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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we will hear the statements by the hon. Members for the District of Bonavista, Cape St. Francis, Terra Nova, Ferryland and Exploits.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I recognize Kristy Peet and her Caring Card team. Caring Cards NL was created two years ago during the pandemic. Mike Herrell, the program's founder, was unable to visit a senior in long-term care due to the COVID restrictions. He decided to send a handmade card and it was so well received, it gave him the idea to create this group, whereby volunteers would create cards to spread joy to seniors in our communities.

Kristy became involved in its early stages, as she saw the value in how small gestures of kindness can have profound impacts. The group has grown to nearly 400 members and what started with one long-term care home has grown exponentially throughout the province. Caring Cards NL have partnered with seniors' homes, several schools and have hosted virtual and in-person card-making events to grow the program.

I became aware of this program when Caring Cards were delivered to Golden Heights Manor long-term care in Bonavista – a tremendous act of kindness indeed.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the efforts of Kristy Peet and her Caring Card team in supporting seniors in long-term care

within the District of Bonavista and throughout the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I rise to recognize and congratulate 10 outstanding young athletes from my district who received the 2023 Premier's Athletic Awards for athletic excellence.

On October 4, several of my colleagues and I had the honour of attending this event where the following athletes were recognized for their particular sport: Abby Carpenter, basketball; Lily Evans, skating; Alexander Hollett, karate; Alex O'Brien, rowing; Kyla Piercey, gymnastics; Emma Pittman, karate; Emily Reglar, karate; Jasper Short, handball; Nicholas Smith, baseball; and Nathan Young, curling.

These athletes were selected to receive this award based on their athletic accomplishments in the previous year. This is certainly a testament to their character and dedication to training in their chosen sport.

In addition to the athletes, I'd like to recognize the invaluable contribution from the family members. Without their support, these awards would not have been possible.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members of this 50th General Assembly to join me in congratulating these accomplished young athletes from my beautiful district on receiving the 2023 Premier's Athletic Awards for athletic excellence.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

From a young age this athlete from Glovertown has been turning heads in school sports and regional competitions provincially, nationally and, this year, internationally.

Jenni Simpson was most recently one of nine young female ball hockey players that played for Team Canada and brought home gold from the World Juniors U21 in the final, beating Slovakia. Jenni contributed an assist in the only goal of the game and was selected to the U21 world all-star team.

There were nine girls on Team Canada from Newfoundland and Labrador who were great ambassadors for their sport and our beautiful province.

Jenni is a recipient of the Premier's Athletic Award for the last two years. In 2022, Jenni received an electoral scholarship for the District of Terra Nova that recognized graduates for their hard work, dedication and academic achievement. She has been named Female Athlete of the Year in Glovertown, excelling in many individual sports and team sports in high school. Now, many kids in the area look up to her and consider her their idol and hero.

Please join me in congratulating a great ambassador for Newfoundland and Labrador, Ms. Jenni Simpson.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize all volunteer fire departments and the members who have served in the past and serve today.

I want to acknowledge and say thank you to our many volunteers as well as those over the years who have given so much to the regions protection and our well-being. The hours that each firefighter gives peace of mind to the residents of our communities and ensures them that they have someone to rely on in the event of a fire or any type of emergency.

Over the years, volunteer firefighters have performed many heroic and life-saving acts and are to be commended for their dedication and commitment. There are many challenges that first responders face today in carrying out their duties. The volunteer firefighters have done remarkable work and over the years have lived up to that challenge. I want to also recognize the partners, spouses and family members for their continued support.

I ask all Members in this House to join me in recognizing all volunteer fire departments, not only in my district, but all across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Today, I would like to recognize 13-year-old Miss Grace Woodworth of Point Leamington.

Speaker, in September of this year, Grace entered the contest for Junior Miss Newfoundland and Labrador in Carbonear. Grace was awarded the Leadership Award for raising over \$3,000 by having two fundraisers, along with family donations, friends and businesses. The money was raised for the Shriners Hospitals for Children with orthopedic conditions, burns, spinal cord injuries and cleft lip and palate.

She also won the People's Choice Award, which was voted through online sources.

Speaker, I would like for all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in recognizing Miss Grace Woodworth for her accomplishments in these awards.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

S. CROCKER: Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize one of the pillars of the Newfoundland and Labrador film and television industry.

Since 1989, the St. John's International Women's Film Festival has been leading with a bold vision to create gender equality in the screen arts and now it is recognized as a marquee event within the Canadian film industry.

I would like to congratulate the festival's board of directors and staff for their tireless commitment to providing a platform for women and gender-diverse artists to share their perspectives and also for shining a spotlight on our province's unique arts and culture.

The festival also provides invaluable opportunities for learning and networking for those who are interested in seeking a career in film and television.

Speaker, the 2023 festival opens tonight and the lineup of feature-length and short films is nothing less than spectacular – films from around the world that are not only entertaining but also inspiring, informative and thought provoking.

Headlining this year is *Party Pirate*, directed by our province's own Ruth Lawrence and written by her son Luke.

I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate Dr. Noreen Golfman, one of the festival's founding directors and vice-chair of Picture NL on being invested into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This year's festival runs until October 21 and I encourage everybody to get out and enjoy the shows.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker, and I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We, too, in the Official Opposition want to take the time to congratulate the St. John's International Women's Film Festival as they continue to become a marquee event in the Canadian film industry.

To achieve this status, we cannot ignore the dedicated and hard-working board of directors who have worked tirelessly to ensure that women and gender-diverse artists are getting the opportunities to share their works. Hats off to the festival as well for also providing a venue for the craft industry to learn and network their industry.

As the festival opens tonight, we encourage people to attend the opening film, *Party Pirate*, directed by our own Ruth Lawrence and written by her son Luke. We also extend our congratulations to Dr. Noreen Golfman on being invested into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We encourage one and all to attend this year's festival, which runs until October 21.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

This festival is an event the city, province and the world looks forward to each year. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the organizers ensured that this showcase of women and film continued through home screenings, giving many an important escape from isolation and kept the festival front and centre in people's hearts and minds.

We congratulate the organization and welcome everyone visiting to celebrate women in film.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, yesterday here in the House of Assembly when asked about the housing crisis, the Premier said: "You can't have a plan for something that hasn't occurred yet."

In June of last year, *The Telegram* reported about a tent city in Pippy Park, just a stone's throw from this building. That was 16 months ago. You can build and repair a lot of homes in 16 months.

I ask the Premier: What's taking so long?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we stated yesterday, we have been addressing the housing crisis for some time. The extra pressure, of course, is a little new and we're responsive to that. But we added 750 new units since 2021; an additional 850 to be awarded to be built in this month; we're refurbishing and repairing 143 vacant ones, all to add inventory to affordable housing, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, we addressed the acute issue as best we can; we also addressed the housing that's affordable issue that's affecting middle-income people in our province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it's just another example of why the Liberal government doesn't work for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Instead of getting ahead of issues, we have to have a crisis to allow them to get worse.

So, again, I ask the Premier: Why does it take a crisis to get your government to respond?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we suggested already, 750 new housing units, new affordable social housing units, have been started since 2021, Mr. Speaker. Another 850 to be added to the inventory. Look, we all wish, and I'm sure you can understand –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: – that you wish we could snap our fingers and create new housing units overnight. We've been planning for this for a while, with 750, now 850, with the single largest investment in public housing in the province's history, which I remind the Members opposite, they voted against.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, that's exactly the problem. We're not talking about having to build new homes overnight. We've had hundreds of homes that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: – has that have been vacant for years. People ask, why is it taking so long to get them fixed?

I ask the Premier: How can you defend denying individuals and families a roof over their heads?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Certainly we recognize on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that housing and affordable housing and housing that is affordable is an important element to society. We continue to make targeted investments in each one of these. Including, again, 750 new units since 2021; 850 additional new units that were announced earlier this year that will be awarded; along with a call for RFQs to repair the vacant housing units earlier this week.

We hope that this inventory will help the people in the affordable housing sector, Mr. Speaker, and those in need. We also realize on this side of the House that it is a supply and demand issue that's causing a market

dynamic which is difficult to solve in and of itself.

As a result, the five-point plan will allow developers to introduce new inventory into the system, Mr. Speaker. It has changed –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Again, I would have thought that a Liberal government would have known how many vacant units it has had over the last eight years and would have taken efforts to at least get all of those units up and running and in place. If they had done so, they would not have had to issue a tender yesterday for repairs and renovations.

Speaker, today we learn the cost of living in Newfoundland and Labrador rose higher than the national average. The Liberal government can talk all it wants about their cost-of-living plan. Well, the indication is Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are falling further behind.

I ask the Premier: How can people keep up?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We certainly recognize that the cost of living is a source of great anxiety for families across our province, Mr. Speaker. That's why this year alone we committed to \$500 million to give back to the people of the province. Per capita, the largest give back compared to any other province in the country, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Member opposite –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: – why he voted against cutting the gas tax in half, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: I ask the Members why they voted against taking the gas tax down to eight cents, Mr. Speaker. I asked them why they voted against increasing the seniors' supplement, Mr. Speaker. I asked them why they voted against raising the Income Supplement, Mr. Speaker. I asked them why they continue –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

A. FUREY: Would you like me to continue or keep going?

They keep on bringing up carbon tax, Mr. Speaker; surely by now they understand, after sitting in this House for so long, that is a federal tax and if not –

SPEAKER: The Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me tell you the one thing I am assured of is that I sat in the House of Assembly and this Liberal government introduced carbon tax to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I can also assure you I say in this House and heard the Liberal government increase the carbon tax for residents on Newfoundland and Labrador

and not one on them – not one of them – opposed those increases.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the Premier just talked about the eight cents a litre that they have taken off gas. That is due to expire on March 31.

So I will ask the Premier now: Will you commit to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that this will not happen and you will keep it off?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Certainly, let me discuss the preamble there, Mr. Speaker. The Member leaves out one important option, Mr. Speaker. The old carbon plan was in place after being negotiated between two levels of government, which had carve outs and protections for citizens.

Mr. Speaker, when it was obvious that the federal government was not prepared to do that, we changed tact, as we should, to fight for the constituents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, the first thing we did is an offset with respect to decreasing the gas tax to offset the carbon tax. The next thing we did, on this side of the House, is to repeal the carbon tax. It is inconvenient or perhaps convenient that Member opposite leaves out those important facts, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, all one has to do is check *Hansard* to find out how much the Liberal government supported the carbon tax, not opposed the carbon tax. It is in

Hansard, just read it, and yet they still continue to say that they're now opposed to it. Their only reason they brought in those measures to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador is because those of us on this side of the House fought to have those increases brought in.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We actually had to have the budget changed.

Speaker, dairy is up 4 per cent; fresh fruit is up 3 per cent; baked goods are up 8 per cent. A senior on a fixed income cannot keep up with these increases.

I ask the Premier: What do you say to the senior who must choose between food or heat?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, let me address the preamble. He, again, continues to leave out the second part of the equation, which is this government responded by repealing the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. This is a federal tax; it's not a provincial tax. They may want to conflate the two, but it's not. This is definitively a federal tax. The federal government has jurisdiction over it, as it does borders and issuing passports and everything else, Mr. Speaker.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador understand that and they understand that we continue to fight the federal government with respect to the carbon tax. We've been very public about it. In fact, their second, third, fourth, fifth or first cousins – I'm not sure how they're referring to them now – have acknowledged that we are onside with not supporting the carbon tax right now in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador understand first-hand how carbon tax was introduced to this province and you can try to deny it all you want.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: You brought it in; you voted the increases and you collected \$35 million in carbon tax from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

T. WAKEHAM: – in the first three months of this year. Those are the facts.

Speaker, the Premier didn't respond when I asked him if we remove the eight cents a litre, if that was going to stay off. He didn't respond to that question, so let me ask him another one.

Marine Atlantic introduced plans to increase a fuel surcharge up to 17 per cent. It was deferred until December.

I ask the Premier: Would you block this cost-of-living increase?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, this side of the House is committed to continually deliver cost-of-living relief, Mr. Speaker. That includes the relief on the gas tax. We know it's a significant source of anxiety for families across the province and we're always looking at how we can do more to help the people of the province.

So with respect to the eight cents, we will continue to make sure that we are looking

after the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. We continue to talk with the minister of transportation federally to make sure that they understand how much their changes, their policies impact Newfoundland and Labrador.

Marine Atlantic is not a provincial organization, Mr. Speaker. Again, they conflate things; they confuse things. Just like the carbon tax is not ours, we don't govern Marine Atlantic, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, last year, the wait-list for a housing unit was 1,930. In March, it was 2,230. Now the media report states that it has ballooned to 2,800. The Premier stated, in his first question this afternoon, we have been addressing the housing crisis for some time.

Why has the minister not intervened to a significant degree while the housing crisis has exploded?

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

P. PIKE: I'd like to thank the hon. Member for his question.

Mr. Speaker, we've done a lot in the last couple of years with the cost of living and with the housing issues that we are now experiencing. It's very challenging but we have invested heavily with the announcements yesterday, bringing \$65 million in for home repairs. If you talk about – well, bringing in the \$3 million, I'm sorry, which will be added to the \$17 million we've already spent on repairing houses this year – \$17 million. That \$3 million –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, we've seen a 50 per cent increase in the wait-list for a housing unit just the past year, and that's on the minister's watch. The numbers speak for themselves.

Does the minister regret not having done more?

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

P. PIKE: Again, thank you for your question.

Mr. Speaker, we've done a lot. We've certainly talked about the 750 new housing options that we created. We're talking about the 850 homes that we will be completing. Eighty of these are going to be here in the city and we're going to be looking at those – we already have eight just about completed and we will have another 32 that will soon start. We're also building a 40-unit apartment building in that area. That, certainly, will help the housing crisis a great deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, we can talk about what we're putting into something but if the numbers in the end and the end result are as bleak as what they are, obviously, there was missing a plan or the plan that they may have had wasn't sufficient or satisfactory.

Speaker, a question: Why has the Premier not gone over to meet the folks across the street and hear their stories first-hand?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said yesterday in the House, I'm aware of these vulnerable people. I'm aware of the complex needs that exist within the people occupying the tents. I think it's important that we not exploit the vulnerabilities or complexities. I think it's best left to the experts.

That's why this government immediately deployed experts in the field, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: – the harm reduction unit, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, the RNC, Legal Aid and others to ensure that the people in the tents have the appropriate services and have access to the appropriate services that the government can provide. Just like they do for everybody else who finds themselves in a vulnerable and complex situation, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, the people there would like to see the Premier. They are looking for him to be there.

Last night, I spoke to a 75-year-old constituent in the District of Harbour Main who told me about his heartbreaking struggle living on a fixed income. Two years ago, he and his wife could go to the supermarket and pay \$230 for three weeks of groceries. Today, they go to the same supermarket and pay \$457 for the same number of groceries – double.

I ask the minister: How do you suggest that these seniors are going to make ends meet?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much for the question. It's an important one.

It's been very, very difficult. We all know the challenges around the cost of living and we've been trying to, as a government, help as many people as possible. That's why we have increased the Income Supplement by 15 per cent. I note the Member opposite voted against that. We increased the Income Supplement. We also increased the Seniors' Benefit by 15 per cent. That put more money in our seniors' pockets. The Member opposite voted against that.

We also included a complete elimination in taxation on insurance for people's homes. That put money in people's pockets. The Member opposite voted against that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Another example of this Liberal government deflecting the issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I asked the minister: How do you suggest that these seniors are going to make ends meet, and this senior in particular?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: These are real examples of seniors who are struggling, who are suffering and are feeling ignored by this Liberal government.

Speaker, it's not just at the grocery store. Two years ago, this senior paid \$300 a month for furnace oil. Today, he's paying \$600 for the same amount of oil.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Should I tell this senior to support your Liberal carbon tax?

