



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 42

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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Wednesday

October 18, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Admit strangers.

### **Government Business**

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 6.

**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 to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015 No. 2, Bill 56, and I further move the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015 No. 2, Bill 56, 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 Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015 No. 2," carried. (Bill 56)

**CLERK (Hawley George):** A bill, An Act to Amend the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015 No. 2. (Bill 56)

**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 56 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, Order 7, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act, Bill 47.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Digital Government and Service NL.

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, that Bill 47, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act, now be read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 47, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act." (Bill 47)

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

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

Automobile insurance is mandatory for all motorists in Newfoundland and Labrador; this is an area of expertise of mine as,

before this life, I spent six years working for a home and auto insurance company. I'm trying to put my expertise to good use here for the public good, Mr. Speaker.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you.

It is against the law to operate a motor vehicle on our province's roads or highways without active registration or an active insurance policy. Operating an uninsured vehicle can result in a series of individual penalties, including cancellation of registration, impoundment of the vehicle, fines or accumulated demerit points.

This past year we have introduced the Insurance Validation Program, a digital process for determining whether a vehicle carries mandatory insurance coverage and we're continuing to identify and keep uninsured drivers from getting behind the wheel.

Essentially, we will not renew your registration of a motor vehicle, Speaker, unless you have an active insurance policy, and there are a series of processes that run, first by email, and then by physical mail to make sure that we do not give anyone auto registration who does not have an active auto insurance policy.

So far this summer, Speaker, we've issued 3,700 suspension notices and 850 warning notices. We give them three notices before we start any of this. So we're giving them ample opportunity. I think this program is hugely successful and hopefully all of these will then get their insurance, as is lawfully required, and then that makes insurance cheaper for everyone.

Speaker, other measures we have taken in recent years to reduce the number of uninsured drivers on our roads and highways include placing the onus on the person who is charged with an offence to prove that there was a policy of insurance

enforced at the time of the offence, as well as prohibiting the owner or driver of an uninsured automobile from applying for payment or damages for injuries arising out of the operation, care or control of that automobile.

So, Speaker, what we're talking today is about Facility. Facility is the association of all the insurers and they insure our most risky drivers. If you're considered a high-risk driver, finding an insurer willing to insure you can be a challenge. As Facility is kind of a historically a not-for-profit association, the idea is that all the insurers share in the losses from Facility for the most at-risk drivers because auto insurance is mandatory.

A high-risk driver is someone insurance companies consider more likely to be involved in an accident requiring payout, which is why all the auto insurance companies band together in Facility to share with the losses.

Persons that may be considered a high-risk driver include new drivers, drivers who have been involved in two or more accidents, especially when those drivers have been at fault, legally, and then persons with a previous licence suspension.

So when you're classified as a high-risk driver, usually this results in a driver having higher premiums, tougher restrictions and fewer insurance options. Most times if you call the insurers they will, unfortunately, often refuse to take them on as a client, and that's when Facility will offer them insurance. It's usually a bit more expensive but it's not so expensive as it's not affordable. That's how Facility shares in the losses of that business.

Speaker, this is not specific to Newfoundland and Labrador. Facility Association operates nationally and insurance policies are made available to those drivers considered high risk who are

unable to obtain insurance in the regular market.

Facility Association is an unincorporated, non-profit association of all the insurers that operate in all provinces and territories with private insurance regimes. Facility does not operate in BC, Saskatchewan, Manitoba or Quebec, as those provinces have government-run or insurance regimes. So in those provinces you buy your auto insurance from the government, whereas in the rest of the provinces you don't. And then all the other provinces have Facility.

Every insurer licensed to write automobile liability insurance, including Newfoundland and Labrador, is a member of Facility. So all automobile insurers in Newfoundland and Labrador are required to be members of Facility Association. According to the 2019 automobile insurance review report, which I have here which I will reference a bit later, it's a very thick document, Speaker. This was our last comprehensive auto insurance review.

Facility insures approximately 4 per cent of the private passenger automobiles and most of the taxis in Newfoundland and Labrador. Facility has indicated in their most recent rate applications that they insure about 11,556 private passenger vehicles, and 393 taxis. So, Speaker, those are the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador that we're talking about: 11,556 private passenger vehicles, the insurance for those vehicles, and the insurance for 393 taxis.

Just as insurers in the regular market are subject to filing rates with the Public Utilities Board, so is Facility Association. Facility, if they want to change the rates, they have to apply to the Public Utilities Board and the Public Utilities Board says yes or no, or tells them what they can charge.

To get more specific, this bill specifically deals with whether or not insurers can make a profit on the business that is through the Facility Association. So Facility Association

identifies as a non-profit association in the *Insurance Companies Act*; however, there is no existing regulatory mechanism prohibiting Facility from seeking a profit on the Facility policies sold.

So historically, profit was never provided for Facility auto insurance policies. They were non-profit. In 2021, Facility Association submitted an application to the PUB, a rate-filing application, asking for a rate increase, including profit now for the first time on private passenger vehicles insured by Facility. So the order resulting from the application, the PUB stated as the legislation did not prohibit the board from allowing a profit provision to be included in Facilities rates, they granted it.

