no access to anything else. If you are requiring anything outside of the little bit what we have, you're shipped away. You're in a private home or something somewhere on the Island.

It has become very serious because as most people know, the demographics of the

country is changing and the demographics of Labrador West is a representation of the post-war period. So most of the residents of Labrador West, the majority of them that are there, are becoming seniors at a faster rate because of when Labrador City was established.

So, right now, we have nothing. Government was warned about it. Multiple, different governments over the years have been warned about the demographic change that was going to come and nothing was ever done about it. Now we are in a situation where many seniors are having a lot more issues.

I know one gentleman, is a good example, who is a lifelong resident of Labrador West. He came there in the early '60s. He can't even leave his house. He has mobility issues. He's trapped in his house. He would happily sell his house or move into a home or something like that, but he doesn't want to leave his grandkids behind. He doesn't want to leave his family behind. Why should he have to leave all of that behind when he contributed to a community that he helped build and loves and spent a lot of time volunteering in?

So this is where we are in Labrador West, now, as the situation is. These seniors are becoming trapped at their houses; living in houses that they can't maintain because they were designed for when he was a young man, raising a family and all that. Now, unfortunately, because there's nothing available in Labrador West for seniors, this is how he is spending his last years in his house, unable to get out, unable to do anything. But this is the situation that has been created. Government knew about it; did nothing about it.

Thank you.

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

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

With the release of the Atlantic Seal Science Task Team report earlier this year and the significance of the commercial harvest to fishers and plant workers in the District of Bonavista, we feel that the seal population is far greater than the ecosystem can sustain.

As a result, the large population of seals is certainly preventing the rebuilding of our valuable groundfish stock and negatively affecting the significant landed value of our commercial harvest.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to address the seal population by taking proactive measures on fulfilling our current provincial quota of seals and enhancing the markets of seal products within our province and other jurisdictions. Action is long overdue.

One of the things we have full control over in Newfoundland and Labrador and our province is capturing our quota of close to 450,000 seals that would be out there. We know the amount they eat. Grey seal, 6.6 kilograms; harp seals, which are probably over eight million now, 3.3 kilograms.

So we know that the piece (inaudible) in the ecosystem is running rampant. What has the current government done? Well, the last time that the government stood and talked fishery they mentioned about the upcoming seal summit.

The upcoming seal summit to be held in Newfoundland and Labrador on November 8-9, which we haven't got any details on, was number seven of nine recommendations from the task team. People are not celebrating the summit out there because they know that there were far more significant recommendations that ought to have been acted on.

For example, we haven't heard anything from our current government in fisheries looking at the diet of seals and what the

stomach contents would be. In fact, the federal government, since 2017, has frozen in their laboratory and research the contents of the stomachs, but they report online that it's yet to be analyzed. Five years, Speaker, and the seal contents frozen in the research division of DFO not analyzed.

So if we look at our provincial government and say let's look under the sealing industry, I stated on *Open Line* one day the last news release related to the sealing industry came in 2015. Not one release from this government since 2015. Shortly after that was mentioned on the *Open Line* now it appears that the sealing industry is taken down on the web page. We need action.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

**C. PARDY:** 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 remind the Member opposite who was the minister in 2015.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Health and Safety of Workers and the Compensation of Workers for Injuries Suffered in the Course

of their Employment, Bill 18, and I further move the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting the Health and Safety of Workers and the Compensation of Workers for Injuries Suffered in the Course of their Employment," carried (Bill 18)

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act Respecting the Health and Safety of Workers and the Compensation of Workers for Injuries Suffered in the Course of their Employment. (Bill 18)

**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 18 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 call from the Order Paper, Motion 2.

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

**S. CROCKER:** 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., today, Monday, October 17, 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:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, second reading of Bill 3, An Act Respecting Pay Equity for the Public Sector and Pay Transparency for the Public and Private Sectors.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, that Bill 3, An Act Respecting Pay Equity for the Public Sector and Pay Transparency for the Public and Private Sectors, be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It's moved and seconded that Bill 3, An Act Respecting Pay Equity for the Public Sector and Pay Transparency for the Public and Private Sectors be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting Pay Equity for the Public Sector and Pay Transparency for the Public and Private Sectors." (Bill 3)

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

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

Speaker, I'm very proud to be here today in this hon. House to talk about the important piece of legislation for Newfoundland and Labrador, An Act Respecting Pay Equity for the Public Sector and Pay Transparency for the Public and Private Sectors referred to as *Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act*.

Our government has regularly stated and demonstrated our commitment to achieving gender equality here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and for supporting individuals who face systemic inequalities. To that end, there have been a number of concrete actions that our government has taken to increase women's participation in our economy and advancement within the workforce.

Actions such as using women's employment plans and gender equity and diversity plans to increase women's participation in non-traditional fields and skilled trades. Actions such as implementing \$15-a-day daycare as of January 20, 2022, and a further decrease to \$10-a-day daycare in January 2023. Actions such as investing \$750,000 in Sandpiper Ventures to support and address early stage financing for women in the province's growing technology sector. Actions such as providing funding for the office to advance women apprentices, which helps women find and maintain employment in the trades.

These are just some of the initiatives our government has implemented that are directly supporting gender equality and the economic parity. As the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality, I have been mandated to work toward advancing the economic security of women in the area of pay equity. I am pleased today to deliver on that commitment and to speak to a historic milestone in



enacting pay equity and pay transparency legislation here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are groups of people in our province who have been disproportionately impacted by inequitable and unfair payment practices, particularly women and gender-diverse people. However, we know that there are additional intersectionalities that impact populations even further, including prejudice based on race, ability and sexual orientation. This legislation will help all people and will help to lift up groups of people who have faced barriers to fair and equitable compensation in the workplace.

When people are empowered in their lives and are able to access fair wages, they have more control over the choices that they make for themselves and for the way that they want to contribute to society. Speaker, there is nothing to be lost from supporting pay equity and pay transparency legislation; however, there is a large opportunity lost by maintaining status quo.

It is as simple as this: when people aren't able to fully participate in the workforce in an equitable, meaningful way, we are not meeting our full socio-economic potential as a province. That has negative impacts on people, on communities and our economy. Equitable pay practices benefit everyone. Workers are able to work in a fairly compensated environment and workers have the tools to justify their payment practices.

This can also be a valuable recruitment tool for employers to showcase their wages and their job postings, and to shed light into compensation of their workforce. When used to their full potential, pay equity and pay transparency mechanisms can foster diversity, inclusion and a more respectful workplace.

There have been many organizations and community-based agencies who have added their voice and their energy to the

discussion on pay equity. I'd like to share my gratitude for their dedication and their support.

The Provincial Advisory Council on the Status of Women and the St. John's Status of Women Council, in particular, were and remain to be vocal advocates for pay equity legislation.

I thank them, as well as other community groups and individuals, for their enthusiasm and for exercising their democratic right to engage with our government and advocate for the needs of women and those who have faced marginalization here in our province.

Speaker, this legislation has been a prominent topic of conversation both in this House of Assembly and within the general public over the past 12 months, and I would venture to say decades, since the '80s. The importance of equitable and fair payment practices have been at the forefront of many conversations. I'm optimistic that as we rebuild in a post-pandemic society, we are able to have meaningful conversations about how to address inequities. One of few positive outcomes of the COVID-19 global pandemic was that it brought to the forefront some of the challenges that were being experienced in the workplace and in our homes.

We heard people facing challenges with violence, increased mental health needs and uncertainty about finances. We saw parents struggling to balance the needs of family and work, which were often both occurring in the same place, at the same time, due to isolation measures.

As our province returns to a sense of normalcy, we are able to pinpoint ways that our government can support and reinforce structures that allow for fair payment practices that empower workers who are looking to attach or advance within the workforce.

The proposed *Pay Equity and Pay Transparency Act* will allow government to outline provisions to support fair compensation practices here in our province. The legislation being presented includes criteria to determine the value of work performed, provisions for pay equity for the public sector, provisions respecting pay transparency for the public and the private sectors and outlines offenses and Lieutenant-Governor in Council regulating making authority.

Speaker, components of this bill will allow us to join a list of provinces and territories across Canada who have enacted pay equity and pay transparency legislation in various forms. Manitoba, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island have enacted pay equity legislation for the public sector.

Ontario and Quebec have enacted pay equity legislation for the public and private sectors and the Government of Canada has enacted pay equity legislation for the federal public sector and federally regulated private sector.

The pay equity provisions within the proposed legislation recognizes the importance of work done within various jurisdictions throughout our nation and focuses on the fundamental components that are crucial to pay equity. A key component of this bill, Speaker, is enshrining in law the four criteria required for pay equity compliance. Those criteria are skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions.

In order for a public sector employer to become pay equity compliant, those four criteria must be used to determine a jobs value within an organization. This is prominent and important to ensuring that an unbiased lens is determining the value of a job in a workplace.

As the largest group of employees in the province, there is an inherent value of

implementing pay equity legislation first within the public sector.

Speaker, within the core public sector, the job evaluation is used to classify employees using the four objective criteria outlined in this legislation. This means that 85 per cent of the core government employees whose jobs have been classified for the Job Evaluation System can be confident that their compensation is indeed pay equity compliant.

A portion of the core government employees are classified using the Hay system, which will undergo an evaluation to integrate the fourth job classification criteria to ensure pay equity compliance. This is being worked on currently and, Speaker, we are confident that this will be completed by April 1, 2023.

The pay equity provisions outlined in the bill will apply to the Executive Branch; the Legislative Branches, including statutory offices; and various public bodies, including Crown corporations, agencies, boards, commissions, municipalities, health authorities, school districts, Memorial University and College of the North Atlantic.

Pay equity provisions for public bodies outside of government departments will come into force when proclaimed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council. The pay equity provisions in the proposed bill will not apply to public sector employers with less than 10 employees.

The bill will require public bodies to prepare pay equity reports and deliver them to a pay equity officer appointed under the *Public Service Commission Act* and the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board will be required to make these reports public.

This is an important component of the pay equity provisions and will provide an accountability mechanism as well as gathering valuable job information about the

composition of our province's workforce and job evaluation within the public service.

Features of the pay equity reports will be set out in regulation after consultation with public sector employers. While the pay equity provisions outlined in this legislation apply only to the public sector, our government is committed to implementing pay equity within the private sector in the near future. The legislation is a stepping stone or an opened door. Our path forward will be informed by our consultation with the private sector, who will be able to share their input and valuable knowledge about how pay equity may be implemented within the private sector.

Speaker, there are additional key elements of this bill that relate to pay transparency provisions. British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, New Brunswick and the Government of Canada all have legislation within elements of pay transparency for the public sector. However, the bill that our government is proposing today has strong elements of pay transparency that will be in place in Newfoundland and Labrador and will place us as a leader among the few jurisdictions with the perspective of pay transparency for the public and private sectors.