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

S. COADY: I can feel the passion in the Member opposite, Speaker. I think we all share in that passion of concern for our seniors.

I will say to the Member opposite that we have a Home Heating Supplement Program to help those seniors with heating their home. It's up to \$500. The deadline for application is November 30. I encourage as many people as possible to apply for that Home Heat Supplement. Again, I'll say to the Member opposite, she voted against that.

We also have done things, as I said, Speaker, we've increased the Income Supplement for people who need assistance. We've increased that by 15 per cent. We've increased the Seniors' Benefits, all to the benefit of those seniors.

We're very concerned about seniors in our province and we'll continue to do things.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I find it unbelievable, Speaker, that this minister is talking about taxes. The Liberal carbon tax is forcing people into poverty, into

homelessness and they're gouging and crushing our people.

This senior's income that I was talking about, it doesn't change. He and his wife may have to sell their car because they can't even afford the insurance, as this too has skyrocketed. How are our seniors going to survive?

I ask the minister: What do you suggest that these seniors are going to be able to do to afford to live in our province?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just have to stand up; there was a specific question that was regarding the oil to electric transition program. We have a very good oil to electric program, which is up to \$17,000.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. DAVIS: If the hon. Member would listen, he would understand up to \$17,000 which should cover the entire cost to transition a home, depending on income, depending on technology, for individuals.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: We've seen a huge increase in people that are applying for it, upwards of 1,000 people and homeowners have applied to this date right now. I look forward to doing that.

Please feel free to apply to our department; we would love to work with them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Good to hear from somebody who voted for the carbon tax.

Speaker, yesterday the minister said rent caps would cause landlords to evict people and increase rents. Well, guess what, Speaker. This is happening now.

Where is the legislation to prevent those renovations?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

If the Member wants to come over, I'm happy to sit down and we can chat about this all day. I'm very open; I've been doing a lot of research on this. Actually, yesterday, as a result of my comments in the House, I had landlords reach out to me saying they agreed with me. Landlords whose mortgage rates and their interest have gone up and they have basement apartments; they wouldn't be able to afford to have an apartment in their basement if they couldn't pass on some of that interest rate increase to their tenants.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) could be more affordable (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. STOODLEY: No, it's difficult. We have landlords and tenants, Mr. Speaker. This is a very difficult situation.

Speaker, provinces that have rental caps see higher rental increases than we do here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'd really be happy to chat with the Member if they want to come over. I've been thinking and doing a lot of research and talking to a lot of people.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, the minister should be talking to the tenants.

Speaker, the landlords are issuing renovations, where tenants are evicted for renovations, but then the home is quickly re-rented for higher amounts. Yesterday, the minister ignored the question.

Why is she allowing renovations?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Renovictions is not a thing. In our legislation, landlords can evict tenants with three months' notice, Speaker. So it is –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I can't hear the Member speak.

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, a landlord does have the right to evict a tenant with three months' notice. That is a fact; that is in our legislation. It is a difficult situation if, when a landlord evicts a tenant, that three-month-notice period is there. They have to give a tenant six months' notice if they are increasing the rent, Speaker, and they can only do so once in a 12-month period.

There are provinces that have boards set up and if a landlord wants to apply for a rent increase, or for an increase between tenants, they have to apply to a board, Speaker. That's making government bigger, that's increasing the cost, adding red tape, which I'm really trying hard not to do.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, no-fault evictions are when landlords give tenants a three-month

notice, then jack up the rents. We have heard of up to 60 per cent increases. Other provinces do not allow no-fault evictions. Why does this minister?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Every province allows landlords to evict tenants with a certain months' notice. I don't have that exact number off the top of my head, but I'd be happy to get it for the Member opposite.

It is a difficult situation; I understand the uncertainty that it causes for tenants. I really do, Speaker. But when we see in provinces when there is a board, where landlords can apply for a rental increase, the boards almost always approve it. So I'm hesitant to add this board, add cost, add red tape when it would only mean the rental increases going on anyway, which is what happens in other provinces, which is why their rental rates are higher than ours.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: You can't add red tape; there's no red tape left.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Speaker, when the Liberal government took office they announced a review of all government real estate and leases, yet they say they have to do a review again to try and find housing solutions.

I ask the minister: What happened to this review eight years ago?

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

P. PIKE: Could you repeat –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. PIKE: Mr. Speaker, can I have the question repeated?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: You found your roll of red tape, I guess.

Speaker, when the Liberal government took office they announced a review of all government real estate and leases, yet they say they have to do the review again to try and find housing solutions.

I ask the minister: What happened to this review eight years ago?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to a question we were trying to decipher on this side of the House.

One of the things we are looking at, obviously, is – and we continue to do – to reduce our footprint in the province. So we have reduced the number of leases and consolidated into government buildings and we will continue to do that.

In terms of working with my colleague, the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, we are going to work and identify any vacant lands that can be made available to developers or non-profits to build housing in the province. So that work continues and we're going to

accelerate it in light of the immediate needs across the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: It's amazing. You know you wouldn't run a hot bath over there. It's unbelievable.

Speaker, time is of the essence. The days are not getting any warmer or drier. The Liberal government now must review what they've already reviewed to try and scramble together a housing response.

I ask the minister: How is this possible?

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I will say to the Member opposite, being disrespectful doesn't help in the situation that we're going through in this province right now – the cost of living.

So I will say to the Member opposite, we put in a tremendous amount of money in last year's budget, \$70 million, Speaker, for 850 units. The year before, 750 units. I will say the Member opposite voted against those measures. Yet, he stands here today and says that we're not doing anything.

I say to him that we're doing an awful lot on behalf of the people of the province. We're spending the money very wisely, we're making big progress in terms of housing and we need to continue to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

This morning, when I visited the people living in tents – because you really don't need special training to have a conversation with people – they were distraught and felt harassed by the police who said they were telling them they had to move. The officer in charge told me police had expectations that the tenters should leave during the day and that the situation will be reassessed if they didn't.

So I ask the Premier: If government's approach to homelessness now is a hard line, not in my backyard, where are these people to go?

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

J. HOGAN: So, Minister, I understand from reports I've been getting from the police over the last couple of weeks about public safety in tent city here across the street is that they initially went there and developed a good relationship with the people who are there to make sure they are safe, to attend to their needs and to not overstep where the police don't need to overstep. They've been doing that for a few weeks. All of the reports I've gotten have indicated that's the case.

Today, I was advised that the RNC removed some collapsed tents from the area, where people weren't and the tents were collapsed. They did that for safety reasons. As you can imagine, it's a very dangerous road out there. I wouldn't want a tent that's collapsed blowing onto someone's windshield and maybe hurting the people who are driving the car and maybe even drive into tent city where these individuals are, Speaker.

So for safety reasons, I'm advised the RNC took those collapsed tents down and they took them to police headquarters where anyone who has their belongings can get them at any point in time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: I guess then the expectation that people should leave during the day made those tents easier to remove.

So I ask, Speaker, 11 days ago on October 6, I wrote the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development outlining my concerns for those living in tents across from the Confederation Building, including five requests for government from the tenters themselves. It was not even acknowledged. The minister also promised to meet with me that day but that never happened either.

So I ask the Premier instead: Would government be able to provide them, the tenters, with a reasonable time frame as to when they can expect to be in a real home that is safe, affordable and allows them privacy?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I feel the need to address the preamble because I want to make sure that the public are aware of what the RNC have been doing there. If there are any comments here in the House that the RNC have been there to take tenters away and to tell them to move and to force them to move, then there would be no tenters there. They would've been gone three weeks.

So it's very clear that that is not what the RNC is doing. That's not the conduct that they have been taking since day one. They have a good relationship with these individuals and they continue to work with them, as the CSSD on those individuals that have needs and how they can meet those needs going forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: It never ceases to amaze me to what degree they will go not to answer a question.

On October 4, almost four weeks ago, I wrote the Premier asking: What was his government's plan to address homelessness and provide safe housing for the vulnerable individuals living in tents near the Confederation Building. I even offered a meeting between him and our caucus to discuss solutions – crickets.

Maybe the Premier can explain why he ignored the request to meet and what his government is doing to provide safe housing, not shelters, for those living in tents. Maybe this time we can answer to that question.

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question.

I just want to clarify that I did respond to that letter.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: The letter is here.

AN HON. MEMBER: Table it.

P. PIKE: I will table it, yes.

I have some comments that I have take off, but it was sent on October 11 and you should've seen that just as I had to go back and look, as well as you did. I did respond and I did say in that letter that we offer supports to individuals in the tent city at the time and that our staff have been on site every single day and they've helped a lot of people. They've had meetings with them, private meetings –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Speaker, I'm concerned about the people in my district as winter approaches and home heating costs continue to rise. Last winter, the cost of stove oil was outrageous compared to other parts of our province. It prevented many from being able to adequately heat their homes. Many now want to switch to the expensive 19 cents a kilowatt hour electricity, which is still far cheaper than our oil. All communities in Torngat Mountains are excluded from the oil to electricity rebate that was spoken about just recently.

I ask the Premier: Why? Diesel plants, yes, emit carbon, but so do home oil furnaces.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

The oil to electric program is designed in consultation and partnership with the federal government. We're working towards expanding that program as we can. The actual program that we've announced now deals with moving people from oil to electric that are on the grid. That's one the requirements for it, because it's a greenhouse gas reduction initiative as well as a win-win-win for people because it will save them money. It does reduce the cost.

I do understand that the hon. Member has questions with respect to that. We're going to be continuing to work with individuals in those diesel-generated areas to try to find solutions. I know I'm going to be working with my colleague in IET for that as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

J. DINN: With the leave of the House, I would like to table the letter that I sent to Minister Pike on the 6th of October and the letter that I addressed to the Premier on October 4.

SPEAKER: Does the Member have leave to table those documents?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

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

P. PIKE: I'd like to table the response I sent to –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: – the hon. Member, if that's okay with the House.

SPEAKER: Yes.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015, No. 2, Bill 56.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that notwithstanding the 2023 parliamentary calendar this House not sit on Tuesday, November 14, 2023, but shall instead meet for the installation of the Lieutenant Governor designate Joan Marie Aylward at 11:30 a.m.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motions?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove the limitation periods for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor (a) within an intimate relationship; (b) within a relationship of dependency; or (c) where the defendant was in a position of trust or authority.

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitation periods do not run during any time a defendant: (a), willfully conceals or

misleads the claimant about essential elements of the claim – i.e., the fact that an injury, loss or damage has occurred, that it was caused by or contributed by an act or omission, or the act or omission was that of the defendant; or (b) willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of a proceeding as a means of remedying the injury, loss or damage.

The above-mentioned legislative changes should be retroactive and apply regardless of the expiry of any previous limitation period.

Mr. Speaker, I'm sure many Members – I would hope all Members – would have heard the story as it relates to Mr. Whelan, and what he had to endure as a youth in the youth criminal justice system. I guess it would be before we had the Young Offenders Act and so on, back in the Mount Cashel days, if you will, that sort of time period.

It is amazing when you think about the fact that even the atrocities that had happened at Mount Cashel, and we all know of those, if that had been just physical abuse, if those kids were being beaten daily and had been emotionally abused, physically abused and so on, and there was no sexual abuse related to that, then none of this would be covered by legislation years later. That is a big problem.

In Mr. Whelan's case, I sat down and met with the man for a couple hours in my office, he told his story and very troubling some of the things that had happened to him while in care of the provincial government through our justice system and he has no remedy.

Apparently, according to him, Newfoundland and Labrador is the only province that the legislation does not allow for physical abuse – to be able to go back in time when there was physical abuse. So what they're asking for is that our legislation would be brought in line with all of the other provinces for cases such as Mr. Whelan and any others who are

out there that had experienced any kind of physical abuse while under the care of the provincial government. They should be able to come forward to have their cases heard, no different than someone who suffered sexual abuse by authorities.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Many residents of the District of Harbour Main are struggling with the constant increase in the cost of living. The working poor, who are living paycheque to paycheque, are experiencing turmoil with whether to heat their homes or buy food for their children. This is having a serious impact on the mental well-being of many families.

The supports that government have recently implemented are failing families who are working hard, yet fall within a lower income bracket and are unable to avail of government supports.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately create an emergency plan for the working poor to ensure that no Newfoundlander and Labradorian is left behind.

Speaker, earlier in Question Period I focused my comments on seniors. We know that seniors are struggling with the cost of living. We also know that working people are struggling as well. We've recently heard that 77 per cent of people are living paycheque to paycheque. Imagine that; that

struggle, that stress, that financial pressure on people.

The tax increases by this Liberal government have taken money out of the people's pocket. The carbon tax has taken millions, \$35 million, out of people's pockets. They are forcing the people of this province into homelessness, into poverty. Housing is unaffordable and impossible to find. Our seniors are calling for action with respect to the cost of living; our working poor, our young families with children who are struggling are calling for this government to act.

We know that seniors are struggling between medication and heat. We know that people, young families, can't afford to eat with the price of groceries.

Speaker, this Liberal government has had eight years to get it right and look at the desperate state of our province. The complete denial, the fact that they abrogate their responsibility has to stop now.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: To address a few things in the petition and the response around the petition.

First of all, the federal government has implemented the carbon tax. We, as the government in Newfoundland and Labrador, especially with the expansion of the carbon tax, the expansion to include home heat, we've been very, very, very vocal with the federal government, very strongly saying to them, it's not the right time and it's not the right tool. The price of gasoline is very, very high. The price of home heat is very, very high.

So I petition the Member opposite to please address this with the federal government. She could join us in that. Rather than her bringing it to the provincial government, join with the provincial government in addressing the federal government.

Secondly, the Member opposite didn't vote in favour of us increasing the Seniors' Benefit by 15 per cent. She voted against us having a Home Heating Supplement Program that will give \$500 back to those that are heating their homes with fuel, Speaker.

So I would say to the Member opposite, we've put \$500 million back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I hope she supports and joins us in continuing those efforts.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today for the petition of anti-temporary replacement worker legislation.

These are the reasons for the petition:

Anti-temporary replacement worker laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and the federal government has committed to introducing such legislation by the end of 2023.

The use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or a lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community and local economy and the well-being of its residents.

Anti-temporary replacement worker legislation has been shown to reduce the length and divisiveness of labour disputes.

Since 2015, the right to strike has been clearly protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* because it helps stabilize the power imbalances between workers and employers.

The use of temporary replacement workers undermines that right.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the government to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or a lockout.

Speaker, we're seeing now the federal government is going to do this in federally regulated industries. It's just disappointing to see that the provincial government currently does not want to do the same thing and follow along with their Liberal cousins, or third cousins or whatever you want to call them, up in Ottawa right now.

At the same time, it is important that we keep the balance of the workplace. The right to collective bargaining is protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. At the same time, if there is a lockout or strike or labour disruption under provincially regulated industries, employers can bring in workers and continue to produce while there are people locked out. That creates an imbalance because the employer is still continuing on while workers are trying to bargain in fairness.

So, right now, there is an imbalance by not having this legislation in place. It can (inaudible) of the balance at the bargaining table. If the federal government has seen and come to the realization that this is an important piece of legislation for bargaining, I just find it disappointing that this province doesn't see the same way.

We've had incidents in this province, pretty nasty incidents in this province, when it comes to the use of temporary foreign workers. They're not seeing the foresight of it and at the same time just kind of dismissing it is really disappointing.

I do encourage this government and I encourage the Labour Minister, I encourage them to actually see that this is an important piece of legislation that the federal

government is doing. It's important for us to accrete fair and balanced bargaining and collective agreements.

Thank you, Speaker, and I'll take my seat.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour for a response.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank my colleague from Lab West for bringing this forward. I do think he misspoke twice in his thing by saying temporary foreign workers. I don't think he meant foreign workers, I think he meant temporary replacement workers.