Speaker, that is what we're trying to remedy here today; there was an element of non-clarity for the Public Utilities Board in our legislation, so we are trying to resolve that and provide that clarity. The Public Utilities Board determined that Facility Association should be permitted to include a profit provision in its rate, and the resulting increase was a 6 per cent profit provision, effective April 1, 2022, meaning a 6 per cent increase on all Facility policies that renew after April 1, 2022. On average 6 per cent.

Then at a June 2022 rate filing, the absence of legislation preventing profit on Facility, Facility requested a rate increase of 13 per cent for taxis, including 6 per cent profit. The resulting order, the decision of the Public Utilities Board in December 2022, the PUB approved a filing with a rate increase of 10 per cent. They asked for 13. They didn't get that but what the Public Utilities Board gave them was 10 per cent; that was a 10 per cent increase for taxis. So a big increase for the taxi insurance in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So it should be noted that before approving the filing in 2022, the Public Utilities Board did advise through a public notice; it was published in the newspapers inviting comments from the public and a copy of the

notice was also sent directly to the taxi operators in the province before the decision was made by the Public Utilities Board.

In the early filing of 2021, which is available on the website, Facility indicated that its rates should include a profit provision to generate an appropriate return for its members, which are automobile insurers operating in the province, given that they are writing and supporting Facility policies and are in the business of insurance to earn a profit.

I don't agree with that. I agree that insurers absolutely need to have a profit and I'll get to that in a bit. This message was further emphasized by Facility in recent communications with my officials in the department. No province or territory used to allow Facility to get a profit; now, unfortunately, all provinces and territories do. Our government recognizes the challenges faced by people in this province, Speaker, in a time of increasing costs and, as such, we are bringing forward this bill to prohibit Facility Association from seeking a profit provision in future rate filing applications to the Public Utilities Board.

This would not be retroactive but when all the policies renew for the next time, there would no longer be a 6 per cent profit provision, or any profit provision, on these policies. These profit provisions would have to be removed.

These amendments would build on other measures taken by our government to help stabilize insurance rates to show continued effort to support the taxi industry and to consumers, those 11,000, almost 12,000 consumers, who, for a range of reasons, are insured by Facility.

So some of the measures we brought forward to help taxi drivers in the last few years: we've reduced Facility's commission fees from 6 per cent to 3 per cent; we eliminated the 13 per cent tax on auto

insurance; and we removed fleet-rated risks from the PUB. So taxis do not have to go to the PUB, I believe they currently, mostly do but they legally do not have to.

Section 64 of the *Automobile Insurance Act* requires me, as the minister, to conduct a considerable review of this act and regulations every five years. That decision is not required until January 1, 2025. So we thought that given the Public Utilities Board's decision specifically was made because the legislation was silent, we decided that now was the right time to fix this. This will still be reviewed again in the next review in – that decision will be made after January 2025.

On the matter of the profit provision for Facility, we don't want to wait; we want to act now in the best interest of Facility to protect the taxi industry and consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you everyone for your patience.

Just to get a bit more into the details. I don't begrudge the insurers for making a profit. I used to work for an insurance company. Obviously, they have to make a profit. They wouldn't be here and operate in our market if they didn't make a profit, Speaker.

When we look at the 2019 Public Utilities Board Commission report, which is available on their website, on page 24 they talk about the allowable return on equity that they allow insurers to make. The Public Utilities Board allows, on average, all insurers to get a 10 per cent return on equity on their business insuring auto policies in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what the Public Utilities Board allows, 10 per cent.

Speaker, my problem with this, personally, is on top of the 10 per cent, adding another 6 per cent on Facility. I don't know if I'm going to be in this role when we do the next auto insurance review, but my personal, as an MHA or as a private citizen, whatever I

am at that time, I'm certainly going to be writing the minister at the time – maybe it's me, maybe it's someone else – requesting that whatever the Public Utilities Board's return on equity is, that they look overall at the insurers, includes Facility. It should be one return on equity for all business, including Facility and the private passenger market.

Speaker, what I'm trying to do today is make decisions and change things based on information that's put in front of me. We saw this decision. As I mentioned, the decision was based on the fact that the legislation was unclear on whether or not Facility could have a profit. Now we're kind of closing that gap. I think that should be reviewed in the next auto insurance review. A decision will be made in 2025 on that. My recommendation right now would be that there's one return on equity for all business, including Facility and non-Facility.

It's very technical, I know, I'm very happy to answer any questions in Committee and look forward to hearing other people's feedback.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

I next recognize the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

It's a pleasure to be back in the House of Assembly again for this fall sitting and tackle some good legislation.

This is an important part of legislation as well. Right now, I thank the minister and her team for bringing it forward because I think at any point if we can put money back into Newfoundlanders and Labradorians pockets from what they've been through in the past few years, any opportunity we can take to

do that, we should take to do that and put that money into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; whether it be in the private sector or whether it be in the taxi and cab sector, who have been hurting continuously over the past few years; whether it be rising insurance rates, rising fuel rates, rising maintenance rates.

The taxi companies here in Newfoundland and Labrador have definitely been hit. We need our taxis, we need our cabs, not just in the metro area but we have them in Grand Falls-Windsor. We have them in many places throughout the province and we want to ensure that they get the best deal that they possibly can, too, so they can continue to run and have a successful business as they go.

I'm just looking at the bill, this "prohibit the facility association from including a profit provision in automobile insurance rates." Again, it's extremely important and for the housekeeping part of the bill, which is important, the first portion of this bill is extremely important. We know that many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians look for insurance, they need insurance; we just discussed it. It's required by law that they have it.