This proposed legislation has four key pieces of pay transparency. The first, and perhaps the most impactful element that will impact all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, is that employers will be required to state an expected salary or salary scale for all publicly advertised job positions. This provision will empower job seekers to determine which jobs meet their criteria for expected salary. It will also provide employers with the opportunity to highlight their own competitive wages or value propositions.

Another important part of this proposed legislation would require that employers not seek pay history information from applications and the employers not threaten

or penalize employees for actions related to pay transparency, such as disclosing their pay to another employee. Speaker, these elements of the proposed bill are crucial to empowering employees in the workplace and ensuring their past income will not necessarily impact their future earning potential.

While this legislation is sure to have positive impact within our province, we also recognize that there are details that require input from stakeholders in order to create strong regulations. Our government will consult with employers from both the public and private sector to inform components of the regulations for both pay equity and pay transparency. Details such as timelines for implementation, as well as reporting frameworks, will be outlined after consultation processes have been complete.

We've recognized that there are many stakeholders within the public and private sector who will be able to share valuable input during consultation and we look forward to working collaboratively with them throughout the process.

Thank you, Speaker. It is certainly a historic day here in our province. I'm very proud to be bringing in this legislation, to be introducing it along with my team, of course, and our Premier. I look forward to the debate here in the House of Assembly. On that note, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

Thank you.

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

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

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

First of all, with respect to this long-awaited legislation, I must say, at first blush, it's a disappointment. It falls short of what was

envisioned back in 2017, Speaker, and let me provide some context to that. In 2017, in this hon. House of Assembly, the provincial Legislature unanimously voted in favour of a private Member's bill, put forward by then NDP MHA Gerry Rogers, to introduce pay equity legislation. We ask ourselves, if this is the legislation that was intended, is this what the House envisioned in 2017? I don't think it is. I think this legislation falls short.

Now, let me first of all say, it is a step. Although it's stated that it's a big step, I think it's a very little step. It's a little step, but at least it's a step in the right direction. When we hear that it is progressive, I have to dispute that; that it is not progressive legislation. In fact, it is very short of being progressive. Because what does progressive legislation mean? It means progress, and we're not seeing progress when we're seeing what they're doing is enshrining what already is in place with respect to the public sector. It is basically reaffirming the status quo, Speaker. That, to me, is not progressive legislation.

We need, when we look at progressive legislation, we look at what is already in place in other jurisdictions, Speaker. The hope is that we look at the best of all of those jurisdictions in the country and we make it even better. We make the best possible legislation, and unfortunately I have to argue that that is not what we're seeing with this legislation today.

When I look at other jurisdictions in the country, Ontario, for example, their pay equity legislation is much more proactive. And when I use the term "proactive" that is a description; it's a process; it's a specific type of pay equity legislation that has been advocated and advanced. We don't see that in this legislation.

I have to note when we had the briefing this morning, the question was asked what consultation took place with other jurisdictions in our country. And the answer was far from satisfactory. Now, I will leave

this for the minister to answer when we ask questions, but there doesn't seem to be a very in-depth, deep dive into asking and to consulting with other jurisdictions to make the best possible legislation we can have.

So one of the things I need to point out when we talk about consultations, when we look at the fact that the St. John's Status of Women Council issued a report, Speaker, in August of 2020 and the minister in her remarks mentioned the St. John's Status of Women Council, she talked about and thanked them for their enthusiasm, yet when we look at some of the recommendations that came forward from them these were not considered or not implemented by the government when they anticipated this legislation.

The St. John's Status of Women Council in August of 2022 published a report, a very thorough and researched report, I might add, on what this legislation should look like in our province. And there are a couple of quotes that I have from this report which are very important: "Our report outlines a consistent trend across Canada showing where there is proactive legislation there are lower gender wage gaps." Proactive.

"In Canada where pay equity has been legislated, over the past twenty years most provinces saw the largest average incomes increase during the year following legislation." But this is proactive pay equity legislation. That is not what we're seeing here today, Speaker.

"The St. John's Status of Women Council calls on the government of Newfoundland and Labrador to implement proactive pay equity legislation in both public and private sectors with funding for well-resourced oversight bodies to ensure consistent employer accountability." Speaker, we're not seeing that in what's being proposed here in this legislation. First of all, with respect to the public service, we do see that they are enshrining what already exists within the public service but there's nothing new

that I would argue is being presented here as far as public service changing the status quo; improving the status quo. So, Speaker, I do have concerns about that in particular.

When we hear about consultations, we hear that private sector pay equity legislation is only going to come after consultations. I mean, is this where we are? This has been years. We look at other provinces. This is four decades. We have so much to take from other jurisdictions who have implemented pay equity and who have done the work, yet we're at the consultation stage. Shouldn't that have already been done, Speaker?

I fail to see why we're still only at this point. It is frustrating when I look at proactive pay equity legislation across the country. I mean, we see that it is the first and most fundamental step in reducing gender income gaps and bringing women and men closer to income parity. So we know that is a very important step. We need to have proactive pay equity legislation. Why? Because it does hold employers accountable and it allows for there to be an adjustment and to prevent pay inequity.

So it is a very important piece and I don't see it being given the necessary attention that it needs to be. Proactive pay equity legislation has been thoroughly researched and well documented about the benefits of having that kind of legislation and that kind of process in a good piece of legislation. They've had ample opportunity over the years. We look at this in other provinces. We go back over 30 years and other provinces have enacted pay equity legislations.

So, Speaker, that, I have to say, is disappointing that we don't see that with this legislation. We do know that our province has the largest gender wage gap in the country. So, surely, we would need and we have to have the best legislation possible to make sure we address that huge wage gap.

I did hear the minister indicating she certainly doesn't dispute the inequitable practices, to quote her today, in our provinces. Clearly, it's been established. There's no disputing that. So, surely, we need to have the best legislation to combat that.

Speaker, I also look at a couple of things, just to put in context. When we look at pay equity legislation and we know that it has been well researched and it has been well analyzed in the country. We know that no jurisdiction can eliminate economic inequality without having pay equity legislation. So at least this is a first step, a little step, but it's a step. We need a lot more work to be done.

From a social justice lens and the economic perspective, we cannot afford not to have the best legislation possible here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Why is that important? Because in order for there to even be economic growth, Speaker, equity in employment is a must. It is a requirement. We have to have equity in employment across the board.

Many provinces, as I've indicated, in our country have enacted and have had their own proactive legislation since the 1980s and the 1990s and here we are still, with respect to pay equity legislation as far as private sector, we're still only now doing the consultations. I mean it seems backwards to me, Speaker. It just doesn't make sense.

We need to ensure as well when we have this legislation that we have funding for well-resourced oversight bodies to ensure that there's consistent employer accountability under the legislation. Again, that will be a debate we will have about this when they finally get to the private sector pay equity legislation, but we need to ensure that there is accountability, that there are ways, there is an oversight body.

Right now, there is a pay equity advisor with respect to the public sector, and I will have

to say that, again, I feel that this just does not go far enough. We need to have a more independent oversight of the pay equity inequities that are taking place.

Speaker, I think that when I look at this legislation I am disappointed. I think that this is not what the House of Assembly back in 2017 had envisioned. Why do I say that as well is because when I look at proactive pay equity legislation in other jurisdictions in the country, these kinds of proactive pay equity legislation and laws, they're not just complaint-driven.

That's the problem with what I see today. It's not proactive. It's complaint-driven. It calls for reports to be written and submitted. So, again, that is not what is working in other provinces in our country. We need to look at that. I think that needs to be an important piece of any effective legislation here in our province.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to again point out, we note that this legislation – and we need to be clear about this – just applies to the public sector. That is not what we had envisioned. I do not understand why with the interdepartmental committee that they had, with three different departments in the government – they've had consultations – they should have been meeting with one another. They should have been at least further ahead than what they are today. I don't understand that.

We do know that the interdepartmental committee wasn't meeting for a significant period of time and that had been reported. Why is government only now doing the consultation piece? Why is there such a delay in that? Why didn't they consult before the legislation so that it could be good, complete, robust, proactive legislation?

I cannot help but think that this is just ticking the box, Speaker. Is this what it is, just an exercise of ticking a box? If that's what's happening here or it's a rush job, because they felt political pressure from media and

us here in the Opposition, but it took a lot of political pressure to get this far. They – if I may say and it's my view – resisted pay equity legislation.

But, yes, it's a step. We have a step here. It's a little step when women and gender-diverse individuals need big steps. We need action; we need stronger, effective actions.

Other provinces have, as I stated, models which are proactive: Quebec, Ontario. I might add with respect to Ontario's model, Ontario requires an assessment of all jobs in an organization and an unbiased comparison of the work done by women to the work done by men in order to determine whether the women are being compensated equitably. So they have an assessment process, which is proactive.

But what does our legislation say, Speaker? Our legislation just says pay equity is required for the public sector, which is a policy that already exists. The legislation does not explain how pay equity should be received. It does not take into account categorization of jobs, whether the majority of people in a classification are male, female, non-binary or gender diverse.

Now, I heard the comment earlier that there's a job classification process, but again that is not enough. That is not what we are looking at that's needed here and, as we see, that's very effective in other provinces.

So is this legislation really progressive? I think not. Progression and progressive means progress has been made. Today's legislation reinforces the status quo. Despite the Premier's claims all the time that we have to change the status quo, Speaker, he's not doing it in this case. This is not progress; it's ticking a box.

We do, however, look forward to phase two of this legislation, and hopefully – I still remain hopeful. Hope springs eternal. I do remain hopeful but I lament that women and

gender-diverse individuals must now wait, yet again, for serious, tangible action on pay equity in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm pleased to stand in this hon. House and I'd like to thank my hon. colleagues, Minister Parsons and Minister Coady, for bringing forth this legislation here today to this hon. House. I'd also like to thank the hon. Member for Harbour Main for her words on this topic. I know she's asked questions on it in the past, and I know she's very supportive of the idea of where we're going.

I'm very hopeful, by her last paragraph, talking about the hope that exists here. I leaned back to my colleague behind me and I said, you could always take the approach to go low, but I've always proved it's much better to take the highroad. I think Michelle Obama said that, so I'd always like to take the highroad. When they go low, you go high. So that's where I'm going to try to stay today because I think this is a great piece of legislation. I think that there are things that are going to make it stronger and that's going to come from the consultation period that we're going to talk about a little bit.

Achieving pay equity and closing the gender wage gap are important issues for government, employers and workers in this province. Mr. Speaker, pay equity and pay transparency legislation is just an additional tool that governments can use to address the gender wage gap and help advance equity among all people. I think that's where we all agree where we need to get.