I just want to correct that because I don't think he meant temporary foreign workers, I do want to correct the record because I know he doesn't mean that.

I just want to say this is a very complex issue with labour and employers, holding very different views, and I think my colleague on the other side would agree with that statement. Government must ensure there is an appropriate balance between the rights of workers and that of the needs of employers as well.

Currently, this legislation that is being talked about right now by my colleague exists only in Quebec and BC in a limited capacity and the federally regulated workplaces. So we're looking at it, we're going to continue to be responsive to labour legislation and the actual conversations that we're having with our labour unions, as well as employers, to try to be as responsive as we can, but we also have to understand that there is a balance between the needs and wants of both labour and employers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Child Support Enforcement do a wonderful job with approximately 5,000 files currently in our province. A regulation of this government allows a 30-day window for payment to be made to children who are often in single-parent homes. This window for payment creates hardships for the custodian parent and child to make ends meet.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to review this 30-day window for payment regulation to assure this critically needed payment is received at the first of each month. This will allow single-parent families to pay rent, child care, food, et cetera, on a consistent basis.

We've talked in this House and we've said one-quarter of the children in Newfoundland and Labrador live in food-insecure homes. You can bet your bottom dollar that 5,000 of these cases that we've got here, a significant number of them would be in food-insecure homes.

Unfortunately, in this province, and like other provinces, children are involved in separations, but we've got to make sure that their well-being is paramount. The province currently has 4,922 active files; 656 of them are outside the province. That means there are other jurisdictions collecting. We have eight enforcement officers, which would equal to 615 cases that each enforcement officer will have.

When a single mother does not get the support payment on the first of each month, they've got big decisions to make: rent, food and I would say accompanying that would be the mental health of all that would be in the house. One parent tells me that on the first of the month in September, the payment received from Support Enforcement was \$24; 4 per cent of the total owing. I followed up with October, because we're into a new month, \$40 was paid; less than 7 per cent of owing. We cannot function with children.

Suggestion, in the 10 seconds I have: Government pay them in the first of the month, because the money is coming in. Taxpayers aren't out money, but we know that we have the money at the first of the month that would be issued to make sure that these children are not in food insecure homes.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you.

Speaking to this in a past role, having done this as a lawyer when I practised and did Support Enforcement files and child support files, I just want to put – number one, I'm glad of the petition here. This does make for an interesting conversation, but I don't want to put a few things out there just for recognition while we're doing this.

If there are 5,000 files right now in the system, which sounds right, we cannot equate 5,000 files with 5,000 families going through food insecurity. Just because somebody is in the Support Enforcement system does not mean that there's a difficulty there. Yes, there's certainly a portion. But let's not think that because you are privy to a child support order that there's a financial difficulty there. There means there was an issue between the families and the children and there's support that has to be paid.

The second thing I would say – and I have to point this out, because any time I get a chance I think they need to be recognized. Newfoundland and Labrador Support Enforcement actually ranks in the top of the country in terms of return on files every single year. I want to give that shout-out to them. Not that I take away from the fact that this individual is not receiving the money

they should. I don't believe that an increase in Support Enforcement workers would actually change that, because in some cases it is extremely difficult, when we get down to it. The issue is the payer. The issue is the person that is not paying. In many cases, they choose not to pay and do not want to pay and hide away from paying. We have seen that.

The only thing I would say – and I think this leads to a really good public policy debate and conversation, because we all agree that any person who's the recipient – this money's for the child, this money is for their needs and they should not be denied that. But I would say that we have to be careful when we say that the public should pay, because that's what it would be. If government paid and the public paid up in advance, then we would be left in the same situation as looking to these individuals who should be paying the money.

Either way, I think it is a great conversation. I take great interest in it as having done that role and hopefully we can have more conversations on it because we all want the same thing for these individuals who should be getting their money for their kids.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This petition is for improved inclusion for Northern Labrador communities to participate in Newfoundland and Labrador incentive rebate programs.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure that residents of the Northern Labrador communities be given due consideration when the provincial government develops or develops in

collaboration with others – such as the federal government – incentive programs such as the Oil to Electric Incentive Program and, in the past, residential rebate programs such as the Residential Construction Rebate Program.

The Oil to Electric Incentive Program eligibility criteria is for all households in the province that are heated with fuel oil, excluding households in communities with diesel electricity generation. This single criteria excludes all six communities in the District of Torngat Mountains.

With the extremely high price charged to Northern Labrador residents for home heating fuel and gasoline compared to most other regions in our province, residents are forced to try to switch to the more equally extreme, high-priced electric heat for our homes.

Northern Labradorians are desperate to find a reliable home heating source. The Oil to Electric Incentive Program would help those trying to switch to the more reliable electric heat.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that when developing provincial incentive-rebate programs, they make every effort to ensure that the northern residents in the District of Torngat Mountains not be excluded due to factors such as their geographic isolation and a lack of infrastructure, et cetera.

Speaker, the problem is we're excluded and the excuse given is, because of carbon emissions, we are on a diesel-generating plant, a power plant. But, in actual fact, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change just got up in the House and touted the oil to electric incentive rebate.

He said it's up to \$17,000 per home. He said that would cover the entire cost to do

the transition for an entire household. We have people in Northern Labrador who are burning up to \$2,000 worth of stove oil if they want to heat their homes, if they want to keep their children warm, if they want to make sure the Elders are not cold.

In Northern Labrador last year, people were burning what we call four to five drums of oil and that's \$2,399. I used to talk about electricity being expensive, 19 cents a kilowatt hour, but in actual fact that's cheap now compared to the cost of oil. Speaker, people need to be able to heat their homes.

I just heard the Member for Bonavista talk about –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

Orders of the Day.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise, pursuant to Standing Order 36, to ask leave to move the adjournment of the House for the purpose of discussing a matter of urgent public importance. I move that the Orders of the Day not be called but that the business of the House be adjourned so that Members can declare a housing emergency, a crisis for which the people of this province cannot wait a day longer for their elected Members to debate.

Speaker, this housing crisis is not a recent phenomenon, even though the Liberal government likes to lay much of the blame for it on the after effects of the COVID pandemic. Repeated announcements over their past eight years in power certainly undermine that argument, and I provide just a few examples.

The need for a provincial housing strategy was identified in the Liberal red book during the election campaign in 2015, in which they

first came to power. In 2017, the Throne Speech identified “safe, stable and affordable housing is fundamental to the social and economic well-being of individuals, families and communities.” It further stated that their government was “committed to the development of a comprehensive provincial housing plan ... paying particular attention to housing needs and support for the most vulnerable and those with distinct needs.”

But nothing really has changed; instead, we have seen the wait-lists for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing balloon under this government. Just from June '21 to March of this year, the wait-list grew by 57 per cent. We have seen chronic homelessness explode in the capital city alone. End Homelessness St. John's reported a nearly 80 per cent increase in those facing chronic homelessness between July 2022 and July of this year.

Yet, this is not a St. John's issue, a Labrador issue or a Bonavista issue. Sadly, we hear stories from every corner of this province about people not being able to afford shelter, of skyrocketing rents, of people forced into shelters or sleeping rough.

I lay out this information because, although this matter is urgent, it has not received the attention it deserves from us, the elected representatives of this province. Nor do I see any further opportunity to debate this matter coming up in the legislation we expect to see in this sitting. We cannot wait a day longer to debate this crisis and for government to come up with effective solutions.

Winter is coming. Yesterday, Labrador West had its first snowfall. I remind you that we have a tent city, which is in the process of being demolished, across the street from the Confederation Building. The driving wet rain, the wind and the cold make conditions intolerable. People living there were facing hyperthermia. They cannot wait.

I assure you that across this province there are many more either living outdoors in the rough or, given the housing crisis, at grave risk of being forced to do so. The only difference between those at the tent city and others at dire risk is that the residents of the tent city made sure to be seen. They cannot wait.

Seniors, those on low or fixed incomes and many other groups are being squeezed by the lack of housing and its rising cost. Many of them face steep rent increases, they cannot afford or the threat of renoviction, which does exist, in which the landlord will make alterations to the unit and then charge rents that the previous tenants and so many of those in similar situations won't be able to afford. They're wondering how they are going to pay for this rent this winter. Many of them will be forced to make very painful choices rent or heating, rent or food, rent or medications. They cannot wait.

Speaker, we are facing a human catastrophe and I fear that without action many people are going to face enormous suffering this winter, the likes of which we have not seen in living memory. We cannot wait a day longer to have this debate, while people suffer through no fault of their own. This House must take this opportunity to discuss and propose effective solutions for the constituents we serve.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I stand in full support of this motion. I think that if we are serious about making people healthier and we believe in better health outcomes, then addressing the social determinants of health are the first thing we should be talking about. Housing and having a roof over your head is one of those important steps.

There is an urgent need to do this. We've been waiting for eight years for a housing strategy which hasn't come and now we find ourselves again in another crisis. Yesterday, the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador introduced a similar motion for an urgent debate on the cost of living, which was turned down, but I also understand from the House of Assembly that if there's unanimous consent of the House, that the Speaker does not have the rule about the particular motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: The Liberal government on the opposite side, that represent a significant number of people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, have an opportunity to really show that you care about this crisis, that you care about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and that you're prepared to put aside the other pieces of legislation right now to have this emergency debate, to allow us, all of us, all 40 of us sitting here in the House of Assembly, to chat, discuss and debate.

This is such an important issue. It's not just about the people who are in tents across the street; they're representative of people all over the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, in Labrador, itself, on the West Coast, in Central, on the Avalon Peninsula, everywhere.

So again, the Liberal government didn't go with the unanimous vote in the House yesterday to support that motion, but I would hope they'd rethink that. I would hope they'd take the second opportunity that's presented to them today, a second opportunity to let the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know that they're prepared to stand here in the House of Assembly, to stay here in the House of Assembly, and to debate such a pressing, urgent issue.

We've heard the stats; we've heard the increases in the number of homeless.

We've heard the increase in the number of people looking for houses. This is not about blame. This is about finding solutions for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. If we're truly going to be the House of Assembly that represents the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, then let us not make this about politics; let us make this about people. Because that's what we're here to serve.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: And I would hope that when I sit down, that somebody from the opposite side, from the Liberal government, will stand up and give us unanimous approval of this House of Assembly to allow this motion to continue and allow this debate to happen.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Good to see that we're allowed to have a little discussion on this. This is so important. I know it was brought up yesterday and it was denied because you don't think it's an emergency. This is so important to the people – the vulnerable people who need this housing. I also looked at the legislation that's going to come forth in the next four or five weeks and housing will not be addressed. It won't be addressed.

I heard the minister here today talking about all that they did, all that they're going to do, and there's more that could be done in the short term. If we don't get an opportunity, through this emergency debate, to help out the most vulnerable, there are going to be people living on the streets during this winter with no house to go to. Trying to live on the streets.

Is that what we've come to? Is that where we're at now? And where we can have an emergency debate, where every Member in this House – every Member in this House – can offer solutions and put them on the table, and let's work together like we should.

If we can't work with the Liberals, or the Liberals work with the PCs or NDP, or the two independents, we're almost become like the US; we can't be talking to each other. That's not the way it works. That's not how 40 of us here in this Legislature should operate. People elected us here to work together and provide solutions for the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. What better way to provide solutions to the most vulnerable than to have a debate in the House of Assembly where we give positive solutions?

I gave the minister some good solutions to how to help out the housing crisis in Corner Brook. I haven't got a response. I wrote you. I gave you the names of the places where you can go. I told you how many. I put it out there, I even offered you – I offered the minister to take him around and show him the units that are not open. I didn't go out and publicly criticize the minister. I wrote him, I'll bring you around.

That's how important this issue is to me, because I know the people who are on the streets. I know the people that slept in a tent this summer. I know them. I know of families who are separated because they're in a hotel and you can't bring kids into the hotel. I know them personally.

For this debate not to happen, for the Liberals just to say no, or you, Mr. Speaker, just to say – I know you're going to make your own ruling, but for not declaring this is an emergency, I can guarantee you you're not in touch with reality.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party, let's do it unanimously. We can all stand up here and say we agree with this. It's out of the

Speaker's hands for a ruling. We can unanimously make a decision here today.

This should be led by the minister to go back in his caucus and say, b'ys, let's have this debate, at least we'll give hope; we'll give some kind of hope to the less vulnerable. But if you think that this is not an emergency, Mr. Speaker; if the minister thinks that they're doing a good job and this here is not an emergency, that we don't need to go work on the health care crisis, I'll say to the minister, come out in Corner Brook and I'll show you personally the people who are suffering.

This is not about politics. This is not about us trying to beat on the Liberals. This is not about the PCs trying to get their day or the Leader of the Third Party who brought the motion forward. This is about helping out the less vulnerable. If we can't come together as 40 of us in this House of Assembly to help the less vulnerable, what have we come to – what have we come to?

I understand the debates in the House, the to and fro and the bantering, I understand all that. I've been there. I don't like heckling too much, but I've been there, Mr. Speaker. When I was in the Opposition also, when they were with government, we asked for emergency debates on a few things also. So the Liberals, when they were in Opposition because I was a part of them, we did ask for emergency debates.

This is not something new. When an emergency crisis comes up, we need to ask for that. I can assure you that at least we'll give hope, at least we'll give some concrete ideas; at least we'll say that we are working together, the 40 of us, to help a crisis that we all see. It's in the media every day. Just walk outside these steps and have a look. Go anywhere in the province, in Labrador; we hear it in Labrador about the emergency crisis in Labrador.

I know it's on the West Coast. I'm after writing the minister. I even wrote the former

minister last year. I didn't even bring it up in the House of Assembly, I wrote the former minister last year about the same thing that I'm trying to get done this year. I never raised it in the House. I didn't want to banter on the minister. I didn't want to try to embarrass the minister, I just wanted it done and it wasn't done.

So here we are another year and a half later and saying we're going to look at it, we're going to do something, when I gave options over a year and a half ago. The letters are on file.

This is not something I'm trying to beat up on the government. This is something that I'm saying we should debate because it is an emergency. It mightn't be for us here, we all have a house; 40 of us have a house to go back to. We all have a warm house, but the most vulnerable is where we should put our energies and here is a prime example.

I ask the minister who's responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to go into your caucus and say let's stand up and let's have this debate. Let's face it. Let's face it and let's have a robust debate because this is the way this Parliament is supposed to work. This is the way the Assembly is supposed to work, that we all work together for the betterment of the people. So I'm asking the minister, we should have it so you could have some positive ideas and then I'll say to the minister, let's all of us work together to find solutions.

I'm confident, and I know every Member in this House is, if the Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Third Party sat down with the minister and said okay, let's find a solution here. Let's get a plan and let's follow with it. I doubt if there'd be a question in this House of Assembly. Do you know why? Because there'll be solutions done, positive solutions, Mr. Speaker. But by putting your head in the sand saying everything is fine, everything is not fine.

I'm going to support the motion and I just ask that we have this robust debate so that we can move ahead to help people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, which we were elected to do, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I support this call for an emergency debate. The reality of it is this isn't just an emergency; it's a crisis. I won't have a whole lot to say about this, but I'm sure everyone in this House hears from people throughout the entire province. I've actually heard from people myself from the entire province.

We're here for a reason, we got elected to come in and look after the people who put us here. So, yesterday, when there was a bill put forward on the cost of living and it was turned down based on past precedent, I understand and respect that the Speaker had a duty to do that and I totally get it. But here's why we're here as legislators: We're here to create precedent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We're here because we're supposed to take responsibility for things and try and move things forward.