Unfortunately, with the rising cost of living throughout our province, we are seeing more and more people who do not have insurance, who feel as though they just cannot afford the insurance at the time. To turn to Facility, of course, it's going to be a lot more expensive, but it's an option that's there. It's good that there is an option that's there.

Facility cannot turn down the person. It doesn't matter what their driving history is or their payment history is, they have to take them on. We need that. There are places in this country and in this province that definitely need that, so we are happy to see it.

Just getting back again to people who are driving without insurance right now. There are more people on the roads right now without insurance. It's not the right thing to do but when you're backed into a corner and you know you have to go to work, you have to do this sort of thing. Unfortunately, we do have that in the province. I do encourage everybody to do the right thing and get the insurance but we can also see that those numbers are on the rise as well.

A couple more pieces of this bill would be replaced referenced to the Trial Division with the correct reference to the Supreme Court. We have no issue with that here in the Official Opposition. Of course, incorporate gender-neutral language, which is important, too. Just a side note, today is International Pronouns Day so we are happy to see that as well. We want to make sure that everybody gets the proper respect that they deserve.

During the technical briefing, the department staff and the minister indicated – this was mostly housekeeping but, again, making sure that this company does not get a profit. Again, this doesn't cut into any private insurance companies' profits. I have many friends in the insurance business as well and they are happy to see Facility do this for people as a combined group.

So, again, when it comes to capitalism, when it comes to profits, we know the companies need to make profits but we also want to make sure that people are taken care of and people can have some money back in their own pocket, which is extremely important where we come from.

At-risk vehicles on the road: As we go further and further into this cost-of-living crisis, we know that there are more people on the road who do not have the money to maintain their vehicle in the proper way. That's a huge issue and that can trickle down into insurance claims as well. But we know there are many people on the road right now who you talk about having to

make decisions between heat and food at home. Well, imagine having to make the decision between having to feed your kids or to get your breaks done when they need to be done.

So, again, it definitely comes back to the people of the province and what they're going through right now. When you have at-risk vehicles on the road, we're going to have more accidents on the road. It's a little side note, but it definitely ties into this. We need to ensure that those people have the best access to maintenance or garages or try to get as much money back into their pocket as we possibly can so they can get their brakes done, so they can get their wheels done, so they're not driving around on banana skins and stuff like that. We're seeing more and more of it as people's pockets are getting emptier and emptier across the province and that's just not good enough.

Again, Speaker, our caucus welcomes it. I have read over this bill now quite a few times. Newfoundland and Labrador, of course, has some of the highest insurance rates in the country. We're glad to see this coming in right now. We want to make sure that government continues to bring in some regulations that will ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians pay less for insurance, if possible, especially good behaviour.

We get the new drivers sometimes are a risk, sort of thing, because they don't have the expertise or they don't have the experience when it comes to driving, but, listen, I know there are tons of new drivers out there that are better than some of the older drivers and we've all see it as well. So we just want to ensure that proper regulations continue to be brought in by government, whatever they can do, without impeding on free enterprise and on capitalism to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians get the best rates that they can get.

Again, unfortunately, we're seeing this come in now after a rate already has gone up. It would have been nice to see this a year ago, two years ago, before those rates did come in under the wire, sort of thing. But it's good that it's here now and we are very pleased with it here in the Official Opposition.

Customers have seen substantial increase in premiums over the past years, despite being claim free and that's an issue. Again, I can't imagine there's an insurance company in this province or in this country that's losing money. It's just not happening. So good behaviour should be rewarded with good premiums. If you go claim free over a year, two years, five years, we that should be reflected upon the insurance premiums that a person gets. Again, wherever government can do the best job they can to ensure the people of the province are taken care of and as much money can stay in their pockets as possibly can, as we can possibly make, that's exactly what we should be doing here.

Newfoundland and Labrador insurance market is dominated by a small number of players and government has done nothing to attract new entrants to protect consumers. I'll reiterate on that. We should be out there looking for new business, for anybody who wants to come into this province and to offer better rates to customers. When somebody is paying an insurance rate of \$300 or \$400 a month and they've never had any claims or any accidents, whatnot, we think that's an issue.

Again, nothing wrong with profit, but we want to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, themselves, are taken care of first. That should be our main priority. So we want to ensure that.

Before I sit down, I'll just have a quick word about the taxi companies. Again, they've been through the wringer and back, especially since COVID-19 here. The drivers, they see a decrease. The owners

and operators, they've seen a decrease with the rising fuel costs and people just aren't taking taxis as much as they used to.

Buses are options and whatnot; we see the rise in the buses, which is great as well, but we want to ensure that the taxi companies – we've had taxi companies operating in the metro region here now for decades, the same owners and operators. We need them. We truly need them. That affects people going to work. It affects tourism. We want to ensure that when a tourist gets in that car, they don't see an exuberant amount of a taxi fare. We're hoping that with this change, possibly, if they're getting back 6 per cent of the profits or if money is coming back to any taxi owners and operators, we hope that gets reflected in the fares. That would be great to see.

We know that when premiums go up or maintenance goes up or fuels go up, the fares go up as well. Well, let's hope it works the other way to help the consumers here in Newfoundland and Labrador. That would be great to see as well.