Government is seeing positive impacts on other initiatives. I know the hon. minister responsible has mentioned these before but

I think it bears repeating: the initiative to support women and marginalized people in the areas of skill development, it's an important piece that we've worked on in this government; child care, another important piece. All of these add up to helping reduce those barriers to get those gaps closer together. Gender equality work plans or equity work plans and helping women to assume leadership roles and access the funds in business development and business opportunities that may exist.

But creating a truly equitable society takes action from everybody, not just this side of the House, not just that side of the House. The business community, labour, everyone has to come to the table and everyone has to be a willing participant. I think we are at that point where everybody in the community wants this to happen. I think we may have different ways of how we get there, but I think everyone in this House can agree that we need to get there.

As Minister Responsible for Labour, I am pleased to play a role in the implementation of pay transparency in Newfoundland and Labrador. Pay transparency is a public disclosure of compensation details in businesses as well as the private sector. Pay transparency is a useful tool for the private sector. It can also help employers identify gaps and inequalities or inequities that exist in their pay practices. It can also be used for employers to highlight positive payment practices that they have in place already. Pay transparency can also provide private sector employers with a transition towards pay equity, and I think that's one thing to note here today.

This new legislation will require pay transparency for both private and public sectors. Once implemented, Newfoundland and Labrador will only be the second province in this country, alongside the Government of Canada and Prince Edward Island, to make pay transparency law. I think that's important to note: only the second province. And even that has taken

longer than we would like to have it in this House, that's for sure.

Under Part II of the act, in relation to pay transparency specifically, both public and private sectors would be required to not request past employment pay history from new employees; include pay range in the scales for positions in job posting; not intimidate, dismiss or penalize an employee or an applicant for making inquiries or requesting related pay information; and prepare and submit pay transparency reports to the minister responsible.

I want to be very clear on this point. That the provincial government will consult with the businesses prior to the implementation of pay transparency. I think that is an important piece that we all have to understand; this is a framework that we're working within and the meat, as I said before, will be around these bones that are placed here today and that is going to come from the consultation period. We want to work with our businesses through this process and feel it is very, very important that their voices are heard; accountability is essential but so is collaboration.

Details on a fulsome pay transparency consultation process will be forthcoming in the coming weeks. Pay transparency is just one step in the process towards pay equity and it is only one mechanism to help level the employment playing field and another step to help address the gender wage gap in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this is new legislation, which will counteract the way that work has been gendered and potentially undervalued. This is a positive step for Newfoundland and Labrador as we work towards gender equality and equity for all people.

Speaker, I look forward to questions from the Members opposite – I know they'll have some and maybe many – and a healthy, active debate on this significant piece of

legislation. But I do look forward to those questions today or when we get to that point in the bill.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

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

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

In 2017, after years of inaction, Gerry Rogers introduced a private Member's resolution in the House calling for an introduction of such legislation. This legislation is badly needed and we, our party, support pay equity legislation for our province. We support legislation that will require employers to maintain and implement compensation practices based on skills, effort and responsibility required in a given job, irrespective of gender of the employees.

So when it comes to those points, gender shouldn't matter. We support that type of legislation, but what we see here is something that's rushed, something that seems thrown together and something that is really disappointing and doesn't meet the needs of our people in our province.

Just looking at the legislation, the pay equity element of this bill only applies to the public sector. We talk about waiting 40 years. Yet, we look at something that's going to apply only to the public sector. So we looking forward to hearing what the government is going to propose and bring forward that addresses wage inequity in the private sector.

It's puzzling to me listening to the minister's comments in Question Period this spring, where she said: Again, as my hon. colleague said, there's no discrimination for wages in the public service. This was in likely reference to the Job Evaluation System.



So according to her words, it would seem that she's introducing legislation to fix a non-existent problem, but we know that's not the case. We do welcome this, even though it doesn't address the problem that exists for the private sector.

Looking at the pay equity of this bill, there are a number of exemptions that are sort of confusing, as well, to us. Disappointing actually is a better word. The exclusion of contractual employees. So what message are we sending to contractors who come in and work for government for periods of time, if they're excluded? Students in student employment programs, students who are going to grow and actually graduate into the workforce, what sort of message is that sending, if we're looking at pay equity? Provincial judges or justices, it's just confusing.

Next one, persons temporarily employed to conduct investigations or inquiry on behalf of the government or the House. So what kind of message is that sending by having these exemptions? Shouldn't pay equity be for everybody? So exactly what kind of message are we sending?

We have to question these exemptions, especially when it comes to the students, our future. They're going to grow into full-time employees working in the province. It's important. We must address that.

Looking at pay equity, the element is poorly defined, unfortunately, as to which employers or classes of employers will be bound by the pay transparency obligations. So is it okay if the minister is just going to set it out in the regulations to be applied at a later date? That shows this is rushed. This shows this is not thoroughly planned out because, basically, what's going to happen is she's going to have to capture all the things that's going to come up, now, when she later consults with relevant groups and different jurisdictions. A lack of consultation with appropriate stakeholders is really what's driving this.

I believe that, basically, she rushed to put something together and a lot of it has got to do with what was exposed in that ATIPP that came out that showed that this government was there saying beautiful words: I thank the Member for her comments; this is near and dear to our hearts. But at the end of the day, being briefed, being coached, because at the end of the day, there was going to be no real action towards pay equity, no real action and just spinning the wheels again.

Now when it was exposed, of course, they had to come up with something. They had to save face. But at the end of the day, you shouldn't be rushing legislation to save face, especially something that deals with 52 per cent of the population – women. It's really disappointing.

Moving on, the obligations for all employers appear rather weak; merely defining what they shall not do. Legislation should be not just about dictating what shouldn't be done. It sets a very low hurdle. It's reactive. I heard the Member talking about reactive and active measures. It's a low hurdle. It's reactive rather than an active measure that mandates employers to seek pay equity and transparency.

One could understand this if we were talking about small businesses of say five employees or less, but what reassurances do we have about which employers will be covered by the mandate to report?

Over and over again the minister has stated that this government couldn't afford to implement pay equity legislation – the cost – the burden of the cost.

In Question Period in June 8, 2021, I quote: "I will remind the Member, payments such as the \$600 million that we will need for rate mitigation, certainly could have gone a long way to help programs such as pay equity and other much-needed resources and programs that we need in Newfoundland and Labrador.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** It's true.

**L. EVANS:** That is true. Of course it's true.

The ATIPP with the briefing holders the minister had early this year also claimed that pay equity legislation would be costly, complex and would not do enough to help women. It's a bit chalky. Yet, this morning in the technical briefing with her department staff we asked whether or not they examined the price of bringing in such legislation. They told me in the briefing that there had been no conversations about the specific costs of making this legislation operational.

So how could the minister claim pay equity legislation would be too expensive if her office had not done such studies on the implementation of the costs? No studies on the cost: lack of planning. Bringing this in now: lack of planning.

What about consultations? What about involving groups that are going to be impacted that have a history of large issues that they brought forward and they dealt with?

I'd also like to raise the fact that the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour was not consulted on the drafting of this bill. It's really hard for me to even fathom that. When I was writing it down to remind myself to bring it up, I was astounded. The department, this department, states that there will be consultations with the public sector as the legislation rolls out – as the legislation rolls out.

You didn't consult when preparing the legislation. The consultations with the public sector will be as the legislation rolls out. One has to say really? Honestly? I do have a problem with laughing inappropriately, so I'm just going to laugh, because that is ridiculous. It's ridiculous. I tell you, anybody in this province should be really outraged at

that. Really? Honestly? It's shocking to learn that – shocking.

According to the St. John's Status of Women Council's report, the report on pay equity, where it's been legislated in other jurisdictions there is a consistent trend showing the average income of women saw the largest increase over the past 20 years during the year following the legislation. So it really shows a huge increase once the legislation has been implemented.

If you look at the messaging we've been hearing: Oh, in other jurisdictions where they brought in the legislation, it really didn't help the issue. But, in actual fact, when we look at the St. John's Status of Women Council's report, it actually shows, it demonstrates that it did. The largest increase over the past 20 years came during the year following the legislation.

This observation is in line with local and international experts who deem pay equity legislation as one tool of many to increase equity working conditions and economic growth. Equity working conditions and economic growth in a world, in a country where we have to talk about pay equity so women can get access to the higher paying jobs. So they're not shut out. So there's not a mentality in the hiring process where a woman wouldn't do as good job or a woman actually isn't worthy of the equal pay.

How come women don't have access to the higher paying jobs? I'm not talking the big, high-paying jobs; I'm talking consistently different jobs. Why is it that the man really has the access to the higher paying jobs? That's a question that we need to discuss; we need to make sure it's addressed. It's 2022.

Also, just looking at, now, the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour wasn't consulted. This morning the St. John's Status of Women Council said that they did meet with government but they were consulted. To them, when they met, they

weren't properly consulted. So there's a lack of consultation really with important stakeholders, yet we look across and there you are introducing the legislation without adequate consultation with really important stakeholders. What about lessons learned? Other jurisdictions? We asked this morning if they reached out to other jurisdictions as well, and the answer there was very, very disappointing. What's consistent here is a loss of failure to consult, a loss of failure to share information that would help.

So throughout the last few years, since I've been elected, we were led to believe that relevant groups and organizations were consulted on this, over and over. It talks about all the consultations they've been doing, and getting into this legislation now we were led to believe. But, in actual fact, it's just empty words. I go back to when the minister replies to questions that we have about pay equity. The minister is always thanking us for raising the issue on gender equity; it's near and dear to our heart. Yet, now we see really there's lack of consultation; there's a lack of planning. This is something that's rushed and, really, we've to think about is this just because they were exposed due to that ATIPP and now they're scrambling to save face.

Gender equity, pay equity shouldn't be about saving face; it shouldn't be about rushing legislation. To me, I'm deeply offended. I really, really am, as a little, old woman that had to grow up working in a man's world. All of my jobs were in occupations that were actually dominated by men. I'm not talking about same job, same pay. I'm talking about the hope of being able to actually get promoted so that you can make more money, that you can have better paying jobs. When in actual fact, when you look at pay inequity, for women it's not there.

Do you know something? That's why women have to work sometimes 10 times as hard as a man. No offence to the men here in this House of Assembly. But then to

see this rushed after 40 years, and I'm supposed to stand up here and be grateful on behalf of all the women. Oh, thank God, you're introducing this legislation. Well, I'm going to stand here and say, no, thank you. The women of this province deserve better. They deserve more respect than just to be saving face for the Premier and the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality. It's really upsetting; it really is.

So let's look at pay gap now. Because when you introduce pay equity, a lot of times we do see narrowing of the wage gap as well. A lot of that has got to go towards the acceptance, and really the education of people where they can actually understand that whether it's male, female or any other group that self identifies, that at the end of the day, it should be the responsibility of the job and the quality of the work being done. Not who you are as a group.