So as the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands just said, the one thing I will say is we have an opportunity here today to discuss an urgent and emergent crisis in this province that affects everyone. If you don't think it does, then go to someone who has spent a night in a tent who now has a flu, who takes up a bed in a hospital. Go to someone who is homeless, who has a mental health issue and they're trying to get help, who can't afford anything so they have to steal to get food.

We have a crisis here that this House of Assembly should address and we should do it today. Over the next five weeks there's no legislation or anything that addresses that. This is an urgent issue. So I implore the Minister of CSSD to go back to his caucus and to talk to people in his caucus and convince them to come out and not even give the Speaker an opportunity to rule on this. This should be a debate that happens here today and it's our responsibility to do it.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll be brief. I would just like to say that this is a great opportunity. This is an opportunity for a unanimous decision that we have this motion go forward that there is an emergency debate on this issue. This is a matter of urgent public importance. There's no question of that.

The hallmark, Mr. Speaker, of any democracy is that we have reasonable debate with each other in this hon. House of Assembly, but somewhere along the way it seems that we have lost that ability to listen to people, to listen to different perspectives, to consider ideas. It is up to all of us, the 40 of us who are elected here in this House of Assembly, to be part of the solution and this is a great opportunity. The people of our province are counting on us, Speaker.

I would say this; it has to start from the top. This tone has to be set by our Premier. He must lead and it's not leadership when the Premier discounts or ignores the perspectives of the people that have been elected in this hon. House. In fact, we are in danger of sowing and creating division and anger when the views and perspectives of the people that we represent are ignored.

There are people that are homeless just outside this building, Speaker, and many others are in danger of losing their place to live.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we all work together to come up with a solution. We need a cohesive, we need a comprehensive, we need a thoughtful and we need to collaborate – a collaboration-based and satisfactory solution to this. Yes, it is a complex issue but it needs a broader response and that's why we implore this government to join with us and unanimously sit down and work this out so that we can find a solution to this crisis. It demands an urgent response and we need to do that now.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm going to be brief but, as I did yesterday, I want to offer my support for this motion. I supported the motion by the Official Opposition yesterday, which was very similar.

I have to say that I absolutely respect your ruling, Speaker, but I was disappointed in it. I hope that today, as has been said, that my colleagues opposite, perhaps the Government House Leader or someone will stand up and say we give consent for the debate. That way, it takes it out of your hands; you don't have to make that ruling. You're not the bad guy or the fall guy, or whatever the case might be and we actually have that debate which is much needed.

As I indicated yesterday, there is so much that we need to talk about when it comes to this issue. It is not just tent city. Obviously that is top of mind because it is right there, it is in our face and it is visual. It is heart

wrenching in many ways to see but this is a much bigger issue, it is a much broader issue, it impacts people all throughout the province and it is not just about building housing units. As I said yesterday, we also have issues with people, for example, with complex needs. It is not simply good enough to simply stick them in a house and walk away. That is what has been happening in many cases. That is not suitable.

There are going to be people in our society that don't just need a roof over their head but they need supports. They need supports with daily living activities. They need supports to make sure that they're taking their medications that they may require, that they're getting them. There are those issues.

There are people with mental health and addictions issues. There are addiction programs and after they get out, they don't have a safe place to go to stay well; they're thrown into a shelter. Speaking of shelters, I have talked to people out here outside the Confederation Building and others who tell me about the shelter system. The concerns – there are people out in those tents that said I refuse to go to a shelter because I feel safer out here on the Prince Philip Parkway than I do in a shelter, because there are people actually being assaulted in these shelters. There are drugs in these shelters. People do not feel safe. That is an issue on to itself. It's all part of the bigger issue.

We have issues with slum landlords. As I said yesterday I went and I visited these houses down on Livingstone Street, Carter's Hill, so on with Mark Wilson and some other advocates down there. Looked at the conditions down there, deplorable. Slum landlords are an issue. We're dishing out millions of dollars in taxpayers' money putting people in unsafe housing. The rents that some of these people are getting; some of these landlords are getting, are just astronomical, \$2,000, \$3,000 a month for

somebody. Then the place is not fit and not safe to live in and there's nobody monitoring it.

That ties into the whole aspect of some of the people who are there are not receiving the supports because they have mental health issues, they have addictions issues and so on, and there's nobody there to make sure that they're on their medications and they're regulated and all those types of things which people need. Simply shoving someone into a shelter or into a house of some kind or an apartment, walking away and saying we're done now, it doesn't work – it doesn't work.

So there are so many aspects to this. There are so many aspects to the housing issue. It is very complex. It's not black and white. It's not as simple as saying oh, we're going to put in \$3 million extra to get some more Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units repaired.

I'm glad you're doing it. I applaud you for doing it. It definitely needs to be done and it's all a help, but that alone is not going to deal with the issue. That is definitely not going to deal with the issue in totality. It's going to come close. There are more things that have to be done. There are many pieces to the puzzle.

These are the types of things that I believe the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want us discussing in here. That's what we're here for. If we're not here for that, what are we here for? Why were we elected if not to discuss the issues of importance to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador? We're only going to be here now for five weeks and one of those weeks is a constituency week. That's four weeks and it's not four full weeks, because we're only here for four days a week, so that's 16 days. I don't know if there's a stat holiday coming out of that or not; I think there might be.

AN HON. MEMBER: November 11.

P. LANE: November 11, now we're down to 13 days. Thirteen days in this Legislature – that's it for the whole fall. We were off the whole summer. We're here for 13 days, so I don't care we can stay here all night and debate. I mean it's not like we don't have time. We can extend –

AN HON. MEMBER: I wasn't off this summer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. LANE: No, I meant off from the Legislature, is what I was referring to. For anyone who's listening now, here's what's amazing. We're talking about housing, homeless people –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Stick with the discussion of this motion, please.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm here, I'm talking about housing, I'm talking about homeless, I'm talking about mental health issues, addictions, and no concern, nobody willing to stand up and say yeah, we're going to have a debate on this. All we get is someone shooting their face off from across the way, making snide remarks about whether I said I was working the summer.

Yes, we were all working. I'm working all the time, just like everybody else in this House who was elected.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: I mean in this Legislature, the people's House, that I was duly elected to be here. And whether you like what I've got to say or not means nothing to me. It's what the people who put me here; they want me to be a voice so I'm going to be one.

So I would just say, Mr. Speaker, I certainly hope, because this is a big issue and – there's nothing in it for me. I can't form the next government. It's not about making the government look bad. I'm not going to be the next government. I'm just one independent Member. After the next election, hopefully I'll still be one independent Member. Well, one of two, I hope.

AN HON. MEMBER: Or more.

P. LANE: Maybe there'll be more. But there's nothing in this for me, only trying to do what's right by the people who elected me and the people of the province, like we all should be here to do.

So I'll take my seat, I support the motion and I'm calling on the minister responsible, or the Government House Leader, please, stand up, give consent so we can have a debate.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This motion is about housing, and we know there's a housing crisis. One of the things that we hear is there's a crisis all across the country. It doesn't matter if we're talking about housing, access to health care. But at the end of the day, Speaker, a government that's elected to look after the province, the people in the province, has to ensure they're doing something for their province. Not just blaming it on, oh, it's across the country.

This motion is about access to housing; access to shelter; access to a home, an apartment. If we don't actually ensure that people have access to a safe place, that they can feel sheltered, warm, then we're not doing our jobs as MHAs.

Also, yesterday, there was a call for an emergency debate on the cost of living and that was ruled out of order. In actual fact, we shouldn't even have had to look at that. We should have welcomed it. We should have welcomed that debate on the cost of living.

The cost of living is related to housing. How can we actually look after our children if we don't have access to affordable housing? How can we look after our children and our seniors, our elders, if we don't have access to affordable housing, if we are choosing to pay the rent or to heat the house or to feed ourselves and our children?

If you don't have access to food, if you don't have access to a shelter, if you don't have access to a warm, comfortable, safe place to live, then you are in crisis. In actual fact, there are enough people in this province that are in crisis. The biggest problem most of the time when this falls on deaf ears, the reason is entitlement.

What world are you living in? I heckled across the House of Assembly just now, I said: What world are you living in? In actual fact, when we're looking at this motion, I ask the government: What world are you living in where you don't want to have a conversation with the people that are elected by the people to try to address the issues here: access to housing?

This is not something that is a comfort. This is not something that is a luxury item. When we look at it, it's not just affecting our elder's families, it's affecting everybody. It's affecting new immigrants that are coming here. They are in crisis. We welcome them to our country. I have to tell you, our party and I know the people in the Official Opposition, welcome immigrants to come and participate in job positions that are vacant, that we can't fill. We need to expand our population, I agree with that, but, at the end of the day, we can't welcome immigrants and then throw them out on the

street because there's no place for them to live.

When we look at our families, we encourage people to actually have families so that our population is not shrinking so that we can be a viable province, but, at the end of the day, are you going to bring a child into this world if you can't actually shelter them? Are you going to bring a child into this world if you can't actually keep them warm? Are you going to bring a child into this world if you can't actually feed them, let alone get them nutritional food?

I have to say to you, Speaker, I draw attention to this food basket. The province has this NL Nutritious Food Basket. In my district, for a family of four, we're paying \$1,868 to feed a family of four. In actual fact, I've been told, people have said to me: Lela, that's lies because to buy nutritious food for a family of four is more than \$1,868. Let me take you around this. Let me take you to the store and I'll guarantee you it's more than that. In actual fact, in my district, we're paying \$632 more a month than the average people in the province.

Looking at fuel to heat our homes. We can't access the Oil to Electric Rebate. We're excluded from that, but, in fact, we're paying the highest rates for electricity, 19 cents a kilowatt hour. In actual fact, when you look at the cost of heating your house, it's over \$2,000 in the coldest months, if you're burning stove oil. How can people afford that?

People in this province, how can you afford to pay over \$2,000 to heat your house? Do you know something? People in my district, most of them can't. So what that means is cold, cold houses, cold floors in the morning when your child gets up. How do you look your child in the face when your house is cold? How do you look your child in the face and not feel ashamed when you can't actually afford to feed them nutritious food?

I'm not talking about iPads. I'm not talking about computers. I'm not talking access to Starlink. I'm talking about the bare necessities. That's what this resolution is.

Also, I've got to say, the PC motion yesterday about the cost of living really is something that we should have had for them to bring forward. We want to discuss that. We want an emergency debate on the cost of living. That's what the PC party – a little foreshadowing there. In actual fact, over here on this side, we're trying to debate the issues.

I've got to tell you, I think sometimes entitlement gets in the way. We struggle a lot. I've got to tell you, I went to university and I talked about the cost of living. I was a university student, but, at the end of the day, I had access to rent. But I do remember taking a pan of oil and putting it in my refrigerator so it wouldn't spoil because some days all we had was peeling potatoes and making French fries.

I went through university a lot of times exposed to that. So when I see people who are homeless, I know about what it's like to feel hungry and I didn't call home to my parents to help me because a lot of the times I knew how they would feel. I've got to say, Speaker, when a parent can't provide safe shelter for their children it crushes them. It crushes them.

If you're dealing with any type of issues, we talk about mental health issues. The Member for Bonavista spoke about mental health issues. When a family is not getting the money that they're entitled to. Out there we're dealing with people who are now homeless and a lot of them are facing hardships, mental health issues, addictions, but by not helping them have a safe shelter that's warm, we are contributing to their addictions. We are contributing to their mental health issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: We are.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: So at the end of the day, I would like to debate this motion. I would like to give everybody here the opportunity to stand up and speak and talk about why access to affordable housing is important, not just for people who are entitled; not for people who are born who don't know what it's like to get out of the bed and feel that cold floor; not for people who never ever knew what it's like to be hungry without actually knowing that they'll be able to have something to eat. We have to speak up for the people who are struggling. We have to speak up and try and help the people now who are in crisis.

We bring forward motions. Yesterday, we talked about a crisis; we needed to debate a crisis. Today, we're bringing forward a motion and we're saying we have to debate a crisis. In actual fact, we are in crisis.

I tell you now, a minister should not be able to stand and say oh, that problem also exists elsewhere in this country. At the end of the day, a minister has to stand and speak and talk about what they're doing to solve the problem; therefore, we want to debate this motion, Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll be quick as well. This is not just a town problem. In Central Newfoundland, Grand Falls-Windsor, we have people sleeping on couches, sleeping in cars. We have people sleeping in tents as well. It's all over the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We need to call it like it is. We need to be honest with ourselves because perspective

is one of the greatest things I could ever imagine.

The perspective is everybody in here cares about it. There's no doubt about it, including the Liberals, everybody cares about it. But it doesn't become urgent because none of us have to sleep over there in a tent or in a shelter. That's why it's not urgent.

We need to be honest. That's why it's not urgent. That's why it's not urgent. We all get to go home to warm, safe houses tonight, so of course it's not urgent for us. But here's the catcher: This is not our House. This is the people's House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: We have the opportunity to show today that we can use this House for the people's purposes. That's Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, b'ys we have out on the lawn right now sleeping in the freezing rain. That's sad; it is. I know we all care. Let's show this province how urgent it actually is.

Right now we have a new minister for Housing. There's no doubt that he wants to learn and he wants to do the right thing. I have no doubt about that. What better venue to do it in right now for the rest of the afternoon with all 40 people who represent everybody across this province – 540,000 people – for us to all put in our input, our ideas, what we go through and what we watch the people who voted for us go through? The minister then can sit there, he can listen and he can take notes. He can have discussions with us afterwards.

This is an absolute awesome opportunity right now for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Let's not waste it.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I find this is a very important motion that we're trying to discuss here. When I was first elected I talked about one particular word that means a lot to me and I try to do on a daily basis, and that's the empathy. I think we all try our best to empathize with those we look after.

But I mean the definition of empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of others. You try and do your best. We were over this past weekend and we had a chat with the people over there in the tents. I can't really get a grasp of understanding what they're going through on a daily basis. I grew up tenting, going tenting for weeks on end. It was always knowing that you had food there and you had a place to go at the end of it. To be over there in a tent city – and that's only the tip of the iceberg. They're bringing awareness to it; they're bringing a visible awareness to it. There are so many more around there.

When we're talking to individuals over there – I spoke to a young mother. She was there admiring a little puppy that someone else had and she said she was trying to get a puppy for her daughter. I said: Where's your daughter? Well, she doesn't have her daughter. Twenty-month-old baby girl and I'm sure she's had some complex issues, but she doesn't have her daughter. Why would she when she doesn't even have a house or a roof over that child's head? Yet, she's still dreaming of getting a puppy for her daughter.

I spoke with another gentleman who has been in the legal system for many years and, in his own words, he is born again and he is doing fabulous. You know, he hugged a couple of our Members when we were over there. I spoke to a gentleman who has a job but that job does not provide him with enough income to put a roof over the heads of his family.

So these are real issues and I am sure we all here in the House understand that, to as much as we can. I can't imagine not having a roof over my head. I can't imagine not being able to keep your baby daughter because you don't have a roof over your head.

Then, on top of that, we talk about the Health Accord and the social determinants of health and we know that housing, income, food and mental health all play a big factor. So my point is – and I know we're not – don't just discard this tent city as a small protest of individuals who are not in hardship because that would be totally false. These individuals have, literally, nowhere to go – nowhere to go. Shelters may be good for some but it is not for others.

These people, in a province that we're all so proud to call our home, and we talk so much about our generosity and how we can take in individuals from war-torn countries and what we did for 9/11 to help people and we have our own across the street here, throughout the town and throughout the province. You know, the Member for Torngat Mountains spoke of Labrador. These issues are everywhere. We're trying to have a discussion in this House, truly, so that we could come up with some solutions that can ensure these individuals have a place to lay their head, be comfortable and feel secure. That's what we all want. I'm sure that's what we all want.