So for the taxi companies out there, for the 11,000-plus private users, this is a great piece of legislation. I hope they're happy with it, I know we're happy with it and we look forward to asking some questions in Committee.

Thank you.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** I next recognize the Member for Labrador West.

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

I'll just speak briefly to the bill. We're glad to see that the government is doing the housekeeping and at the same time making sure that Facility is not taking more than what they need to take from consumers.



We're talking about the cost of living and stuff but it also, at the same time, is interesting of the fact that we are going to be the only province that is going to be limiting Facility with the profit margins currently, right now, from the other members of Facility; so Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia and so forth.

So it brings up the fact that we have to do this with Facility when there is an exorbitant rate of profit. We're also seeing that the massive rise of auto insurance and other insurance programs currently, right now, in the province for your home, auto, life, everything has gone up significantly in the last couple of years and now we have to do this with Facility to bring down the cost for high-risk drivers, taxis and so forth.

We do agree with this motion but, at the same time, it brings the question, which I'll ask in Committee later, on why we're not joining the other provinces of Quebec, BC, Saskatchewan and Manitoba with a public insurance program which doesn't have a profit motive compared to what we see right now as an option to bring down rates significantly. Because currently, a business is going to do what a business is going to do and they're going to find other ways to get their profits back. We can limit them here in Facility but knowing how those industries work, they'll find another way to increase rates and get their money back.

It is great that we're going to do this at the same time, but my question to government will be: What are we doing to make sure we can stabilize this industry? We've seen countless years now of constant increases in the auto insurance rates. The justifications are interesting to say the least and that we are not seeing any real savings with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians when it comes to auto insurance. Like I said, we pay some of the highest rates in the country; we have some of the least amount of vehicles on the road in some parts of this country, yet we're getting dinged left, right and centre for auto rates.

This is one good step, I think, but the question is why aren't we joining with Saskatchewan, Manitoba, BC and Quebec on having a public auto insurance system that they seem to be having, where we have the ability to actually adjust rates and make them that they're reasonable and affordable for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

So, you know, this is just some of the things we want to know. But other than that, we're glad to see there are some steps made, especially for the taxi industry who has been really dinged over the last number of years so that they can actually continue to conduct business in this province. The rates are still really high. In some cases, it makes it really much harder, especially for those who are on fixed incomes, low incomes, to even afford insurance for their vehicles. We understand that, for some people, a vehicle is very important, especially in rural and remote areas where other options of transportation are not available.

We see this as great, but at the end of the day auto rates and insurance, it is very concerning the prices people are paying right now. I'll have some more questions in Committee, but those are some things to think about.

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

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

It's an honour as the Member of the House of Assembly for Harbour Main to speak on Bill 47, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act.

When I look at this legislation, Speaker, and I listen and heard the minister in her introduction about the bill, I noted that the bill is of housekeeping nature. And I think from what I can see, it really applies to two main elements: the uninsured driver, so that they are not out behind the wheel – that's one of the important themes in this bill – as

well as the specific aspect of Facility and insurance with respect to the most risky drivers – I mean, I think this is a very important element to this bill when it speaks to the amendment, and in relation to the risky drivers.

From what the minister said, the bill is really applying to about 11,000 to 12,000 consumers in our province, if that's my correct understanding of the bill. So these are important efforts, and no one can question that. But again, I need to address the bigger issue here. Although this is a piece of legislation that is housekeeping, when we look at the impact that the insurance rates are having on our everyday consumer, in particular our seniors and others on fixed incomes, I wonder why not more meaningful legislation is not coming forward.

I had the opportunity this morning to review this legislation with one of my constituents in the District of Harbour Main, just to see in terms of the impact that this legislation would have on our everyday citizen, our everyday resident. This is a very important piece of the cost-of-living crisis that we're facing now in our province, Speaker. And when I talked about this insurance bill with my constituent, he had indicated that over the last four or five years the cost of insurance, whether it's car insurance or home insurance, has doubled. And I referenced that yesterday in Question Period, about the impact that these costs are having on our seniors and others who are on fixed incomes.

So basically he explained that when you look at the cost, for example, of car and truck insurance – he and his wife have two vehicles. Last year, they were paying \$1,200; this year, it's \$2,000. He's at a point now where he's probably going to have to sell his car because they cannot afford these costs. Speaker, that's just unacceptable.

When you look at a man who's 75 years old, he started working when he was 16, up until he was 69 and he had to leave work then because of his health condition, but he said he'd probably look at going out to work now. He's 75 years old, so he would be able to keep his car. Now, is this the standard of living that we are going to accept for our seniors and others on fixed income in our province?

I bring that up, Speaker, because it's important to note that when we see legislation – and I'm not criticizing the legislation for what it is on its face. It's fine in terms of addressing the issue of uninsured drivers, of addressing the risky drivers and increasing oversight there. I think that's important. But it's applying to such a limited pool of the people of this province, 11,000 to 12,000 people. We need more meaningful legislation to come forward from this government, especially if we're going to address the important issue of cost of living, which is skyrocketing; insurance rates are a very important part of that.

On that note, I do think that we need to look beyond and we need to do better in terms of legislation. As my colleague from Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans stated, Newfoundland has some of the highest insurance rates in the country. We're being overcharged here in our province by insurance companies. Who is bearing the brunt of this, but it's our seniors and other people, young families as well, but people on fixed incomes who do not see their salary or income increase. They are at a fixed income, yet the insurance costs keep escalating year after year after year.