Basically, we listened to others out there and they have noted that the gender pay gap allows employers to get away with paying women and gender-diverse people less, all to increase their profits. To use cheap labour in tough economic times, this is exploitive. It makes women bear the burden of carrying the economic downturns many times. Conversely, pay equity would cost the government so little, go a significant way in providing greater economic stability and security for working families and help tackle affordability issues.

More has to be done to ensure women get equal access to good paying, higher paying jobs. I know that myself after working 20 years in a field dominated by men.

Now, what was disappointing this morning when we were getting a technical briefing for this legislation? We asked whether or not they consulted other jurisdictions in drafting this legislation. Because that is actually a very reasonable thing to do. We were given a vague response at the briefing. The deputy minister noted that there were conversations had taken place,

both formally and informally, but there was no real answer. So, to me, that actually indicated they had not properly consulted other jurisdictions.

Staff then noted that the drafters of this legislation routinely look at the laws in other jurisdictions. They were not seeking a cut-and-paste job. They had opted instead for something that would fit best with Newfoundland and Labrador, taking the independent path.

We support having legislation that actually addresses the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. That's important. We understand that. But I don't think anyone should actually refuse to go out and adequately consult with other jurisdictions. Because there's a lot to be learned from what the other jurisdictions have done.

We are the last province in the Maritimes to be introducing this legislation. So there are a lot of lessons we could learn from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, even Ontario. The Ontario pay equity commissioner wrote to the Premier – a lot of people don't realize this – and the minister on August 17 offering assistance of her office in consultations. Workshops and research was offered.

From the letter quoted in *The Telegram* September 21, 2022, and I quote: "Ontario was one of the first governments globally to introduce a pay equity act that covered both public and private employers in 1987. With 35 years experience implementing the legislation we would be delighted to share our lessons learned and best practices when it comes to designing and enforcing pay equity legislation." Such a generous offer. I wonder if that was followed up on. Because of the vague answer I think that there was very little done to actually work with the Ontario government and basically share lessons learned.

As the clock winds down for me, I have to say how can we support something that's clearly rushed with selfish intentions rather

than the true merit of advancing women and families? How can we support that? How can we support this bill, which has all the signs of being rushed in order to pacify public opinion and take away criticism after a government that had no intentions of working towards gender pay equity, only until after they were exposed to ATIPP, when ATIPP looked at the messaging, the briefing notes to the minister? This does very little of what was originally asked by women, by labour and by other groups.

There has been little to no consultation with the public or private sector unions or even counterparts in other jurisdictions, so how can we support this really, honestly?

We support pay equity legislation. We don't support this poorly thought out, poorly executed – Minister, I have to say it's disappointing.

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

I remind the hon. Member that her speaking time has expired.

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

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

It's my honour to rise here today and to speak to the advancement of women and gender-diverse individuals. We've made it a priority within our government. We've made it a priority within Treasury Board. I am disappointed to hear my colleagues' remarks across the hall that they are looking not to support this legislation.

I say it's a step forward. It's not a leap forward because there are many, many, many steps that are being taken that will give us the overall leap. We have to do this incrementally. It's very important. I can tell the Member opposite, I know that she's been in business for a number of years, as have I, this is something that is a tremendous step forward.

I think the Member opposite would agree, it's a step forward for all of us as women in the gender-diverse –this is an incredibly important step forward and all of it together gives us the leap forward that we need.

I am very pleased to see the government advance and legislate the requirement for pay equity. I want to really give, I guess, kudos to the Premier. This has not been done previously in Newfoundland and Labrador. He had the courage and the conviction to say that it will be done and it is being done. I want to recognize the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality, I think she has done an outstanding job of bringing this forward.

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

**S. COADY:** I want to recognize as well the Minister of Environment and Climate Change who is Responsible for Labour because, again, this is such an important piece of legislation that three ministers are bringing it forward, all under the leadership of the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality and under the direction of the Premier. No other Parliament in this province has brought this forward – we are. It is a giant step forward, Speaker, I say.

We need to create a truly equitable society and that takes action from every one of us. While I appreciate the Member opposite's words; I say that she should support that action that is being taken – action that is being taken.

This pay equity legislation requires employers in the public sector to establish, maintain and implement compensation practices that are based on the relative value of work performed irrespective of the gender of the employees.

Speaker, I have just said this requires government and those in the public sector to establish, maintain and implement compensation practices that are based on

the relative value of work. How could anyone not support that?

I say to you, Speaker, I don't understand why anyone would not support that value. I say to you, this is now taking our Job Evaluation System and making it law. I think that it also shows leadership to the private sector – and we'll get to the private sector. I know my colleague, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, who is Responsible for Labour has spoken eloquently to this issue.

But I will say to you, Speaker, I think it is very important to ensure, especially, I'm standing as really the employer, I guess, of our public sector employees, acting as President of Treasury Board, we have to make sure that our public sector employees are fairly and equitably compensated and we implemented a Job Evaluation System in 2015.

The Member opposite should know that the Job Evaluation System, which ensures skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions – which are the four pillars, I say, of pay equity – are established. And there was intense consultation with members of the unions at that time concerning those four key pillars. Now we're enshrining it in law.

So this Job Evaluation System, the one for our core civil service, covers about 85 per cent of core public service employees. The other 15 per cent are managed by a different system, and I'm coming to that. But it's 100 per cent within government have a job evaluation system. Eighty-five per cent have the Job Evaluation System that has the four pillars that I talked about: skills, responsibility, effort and working conditions, four key elements. These people are in the front line of programming and service delivery in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I think it's very important to note that the other 15 per cent, which are in the Hay system – the Hay level system it's called –

they're primarily in senior management and executive roles. This system is compliant with regard to skills, effort and responsibility. We are now speaking with Korn Ferry, which is the company which created the original Hay level system, to add working condition to this evaluation. We will be fully compliant by April 1, 2023.

So that other 15 per cent, the executive and management of core government, will be fully compliant by April 1, 2023. That should be applauded – applauded – Speaker, I say, that we now have a system in legislation that requires job evaluation: skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions. It takes gender out of the equation. The only thing that it's concerned about are skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions.

So for those of us, and I can say this, who in the past there has not been an equitable process, I can tell Members in this House we're enshrining it into law to ensure that the public service now has that system. That's incredibly important. I hope everyone in this House supports it. I'm hearing otherwise.

Over 50 per cent, Speaker, of our core public service – including senior management, directors and executives – are female. We know that over 50 per cent are female. This system is important to ensure that gender and equality are part of the system that's required to ensure that skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions are what's valued. Not the colour of your skin, not your gender. It is those four valued systems and that forms the premise of the pay equity system.

Now we strive – and this is why I say there are steps to this process – to create a workforce that is supportive of women. I think the minister made a very impassioned speech about some of the things that she is doing to advance women in our society. I'll also add from the workplace, flexible work arrangements, family responsibility leave

and compassionate care leave – all tenants of ensuring equality. All tenants.

So these are incremental steps. I'd say we've taken that leap because of those incremental steps. We've just taken another large leap with the pay equity system. Our public service employees are the backbone of our society. Every day they work hard. They lead us towards that strong, smart, self-sufficient, sustainable Newfoundland and Labrador that I've placed before this House many, many times, that goal. They are committed to the people of this province. They are the backbone to what we offer in terms of services and programs to assist the people of the province.

But we have to provide valuable workplaces. We have to make sure that our employees are valued and respected. That is why we've worked hard to achieve pay equity. That's why we've worked hard to achieve the Job Evaluation System. That's why we've worked hard to introduce pay equity legislation and pay transparency legislation.

I can tell Members in this House that we've consulted with all jurisdictions. I know the minister has consulted with all jurisdictions and the Provincial Advisory Council on this legislation. So we were accused of not consulting. We are further consulting as part of pay transparency so that we don't have unintended consequences that we're working with and on behalf of our communities and their stakeholders to make sure that we have the right system in place.

I can say, because I heard a Member opposite talk about the Public Service Commission, the Public Service Commission is at arm's-length. The public service commissioner who is the pay equity officer will collect the information, will make sure that she or he brings it to this House of Assembly to ensure that we are held accountable. So we have that in the legislation, Speaker.

I can also say another question that came up in second reading, in the discussions from colleagues opposite, they questioned why the exemptions of students and contractual employees. I will say that both those, the contractual employees, are for specific jobs, for specific periods of time. They're usually an immediate need, under unique circumstances. Very hard to do a full Job Evaluation System.

For any Member of this House – I was in the private sector for many, many years, Speaker. I've done many job evaluations. I've had been involved in the introduction of the Job Evaluation System. It's a timely process. You're evaluating the skills. You're evaluating working conditions. You're evaluating effort. You're evaluating responsibility. So it's a very lengthy process.

If you're hiring a temporary employee, a summer job, it would be very challenging to have it in a timely basis. So yes, it's not dissimilar to other legislation across this country. We've followed best practices across this country. We have made some changes that are effective for Newfoundland and Labrador. I can say to you, Speaker, that we have done the work here on this.

I'd also say to you, Speaker, how important this is in making sure we lead by example. By enshrining our Job Evaluation System, by enshrining pay equity practices in legislation we hope to guide others, and that's why this legislation will be important as we go out to consult on pay transparency and the next phase of pay equity, we have set the framework – skills, effort, responsibility, working conditions, the tenants of pay equity. I say to my colleagues across the aisle that I think regardless of some of the questions that they may have, that I hope that they support the pay equity and pay transparency legislation.

I hope that they encourage this legislation to move forward, because I think it is a giant step forward toward that leap that we're all

trying to make with all the different ways that we're trying to make equality and make the job system equitable.

So, Speaker, I will take my seat and I will listen to debate but, again, I say that this is a great day and I thank, again, the Premier for his leadership, the minister for her intense desire to advance women and making sure that we have gender equality and gender equity in this province. I thank the minister who is responsible for labour for his actions on making sure that this is a robust piece of legislation, a robust attempt to move forward on pay equity, to make sure that we recognize same and for our next advancements I look forward to as well.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

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

I certainly want to recognize my colleague from Harbour Main for continuing to bring this issue forward.

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

**P. DINN:** I am sure she will continue to do so until we have true equity in this province.

Some people will ask: What experience do I have to get up here and talk about pay equity or employment equity? I can tell you, when I was early in my career in government, in the late '80s and early '90s when the first offshore development was happening here in the province, I was responsible for employment benefits. That was part of my job for the province. Falling under that, believe it or not, I was responsible for employment equity. Many, many meetings down with WRDC and Women's Policy Office where I was the only

male in the room. So I know from the other side how this looks.