Announcing plans – plans are good, but plans have timelines and right now these people are on very short timelines – very short – and you really have to walk over there – and I know most have – and have those conversations. I'm trying my best to be as empathetic as I can with them. But I cannot imagine. The discussions we had over there, and I won't get into the details, but even a toilet over there – if you had chats with them on where do they go, it would be a real eye-opener for you, and where do you lay your head.

So I really do hope that we will all stand and agree with this motion going forward today. Because there are people out there who cannot afford any more delay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I was hoping I wouldn't have to get up here today and speak on this, but the people in my district elected me for a reason. That was to come in here and speak up. To let this go is not acceptable. We have to discuss it. We just have to discuss it.

We're all elected here to come in, as a group of 40. So we had some announcements come out yesterday, did we have any input into them? Or could we add something to help it? I think we definitely could. Maybe there are some solutions we can come up with, or something to help the solution. But we don't get to discuss it.

I'm elected here in my district, the same as you are in your district, and so 22 people are going to tell 40 people what to do. It just mind-boggles me. You get in here, so what's the sense of having an election, if you're not going to be able to get in and represent but you get in to speak, but no one's going to change anything and no one's going to listen. It's so frustrating – so frustrating.

The people want you to discuss it. You've got issues; you bring them forward. I've got a lady in my district that wants to move from Bay Bulls – she's in a dwelling there. She wants to move from Bay Bulls. She's got some mental health issues. Her daughter's calling me because it's costing her a fortune. She can't afford to drive back and forth to St. John's.

So she's calling me, two months ago, to try to get some housing. And now we're into

this crisis, and when she's calling, there are people on that list for years, trying to get housing, and now it's getting totally worse and we're not going to be able to sit down and see if we can add something to the solution to make it happen.

Just some of the discussions that we listened to – I listened in our caucus yesterday, people from Bonavista going to Clarenville to get methadone, there's people from Clarenville going to Bonavista to get methadone, and why can't they speak to each other so they can stay in their hometown and get it? That's the kind of stuff we need to discuss. That's the cost savings that we think we can help you with. But you don't want to listen to it or don't want to talk about it? We can't solve the problem if we don't have any discussion on it.

So I'm totally in support of this – totally. We can sit down and hopefully the Members can sit across – everybody's affected and we need to get down and have some discussion on this.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, I want to say this is a very important motion, it's a very timely motion and it is of urgency.

I'm lucky enough that I do come from a very affluent district; I'm not going to lie. We have the highest wages per capita in the province. I'm not going to lie; that's a fact. It's a mining town but I also have some of the most disproportionate when it comes from those with have, and those who do not have because of the cost of living and because of the thing – a 70-year-old house in Lab West right now goes for \$500,000. It's out of almost anyone's pricing range.

Right now any available apartment or anything like that is available right now – the minister did say there was no renovations. Well, it happens all the time in Labrador West.

They'll renovate an apartment, kick out the tenant and then bring in fly-in, fly-out contractors to live in that apartment. Then there's a family on the street so that someone who flies in and out of the district, who works in the mining industry, can have a place to stay for their two weeks on. That's happening constantly in my district. Then I have families come to me and going we've been on the wait-list for two years for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, and they watched a bunch of rundown units, rotting into the ground, wasn't even fixed for years, until I brought it up in this House in 2019. That was the first time I brought it up and I'm still asking about it since 2019, about these rundown units that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing owns.

The last time a public housing unit was built in Labrador West was 1975, and then 50 per cent of them were sold off in 1985. They weren't even 10 years old and the government sold them off. Now I don't even enough units. I have 37 people on a wait-list for a handful of units that are left that has to be renovated, and there's no plan to put another single unit in that area.

So I'm still trying to figure out these 750 units the Premier keeps talking about for my district, or for the province, I should say. I'd like to have 750 because I bet you I could sell every single one of those houses, if they built 700 houses in Lab West right now. Right now, I have nothing. There's nowhere for a person to go that can afford it. If you don't work in the mine, you can't afford a single thing in that town. It's so disproportionate right now and every time I bring it up, I feel like I'm talking at a wall because no one wants to take the time to actually deal with the issues up there.

We put in five proposals to the federal government under rapid housing to make affordable housing for seniors – five proposals. The federal government turned down all five of them. Most of those seniors now are actually having issues in the homes that they live in because they cannot be renovated to accommodate for their needs. Most of them cannot even afford to renovate it because the price of everything has gone through the roof.

So right now, I have winter coming. I have a person living in a laundry room in the building that she was evicted from. I have a person that was living up in emerg for a while because he had nowhere accessible to go because of health issues there. He was living in an RV and he was up in emerg. It took him two weeks to find a shelter and now, like I said, there's still nowhere accessible for him to live.

I have people that are living on couches. I have people living in garages. I have people living down in cabins that their friends let them stay in. Yet, I still have 37 applications on a wait-list for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and I can't even get an answer if they're going to increase the number of units because there are not 37 units in my region for them to live in.

So when we talk about urgency in the debate, we're only a few weeks away from winter here on the Island but winter is already started in Labrador West. We had our first snowfall in Lab West yesterday. So if you want to talk about urgency, the weather is urgency because if anybody, a single Newfoundlander or Labradorian is outside in this weather right now, that is urgent. That should be urgent right now. That is urgent.

That's the definition of urgent because no person in this province can survive outdoors in our climate. That is an absolute known fact. Every person in this province deserves shelter and they deserve it today but at this point in time we need to debate it today,

because guess what? We all see the calendar. We all know that right now it's October and we know next month is November and when November comes, that's when the sleet, the snow and the wet starts here on the Island and the heavy 40 belows start in Labrador West. So this is the definition of urgent.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I certainly would just like to say that I agree with the Leader of the Third Party for debate on the housing conditions. We are certainly in a crisis. As the Member for Grand Fall-Windsor - Buchans said, we hear it in Central Newfoundland all of the time. We are in a housing crunch in there, just the same as all across the province. If the ones across the way don't think we are and if they don't want to have a debate here, I think that's one chance they're losing to have a debate in this House of Assembly to try to fix the problem, bring everyone together and let's find some solutions to this because I hear it every day. I know they do as well.

I've had people last year sleeping in sheds. I've had people this year sleeping in cars, vans. I've had people couldn't find housing up in hotel rooms in Central Newfoundland. There are over 300 people on the waiting list in Central Newfoundland to try to get into the housing units and those units are there. Not all of them – there are not enough there, probably, for them all, but we can start one at a time. There are lots down in different communities that's not renovated, not used but they can certainly start there as a good place to start. If they're looking for suggestions right now, it's a good place to start in Central Newfoundland. Start renovating those units. Get people into

some housing so this winter they're not in the sheds, they're not sleeping in vans and they're not sleeping in cars. At least they have a roof over their head and somewhere to stay.

Now, when you're looking at other options in Central Newfoundland, in one term there's a Premier's office in Central Newfoundland that pays over \$750,000, probably over a million by now. They can certainly take that money, put it into housing units in Central Newfoundland, have warm people sleeping in the houses –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: – and not facilitating just friends of the government right now for making a Premier's office. There's no voice in it right now for those people in Central Newfoundland to find housing. That's another solution.

I think you have no choice only to debate this and bring it to the floor of the House of Assembly so we all get a chance to debate this. Hopefully I'll get a chance to speak further down the road.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to weigh in on this, too, because it's a provincial crisis. It's something that's facing everybody, every community. On the Burin Peninsula right now I have people – I just saw it yesterday; there is somebody that's camping out in the mall. There are people who are on different programs that need other wrap-around supports that are just not there. It's not a fulsome system. That's the reason why we want to debate it. We have ideas.

The minister is from the Burin Peninsula. He understands fully well what I'm talking

about. I've been working with him quite well since he's been elected. I've worked quite well with the former minister of CSSD and the two before that that I dealt with as the shadow Cabinet minister. The things that I bring forward are the same things over and over again.

I think we need to have this debate because we need to draw in some of the opinions of the other people in the province. I never got into politics thinking I had all the answers, but I had one thing about me that I knew. I have two ears and one mouth. I always listen twice as much as I speak. I'll tell you right now when I have something to say, I'll have my say because I'm here to represent those people.

I would implore the Liberal government on the other side to listen to the rest of the province and the people who elected us. We're not here to bombard you. We're here to come up and debate this so we can come up with some solutions of what's the best path forward to help our most vulnerable in our province, which are our children, our seniors and people living with disabilities. People who are disenfranchised are the people we want to talk about today. This is, as my colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor said, the people's House. Let their voice be heard in their House.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Just a few words. Watching today in Cape Bonavista is a lady by the name of Rita Durdle, 89 years young and a wonderful contributing family. She has a wonderful family. She stays in her house as late as she possibly can, she hosts her family at Christmastime and then she goes with her

daughter. She leaves her house in the wintertime.

But up the road from Rita Durdle is a lady by the name of Sandra Cooper. Sandra Cooper lives up the road from her and she receives, on income support, \$637 a month. She burns oil. The first time we had the Oil to Electric Incentive Program she couldn't avail of it because it didn't have the loan option part of it. I'm sure that we debated it in the House and maybe from the debate we had in the House it was changed the second time around – maybe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

AN HON. MEMBER: Debate works.

C. PARDY: This year she's availing of it. But do you know what? A lot of people are. Now we're trying to get the quote in for her and the guy that does the pricing and the invoicing is flat out. He's all over the Bonavista Peninsula trying to get the quote for her. It's going to take time and here we are in the middle of October, she's not going to see it before Christmas. I really don't think it's going to happen.

So the only thing I would say to you, there are suggestions that we would come up with in a debate, if we went ahead with it, that may make a difference to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians out there.

Case in point: In September, I went to a session at the College of the North Atlantic in Bonavista. It was on affordable housing. It was hosted by SaltWater Community Association Inc. and the Bonavista Peninsula Status of Women, which is not funded by the way, but anyway, those two groups. It was well attended and in there they were throwing out suggestions.

One of the suggestions that were mentioned in that forum was co-operative housing. That means you build affordable housing, the people that move in there will eventually get to own them, all profits and whatever

maintenance in those units stay within those units. They are not tenants. They are on a board of directors and they will look after the community of houses that they have. All money that would be associated with it, they pay only the amount to make sure that they look after their property and it is kept up well. I would say: good concept.

Myself and the Member for Terra Nova and the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology attended their provincial conference of Newfoundland co-operatives. All of three of us, when we spoke, agreed that there was a concept here through the co-operative movement that could pay dividends in rural Newfoundland. It could help. It was three of us. So there are options out there that I think we can pursue and we can look at that would certainly make a difference.

Today, in Question Period, the numbers came up. So we had last year the wait-list for housing was 1,930. It grew to 2,230 and now recently reported as 2,800. Those are significant numbers of people looking for houses. If it is increasing that rapidly. That is the data that would indicate that we're in a crisis.

The thing would be: What are you doing about it? Because the dollars that you said you've mentioned has not made a difference. What you've mentioned in the dollars has not made a difference.

The Minister of Finance will stand up and say \$500 million we put out there, and she is correct. She puts the money out there, but if that's not curbing the cost of living, why keep going back to that when you know that the cost of living and people are suffering out there?

The next question would be: What have you done for me lately?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: That's a good question. What do you have planned? That's what they want to hear in the House of Assembly. They want to hear: What are you going to do for us?

Sandra Cooper will not be able to stay in her house, she has no family; she is not going to be able to remain in her house. She is just up from Rita Durdle in Bonavista who has a family who supports her and she is very fortunate to have such.

People need a debate; they need solutions. I throw out co-operative housing as one; cost of living, we have got to get a handle on. All I would say to you, I strongly recommend that we have our debate in the House of Assembly. If one or two ideas come up that we can use: time well spent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I was going to say the beautiful District of –

J. WALL: I don't have a mic. Thank you.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: You're going to have to move to your proper seat.

J. WALL: I do. I do have to move back to my seat.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, and I apologize for the inconvenience here this afternoon.

As I take a quick look around, Speaker, I think I'm going to have the last few words

on this, this afternoon. I'll only take a couple, until we move on. I do support this, as we want this urgent debate.

Speaker, when you're looking at affordable housing, no doubt it's linked to the cost of living. A few short weeks ago, myself and my colleague from St. John's Centre attended a town hall at Memorial University. Unfortunately – and I say this with the utmost respect and sincerity – unfortunately, the person that was supposed to be there from the Liberal government did not attend. He had confirmed that he was going to attend, but did not. I say that sincerely and honestly that he was not there and it was unfortunate.

Speaker, the issue that we discussed at the university was housing. Of course, at that particular town hall it was housing for newcomers who find it very difficult to come to our province and find housing. So not only do we need to ensure that the access to housing is available to newcomers, we need to ensure that it's there for everybody: for students, as was mentioned earlier today; for young families with children, that was mentioned earlier today; for seniors who are moving out of their homes because they can't afford to live in them any longer. We need to ensure that housing is there.

Speaker, when you don't have a roof over your head, then that snowballs. There's a snowball effect there for sure. You don't have a roof over your head; you cannot afford to stay afloat with the cost of living on a day-to-day basis. Most times you don't have access to health care or a family doctor. All this goes hand in hand. So without a roof over your head where do they go? Where do the people go, Speaker? They come here. They come here to the 40 of us looking for answers.

So I do support this. People are asking for answers. They're asking for timelines. The people across the street are certainly hurting and struggling and they're asking for action.

I support this today, Speaker. I support a full, wholesome debate and I'm not going to lead it on any longer because everything has been said here.

I do support that, Speaker. I thank you for your time and, of course, for the government's attention.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: This House is going to recess to review the motion as per Standing Order 36.

This House do stand recessed.

Recess

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

Before ruling, I would like to acknowledge that the Member for St. John's Centre provided me with a copy of the motion, as required by Standing Order 36.

As I previously stated, this is a very serious issue, with serious implications for the people of our province. I recognize that and I've been very generous in allowing Members to share their thoughts before my ruling.

As Speaker, I must be guided by the Standing Orders and conventions of this House. As well, I am guided by rulings of previous Speakers who have consistently applied analysis based on urgency of debate rather than urgency of matter. The matter of urgency of debate has not been established. Therefore, I'm ruling that this matter not proceed under Standing Order 36.

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 15.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that under Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, October 17, 2023.

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.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act, Bill 47, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act, Bill 47, and the said bill be now a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act," carried. (Bill 47)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act. (Bill 47)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 47 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 7.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022, Bill 48, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022, Bill 48, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022," carried. (Bill 48)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022. (Bill 48)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: On tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 48 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 8.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the King's Printer, Bill 49, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act Respecting the King's Printer, Bill 49, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting the King's Printer," carried. (Bill 49)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting the King's Printer. (Bill 49)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: On tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 49 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 9.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Change of

Name Act, 2009, Bill 50, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Change of Name Act, 2009, Bill 50, and that said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Change of Name Act, 2009," carried. (Bill 50)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Change of Name Act, 2009. (Bill 50)

SPEAKER: This bill has been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: On tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 50 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 10.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act, 2008, Bill 51, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act, 2008, Bill 51, and that said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act, 2008," carried. (Bill 51)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Embalmers and Funeral Directors Act, 2008. (Bill 51)

SPEAKER: This bill has been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: On tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 51 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 11.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Buildings Accessibility Act, Bill 52, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Buildings Accessibility Act, Bill 52, and the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Buildings Accessibility Act," carried. (Bill 52)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Buildings Accessibility Act. (Bill 52)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow?