Speaker, this is just unacceptable. We need to bring forward legislation that addresses the overall and the broader issue of the high insurance costs for our people in the province.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Any further speakers?

I recognize the Member for Bonavista.

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

I just wanted to rise and have a few words on this bill, Bill 47. I hadn't planned on earlier but I thought I would just chime in with a few thoughts that I had. When I looked at the insurance company and the bill, I immediately thought of the many people in the District of Bonavista who cannot afford home insurance. That is not what we're talking about here today but I know that when my colleague from Harbour Main suggests that, when we know that we've got a lot of issues out in society and in our province, that is what should drive our legislative change.

Yesterday, we talked about those people who are struggling to stay in their homes or do not have a safe and secure home. Well, that ought to be a discussion on everything we can do in legislation to make sure that we can change it. So we are focusing today, not on the home insurance, because if anybody burned wood because they can't afford oil or electricity, if anybody did, then they know that they can't get insurance because it's priced out. So we have a lot that can't afford it.

On the vehicle side when we look at insurance, I'm most intrigued with the Member for Labrador West who says that the provinces that would have their publicly run insurance – and I'm sure the minister will speak to that because she's got a background in that – that would eliminate, I would assume, the 10 per cent profit for the insurers that we currently have and the 6 per cent now would go to Facility.

I'm not sure if I've got that right, but it should be able to say that we will do it on a

revenue-neutral basis to have an insurance and make it as affordable for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians as we possibly could, no profit involved. That sounds very attractive and that's something maybe that, we, as a collective group of legislators, ought to be looking at.

This is complex. We look at what drives up insurance rates. The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor says we have amongst the highest in the country. I thought we would be high. I don't know if we've got the highest but if we're up there, why? Why do we have the highest? We know what our climate conditions are. The residents in the District of Bonavista would say well, we know the vehicles that are damaged on potholes because if ever they're going through insurance, we'd know that.

I often tell my children, if they're coming from St. John's and coming back to the District of Bonavista, avoid driving in wet weather. There was one time when I was in Whitbourne. It was heavy rain on the way back to the District of Bonavista, when the tow truck driver had said that they had eight calls in the vicinity of Whitbourne, in that stretch, eight calls for vehicles that went off the road in the wet weather. That's not all the fault of the roads, but I guess some would make that assumption that is an issue, the condition of the roads.

The second thing would be how can my daughter or Scott Martin in Elliston, how can they assure that the vehicle that's coming towards them has the proper treads on the tires that they ought to have? Because is that a factor that would contribute to an incident on our roads? It sure is. We don't know as a government, we don't know as travelling pedestrians or driving our vehicles on the roads; we don't know the condition of the vehicle that's coming towards us because there are no inspections anymore.

I bring up inspections to know there's a degree of reluctance because the bottom line is that people can't afford the cost of

living of what they have and I'd be really hesitant on adding more. But we have to find what that balance would be. We have to make sure we're safe on the roads. If it's because of tire tread or the vehicles or the roads, there are a higher number of accidents, then we have to tackle that.

The Member for Ferryland, he passionately talked about the brush cutting. All of a sudden you don't have the visibility if you're travelling in areas where the brush cutting isn't up to standard, then there's a risk of encountering a moose, a much higher risk, especially if he said he can hold his hand out the window and touch the alders on the passenger side.

There's a lot when we look at bringing legislation to the House. We can certainly make it broader to see what we can do to tackle the issue of the cost that would be included in the insurance.

Mr. Speaker, I will end with that and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

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

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

I now recognize the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

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

I'm not going to take too long here, but I'll support Bill 47, of course. Mostly what we have here is housekeeping, but the big one of course is taking away the profit provision in automobile insurance rates for people who are in Facility.

Certainly, anything that we can do to lessen the burden of insurance costs on consumers, I think that's what we should be doing.

I will say, though, while I applaud this move, I'm not sure how much of a difference it will make in the end because if you look at the

history that you see with big corporations – I don't want to sound like a socialist here now because I'm not, but you look at the history you see with big corporations, whether it be the big banks, whether it be –

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

**P. LANE:** No, I'm not a socialist. I'm a populist, remember? I wear that as a badge of honour, absolutely.

But if you look at the big corporations and the huge profits that they make, whether it be the banks – just think about the fact, capitalism has really gone amok. I know it's better than communism and everything else but it has kind of gone amok. The profit margins that you're seeing are through the roof. It's absolutely ridiculous when you think about it that if somebody wants to go and take in a ball game or something, you've got to pay \$10 or \$12 for a hot dog. There's something wrong with that picture.

When you look at the fact that when you go to the ATM machine, every time you use your card, it's costing you \$3 or \$3.50 just to stick your card in the machine. That's all profit. You see these huge profits by the banks, by the big corporations and by the insurance companies. So I wouldn't be a bit surprised if any help that's provided by taking it away from there, the insurance companies will find a way of adding it onto something else and they'll get their money back, I guarantee you. Sadly, that's the way it seems to work, but I will support it.

I will also just add to what the Member for Bonavista said about trying to get rates down by preventing accidents. I'll just throw this out here. When we talk about the roads situation and I know that roads are costly and the minister has said if I spent \$10 million, there's another \$100 million to do and all that. I appreciate that.