I remember having a meeting in the collective bargaining room in this building before Hibernia started and it was a meeting by the proponents on what the layout of the Hibernia site would be and Beth Lacey, who was a strong advocate for the Women's Policy Office, she was sitting next to me and we had this great presentation of all these places where the staff were going to stay and she asked the question: Where are the women staying? The person giving the presentation looked dumbfounded. He almost said well, we weren't expecting women to be hired on the job, but he did point out to a trailer up in the corner on the site.

I can tell you with my experience there through monitoring employment equity and getting people on this site, there are two individuals that stand out in my mind. I won't say their names. Two young women who graduated; one was a welder and one was a sandblaster. Not easy job. I tell you, they got on that site and they worked their way to foreperson when everyone else was holding them down.

So we have a lot of individuals out there, a lot of women, a lot of individuals from diverse gender groups and marginalized individuals who have been waiting and waiting and anxious to see the employment equity. The employment equity act is going to come in and solve those issues for them. Unfortunately, when I look at this, it's not a disagreement with what the act is intending to do, but it's a disagreement with it really hasn't made a huge impact and I don't think it will.

When the minister calls this a historic milestone – a historic milestone in this day and age – and this is the historic milestone. It's not even close.

You talk about advancement of women. The Member opposite talked about the courage

of the Premier to bring this forward. This takes courage? It takes courage to do what's right? It takes courage to make sure that people who work of equal value get equal pay? That's common sense.

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

**P. DINN:** That's not courage.

Fifty-two per cent of our population are women – 52 per cent. They deserve a lot better. Is this going to have women and non-gender groups out there shouting in the streets today? Not going to happen.

It's been acknowledged that this is a small step leading towards a leap.

I'm going to say about 20 years ago or more, maybe 30 years ago, a report came out. WRDC put out the report, I believe, and it was talking about what can be done to bring equality and equity to the workforce. Do you know what the title of that document was? *At A Snail's Pace*, and here we are 30, 40 years later and we're still no faster. We're still no faster.

I met many wonderful and strong women in my career who advocated 24-7 for women and marginalized groups. The late Brenda Grzetic, she passed in 2021, huge advocate. I learned so much from her when it comes to equity. Even the past leader of the Third Party, Lorraine Michael, she was head of WRDC for many years. I remember attending meetings of that group and being the only male in the room and she was very appreciative of that.

So when I look at this, you talk about transparency, you talk about a stepping stone and opening the doors. I can't imagine for the young women out there, those who are marginalized, those who are non-gender specific, what a huge disappointment this is.

It is a step, it is an advancement; it is at a snail's pace. I'm not at all arguing that, but I



think they were expecting a lot more. I think my Member here for Harbour Main mentioned that it seems to be reaffirming the status quo.

This is talking about the public sector, and the Hay system has been mentioned here today, as well as the JES, Job Evaluation System. I can tell you, having been a part of that Job Evaluation System five or six years ago when they first started doing that, that is still riddled with complaints. That's still riddled by employees who are saying we were not evaluated at the same level or how we should have been for this person over here based on skills, competency, education. That process was supposed to clean that up; it hasn't. For a vast majority it has, but for a smaller portion it hasn't and they're still fighting that.

So when I look at this what jumps out at me here – granted, the public sector because of that notion I just gave, the example of JES, it's not perfect in the public sector, but the public sector has a lot of checks and balances in there. Not saying you can't improve on it; you certainly can. But I read in the bill where it talks about the level of the companies or employees that it deals with and it talks to – I think it says – employers of less than 10 are exempt, if I read that correct – less than 10.

Do you know how many businesses in this province are small businesses? So 28,000 to 29,000 are considered small businesses. Do you know how many women entrepreneurs are out there? They are starting and putting their blood, sweat and tears into starting a business while trying to raise a family into small businesses? Or trying to get a job with a small business because that's all that's available? And this piece of legislation has that exempt, not even addressing the private sector.

But there's been a fulsome consultation. This is the cart before the horse. I can't disagree; it's ticking off the list. It's ticking off the list because of public pressure. It's no

different than the Medical Act the other day – no consultation, you hear after the fact.

So, you know, if I'm disappointed with this, I can't imagine how disappointed the individuals out there who were really expecting something colossal – something colossal here. It's not here. This is a small step again. For a group that's been held down for years and years and years and were hoping for something better and here we are.

Again, part of my past employment with government, I also worked with Labour Standards. I see here that it says, "allow a person who alleges that an employer has contravened Part II of the Act to make a complaint to the Director of Labour Standards."

Do you know how many complaints go into Labour Standards and how many don't get resolved? And how many end up down to human rights? There are people who end up at human rights trying to solve these issues. Do you know that individuals who may have a wage complaint, much like it says here, there's no real means in which to control a retaliatory action by an employer – oh, sorry, your job is redundant now because you complained three weeks ago, four weeks ago, five weeks ago.

So even there – and again, I know the people who worked in Labour Standards over the years they do a masterful job, but it's always bound by what they can do.

In essence, there's really not a process that leads to effective and efficient solving of an issue. But this here when we read through this bill and it talks to, identifies employee in Part I, employer in Part II and a contract of service and the like, we have many small businesses out there, private businesses, that are probably getting funding from a government program.

There have been programs, and government job bridges, as an example,

where it would allow money towards people hiring women in a non-traditional job. There are other programs to help business start-ups and the like. If you're really entrenched and dedicated to looking at pay equity, it would be wonderful to see one of the requirements of these programs that go out to small- and medium-sized businesses to have some clauses there that speak to employment equity and speak to a fair wage rate. These are ways that you can effect real change when it comes to wages. Because I guarantee you the alternative of going through a complaint process is arduous and many don't take it on, and many don't follow it through.

So if we're talking about equity do we really need to talk about – and we throw it around all the time – education? We really need to start educating those businesses on what we believe to be proper ways towards employment and pay equity. I would say that within the public service there's a much, much better understanding of it. It doesn't mean it's perfect. But if I'm focusing on pay equity and equity, then I'm focusing on where it really, truly needs to be addressed.

Look, there are larger employers out there who can afford to do up their employment plans and they have all the resources to do it. But in this province, we really need to focus too on the smaller businesses, smaller employers, those – and I'm sure we'll talk to you on it later – who can just barely afford to pay the minimum wage, so how are we going to ask them to look at pay equity and look at putting out the paper and the wage ranges and all that.

But maybe we should be looking at a program that provides administrative subsidy to allow these private, small enterprises to promote it because a lot of them can't do it because of their resources or what they take in. But it really has to promote.

You know, I spoke earlier today in a Member's statement on my three daughters.

Three very strong, young women – sometimes too strong when they talk back to me. But anyway, nine chances out of 10, they're probably right when they talk back. But I'm very proud of them because they've all done great in their education and they're going to have wonderful jobs and they're going to send money back to their father.

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

**P. DINN:** Don't rain on my dream. Everyone has a dream, that's mine.

But the point of it is there are others out there, there are young women, there are people in marginalized groups, there's non-gender individuals out there who don't have those supports behind them and may not be the most educated. But you know what? I've seen people who have done outstanding without an education.

Now, yes, we'd like to have it. But there are people with, I think – my God, it was many years ago when I worked with the feds, Jackson's Boatyard, out in Trinity Bay. Mr. Jackson couldn't sign his name. All our forms were an X. But I can tell you, he could build a boat.

This is what we have to do. Legislation like this got to bring people up. It's got to bring people up. I try not to be critical but in my own mind this is not even a rung on a ladder right now. I don't know if this puts us any further ahead. I guess it does put us ahead by a small margin, but when you go back to how long pay equity and employment equity has been an issue in this society – like I said, this has been around for a while, at a snail's pace. We really need to do what we can to speed up that pace; push that snail along.

I said, wow. When this was announced that we were going to do this and more to come, stay tuned, I was tuned in. But I guarantee you there are more people out there that are tuned in, who are really tuned in, have been stuck on this channel for many years waiting

to hear something that's going to make a difference in their everyday life.

You don't have to go very far to hear people talk about, oh, we just had the minimum wage go up 50 cents, how much that means to people. How much does it mean to the individual out there who's doing the same job, probably with better skills, probably more confident and is not paid the same? That's an issue for this government and for all of us, because we all have it; we all see it.

I'll be the first. If I see any one of my daughters go into a job and there's a discrepancy, although they may like it, I might be the first one in there talking to them about that. We really have to look at this. It's only through fulsome consultation, dealing with people and talking to people with lived experiences, that's who we have to talk to. And not have people not participate because, oh well, they don't really fit the bill. They may have something to offer that helps the bill.

Again, I guess we'll get a lot of questions in Committee that will hopefully answer some of the questions we have, but I can't help but look at this and say we're pushing through something – I mean the effort by public servants to do this, there's tremendous effort. I'm not sure if their time could have been better used if we took a little bit more time.

So I'm going to sit down and that's my comments on this this. I appreciate the time.

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

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

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

I'll say first of all, Mr. Speaker, that I will support the bill. I do so because it is a step in the right direction, but I would echo a lot of the remarks that have been made by my

colleagues, certainly on this side of the House, that it's a very, very small step. It really doesn't go nearly as far as we need to go and I think what people would have hoped it would have gone.

I think if Gerry Rogers was here, my former colleague – I'm not sure how many Members were around when Gerry was here, but she would probably say something like, she was looking forward to this day, that she had her dancing shoes ready and she was ready to put on her dancing shoes and celebrate, but unfortunately she's going to have to put those dancing shoes back in the closet. I think she would be disappointed by the fact that this doesn't go anywhere, I think, where she envisioned it would go.

I want to say, as well, the Minister of Finance in congratulating the Premier and the Minister Responsible for Labour about the wonderful job that everyone did here today, I mean, that's fair enough. They can congratulate each other, tap each other on the back; it's all good. It's all part of the game; we know that. But if the Minister Responsible for Labour in particular, if there are things that he wants to do, to make meaningful input, things that can make some real tangible, meaningful input – and I look at the *Labour Standards Act* and I look at people working in – I would say that's probably female dominated; I could be wrong with my perception – the service industry; look at people working in a lot of the box stores, the cashiers and so on.

I look at these people who are working there and they're having to work all these split shifts and come in in the morning: We're here a couple of hours and it's not busy, go home; or come here and it's gets busy, now you have to stay late. They don't really care about the fact that they have lives and families and so on.

We look at issues – I had a certain restaurant here in town that there was an issue with the tips, again in the service industry, and I brought it to Labour

Standards. Nothing they could do about the unequitable way that tips were being dealt with by that employer.

I look at, in the *Labour Standards Act*, overtime. It is not time and a half; it is time and a half the minimum wage. So if somebody is working making, say, \$16 an hour, one would think time and a half, \$24 an hour. It is not; it is time and a half – well, what is it now? Has it gone up to \$15 yet? Whatever it was, anyway, \$13 an hour; it would be time and a half the \$13 an hour and not time and a half the \$16 an hour.