On motion, Bill 52 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper Motion 12.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts, Bill 53, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts, Bill 53, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts," carried. (Bill 53)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts. (Bill 53)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper Motion 13.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Towns and Local Service Districts, Bill 54, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Towns and Local Service Districts, Bill 54, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Towns and Local Service Districts," carried. (Bill 54)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Towns and Local Service Districts. (Bill 54)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 54 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper Motion 14.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, the City of Corner Brook Act, the City of Mount Pearl Act, the City of St. John's Act and the Municipalities Act, 1999, Bill 55, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, the City of Corner Brook Act, the City of Mount Pearl Act, the City of St. John's Act and the Municipalities Act, 1999, Bill 55, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a

bill, "An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, the City of Corner Brook Act, the City of Mount Pearl Act, the City of St. John's Act and the Municipalities Act, 1999," carried. (Bill 55)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, the City of Corner Brook Act, the City of Mount Pearl Act, the City of St. John's Act and the Municipalities Act, 1999. (Bill 55)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 55 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I have a short comment to make to the House regarding Bill 17.

Members will note that the Notice of Motion given on October 6, 2022, refers to the bill as the Aquaculture Act, 2022; however, the short title of Bill 17, as passed by this House in second reading yesterday, is the *Aquaculture Act, 2023*.

I am advised that this is correct and appropriate from a legislative drafting perspective. I would like to draw the House's attention to the adjustment required. I suggest we proceed to debate in Committee of the Whole and that any required adjustments to the record of the House be made.

SPEAKER: All Members clear on that?

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House to now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 17.

SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that I do know leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Warr): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 17, An Act Respecting the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province.

A bill, "An Act Respecting the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province." (Bill 17)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

I had the privilege, last September, of travelling down to Central to view the aquaculture industry in Central. I spent a week doing that and it was phenomenal. I went to Pilley's Island first, then we went to

Cottrell's Cove, then we went to the South Coast, Harbour Breton and St. Alban's. To make sure, Mr. Chair, I'm on topic, I drove those roads and not a pothole, but that's not relevant.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Not relevant and I do apologize to the House for that but there it is, it just came out.

CHAIR: Order, please!

I'll ask the Member to stay relevant.

C. PARDY: We support Bill 17 and we know that the aquaculture bill has to be updated. It has to be able to allow for new technologies to come in. It's probably past due but at least we have it right now for a striving industry. How many people employed in aquaculture? Generally, 700 people directly employed on the seafood farms. That's not including processing.

The Premier's Greene report has stated: multiply 1.9 for those jobs that would be outside aquaculture and that's the number you have. That would mean that we have, in addition to the 700, another 1,330 jobs – very significant.

While I wasn't here yesterday to speak to this, I did tune in to some of the commentary and some of the debate that occurred.

I reference an article from *The Cold Harvester*. This person is a scientist and I want to read just a couple of excerpts. He's a marine biologist, aquaculture scientist, educator, part-time seafood farmer, advisor and academic. He says aquaculture is healthy for the environment. That's contrary to some comments, it's healthy for the environment, and I probably touched on that a short time ago. He said most seafood farmers are environmentalist and conservationists using the best available science to apply their craft and produce

safe, healthy, responsible food. There it is representing the science world.

One thing that he also mentions is Canada's seafood farming sector generates \$2.1 billion in GDP; \$6 billion in economic activity; and about \$1 billion in wages. That's pretty impressive. We have a population in our world of about what, eight billion? In 2050, they're predicting 9.7 billion. The amount of food the world is going to need, protein, we're going to have to meet a higher demand. Aquaculture can do that and I think most of us would concur with that.

When we look at a fillet of salmon, we don't need to mention what the nutritional value would be, but if we're looking at a 125-gram piece of salmon for the meal plate, then here's what it provides for the consumer, for us: Omega-3, 114 per cent of your daily intake requirement – that's amazing – Vitamin D, 138 per cent of your daily intake; Vitamin B12, 256 per cent; Vitamin E, 66 per cent; and the list goes on. It's good stuff.

We talk about here in Newfoundland and Labrador, we're growing. We're still in our infancy but think of these numbers that I present to you – and the minister probably has the same numbers, but at least he doesn't have to repeat them now when he speaks and closes the debate.

The United States has about 20,000 kilometres of coastline and they produce 9.6 tons per kilometre. Norway has a little over 25,000 kilometres of coastline and they produce 52.5 metric tons per kilometre. That's pretty significant over the US, blows them out of the water. Canada, 80,000 kilometres of coastline, we produce 2.1 tons per kilometre.

So I'm saying, do we have room to grow this industry in Newfoundland and Labrador? We sure do. Norway, I think, was used yesterday. I think the minister referenced Norway yesterday in the debate,

somewhere along and he talked about Norway.

Well if we're looking at the wild fishery in the world, Norway is our beacon. Norway is one of the countries that we would look at to say, boy, we only produce a fraction of what Norway produces in the wild commercial fishery – just a fraction. Newfoundland and Labrador, well, our wild fishery is lacking on quota. We're waiting for it to rebuild. We know we have some bright lights but for overall our quotas are very low. That's our wild fishery. Our aquaculture is very low. If Norway is our beacon that we look at, they're off the charts with aquaculture, open pen, and their wild fishery is really one that we would aspire to have.

Seventy-one per cent of the Earth is covered by ocean. Nothing wrong with utilizing a section of it, and sections of it, in order to create protein for our society. We look at CO₂ and burning carbon dioxide, and that's important. Every Member in this House wants to reduce our carbon footprint. How we do it? We probably have a difference in degree or of concept of that.

According to Global Affairs Canada and some other reputable institutions, farmed salmon produces 6/10ths of a per cent of CO₂ per serving of edible protein, and other animals there that we use for protein ranges from 0.88 to 5.92 per cent and even up beyond that. So the carbon footprint for aquaculture is very low. It's very low.

The last piece of data: In 1990, someone mentioned yesterday that around the moratorium is where the aquaculture industry started, say around 1990. In 1990, Norway was producing 150,000 metric tons of product; Canada, 60,000. One hundred and fifty thousand, compared to 60,000.

In 2019, Norway is producing 1.5 million metric tons of aquaculture product. Canada, 190,000 metric tons. Big significant difference since 1990 in those numbers.

I want to mention in my closing, before we get to questions, it didn't come up yesterday about the part that Memorial University plays within the aquaculture industry. And I just want to give a shout out to the research aspect of Memorial University, who's been working with the aquaculture industry for quite some time. I would think we're probably gone back two decades. And in particular, it would be the Dr. Joe Brown Aquatic Research facility. The head of that, the facility and business manager, is a guy by the name of Danny Boyce. Now I can see everyone looking and say well, where is Danny from? Guess.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Bonavista?

C. PARDY: Bonavista. The Member for Ferryland wins the prize. He's from Bonavista.

Anyway, he's doing a great job with that. He is the one, along with the industry, who brought cleaner fish to the industry. The eggs were incubated down at the facility at MUN, grown, and they put it out in the pens with great success. Cooke industry now is going to utilize cleaner fish all over the world where they farm salmon, and it started down here at MUN in our province. That's something to celebrate and that's where we are.

One thing when we look at legislation, when we look at legislation in Norway, you have 100,000 fish per pen. These pens that are out now are almost impenetrable. Years ago, they weren't. Years ago, you could have mammals that could breach them. I don't think there's a very remote situation where they're going to be breached by some other marine life. Not going to happen.

I had asked when I was down there in St. Alban's: How many salmon are lost out into the wild? The comment was there are no significant escapes since 2016. That was the response. But they did lose one fish in 2022. I thought that was pretty remarkable.

You take the fish up from the pen and if they're showing you the pen, which I was there, and trying to hold them, it's wild. I can see one jumping out of your hands and going outside the pen, just having a feel for what the fish are.

The last thing I would say in the legislation, before we get to the questions, would be in Norway, they've got 100,000 fish per pen. They use cleaner fish. They add 10 per cent, which would be 10,000 cleaner fish, to the existing 100,000. They haven't had a problem with that for years.

Our regulation says you have to take 10,000 out; you drop down to 90,000; 10,000 product moved out for the 10,000 cleaner fish to go in. But here's Norway, been doing it for years and years and years, having 110,000 fish; 10,000 of which are cleaner fish in the pen.

I think I'm gone over time but at least I'll –

AN HON. MEMBER: Two minutes left.

C. PARDY: Two minutes? Was that 20 minutes?

AN HON. MEMBER: No 15.

C. PARDY: Fifteen.

Anyway, when it comes down to the regulations that we're going to look at, there are many things we're going to talk about when we do it. We talk in the legislation about stringent regulations. The question would be: How much more stringent are the regulations going to be? In the questions, we will talk about the sureties and the sureties are good. Sureties mean that you're going to have to make sure that we've got the money so that the sites can be cleaned up. That's the bottom line. How much are we going to have with the sureties that we're going to have these industries provide? I don't know. At least the minister might be able to share that as well.

We do not have any gear left over in Newfoundland and Labrador from abandoned aquaculture farms in the province. I think the last one was probably removed in my District of Trinity. If anybody drove to Trinity you'd see all the buoys, the mussels – that's long gone. So pleased with that.

The biosecurity plans: I would think they have great biosecurity plans ongoing now. What would the change be in the new legislation?

Sea lice: my understanding from the data I would witness with the use of the lumpfish, which is the cleaner fish, they feed on sea lice. My understanding from the industry and those people would be in the industry is that is not an issue. Sea lice wouldn't be an issue with the cleaner fish being used. We no longer use any kind of medicines to treat it.

I will end at that, Mr. Chair. Thank you for your time.

CHAIR: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I'll speak to this part again in regard to the notion of sustainability.

Some data here, this is from the Salmonid Council of Newfoundland and Labrador: production has declined significantly with regard to aquaculture, open sea pen aquaculture in salmon. In 2022, production dropped to 8,232 metric tons, down from 15,904 metric tons in 2021. The same thing happened in 2020 after the mass die-off in 2019. Every time the industry ramps up there's sea lice and ISA resulting in mortalities. This coming from the member of SCNL: If they had to pay for the

environmental damage to the marine environment, they would be bankrupt.

So any legislation that must come in, and if the legislation is truly about sustainability, then there's going to have to be something here to deal with everything from sea lice counts, as to what the protocols are dealing with it. It may be similar to what they have in Norway if it's a traffic light system, but the fact is that sea lice do present a significant threat.

Cleaner fish: the lumpfish will feed on sea lice for a certain period of time after which they do not, but they can also become infested with sea lice as well. But the fact is that's not an answer. We're raising more fish to clean other fish, which it doesn't necessarily happen in the wild but you can see what we're trying to do. Yes, this is a better alternative maybe than to therapeutants, but it's not the total answer by any stretch.

Again, I remind us, even with all of this technology, we still have one of the most productive wild salmon rivers in the province, Conne River, decimated.

No significant escapees: I don't know what that means because in the end we have to have some clear idea, not only of what exactly the numbers are, because if they're out competing with wild fish in the environment or interbreeding or whatever else depending, then it presents a significant threat. I have recommended and have asked why can't we do fin clipping here as a way of identifying those fish that are escapees.

I think here, for the most part, I'll go back to what I said yesterday, there is technology – and I think the Member for Bonavista was referencing this with regard to closed-containment systems. Now one closed-containment system is land based, totally land based, which could be argued that it's expensive to set up here – although other jurisdictions are doing it – we're not close to

markets. Well, if that's the case, we're not close to the market for anything because we're stuck out in the middle of the Atlantic, but we still find many ways to upsell our products and show the benefit.

But I think right now there are numerous closed-containment systems which actually minimize the use of feed, which is going to be a saving, which means also that the amount of waste from food is going to be minimized and then could be taken out so it doesn't float down to the ocean floor; it is able to control temperatures so the fish are shielded from super chill and extremely high temperatures; since the water is taken in from below the depths which sea lice live, it basically eliminates the whole sea lice problem or, for that matter, the need for cleaner fish altogether.

Also, when it comes down to ISA, infectious salmon anemia and piscine orthoreovirus, it's another way of containing those and reducing mortalities, not only with fish in the wild, but also fish in production. Maybe then even the need as to what type of chemical treatments or otherwise that we need to do, the donuts are also self-contained. You can probably raise fish from smolt up to a market size without too much handling after that. There is that option, but it is a viable alternative to the open sea pen aquaculture that we're seeing.

They're here in Newfoundland and Labrador because we've sold our natural resources cheaply because over in Norway, Mother Norway, the licensing fees are significant and the regulations are significant in order to protect the environment. Well, hopefully, this Aquaculture Act is going to take care of some of that. There are some questions I have on it.

I'll say this with regard to the donut, the technology, the blue donut is that there's a win-win. One of the MHAs from the Official Opposition talked about the processing of fish so we're not just simply shipping them out head on, gutted; it's more processing for

that, more jobs should stay here. But the advantage is, if we look at a blue donut technology and start investing in that, well there is an opportunity here for an industry that's about producing these, designing these blue donuts from construction.

I'm thinking that could replace open sea pen aquaculture, but the production facilities here, the amount of specific training, skilled trades that would be needed would be fantastic. And then there's an opportunity to even maybe become a supplier. But there is an opportunity not only for the aquaculture itself, which doesn't employ as much as the wild fishery, but here is an opportunity where we can actually increase production and attract skilled tradespeople back here to the province and to grow another part of the industry.

That's my hope, that we can see an industry that builds on employment, that increases the skill set that we have, that protects wild salmon and that also makes sure that the farmed salmon that are being raised are raised in the most ideal conditions with the least mortality that we have so at least we're not going to see the 2.5 million die-off that we saw back in 2019.

Here's an opportunity, I think, where we can maybe actually render a lot of wording in the legislation almost obsolete or irrelevant, because if my reading of the closed-containment system is – it's the way to go. And as the Member for Bonavista said, the blue donut is impenetrable to sharks and to tuna. So it has all those advantages. I'll leave it at that, and – oh, one other thing, almost no escapees unless it runs aground somewhere.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Interesting comments from all sides, no doubt. I remember the last time I was in the chair of the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, I said to the Leader of the Third Party that he should come down, and visit – and the invitation is open again now, and I say that with all respect – to come down and sit with the companies, go out – I know the Member for Bonavista did that. Because I did visit Norway and had a chance to be in one of those donuts.

I'll just tell the Leader of the Third Party, that's still an evolving process I guess, if you would. I chatted to the people that were building it. It's evolving; they've got a lot of questions that need to be answered, wrinkles have to be ironed out. But they're not stopping, because the world has a need for the protein. They know that they're doing it in a very responsible, environmentally sustainable way. I saw that over there; not unlike what we're doing here.

The industry has faced challenges but I think – and I'll say to the Leader of the Third Party, I took a little bit of exception to you, yesterday, when you said this is a PR exercise. This is not a PR exercise. Out of respect for the staff, there has been a lot of work done with the staff and the industry over the last three or four years. I think, from their perspective, that stung a little bit as well because they put so much work into this.

The Member for Bonavista referenced people that are working in the industry. I met biologists down there, marine biologists who are big proponents in the industry. We have them here. Even locally, we have people that are on the rivers fishing salmon. They work in the industry but they want to see a balance as well because it does provide economic opportunities in my district and is reaching the whole province.

The Member for Bonavista talked about the numbers in Canada and we can do better. We can do better here. In terms of Norway, they implemented a 27, I believe, per cent

tax on the companies and it has destroyed the investment opportunities there. Where do they want to come? They want to come to North America. They want to come to Canada. They want to come to Newfoundland and Labrador and I welcome that opportunity.

Land based, it's still an evolving process, I think. I think the responsible thing for us to be doing is that we're open to that. The industry, right now, in Newfoundland and Labrador, is an open-cage process. I believe the companies have done a great job in terms of addressing a lot of the issues and the staff working with industry, which is important, and we take it very serious, in terms of growing fish in the wild.

I'm going to tell you, I visited open cages and I visited land based. I'm still a believer that the natural environment in the open water is the best place to grow the fish. Here in the province we have advanced because we're growing them bigger on land before we put them in the water and that's been an advancement. That's come from our staff working with the industry and trying to improve it.