But I just will say that, anecdotally, before the House opened, I went on a little family vacation. I drove down to the States. I drove

right down the Eastern Seaboard of the United States and back up through Niagara Falls. I went down through Maine and up through Niagara Falls. I would have driven through Ontario obviously, Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and numerous states in the US. The only time I encountered ruts in the road was Newfoundland and Labrador. That was the only place I encountered ruts in the road.

Coming back home on Saturday, I got off the Port aux Basques ferry. I want to say between Deer Lake and Grand Falls. It was raining, of course, and the ruts were wicked. I was like an impaired driver because you were trying to go around them, trying not to drive into ruts so you'd be kind of hugging the centre line and if cars were coming towards you, then you would kind of go over and you'd be hugging the shoulder and that just trying to avoid the ruts. You were like someone who was impaired, driving the car, trying to avoid going off the road and had to reduce speed, obviously, significantly just to try to stay on the road.

Newfoundland and Labrador was the only place that I encountered that. Of all the provinces I was through, nowhere else did it happen. It's definitely not coming from trucks. I hear people say big trucks and all that. It's not because it aligns perfectly with a passenger vehicle. It's not big trucks doing it.

I don't know if it's the studded tires. I don't know if we're going cheap somehow on how we're doing the roads, but there's obviously a problem in this province. It has been raised numerous times. If we could address things like that, perhaps we could cut down on the number of accidents and perhaps that would have a positive impact on insurance rates as well.

I do concur with my colleague from Bonavista around the idea of looking at what is causing the accidents here. Why do we have such a high accident rate that's driving insurance rates through the roof?

Bearing in mind, as I said, that at the end of the day, just like the big banks and the big corporations and everything else, and the corporate greed, which has really come to the forefront – particularly since COVID, everybody wants their money back and then some – they will find a way to get their money back, even after we do this. I'm convinced they will but at least we're trying. At least we're doing something to try and help and I will support that.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Seeing no further speakers to Bill 47, I now call on the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to close debate on Bill 47.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the Members of the House for making valuable comments and suggestions and stories.

I just want to address a few of the points and I'm happy to discuss more in Committee. I guess in terms of the auto insurance market in the province – I used to work for a home and auto insurance company. Our auto insurance rates are based on the cost of the company to run and they have actuaries that estimate how much they have to pay out in claims for next year. Your policy is based on their estimate of how many accidents are going to be in Newfoundland and Labrador next year, and that's kind of divided up between all their policies and that's kind of the claim's cost. Then you have some IT, HR, all that kind of cost built in and then the PUB allows them to have a 10 per cent rolling return on equity for profit on top of that.

Really, the insurance companies make money – people in insurance get bonuses when there are no accidents. Let's say there are no accidents this year – let's say there's a significant reduction in car accidents this

year. Next year, everyone's rates will be a lot cheaper. There's a direct correlation, a mathematical correlation that many people are employed to look at within these insurance companies: What is the likelihood of car accidents?

So as a province – I'm in charge of highway safety and I take that very seriously – if we become better drivers and have less accidents and slow down and follow the speed limits, that will put a downwards pressure on our insurance policies. I guess what we're talking about today is specifically the people in Facility, and so whether or not there was the 6 per cent on average profit added in. Those 11,000, plus 300 taxis, when they renew their policies they should get a 6 per cent reduction on average in their insurance premiums this year, unless for example Facility – they might apply to the PUB to have an increase if their costs went up. If the claims costs went up, they might apply for an increase. But overall there should be a 6 per cent decrease for those 11,000 people when their policies renew, Speaker.

I guess the second point I wanted to raise, which multiple Members raised it, about whether or not we should have a public insurance company. In some provinces, the government essentially has a Crown corporation that runs the insurance company. That's a really interesting idea, and I have thought about that, and my struggle – we have Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. They're a Crown corporation. They have their own policies and procedures, that kind of stuff.

Some provinces have more Crown corporations, some provinces have fewer Crown corporations, and I guess I was a mid-level manager, let's say, in an insurance company for six years, and I know how tightly they ran that ship, and that was an international insurance company. I have a lot of respect for our public servants here and our government employees. The reason why I have not – well, as a

government we would have to, but I personally would not right now champion having a public insurer, because I don't think we could run it as efficiently as a private company, and I think we could not offer, based on the accident rates in Newfoundland and Labrador, insurance rates at a lower cost than they do.

Because they're looking at the cost plus 10 per cent. Personally, I do not think that we could create a Crown corporation, and run an insurance company and deliver premiums at the current rates. I don't think that taxpayers would win in that model. Just because I know how efficient and cost, profit and efficiency-driven those companies are, or at least the company I worked in was. So I don't think we could do it cheaper, Speaker.

So that's why I have not brought that forward, but I'm happy to have those discussions. So I'm happy to answer any questions in Committee.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 47 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

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

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 47)

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

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

I move that this House do now resolve itself into Committee of Whole to consider Bill 47.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved that I do now leave the Chair so the House can resolve itself to consider Bill 47.

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.

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 47, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act." (Bill 47)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair is recognizing the hon. Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

Can the minister explain why she's doing this now instead of bringing this legislation forward last year, six months' ago or the year before last?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you.

That's an excellent question.