So, in a lot of these cases, a lot of these jobs we're talking about are in the service industry, in the restaurant industry, in grocery stores, big box stores and so on. A lot of the people working there, I would suggest, are probably dominated by females; that would be my perception, at least. I could be wrong. Those people are being treated like crap by their employers in many cases, in my opinion. I apologize if that word was inappropriate, Mr. Speaker, but you get my point.

If we really wanted to do something to help some people, the Minister Responsible for Labour, while he is getting patted on his back here, that is something that he could bring in some amendments to change some of that to help those people. I wanted to put that out there.

I think it is also important we talk about consultation. It is fine to say we're going to consult on the regulations, but the fact of the matter is, as all Members in this House of Assembly would know, the regulations are dictated by the act. So if there are things in the act or if there are things that are not in the act that ought to be in the act then, those things will not get addressed through regulations because the act itself is what determines what the regulations are going to flow from.

So my point is, the consultations should have been done on the act and also on the

regulations. We can't simply leave the consultation for the regulations and not have consultation on the act itself, which is what guides the regulations to begin with. So I think that is just another point I wanted to make.

Of course we're talking pay equity here; pay equity, some people would look at it and define it as: I'm doing a job, a female is doing a job, and we're both getting paid the same amount of money for doing the same job. But it is not just – of course Members here would know – about a male and a female doing the same job and getting the same pay. It is also about classes of jobs; it is about jobs that are predominantly female, not being valued the way they should be valued.

This legislation is addressing it in the public sector, but we're doing it anyway. So it's not really changing anything. There's nobody in government going to wake up now tomorrow or once this is proclaimed and all of a sudden, you know, if anyone's expecting all of a sudden they're going to do a job evaluation and I'm going to get a raise here now, that isn't going to happen because all that's already in place in government. It's already been done.

So all we're basically doing is putting in a piece of legislation to enshrine what we're already doing. Now that's not a bad thing; I'm not knocking that. It's the right thing to do, and that's why I'm going to support the bill. But it's not like we're doing anything extraordinary here. It's not like this is some major announcement, as it's being portrayed by some Members on the other side. It's simply putting in legislation to basically enshrine what's already happening.

Now, my colleague from Topsail - Paradise made some reference to contractors or people or organizations receiving some government money. That's where I kind of wanted to go, but I wanted to take it a little further, I guess. Again, in the context of pay

equity and positions that are traditionally filled by females. I want to just think about for a second, home care is the one that comes to mind. Home care is a big one that comes to mind.

You look at people, I'm sure we've all had constituents – I know I've had many – dealing with the challenges around home care. Not just about getting the appropriate amount of home care hours and so on, but the difficulty in trying to get employees to fill positions in home care, given the fact around what's expected of them, the types of care and what they're expected to do for the money that's being paid and the benefits that are being provided. Benefits are basically nil, for the most part, and wages are extremely low.

I've had this conversation with people in the past. It's pretty sad, when you think about it, that traditionally – and I know; we've seen improvements; I will give credit where credit is due. When it comes to the student assistants, we have seen improvements. The Minister of Health, when he was minister of Education, he did bring in some improvements. I recognize him, and I thank him for that.

But traditionally, when we look at home care and child care – think about it for a second, our two most precious things from a human point of view, our kids, our parents and grandparents, and people are making more money pouring a cup of coffee.

In terms of placing value, just think about that for a second. You can make more money pouring coffee and have greater benefits than looking after somebody's grandparents, as an example, and all the work and the stress and everything associated to the care of those people. Just think about it. Some of those cases can be pretty complex, and people's health could be on the line.

So if we're going to be serious about pay equity, as an example – I'm just going to

use the example of home care. Home care is funded primarily by the government. People have subsidies and so on and it's the government that are subsidizing the care of people in care. The home care agency is getting the money. Or in some cases a senior could try to hire someone themselves without going through an agency, but they're still only getting that same, small amount of money.

So if we're truly committed, if you will, to pay equity for positions that are traditionally female, then should we not then be looking at the amount of money that's going to fund these positions? How can a home care agency pay somebody a deserving wage for looking after our seniors if they're not getting the funding from the government to do so? That is a problem.

I know there's a cost associated to it. I understand there's a cost associated to it, but it's kind of hypocritical when you think about it – and, again, I'm not directing this at this government in particular; I'm just saying in general – that we're going to be talking about pay equity and ensuring all government employees have pay equity and everything else, but we're just going to turn a blind eye to the fact that the people that have to look after your grandparents, your great-grandparents or your parents and everything else, that they are not receiving near the benefits and the money that they should for that job. That is female dominated as well, I would suggest.

The same thing with, whether it be child care or whether it be senior care. It just feels a bit hypocritical. I just throw it out there. No different than – my colleague from St. John's Centre has raised this in the House and I've raised it before with the department – when we had people here working for government, cleaners in this building not even getting paid on time, being paid cash and everything else, contracted out by the government. To allow that to happen is wrong. We talk about leading by

example and so on. That's not leading by example.

So I think as we look at pay equity in government, I think you have to be willing to acknowledge the fact that there are government services being contracted out, utilizing public money, in which those services we do not have pay equity. If we are not going to be hypocrites about it, I think that's something that needs to be considered.

With that said, I'm not going to take all of the time other than to say, once again, I will support the bill because I do support pay equity; it is good to have at least what we're doing enshrined in law. To say that this is some major celebration and we should all be dancing on the ceiling here, that we've accomplished something major here today, I think that would be quite the stretch, Mr. Speaker, but I will support it.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

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

It's always an honour to stand and represent the people of the District of Terra Nova. Equality is a world where everyone gets the same thing and equity is when people get exactly what they deserve. I've said in this House before that we need to look at perspective sometimes.

I will say imagine sitting across from an employer during a job interview and having them look at you and wonder when you're going to bear a child and if you're going to take time off. Imagine sitting alongside someone and not getting paid the same thing. Imagine being a Member of this House and not being paid the same as one of your colleagues next to you. And then I'll say imagine that's the scenario that happens to men and not women and gender-diverse individuals. There's no way

it would happen. I guess at the end of the day when we think about it in that light, we think about this legislation.

We hear words like "historic milestone" and "giant leap." It's a start. It's not a milestone. It's not a leap. To be honest, I don't know what's worse, that it's 2022 and we're having this conversation or that it's 2022 and this is the legislation we're putting forward. It's just simply not strong enough.

I don't say it's not strong enough because we don't need to start somewhere. I always look at my mom, probably one of my greatest heroes. Almost 50 years ago my mom was hired in Wabush Mines. She was hired to do what back then was a man's job. She did everything alongside the men and it wasn't just her, there were a bunch of pioneers. There was Josie Stokes and Kathleen Martin.

These women went to work back then in a situation where they were the first few women that went to work in that mine. They held on to shovels, they drove big trucks; they worked alongside their counterparts and because of the unions, they were paid the same. They were paid under the same contract and they were treated equally. That doesn't mean that they didn't have struggles. It doesn't mean that there wasn't all kinds of stuff that happened in the workplace, things said, and they didn't put up with harassment and things in the workplace, but over time it disappeared.

To sit here today and to talk about pay equity and think that it's a fair scenario, it's not, and certainly not if you're a woman or a gender-diverse individual. One of the things about the bill that I personally don't like, being a person with a disability, is I never saw a reference to persons with disabilities in this bill and they ought to be included. The lens should be broadened and it should include all.

When we come to the House of Assembly and we're now putting legislation out before

we do consultation, or the amount of consultation that's required, it's really a sad state, isn't it. Because what we're trying to do is push things through to say we're doing it and hope that down the road we can fix it. The reality of that situation is that we should be presenting strong legislation that looks after those issues before we do the consultation, and we do the consultation prior to bringing the legislation here to the House. It puts us in a much better situation. It makes us understand what we're debating in the House.

Do you know what? As legislators, it would make us proud to support legislation that we know is supported by the public.

I believe that this bill is very important. I won't deny that. I believe that the timing of it is – I won't say suspect, but I believe that the heavier lifting should have been done before this bill was brought to the House of Assembly. It's sad that it wasn't and there are lots of groups out there that feel the same thing.

Now, in my previous life, when I was in construction, I sat on the Hebron board and I was the chair of diversity. I will say through consultation with the WRDC and the Newfoundland and Labrador Building Trades, and then the minister of – she was the minister of energy at the time, now the Minister of Finance, I think that she would stand and say that not only did we have hard, hard goals for women who worked on the Hebron site, we met every one of them very proudly. It was a big deal. We brought in women in skilled trades and we worked very hard to make sure that we could.

**S. COADY:** Standards set.

**L. PARROTT:** Exactly, there were all kinds of standards set to get them there. Sadly, since Hebron has been built and gone to sea, we don't meet those standards anymore. Young women aren't as inclined to go into the building trades, but hopefully in future projects that will change.

Again, another thing about this legislation that I don't like that I think needs to be in there, and the hon. Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands mentioned it, is government contracts. When we're contracting out, certainly when we're bringing in SPOs, these special project orders, where we have anything that has to do with our natural resources or anything that government is investing money in, this should be a given. It shouldn't be a question. It should be a standard that employers are held to and we should hold them firmly. It will help us progress inside of government and outside of government.

The groundwork should be done now, prior to this legislation being passed, and it should be something that employers are held to. If they're bidding a contract in this province, then they ought to put certainly a gender-based lens on it and I would also argue again a disability lens on it.

There are so many things that we can do as a government in order to speed this up to a place where everyone is treated fairly. Again, I just say it's not about changing things; it's about making sure people get what they deserve. Historically, women and gender-diverse individuals have not got what they deserve.

We sit here all the time and we talk about the Elections Act and we think about things that we can help and we look in this House of Assembly, I would be first to say, on both sides of the House, the other side won't agree because they have more women, but I'll tell you, the Member for Harbour Main, it's an honour for me to sit next to her. It's an honour for me to sit next to any woman in this House.

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

**L. PARROTT:** We need more women in this Legislature, there's no question.

Fifty years since the first women were hired in mining in this province and this is the

conversation we're having in here. It's not just about construction or anywhere else, it's about government. Now just think about that – government.

Now, I heard whispers across the hall earlier saying you guys didn't implement it. No, we didn't. And do you know what? It's not right. It shouldn't have happened in 2015, it shouldn't have happened in 2010. It shouldn't have even happened in 2000. It should've happened 35 or 40 years ago when it first came out as a huge issue. It should've never been a question.

So all governments have failed. That doesn't mean that this legislation makes it right. This legislation needs to get much, much deeper into the problems and it needs to look at it with a much stronger lens. We need to do more, much more consultation with people from the outside.