It's an evolving industry, but I look forward to better numbers in terms of production levels over the next several years. I'm certainly proud to have it in my district because it employs people and they're good jobs. I think the Leader of the Third party might have talked about the type of jobs that are in the industry. This industry is moving towards – it's not just about filling up fish plants full of workers that will just split fish. This is focused. I saw people in Norway – and they're doing it here. You walk on two barges that are growing the fish. You walk and there are people that are controlling the stress of fish by computers. It's advanced. There are degrees that you can get in aquaculture, so the industry has so much potential.

I think anybody coming down in my part of the district or even on the Burin Peninsula

and other areas to see what the supply industry is all about, then they'll see that this is a good industry and the growers are being responsible with what they're doing. So I'll leave it at that and leave it open on the other side for questions. Hopefully I can answer them.

CHAIR: Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 5 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 5 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 5 carried.

CLERK: Clause 6.

CHAIR: Shall clause 6 carry?

The Chair is recognizing the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I move the following amendment. That clause 6 of the bill be amended as follows: Immediately after subsection 6(5), add 6(6): The records kept by the registrar under subsection 6(4) shall be open for inspection by members of the public during office

hours or digitally at all times. Seconded by the Member for Labrador West.

One of the questions we've asked here, or the concern not only in our party but other people who have interest in protecting wild salmon and making sure that the farmed salmon, their health as well, it's about transparency.

This here would allow for more public transparency about the status of the inspection –

CHAIR: Order, please!

Before we speak to the amendment – I know you're speaking to the amendment but before we do, we need to make sure that it's in order. So I'm going to recess the House to make sure that the amendment is in order.

Thank you.

This House stands in recess until we determine whether the amendment is in order.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready?

With regard to the amendment that was moved by the Member for St. John's Centre, the amendment is deemed to be in order.

The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

A large part of sustainability is indeed related to transparency and if anything else – and I take the minister at his word about the invitation. By the way, I did visit down that way, way back in 1998 when it was first starting and I do remember my trip out to the various salmon farms in its infancy and

only wishing that I had a fly rod with me at that time.

I do remember the measures in place. However one thing, I guess, the criticism over the years has been the lack of transparency. You think of the mortality event in 2019 and that shook the confidence of a lot of people who are concerned about the fate of our wild salmon stocks and other wild fish stocks. When I think, also, that there were court challenges against Grieg, successful ones, and Mowi, I think the Indian Head hatchery in Stephenville. So here is an opportunity to bring something in that maintains or enhances transparency.

The current outgoing act required that, “the registrar shall keep copies and records of aquaculture licences, leases of land granted for aquaculture purposes under the *Lands Act*, environmental preview reports and environmental impact statements prepared under the Part X of the *Environmental Protection Act* and other documents that the minister may direct or that may be prescribed.

“(3) The records kept by the registrar under subsection (2) shall be open for inspection by members of the public during office hours upon payment of a prescribed fee.”

The new act does not provide provision for public access to any of the documents required for a registration. There should be no fees for public access to information unless extreme effort is required to provide that information, as with ATIPPA. Access to information should be facilitated by all departments of government and not just regulated to ATIPPA requests. If there is no reasonable access to records, it should be limited to physical access at government offices.

Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture already keep record of all aquaculture licensees on their website. Currently there are 157 registered licences. Digital Government and Service NL keeps an online record of all

Institutional and Public Food Premises along with records of health inspection services. Currently there are almost 4,500 premises listed.

It should be a relatively easy feat to provide an online list of all licence holders along with the links to their individual registration documents. If there are issues with confidentiality or commercially sensitive data, Chair, that can be omitted from public access via the regulations as the current outgoing legislation does.

So basically, in its simplest form, it's stating that the records kept by the registrar under the subsection 6(4) shall be open for inspection by members of the public. Not with a fee or anything like that but there can be protections built in if it's commercially sensitive. I think this is a small amendment but it has significant value to all, whether they are in the industry or not, for transparency and for a healthy and a sustainable industry. That's what we're truly after.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further speakers to the amendment?

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

We weren't aware of the amendment, initially, but I just want to speak to it for a minute or two.

We are all for transparency and what we can post; I think we ought to post. I know that when we have commercial sensitivity that affects an industry or the public interest, there is an inherent danger in posting for public consumption. Someone takes it off and then they would put their own marker on it and their own narrative and sometimes

that could be a little damaging. That's where the commercial sensitivity.

I know that when the Leader of the Third Party spoke, he said we can put some mechanisms in place to guard against that. I would think as the Opposition, we're not going to be in favour of the amendment. I think for the reason right now, until it's framed out further. We are big on transparency but we won't be in favour of this amendment at this time.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Further speakers to the amendment?

Shall the amendment pass?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: The amendment has been defeated.

On motion, amendment defeated.

CHAIR: Shall clause 6 carry?

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: (Inaudible.)

CHAIR: I'm sorry?

P. LANE: Clause 6 but not the amendment? Something else in clause 6.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Chair.

I'm just wondering, Minister, in reading section 6 of this, I think, kind of goes down into, I believe, 7 and 8 as well, but I know we're talking about 6 here. You look at 6(1) it says: "The minister may designate a person in the department to be Registrar of Aquaculture who shall exercise powers" and then it talks about the different things under the powers. But it doesn't seem to make sense to me that we're saying you may appoint someone but then after you may appoint or may not appoint someone, then you're going to have these things that this person who may or may not be appointed would do.

I know we've had amendments in this House of Assembly brought forth by the government in the past, where somebody put in a "may" where they should have put in a "shall" or vice versa and it caused problems, we ended up coming back and amending legislation.

So I'm just wondering is this an oversight or can you explain, given the fact that we're saying that there is going to be this registry and all the things under subsection (2), (3), (4) and (5), then why would we even have this here if it's not even established under section 6(1) that you shall even have a registrar to begin with? It's saying you may. If you may that means you may not and if you're not, then what are you going to do in the absence of that?

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: I'm sorry, but I'm not sure I'm getting your question clearly in terms of the "may" part, because you referenced certain section of section 6(1), (2), (3), (4) but can you just clarify that please?

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Maybe I wasn't 100 per cent clear; I'll try again.

Section 6(1), it doesn't say the minister shall designate a person in the department to be the registrar or aquaculture; it says: "The minister may designate someone in the department to be the Registrar of Aquaculture who shall exercise the powers and perform the duties imposed on the registrar under this Act and the regulations."

It's saying there that there's a registrar of aquaculture who's going to have powers and perform duties under the act. Then under subsection (2) it talks about: "The registrar may access any database or information" Subsection (3): "The registrar may collect from and disclose to the department the information, including personal information prescribed in the regulations" Subsection (4): "The registrar shall establish and maintain a registry" and all documents to be filed under this act.

It's clearly giving duties to a registrar, but if you look at 6(1) it's not clear that there is even going to be a registrar, because it doesn't say the minister shall designate a person; it says the minister may designate a person. If he may that means he also may not, and if he doesn't then everything else is a moot point, I suppose. I'm just wondering if that's an oversight that that "may" is supposed to be a "shall," so we can correct it now. Or is there some reason why it's a "may" and not a "shall"? Do you understand what I'm saying now?

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: Yeah, I hope I do, I say to the Member opposite. But the minister is the registrar, he or she, whoever the minister is, and has the discretion to appoint someone else if he or she deems necessary. But the registrar is the minister.

I don't know if that answers your question.

P. LANE: Okay.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Minister.

Is there anywhere in the legislation that clearly says that the minister is the registrar? Because there's no way in a million years reading at least this section that one would think, be led to believe, the minister is the registrar. I mean, if you are, fair enough, but it doesn't say the minister is the registrar.

So I'm just wondering, it might be a small thing, but I know there's been things come through this House in the past where a shall should have been a may or a may should have been a shall or whatever; something wasn't quite clear and then someone came back after the fact to make amendments. So I'm just wondering if that's just an oversight in the way it was written, if it's a mistake or not. That's all.

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

E. LOVELESS: Yeah, I'm not minimizing the importance of it, even though it was viewed as small, but it's a question of concern.

I know on page 8, I don't know if this can help because it says under (hh): "registrar' means the person appointed as the registrar under section 6." That's on page 8, the middle of the page. So it's not an oversight, I say to the Member opposite. So, again, I can just repeat that the minister is the registrar and can appoint someone if he or she deems it necessary.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Minister, thanks for pointing that out but if we're looking at definitions under (hh), it says here "registrar' means the person appointed as the registrar" You're the one doing the appointments so I

don't see how we can conclude that you would appoint yourself. That clearly infers to me that the minister is going to appoint somebody. That's also what section 6 really infers, is that you are appointing someone, it's just that it doesn't say you shall, it just says you may.

That's where I'm wondering if that may in section 6(1), if that third word where it says the minister may, if that should really be a shall? That's what I'm suggesting.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: Yeah, I see your point. I guess what you're asking for is clear language to say that the minister is the registrar?

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: No, Minister, what I'm suggesting is that where 6(1) says the minister may designate a person, I'm wondering if the intent really is the minister shall appoint a person, not may. That you shall do it, not that you may do it.

The intent seems to be that someone is going to be appointed by you but it says you may do it. I think really it should say you shall do it. I'm saying a friendly amendment of changing may to shall may be in order. Maybe it's not. I'm pointing it out because we're in debate, this is the time to do it.

Like I said, I've seen things come before this House in the past where we've made changes around may and shalls. So that's why I'm pointing it out.

CHAIR: The Chair is recognizing the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: Not to belabour it, but my response is the same, is that the minister who is the registrar may or may not

designate someone, a person, as the registrar.

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

J. DINN: Thank you.

Are we on 6?

CHAIR: We are on 6.

J. DINN: Thank you.

So I just want to do a comparison between 6 – this replaces the section 9 in the old act. In the old act, Registrar says: "The minister may designate a person in the department to be Registrar of Aquaculture." It talks about, in section 2, it shall keep copies and records of aquaculture licences, leases and land, but here is where the difference is, between the old 9 and the current 6 and what's troubling, I guess. It says here: "The records kept by the registrar under subsection (2) shall be open for inspection by members of the public during office hours upon payment of a prescribed fee." That's in section 9 on Registrar in the old act. "Notwithstanding subsection (3), information prescribed as confidential shall not be available to the public." In (5) "The registrar may carry out a function or perform a duty delegated to him or her under an Act or regulation of Canada."

So here's my question. Why was (3), with regards to the inspection then, removed? The House voted it down. It's a significant change from the old act. It seems that the intention of the new section on Registrar is, basically, to counteract or negate any transparency.

I'm trying to get an idea of the rationale for removing a clause that specifically allowed for public inspection by members of the public during office hours and is now no longer in the act, even though it does say in (4) it allows for information that's prescribed as confidential to be available.

So I'm just trying to get an understanding of the rationale why you and/or your department officials decided that was important to remove something that was about transparency.

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

E. LOVELESS: To the Member's point and even to his amendment, what he proposed under his amendment now is available under ATIPP. So that exact information that you were requesting is now under a process called ATIPP or ATIPPA.

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

J. DINN: We know how ATIPP works. It's just one more process that we have to go through as opposed to clicking online and looking at the information. I understand it's on ATIPP but it's putting one more barrier, one more step in the way from any member in the public.

It's one thing for a political office staff to go through this process and someone who has the effort, but I will tell you that for anyone out there, it's making it that bit more difficult, hiding information behind one more step; whereas, the simplest thing to do, which is what was in 9, is just simply that it's available for inspection.

You wouldn't need to do an ATIPP, which I would assume also is going to tie up people either who are doing the ATIPP or the people who have got to decide if the ATIPP is valid or if there needs to be an appeal.

So I'm just thinking here, we heard a minister talk about red tape, well this is basically more red tape for people in the public who want to find out information. And if that's the rationale, we got ATIPP.

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

E. LOVELESS: I think what's important, too, to make note of here is that there are commercial sensitivities as well around this request that the Member opposite – so I want to put that on the table here.

I don't know if I have anymore to say about that, at this point.

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

J. DINN: I understand the whole notion around commercial sensitivity, which I am assuming – subsection (4) it says here: "Notwithstanding subsection (3), information prescribed as confidential shall not be available to the public." So I'm assuming here that confidential would cover commercial sensitivity. So in the old act, under 9, there was a balance between transparency and confidentiality and commercial sensitivity.

Now what seems to be done is that all such information that's collected – and if I look at the list here that was identified in section 9 – I'll just read that to you – it covered such things as aquaculture licences, leases of land granted for aquaculture purposes, the environmental review reports, environmental impact statements prepared under – and these are key documents that would have to do with – we talk about sustainability, but it seems that all these documents, then, with the environmental review and everything else are now not going to be available to the public unless they take it upon themselves to go through the expense and the time and whatever else to do an ATIPP request.

My point is that basically what this act now then is, it makes it less transparent and probably favours the aquaculture industry to do what they want without having to worry about reporting to the public, which is why it mystifies me that the House voted against a clause that was already in the act.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Shall clause 6 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 6 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 7 through 71 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 7 through 71 inclusive carry?

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Just wondering, Minister, the consultations on these changes. Probably before I go to that, the 24-hour reporting, I was always a little concerned with that on the commercial sensitivity. When something was stated to be public, without really knowing what the details or what the information would be, if it's released to the public, it has an impact on the industry. That is usually what I look at as a site for commercial sensitivity, the release of information. Because to release information without a background or without the details and the intricate details affecting the product or the public interests is dangerous.

I'm big on transparency and we all value transparency, but you need to make sure that what you're reporting is full fleshed out for the public with the background on it.

Three things when I was down on the site. I know one thing they looked at was the oxygen, the temperature and the salinity; those were the big numbers that they looked at. If there were no sea lice and no infections, I'm not sure what else, what other pieces of data that we would have. Everything has to be reported. Any abnormality has to be reported to the department. True?

So, again, I don't know what exactly would fall under this that we may be concerned with, that we haven't already mentioned. I just throw that out. I'm not sure and maybe the Leader of the Third Party may have something that he would throw out as an example.

I'm assuming like the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the aquaculture operators, fish harvesters, recreational fishers, would they have been consulted in some form with this new act.

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

E. LOVELESS: I'll ask him to repeat, who did you ask were consulted or not?

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Department of Fisheries and Oceans, aquaculture operators, fish harvesters, recreational fishers.

E. LOVELESS: Yes.

C. PARDY: Okay.

E. LOVELESS: But in terms of the public reporting, we all know that the industry faced challenges back in 2018 with the die-off. Since that time, I mean the consultation piece, because the consultation I believe happens daily with the department and the industry and it's come a long way. Because these companies want to be open and transparent, absolutely. They've come a long way from public reporting when there are die-offs and escapes. There's a responsibility there as well between FFA and DFO. They play a role as well.

All I can say to that is the industry took it serious, the former minister who was here at the time, he's here on the floor now, took it serious and they worked together to make it more transparent. I think where we are today – and companies have come a long

way in terms of reporting these requirements, I guess, if you would, to ensure that the public trust is there. I believe the public trust has come a long way in terms of the industry and what's being reported.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: We don't have the regulations, of course, and we don't know, but when you look at the sea cage inspection, I think they're weekly now, are they not? I'm not sure what your opinion is as to whether that would be suffice or would you want more frequently cage inspections than weekly?

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

E. LOVELESS: Yeah, I'm trying to find where the inspections are done on a weekly basis. Bear with me for a second.

So if I just read here, I think it would be valuable information in terms of inspections: Fish inspectors perform Code of Containment and site marking inspections on all salmonid sites and site marking inspections on all shellfish sites. The site marking inspections are completed once a year with a re-inspection if required.

Inspectors are looking for issues of non-compliance with the Aquaculture Act and regulations, licence conditions and the Transport Canada approval documents. The issues would include shore fastened moorings, lack of corner marking, labelling of buoys and site perimeter not marked as required.