My team tell me whenever the Public Utilities Board make kind of big decisions and they came to me and said, oh by the way, this happened. I look through the paper on the weekends and I look for the Public Utilities Board notices and I never see them, but they say that they're there. So I didn't see this. When they told me about it, I started asking a lot of questions and we dug into it, dug into it, dug into it and dug into it, and then this brings us to this place we are here today now.

When I understood that they had made a decision to allow profit and then the more we asked questions and the more we looked into it, that's why this is right now. This is the time between when the decision was announced and when I could bring this to the House of Assembly.

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

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

What about the drivers that have already renewed mid-year or if a driver renewed January 1, 2023, as opposed to a big tax

company renewing now on December 1?  
Why isn't any of this retroactive?

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

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

That is a fair question. I guess we want to be clear moving forward. The policies react like, in the past, the ruling was made; the insurers have to do their work to issue the policies. It is an enormous amount of work for them to go through all the policies and send cheques to people. I'm not trying to punish them or unduly burden the insurers by doing this. We're trying to clarify an area that was unclear in the legislation so I think it is not perfect, I agree.

I'd love to make the insurers send everyone cheques, but I think it is reasonable that moving forward, when everyone's policies renews, after this receives Royal Assent, I think it will take affect immediately. I'm sure that if your policy renews tomorrow they might have to send you a cheque but I don't want to burden the insurers by having to send everyone cheques. I think that might be too onerous and their financial statements and stuff would be all messed up. It would cause a lot of problems for Facility if we made them do retroactive; I think it is very reasonable to go on a forward basis.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Just to be clear, Minister, was it an option for your department to make this retroactive to put money back in Newfoundlanders and Labradorians pockets?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** I don't know if I have an answer to that. We're trying to clarify that profit is not allowed in Facility. So we're doing two things with this act; we're changing the definition of profit provision and then we're saying profit provision cannot be allowed in Facility. That's our intention to the act; I guess that's the most I can say about that.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Minister, I'll continue on with other questions, but before the Committee is over if I could get an answer to that question it would be great. If it was an option for your department to make this retroactive, to put money back in Newfoundlanders and Labradorians pockets, because issuing cheques, although it may have been a little bit inconvenient for Facility, it would have been great to see some money back in those people's pockets.

Minister, why has the government allowed insurance companies to overcharge for several years, between 2021 and 2022?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** I'm sorry; I don't understand the question. I'm not aware that insurers were overcharging. They applied to the Public Utilities Board for a rate. The Public Utilities Board says yay or nay and there's an official order on the Public Utilities Board website that's published. The Public Utilities Board officially approves all the rates so if any insurer is charging a price higher than what they have on file with the Public Utilities Board, that would be against the legislation regulations and I would expect the Public Utilities Board to fine them or take some kind of action. I'm not aware of that, so I'm not quite sure what that means.



Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

Can the minister please outline the consultations that were held for this legislation?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you.

So we did not do broad consultations. We spoke with Facility. My team spoke with Facility. The department experts spoke with the Public Utilities Board on many occasions to understand the background and all that kind of stuff. I met with the Insurance Bureau of Canada, so essentially the association of all the insurers, maybe a month ago.

One of the things that I told them was that I was very disappointed with their ask to the Public Utilities Board to add profit in Facility. We didn't have any discussion, but I did communicate to them verbally in the room that I was disappointed with their decision. So that's kind of the extent of our consultation.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

Minister, you said that you did consult with the PUB. What was their stance on this decision?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** I guess the way it works is we set the legislation and the Public Utilities Board, they're an independent, quasi-judicial body and they make decisions based on our legislation. So it's not their role to be supportive or not. They execute the decisions based on the legislation.

I guess our relationship with them is more so like, Digital Government and Service NL's experts would ask the Public Utilities Board for background information on why did you make this decision. All this is published on their website. You can see the order where they granted the Facility and then they did send a notice out to the taxi companies. So it was more like fact finding with the Public Utilities Board.

The Public Utilities Board gives us that fact-finding information and then they communicate it back to us. My team have been having those discussions with the Public Utilities Board. They wouldn't really say we agree or disagree with the legislation. Their job is to enact the legislation as a quasi-judicial government body.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

What did the taxi brokers, the owners, the operators and the drivers have to say about this?

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

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

I have not spoken to them. I thought I might have been going second this morning and so I was going to try and give some of the owners a call this morning, but I did not have a chance.

I am saving them 6 per cent on their insurance when they renew, so I don't anticipate that they'll have a problem with that.

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

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

How many taxi owners will receive a rebate?

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

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

Thank you for the question.

I think I mentioned the number of taxis. I have no way of knowing when different taxi policies renew and so any that renew after the date, before the Facility and the insurers have a chance to update their systems – because they're going to have to update the system to change it. I have no way of finding out how many policies will be changed between the Royal Assent and then when the insurers have the chance to update their systems and then they might have to issue a refund.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

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

Do we know how many individuals will receive a rebate?

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

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

Again, I think there are 11,000 vehicles insured through Facility. If their policy renews a week after this bill receives Royal

Assent, if and when this bill receives Royal Assent, they may get a refund because their policy might automatically renew, for example, with a 6 per cent built in and the Facility might not have time to change the systems to incorporate this.

I can't say how many individuals or taxi companies will be in that situation. But if your policy renews in six months' time, then you'll just get the lower price in six months' time and no refunds will be issued.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

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

Will this legislative change be retroactive for several years to date of PUB implementations?