At the end of the day, we sit in here and we think we know – I'll tell you, I'm a father of a beautiful, strong young girl who I'm frightened to death to debate. She's a spectacular speaker and she knows exactly what she wants in life. She's strong, she does all that stuff, and I believe that the future is strong for her. But at the end of the day, I want her to be able to do whatever she wants to do and I don't believe that this legislation makes her believe that those doors are open or that she's treated equally. That is the problem with all of this right now.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to speak all day about this. I just needed to get up and put out the fact that I believe that the legislation doesn't go far enough. I do believe it is a first step. I do believe it can go further. I just implore government with future legislation to do all the consultations, to understand the big picture, to have the conversations before; not even to bring the technical briefing the morning of sometimes. At the end of the day, there's good input and questions long before legislation gets passed.

On that note, I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

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

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

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

We've been called on to support the action being taken that this is a giant step, a step forward. It's an important piece of legislation, articulated not by one, not by two, but by three ministers. No other Parliament has done this. It's historic; it's making history. It's absolutely the best.

Mr. Speaker, I've never seen so much attempt to dress up a hog in a silk waistcoat, and that's what this is. It's lived down to my expectations. It is lazy legislation and slapdash and it meets the low barrier of mediocrity.

Now, in my previous career as a teacher, when a student would pass this in, I'd give them a do over, you can do better. You can do better than this.

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

**J. DINN:** That's right.

The Premier has said that this is a priority. Now let's think about that. I was elected in 2019, the Premier was elected, or moved to the post in 2020, an election in 2021 and here we are in that time, it's only now that finally we're getting to this.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Very courageous.

**J. DINN:** Very courageous.

In 2017, my predecessor in St. John's Centre, and a person whom I have great admiration for, Speaker, put this forward. That's five years and in that five years, six meetings – six meetings which obviously



demonstrate the level of priority that this was given.

So I have to wonder, how many meetings for the next stage, because what this has done – I have to ask myself, will this legislation, if it's defeated, make a difference? No, because to the people who need it most, the ones who are unprotected, it's still offer them no protection.

So let's talk about commitment. Let's look at the history here and I want to read a few things into the record. Back during the Committee of the Whole, I asked the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality about this, about their commitment to this and when are they going to bring this in. The minister said: What I can say is that it's something that we certainly are committed to do within the reality of what we can do to implement ways in how we can advance this project.

The minister also said, back then on June 8, 2021: "I will remind the Member, payments such as \$600 million that we will need for rate mitigation, certainly could've gone a long way to help programs such as pay equity and other much-needed resources and programs that we need in Newfoundland and Labrador." The briefing notes for the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality: That proactive pay equity legislation can be costly and involve significant legal battles.

In 2018, the Minister of Finance was saying that government was studying how to implement it in an interdepartmental committee that had been set up for that purpose. Fast-forward to 2022, the Minister of Finance seems to be soft peddling the lack of action, saying we want to have the right legislation. You have to have the best legislation while still insisting that the government is signalling fairly strongly that this legislation is essential.

The Labour Minister previously told reporters that government wants to get the

legislation correct, adding: I know that takes times, but I'm more focused on getting it right than getting it done quickly. In May, again, the Minister of Finance told reporters that government wanted to make sure it got the potential legislation absolutely correct and our committees are working with the federal government and provincial government. I'll say that the provincial government has done a tremendous amount.

The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality: Clearly if this is something that can be done in the flick of a switch, it probably would've been done in the 1980s when it was first brought to the Legislature here in the province.

So here we have then, a piece of legislation which I would argue is not done right. It's a small step. I'm so tired, Speaker, of supporting small steps because, remember, when this government first came in, it was about bold initiatives, about bold action. Status quo; change that. So here we are, we're talking about baby steps. Now for a baby, for an infant, yeah, that might be bold. But not for a government who's been in power for quite a while and has ample opportunity to deal with this.

I can tell you that when it comes to consultation – and I want to talk a little bit about that. Gerry Rogers, the previous Member for this district and the former leader of the NDP, I have a tremendous respect for her, a good friend and I can tell you that her idea of consultation – in fact, my idea of consultation – our party's idea of consultation is vastly different than a simple phone call or checking the boxes or so on and so forth.

I know Gerry speaks to people and she is in touch with them –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind the Member to not refer to Members by names.

**J. DINN:** No problem.

So it comes down to, leading up to this, that groups were consulted. Well, certainly the executive director of the St. John's Status of Women Centre spoke at the scrum and said: Nope, they had not been officially consulted on this piece of legislation. They had concerns that pay transparency does not equal, equal pay. Nothing for rural women, nothing for Northern women, nothing for Quadrangle Newfoundland and Labrador, nothing for the racialized, nothing for immigrants, nothing for Indigenous groups.

The other thing about this, this is more reactive, because it depends on people making a complaint, instead of being proactive. Now, I was head of the Teachers' Union and I can tell you one thing; for a person to take the effort, take that step and make a complaint, to file a grievance, to do anything, takes a tremendous amount of courage because an open-door policy is only as good as the people who are willing enough to step across that threshold and make that point. That is a bit intimidating when you're the employee in a position – if you're not unionized especially; so this is not doing the job. The Federation of Labour, in comment to us, they weren't consulted; they were actually surprised this is going ahead.

So, for consultation, there seems to be an awful lot of people who are surprised here, all of a sudden, for people who were consulted. Because no one should be surprised if people are consulted. I've got to come back to this whole thing about the level of commitment. Because if indeed we have all these statements in the past that suggest pay equity was important but it wasn't on the radar, I've got to question the legitimacy of that comment.

The Federation of Labour has said that, basically, there's a specious reason that Muskrat Falls stymied the legislation. All of a sudden, the reason of Muskrat Falls has

fallen away and now it's become a priority for this small step. That they wanted to overcome some of the weaknesses of Ontario and Quebec legislation where private sector compliance was low, yet they're introducing narrow legislation and it's the opposite of what women need.

Any pay equity legislation or pay transparency legislation that does not include the private sector from the Federation of Labour, that does not include private sector is woefully inadequate, behind the times and will not do the heavy lifting to close the gender pay gap.

The federal *Pay Equity Act* applies to private, federally regulated industries with 10-plus employees. Internationally, pay transparency applies to private sector.

If anything else that COVID-19 has demonstrated to us, clearly, is that women who are at the core of our economy, they were the most affected.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask Members, the level of chatter is getting a little too loud there.

**J. DINN:** I'll just keep using my teacher voice, Speaker.

As I said, I'm tired of being called upon here – and we can say an awful lot at times, well, you know it's not perfect. It's a small step in the right direction and we're going to support it. But that's such a low barrier. It barely makes the grade.

I don't know about anyone else here, but I'm certainly tired of rewarding mediocrity. You can pat yourselves on the back. You can talk about how this is a giant step forward, but for some of the people who work in this building, for the women out there, those who are marginalized, this is not going to cut it.

So go back; redo it; bring back something that is bold, that is inspirational. Something that addresses the concerns that the Federation of Labour, that the St. John's Status of Women Council want. Let's do this right because, go back several months, you wanted to do it right. This is not doing it right. This is not what you settle for. This is a small step. It's not perfect.

Now I realize that the enemy of the good is the perfect. But, folks, we're down below good. We're down into mediocrity. I expect better. I know you can do better. I know that when it comes to finding money and the will to do something for an initiative that you deem important, the government will do it, Speaker. They will do it. I want the same priority put onto this. Come back with something that we can support and we can all be proud of.

Thank you.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, it's a pleasure to get up, I always say it and, I mean, it is a pleasure to get up in this House every time you stand in your place to speak for your district. We all tend to do it sometimes; we don't realize the importance of what we're doing.

So you look at this legislation, pay equity. It was there this past year that my colleague from Harbour Main spoke about this in this House of Assembly, in the media and government were almost – well, first they were insulted that we brought it up. That's the way I took it. The response was kind of anything but agreeable and the more we dug into it and there were ATIPPs and whatever released, there was nothing done. The Committee never even met for, we don't know how long. It was a long time the Committee never met.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Three years.

**B. PETTEN:** Three years. There you go. Three years, which in itself, is ridiculous. It's not good enough. So then, with all the pressure coming on and the calling and the pressure from Opposition led by my colleague from Harbour Main, lo and behold the Premier finally steps in and said we are going to bring in legislation; we are going to bring in pay equity legislation, which is a good thing. We were all like, okay, it's about time we've accomplished something.

So we went from three years with no meetings, no nothing. It was sitting on the back burner collecting dust. Now the Premier is going to speak publicly and commit to it and it's in the Speech from the Throne. It's great. We're all happy about that, but it's being done for the wrong reasons. It's being done to check that box and this government opposite, they check a lot of boxes.

Do I think that the boxes are accurate? Do I think what they're checking is worthy? Not really. We went through it last week with the Future Fund. It's checking a box and these issues are too important to be checking boxes. We continue to find we're always, oh yeah, we got that done; we got this done. So when the House closes, the Government House Leader will stand up and say we have this piece of legislation, that piece of legislation; reform or progressive, we're doing great. And if you're out in the general public and you're not really engaged in the back and forth and the debate in the House, which a lot aren't, you miss that point.

So what did we bring in? Okay, yeah, okay, very good. What I'm hearing now, I haven't done a deep dive, but there's little consultation. It's a weak piece of legislation. You force the Opposition, you force this House to say you can't say no to it because ultimately it's a step in the right direction. But it's a step. It's one step. We haven't solved the world's problems.

I know other colleagues of mine got up and spoke about their daughters and that. I have

two daughters as well, but I also have a wife. This has been long, long, long overdue. Here we have people waiting for this. There's no sense of relief today. What are you getting today? Nothing. You're getting a piece of legislation, but it's not really that great.

I jot notes when I'm listening to speakers get up and the commentary going on. The first question that comes is: Why? When I say why, I mean why now and why not years previous? And I'll bring in former PC administrations; it should've been brought in.

There's one thing I'll point out, and it hasn't been brought up, at least I don't think I've heard it. Back in the early '90s there was a pay equity agreement that was signed. At the time it was groundbreaking. But what happened? A new government came in. It was a Liberal government, led by former Premier Wells. What was one of the first things – go back in time and check – they tore up? The pay equity agreement.

Now you go back in time, and it's a story I'll tell, because it's back in time. In my previous life I was a union activist. I was president of the local. I had close affiliation with NAPE, actually. I was a part of many negotiating teams. One of the biggest issues we used to always put on the table was pay equity, pay equity, pay equity, and governments of the day, not just Liberal governments, it was both, then it progressed into Tory governments, they did nothing.

What I will say is in the 2005-2006 range, I'm not exactly sure of the year, the Williams administration – which I wasn't part of, I'll clarify that – they brought in this ex gratia payment of \$24 million. It wasn't to fix everything, but it was the acknowledgement of what happened when that pay equity agreement was torn up in the early '90s. It was to address some of the inequities there.