I think some of that information is important. Also codes of containment inspections for the sites are completed twice a year: once in the spring and once in the fall. Like the site marking inspection, a Code of Containment regarding inspections is completed if issues are found.

During the inspections the inspectors check for the following: a net identifier – I'm reading this off because a lot of work has been done and this is required – which is used to get the net testing information; holes in the nets; ensure the net is properly attached; any damage to the cage grid system; company name in yellow reflective tape on the cages.

I hope that provides some information as to what you were referencing in terms of there has been a lot of work done in terms of inspections and stuff.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: I just wondered about increasing the frequency of those inspections. Whether that's an intention of the department?

E. LOVELESS: Yes.

C. PARDY: When I was down with Cooke Aquaculture last September when we went down to the cage, probably the one that's furthest offshore, there were inspectors there then inspecting the fish. I guess they were obviously collecting data at that time with that pen, what that would be. I'm not sure what the frequency of those would be, because you had mentioned the containment was twice a year. When these people are doing the inspection on the fish, what's the frequency of those inspections?

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

E. LOVELESS: Also by the companies; they do sea cage dive inspections, and they're done weekly as well. To go to the Member for Exploits, a lot of those inspectors are ones that are in both districts, in Grand Falls. The offices are located right there. It's employment of families that live in that area.

Just to go to that point of the sea, talk about the other side of the industry that brings benefits to towns.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: When I was in Cottrell's Cove and they had the oyster aquaculture, there it was discussed about the Crown lands that were all around that body of water. That the Crown lands, that conceivably a cabin could be built on which may affect the quality of the water that the aquaculture farm would be in.

The comment I had made at that time was that surely, goodness, this would be a hold on the Crown lands, that nobody would be able to build a cabin around that farm. Would I have been correct in that?

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

E. LOVELESS: Yeah, there's quite the assessment process that goes on when sites are set up, and you are right there. I'm the minister responsible for Crown lands, so I've had a discussion, even at the recent NAIA conference with mussel growers, and certainly in my district as well, around those issues and certainly helping those companies with those issues around the Crown lands issue.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: My final question, Minister.

When I was down in Pilley's Island, they talked about the Transport Canada regulations for the barge operation. So we went on the barge and we went out to the mussels, which was probably no further than 500 metres, or less, and that barge would have the same regulation of any barge transporting the public. So the regulations, you can only imagine.

This barge was totally different, and at that point in time they were concerned about the regulations of the barge and what they would cost, and what they would have to do, knowing that full well they weren't carrying the public on it. It wasn't a passenger barge or ferry, but still they were in the same classification as such.

I'm not sure if you had any communication on that?

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

E. LOVELESS: I think I alluded to it in my notes before. We work with Transport Canada on many levels, whether it's the barges and certainly with DFO as well. While I don't have a breakdown, I can tell you we deal with specifically with Transport Canada, but there is a relationship requirement to work with Transport Canada; not just on the barges, but other requirements within the industry of setting cages up, feeding, the barges, how they're connected, and the whole scheme of things. So there's extensive partnership there with Transport Canada.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

So with regard to the various inspections and that, that the Member for Bonavista just referenced, where would I be able to access these reports and the inspections and so on and so forth, right now?

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

E. LOVELESS: My understanding is that should be available online but I will confirm that for the Member opposite.

Before I go any further, the barges are covered by Transport Canada, so I want to make that clear. But, you know, the industry

works in conjunction with them as well and so does the department.

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

J. DINN: And am I correct, then, in assuming that now with no requirement to provide public access there is really no guarantee, in the end, that these records will be publicly available.

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

E. LOVELESS: I'll take that question under advisement and I'll see if I can get the answer for the Member.

J. DINN: Section 10.2, where it says, "Notwithstanding paragraph (1)(b), an applicant may not be required to submit the documents referred to in paragraph (1)(b) where the applicant holds an aquaculture licence in relation to another facility at the time of submitting an application under subsection (1) and has previously submitted the documents referred to in paragraph (1)(b)."

Section 10 then covers applications for aquaculture licences and there is no stated requirement for an environmental assessment under those regulations; just those regulations which we haven't seen and may or may not be established for the industry under this act. Which, if I look at it, the minister or the Cabinet can waive at any time.

Section 10 sets out the process for applying for an aquaculture licence for a facility. The current Aquaculture Act requires that applicants submit a separate application for each location or facility but the proposed act essentially means that once a company is issued a licence for one location, in accordance with the provisions of 10(1)(b), or if they have an existing licence for anywhere in the province, they can apply for and receive any number of licences for

different locations and facilities without any further review of government. You can correct me if I am wrong on that.

So any company currently active in the industry in Newfoundland and Labrador can go ahead, with a nudge and a wink, and set up shop anywhere they like and the Lieutenant-Governor in Council and the minister agree, these new facilities would not be considered new undertakings and would therefore not trigger a requirement for an environmental assessment, at least from my point of view.

So I would ask the minister to respond to that. If that's a fair assessment or if, indeed, each new project or expansion would require an environmental assessment, and I ask that because we saw the same approach taken with the Indian Head hatchery, where they tried to expand it without a proper environmental assessment.

I would ask the Premier to respond to that, please.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: I think he just called me the Premier.

I'll just say to the Member, I think he asked, earlier, about inspections. So inspections are not public. Again, I know you don't like what I'm going to say but it is accessed by ATIPPA.

I lost my train of thought in terms of your last question. I'm hearing you, listening to what you're saying is we're giving licences out. We can go anywhere. I mean, it's not that case. You're not going to come into the department – there's quite the extensive oversight, I guess, in terms of if someone applies for a site, we are not just say yeah, go right ahead. There are requirements.

I don't know if the minister can answer that question in terms of the environmental piece

because there are environmental requirements and stuff but our department certainly works with the department and the environmental assessment, as I said, is not under our legislation; it is under another department. We do work with the Department of Environment, obviously, on it. We will continue to do that.

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

J. DINN: So with Mowi, with regard to the expansion of the Indian Head hatchery, the argument they had – if I remember correctly – they didn't need to go through the full environmental assessment because this facility was already in existence. The court ruled otherwise. Actually, it was appealed and the court still ruled otherwise.

I guess here the concern is that whereas the current *Aquaculture Act* requires that applicants submit a separate application for each location, this act seems to remove that responsibility or that requirement and now it's basically if you've got it set up, you can just keep adding on to it without too much concern for having to go through a separate application.

That's the concern I have with this right here. The current act seems to provide a bit more protection for the environment and making sure that people do a proper environmental assessment.

Am I correct, though, that right now the current act will not require applicants to submit a separate application for each location or facility? Once a company has been issued a licence, basically, they can apply for and receive any number of licences for different locations. That's what I'm trying –

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

E. LOVELESS: So are you asking from an environmental perspective, because that's

then referred to the Department of Environment once –?

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

J. DINN: I'm referring to section 10 in old act, the current act, and it basically sets limits that an applicant must submit separate applications for each location or facility. The new act seems to say this is not environmental. It seems to suggest that basically once a company is issued a licence for one location, in accordance with provisions 10(1)(b), or that they have an existing licence anywhere in the province, they can apply for and receive any number of licences for different locations. So once they're in, they're in.

I'm just trying to get the feel if this new act – does this require companies to make a new application for each new location or facility?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I can confirm that a new application is required for every site.

J. DINN: On page 19, clause 31: Escape event. I'm assuming now that the escape events are reported or certain levels, but what is the plan for recapture?

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

E. LOVELESS: Just for clarification, you said 31 or 30(1)

J. DINN: Chair, 31: Escape event.

E. LOVELESS: Okay.

To his question about recapturing escapes – and this is something that we, I guess, have worked with industry and through the bumps in the road, if I could use that, that

we've arrived at this, this time with the act. Aquaculture companies are responsible to adhere to the Newfoundland and Labrador Salmonid Code of Containment. So a provincial and federal co-managed tool that sets out company responsibilities, should a fish escape occur.

That Code of Containment is entrenched in this new legislation. Recapture plans are a requirement under the Code of Containment which is also the condition of the licence. Finfish aquaculture licences are required to report escapes and have a recapture plan in place. Recapture licences are issued by the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

I'm not sure if that answers your question.

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

J. DINN: So in their report of escapes, are they required to report an estimate or a number of escapees and are they then also required to report the number of recaptures?

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

E. LOVELESS: I'll have to take that under advisement and get an answer to that very shortly.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

J. DINN: With regard to – on page 21 and I am going with the one I had last year – clause 36: Provincially reportable diseases.

It says here that: "The minister shall establish a list of diseases which are required to be reported to the chief aquaculture veterinarian."

So do we have that list right now?

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

E. LOVELESS: Sorry, Mr. Chair, I got ahead of myself there.

Those lists for federal and provincial reportable diseases are available online on the FFA website.

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

J. DINN: Under clause 38: Abnormal mortality event, I'm interested here in the die-off threshold as to what defines an abnormal versus a normal die-out event. It says here: "Where an abnormal mortality event occurs at a facility or at a location where cultured aquatic organisms are being held, the licensee shall (a) notify the department ... (b) comply with the requirements prescribed by the regulations."

So what would constitute, in an open sea pen aquaculture facility, what would qualify as an abnormal mortality event? Is it 10 per cent, 20 per cent? Is it 50, 100 or 10,000 fish? What would be the threshold for that?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hopefully I can answer this for the Member. "Abnormal Mortality: Mortality equivalent to three per cent or higher of the current aquaculture inventory within a marine and freshwater site, vessel or other method of transport and/or transfer for salmonid and cleaner fish aquaculture licensed sites; or any incident at an on-land salmonid and/or cleaner fish aquaculture licensed site, where an incident is encountered, which requires additional resources for the on-land facility to address and mitigate the incident."

All of this information is publicly available on our website.

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

J. DINN: For now.

So it's about 3 per cent, so anything under 3 per cent then there's no requirement that it be reported or notify the department, and that wouldn't appear on the department's website as well, correct?

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

E. LOVELESS: I'll have to take that under advisement, but I say to the Member, I've got nothing to hide.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

So my point here is that you could have an abnormal mortality event that comes up once a month, but you could have multiple normal mortality events throughout every day of that month or the year, which cumulatively would be a significant mortality over the course of it.

As I noted at the beginning, production actually has decreased significantly in aquaculture, so obviously there are die-offs. So I think there should be some mechanism here to address the fact that I think all mortality events – so you can get a bigger picture, not just of the abnormal ones, but what is a normal die-off in the run of a year.

With regard to section 41, Chair – and I think I'm just about done here with this – it says Orders of the chief aquaculture veterinarian: "The chief aquaculture veterinarian may order a licensee to take measures that the chief aquaculture veterinarian considers necessary to prevent the spread of pathogen, parasites and disease and to protect the health and welfare of cultured aquatic organisms, including measures relating to ..." isolation,

so on and so forth, disposal or destruction of feed, and so on and so forth.

I'm assuming here, 41 also covers the spread of sea lice?

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

E. LOVELESS: Again, I'll get that answer for the Member.

But before we go any further, as the Member references several times in terms of last year, production is down. He's making the assumption that it's purely due to die-off. That's not factual. So I just want to put that on the floor here, that there are various challenges from a production perspective. So for him to say that is not factual information that he has in front of him so he's just saying that. I just wanted to clarify that out of respect.

CHAIR: The Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I'm just pointing out the fact that production in 2022 dropped from 15,000 to a little over 8,000 metric tons. That's my main point and that has been decreasing ever since, regardless of reason.

We'll assume for a minute that the parasites that I referred to are indeed sea lice spread. So what, indeed, is the approach here to prevent the spread of pathogens?

I'll use the examples from Norway where they have now set up sort of a traffic light system. Green, you can increase production; yellow, it might be a little bit that the sea lice levels are getting to the point where it's a concern; and then red, where we're going to stop the production. We're not going to increase because the sea lice level is a significant threat. That could be for anything, ISA or the piscine orthoreovirus, you name it.

So my question is here: What are the measures taken if indeed the sea lice levels

are such, even with the cleaner fish, that they get to be such a stage where they have to be dealt with? A few things: What is the sea lice count for salmon that would trigger this veterinarian ordering a licensee to take measures? Is it three per salmon, four per salmon, five?

It's great to have the sea lice count numbers, but what will trigger these measures? I'll use sea lice as a specific example.

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

E. LOVELESS: Just trying to find the information I can provide to him for his question.

I don't know if I have this in my notes here to give. I think it's pretty technical in terms of – it's beyond my – if I had a veterinarian who's employed in the department, they might be able to help me out.

But companies certainly are required to report sea lice counts each month, when the water temperature makes it safe to do so. Sea lice audits and monitoring of it here, as to pest control plans, is completed by FFA. I don't know if that adds anything or gives you any certainty to your question.

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

J. DINN: I appreciate, Minister, it is technical. I totally appreciate that and this is not to put you on the spot but, I think, your department needs to have clear standards for this, especially when we know that sea lice on wild salmon and the smolts, it takes as little as three to basically kill a smolt. That's that aspect of it. But also if we have all that money invested into a significant number of salmon, it's important to make sure that they are healthy, that they make it to market and that the loss is mitigated.

I guess what I'm saying to you, as well to your department officials who may be listening at this time, is that maybe not just simply reporting sea lice, but I'd like to know what are the measures, what are the trigger points that will require when it comes to any pathogen or disease that will trigger a veterinarian to make this order? That's what it comes down to.

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

E. LOVELESS: Well, I'm going to make a suggestion. All these specifics, I'm going to say to the Member, come down and visit the sites. I say that with all respect. I believe that there are people who are on these sites that can really provide some answers, greater than what I could here. That's due with all respect because, as I say, there are a lot of specialized professionals that are working in this industry.

That's why I say that the industry has come a long ways. I will use my example again in Norway. I mean, I compared the oil industry of Newfoundland and Labrador, of Canada. That's how big it is and they're doing it right, but not without challenges. Public trust, transparency, all that is very important, and to staff as well. It's not missed on them that that's crucial moving forward and they've worked hard to ensure that the public trust is there.

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

J. DINN: I'll say this, in the end, it's not the industry; they have their interests. I guess what I'm looking at here is it's the government as a regulator, I think overall, who must be the regulator and be objective. I think that's where my questions are coming from.

I can go to any furnace shop or any vehicle or car dealer and as far as they're concerned, they're selling the best vehicle around. I understand that, but really what I

want is, what I'm looking for is that objective from the government, the regulations, and making sure that we have the best regulations to protect – well, basically, if it's sustainable, it's about protecting the fish that are being raised – I'm focused here on open sea pen aquaculture, in particular – protect the workers who are in those jobs so that have a sustainable future, and also protecting the environment so that when you look at the salmon angling industry, it's also protected. The concern comes out of those.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Shall clauses 7 through 71 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 7 through 71 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act Respecting the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill without amendment, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 17 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 17.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

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

B. WARR: Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 17 without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed him to report Bill 17 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time presently, by leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: I call from the Order Paper, Order 2.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move seconded by the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture that Bill 17, An Act Respecting the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province, be now read a third time.

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

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to take one second here, because I meant to bring it up during Committee of the Whole. We got passed the clause before I did, so I'll just say for the record once again I do support the bill. I think strengthening legislation is certainly a good thing, but I do want to say for the record that I do share the concern of my colleague from St. John's Centre around the issue of proactive disclosure and if we had legislation in the past, which the former act did, that disclosed information proactively to the public, then to simply now revert to a system of well you go ATIPP it, I think is a step backwards.

I just want to just make that point and, with that said, I will support the bill.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, 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: An Act Respecting the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province. (Bill 17)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting the Regulation of Aquaculture in the Province," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 17)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader 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 10 a.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.