By no means did it solve the problem, but it was acknowledgement that the wrong was done; you're trying to ease the burden that's been placed because of that. Should we have continued on back then and come up with a pay equity agreement? Absolutely.

But that's a difference, Speaker. Some Members on this side of the House don't mind talking the facts of life. I've heard a couple of other Members say the former administration. Don't shy from that. But, also, don't try to get us to think that the world has changed and the planet has shifted because we brought in some earth-shattering legislation. That's not the case, Mr. Speaker. That's not the case. I mean, I'm looking over this, it's disingenuous to a degree, some of the stuff that's in it; it's disingenuous.

I know the Minister Responsible for Women, she'll get up and she'll be very passionate in her defence of the pay equity agreement, and actually call out my colleague from Harbour Main many times, how dare you kind of question.

But as we know that's very common in this House here, you can't question government. But where would we be? Lord knows where we're be if we never had us here to ask those questions on a daily basis. I fear to go down that road, but just imagine what kind of government we'd have if we never had Opposition. You'd be into a dictatorship – authoritarian government, people don't want that obviously. How dare you question important issues like this?

And then they deliver this to you 9:30 this morning?

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** 9 o'clock.

**B. PETTEN:** Nine o'clock this morning we get this. We're going debating that this evening.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** No, 8 o'clock.

**B. PETTEN:** Eight o'clock.

I mean, I haven't dug down and read through that. I've tried my best to catch up, like you would, but like a lot of Members in this House, we have a lot of things to be at every day. Reading a piece of legislation, is it very important? We have other things to do. So you try your best to catch up in the afternoon and you read it. And what are you getting?

Do you know what this is?  
Acknowledgement, we have a problem.  
Acknowledgement that we're going to try to do something.

Again, it's ticking the box for the Premier's office. I done that. We done the Future Fund and the list will go on. That list will grow as the next few weeks go and all the amendments. We may bring in amendments to this, who knows. But will we win those amendments? No. We won't get those amendments through because government got the ability in our Parliament, and they have that right.

Speaker, I go down this road because I'm trying to bring back the point of collaboration. My colleague from Harbour Main stood in her place and repeatedly asked questions. Stood in the scrum area. Spoke to the media. She spoke to different radio stations. She drove this issue. But all she faced was ridicule, criticism; how dare you bring it up? That's basically what you felt like.

Obviously, government acknowledged that they should have dealt with it and now, all of a sudden, they're going to try to find it. Do you know why? Because the court of public opinion. It's all about public pressure.

Does this government worry about what Opposition says? They might say publicly they do, but the public hears what we say. So when the public gets wind of what we're at in here, the public puts pressure on them and then they react. So I guess indirectly

we're effective. I think we're very effective actually, but you'll never hear from the other side. Why not call up one day and have a conversation with the Member opposite about how to move forward? Isn't that what collaboration is? Isn't that what the public wanted?

I'll go back again, Mr. Speaker, and it irritates me actually. If we go back to 2019 we had a minority government. The public spoke. Generally, the public were happy. Were there problems with a minority government? You know there were. There were different issues in there, we all realize that; the first time since Confederation we had a minority government or since '72, is it? The first time ever.

But the problem is back then the public said we like this government. We think this makes a better government. Do we read from the same hymnbook? No, we're not the same party, but if you want to do things for the betterment of the people of the province, why not collaborate on some issues.

We don't own the pay equity issue, nor do the Liberals. Neither one of us do, but we should all feel an obligation to do something about it. Women in this province have been underpaid for too long and it's gone on unnoticed actually, because government went three years and a committee was never even made. Is that right to your daughters and your mothers and your sisters and your wives? Is that right? It's not.

Then to bring in something like this and throw it at you three or four hours before and we're going to debate it. It's comprehensive but there's not a whole lot to it. It's comprehensive because it's more of the things – you're trying to find what's not there. You are looking for what's there, but we quickly find there's not a whole lot there. It leaves a lot of unanswered questions, Speaker.

The consultation piece – we've heard other Members, Speaker. It's not consultation. I mean this government don't really believe in consultation. They got this mindset that they know better than us and if we bring up something, you're dismissed. Go on; move off; get on to another topic.

We have no desire to talk about this; we don't need to talk about this, but we will talk about it. Again I'll say it and I've said it before: No matter what legislation comes through this House, if we don't speak about this and we don't propose amendments, we don't propose debate and meaningful questions and get out in the media and tell the rest of the province what's happening, are we any further ahead than we were back in the 1990s or the 2000s? Now, we're 2022. We're not back in 1990, 1989 or 1991. That's a long this has been kicking around.

I know government likes to get a bit of good news and have a good-news story but this is not going to meet the bar for me, Mr. Speaker. Do I think it's enough? No. Will it ever be enough? Maybe, but that's not for me to answer. That's for the women, the women's groups, people who represent women's interests. That's for my daughters to answer. That's for your wives, your mothers, your sisters. They're the ones to answer that, not me.

But my God, give something. Give something to them that they can say we're being respected. We are being given the right treatment. We feel like our voices are finally being heard. But no, it's raw, raw politics like it's always played on that side. Get it done; get the box ticked; get it in the House; get it through as we got to have our Government House Leader announce that this legislation is through.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** We've done it.

**B. PETTEN:** We've done it. That's what you're going to hear: We've done it.

It's not about what's best for people. Unfortunately, that's what this has come down to and it may sound cynical, but if I'm cynical so be it. Guilty as charged because this is what you're getting here.

This is frustrating to us. We've talked about it on a daily basis and we say: Why are we getting this piece of legislation? We've got three or four hours to talk about it. Let alone talk about it, get in the House then and try to speak coherently on it, fluently on it. Good luck. I don't know what's in the weeds of that but I don't think it's much.

But I do know a lot of women out there are scratching their heads too when they look and they hear what's being said. There's nothing there. Now government will get up today and you know they're going to have their big news conference, and they're all up at the head table. It's what we've grown accustomed to. It is. It's a deflection, you know. You get a news conference when it's bad news, let alone good news. Bad news gets a news conference. So everything gets a news conference. It's all deflection. We've accomplished that; we've solved it; we're done.

So as I'm wrapping up on this, Mr. Speaker, I guess my word to government would be nice try, but you need to try much, much harder to convince me or to convince anyone on this side of the House that what you're doing is anything meaningful to dealing with this very serious issue of pay equity and they need to do more.

Thank you very much.

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers if the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality speaks now, we'll close the debate.

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

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

Well, it certainly has been a debate, if we can call it that, here in this House of Assembly. To say I'm not surprised is an understatement and, unfortunately, it's disheartening. For quite some time – we're talking about last year, for example – we need something; we need something. We're finally bringing something. Something good that no one else has ever done. No one else has ever done this and I will remind this hon. House that that is the case. It was never done. But we're doing it. We're taking this step and we're bringing this legislation forward and, again, we are making history here, whether the Opposition wants to admit that or not.

It's a positive day, it's a historic day and I don't want to take a low road and respond to some of the nasty comments that are misleading to this hon. House. With regard to consultations, we will be consulting, of course, with valuable stakeholders who are, indeed, the experts here in Newfoundland and Labrador, Speaker. That's equality-seeking organizations, members like the board of trade. We will be consulting with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They are stakeholders here in our province and, of course, we need to put the best legislation forward.

This is only one tool, Mr. Speaker, and we see across jurisdictions and I will say, too, I took the time to listen to the debate – and they're over there chirping now. They always call out this side for chirping, but they're over there laughing and talking now.

So, perhaps, you can pay attention. This is very important legislation. As I said, it's one tool in the toolbox.

**B. PETTEN:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South on a point order.

**B. PETTEN:** The Member opposite is making false accusations in this House. There is no one chirping or laughing at her while she's speaking. I need that to be clarified for anyone that's watching at home. That's a low blow. We're actually listening to her and I'd like her to carry on and be more respectful.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** There was no point of order here. It's just a difference of opinion.

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

**P. PARSONS:** It seems to be a theme. No matter what is brought forward in this hon. House to support the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – the Future Fund, issuing cost-of-living cheques – that side wants to put it down; wants to put fear mongering all around what this government is trying to do, but the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know what this government is doing. I certainly get the feedback as an MHA when I'm out there and we're going to continue and we're not going to be disheartened. We're not going to be intimidated and we're not going to be discouraged by the unfortunate behaviour of what we see on the other side.

So, on that note, I want to stay positive today. Mr. Speaker, because, again, this is very important legislation. One tool in the toolbox. I want to talk about the important advancements made in IVF that this government has done for families who are trying to conceive, the feedback we have received there. The GBA+ lens, which is a mandatory policy, the Gender-Based Analysis Plus lens which is put on every piece of policy, budget produced by Government NL to mitigate negative impacts for people of gender, gender-diverse, people of intersectionalities. I also heard the Member for Terra Nova talk about

– he didn't see intersectionalities mentioned. Well, I am going to enlighten him. It certainly is mentioned in the legislation; that is taken into consideration.

Also, Speaker, we have an increase in the minimum wage and we're even going further in next October to bring the minimum wage to \$15. The \$10-a-day daycare, do you know how valuable that is, Mr. Speaker, the calls that I've received to my office about women who are able to get – whether it's continuing education, whether it's getting to work full-time in the workforce, and not just a minimum wage job, or a low earner, but those better-paying jobs in our natural resources sector, because as we know we are rich in the natural resources sector here in this province.

Again, the women employment plans that we negotiate with businesses that are coming here to Newfoundland and Labrador to do business in our natural resource sector. Investments in capital ventures such as Sandpiper Ventures, just under a million dollars was invested just last year, and that's to support women and gender-diverse people in tech.

So, again, this is one tool in our toolbox. I look forward to the consultation process, of course, with regard to transparency and pay equity in the private sector, which we're going to take even further. They don't want to understand that. They don't want to acknowledge that. I even heard the Member go as far as to say that they're trying to take credit for asking questions and that's why things are getting done. That's not the case, Mr. Speaker, as we know.

Again, on that note, this is a historic day. I want to end by saying that tomorrow is Persons Day in Canada, which marks the day in 1920 when women were included in the legal definition of persons. Not all women, because we know Indigenous women did not fit into this criteria, so we acknowledge that. But while this day has remarkable significance in our nation's

history journey towards gender equality, I'm struck by the timing of our legislation now in this hon. House, and while Persons Day has roots in 1929, we are still breaking down barriers, as we know, and creating better systems and structures here in 2022.

Mr. Speaker, this is the government that's going to do it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The motion is that Bill 3 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.'

Motion carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Respecting Pay Equity for the Public Sector and Pay Transparency for the Public and Private Sectors. (Bill 3)

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

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

**S. CROCKER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Pay Equity for the Public Sector and Pay Transparency for the Public and Private Sectors," read a second time, ordered



referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 3)

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that this House do now adjourn.

**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.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 o'clock tomorrow.

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