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

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

It is not retroactive. It is moving forward after the date of Royal Assent.

Thank you.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Again, Minister, I don't know if we found an answer, if your department was able to make this retroactive. If so, why was it not retroactive?

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

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

So I guess part of the complexity is we have insurance companies running their

businesses. I don't know if it's reasonable for us to put in a piece of legislation that says: Okay, all private companies, you have to give all your customers a cheque.

We try and do that as few times as possible. That causes a lot of disruption.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** I'm trying to clarify a gap in the legislation for the Public Utilities Board, I guess. That's what we're trying to do.

As a government, we've done things for the residents with the cost of living. We cut motor registration fees in half, we cut the tax on auto insurance, we cut the tax on home insurance, we sent out \$500 cheques. We do have people's household cost-of-living measures in mind all the time. With the change here, we are trying to clarify an element that was silent in the legislation.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Is it possible we can give those back and pay for next year? Is that an option that your department could look into?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** I guess I'll reiterate. We are trying to clarify an area of the legislation that was unclear in advance of the 2025 auto insurance review.

What we are not doing is saying: Okay, private company or not-for-profit association, you have to find this money in your budget and give it back to everyone. That's not what we are trying to do.

We are trying to clarify a piece of legislation so that the Public Utilities Board is clear that Facility policies should not have profit.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

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

Do we have a total amount of rebates that are going to be given back?

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

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

I don't have that. There is a lot of public information available about the number of policies in Facility, the total policies written in Facility. I think you can do some basic math and get an estimate. I don't know off the top of my head.

Thank you.

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

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

Is there anything in the bill to help customers with another options besides Facility? If not, why not?

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

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

So Facility is the insurer of last resort. I encourage anyone with auto insurance, shop online and shop online every year. You can go online and get all the online insurance quotes. You can call and get quotes. If you're looking for the best rate

insurance, you should shop around every year is my advice.

If, as a driver, you are too risky and you do not fall within the approved risk that the Public Utilities Board allows each insurer, if you call and they say: I'm sorry I can't give you a quote, you've got to call Facility. Facility is the insurer of last resort.

So everyone can buy insurance through Facility. Facility operates, generally, at a loss and so all the insurers share in that loss because the idea is these drivers, essentially, cost more than they pay in their insurance, on average. That's why Facility exists because auto insurance is mandatory.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

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

Will taxi customers see a reduced rate or benefit from this move?

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

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

So it's up to taxi companies how they run their businesses. I certainly hope that this prevents an upward pressure on rates. I am trying to turn over every rock and stone to keep costs down for residents of Newfoundland and Labrador within my portfolio.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** I hope that this does not have an upward pressure. This allows taxis to get a very small amount of breathing room, is my hope. I cannot say how that impacts taxi rates.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**C. TIBBS:** I'll just leave on this. We appreciate that, Minister, because we're all trying to do the same thing here, I guess, and put money back into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

My question would be: Why wasn't there more done with this legislation on this day to ensure rebates back for people who may have already renewed their insurance? I mean, that's something that I think could have been looked at, that should have been looked at before it was brought to the House of Assembly.

We have seen rushed legislation in the past and I hope that this wasn't rushed because I think that this is an opportunity to ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have more money in their pockets. If we can get an answer to that, it would be great.

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

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

I guess I'll reiterate again. We're trying to clarify an area in the legislation that is unclear. So the Public Utilities Board said that they allowed Facility to include profit because the legislation didn't say that they couldn't. I guess we are not trying to be punitive to the insurance companies or to Facility. I'm not trying to punish them. I don't think it would be reasonable, right now, for us to say you have to take a cut of the money you are expecting to get this year to run your business and to operate and give that back to people. That would be punitive and that's not what we're trying to do today. I'm trying to clarify an unclear area in the legislation.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you.

Minister, I'm just trying to seek some clarification on how this went down.

What I'm understanding is that – well, first of all, let me ask this: Without making this change, was it the intent of the legislation that there would be no profits on Facility, it just wasn't as clear as it ought to have been, but that was always the intent of the legislation to begin with? Is that true or ...?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Facility has always been non-profit. I think it was always assumed that Facility would not have a profit provision. If I just guess, I'm just guessing, that it was not explicitly put in because Facility historically has always been non-profit. They now asked for a profit and because the legislation didn't say they couldn't have a profit, it was granted.

Now we're clarifying that they cannot have a profit. They're already getting profit.

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

**P. LANE:** Okay, I'm not asking for the specific date, if you have the specific date, fine, but even a rough idea: At what point in time did the insurance companies apply to the PUB to get profit and how long have they been deriving the profit? Has it only been a couple of weeks, couple of months or it's been a year? How long has this been going on that they've been receiving profit?

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

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

I think it's within a year or year and a half. All the dates are publicly available on the Public Utilities Board website in terms of the day they made their order. I thought I had it here, I might find it in a second. If I don't have it, I will certainly get it to the Member in terms of the actual date the order was granted and then when the Public Utilities Board allowed it. It's all public information, I will get that.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you for that, Minister.

Okay, well then, with that being said, I was kind of under the impression that this was something that had kind of just happened. If it had just happened and we were intervening immediately, type of thing, to add clarity, prevent them from collecting money from people that they ought not to have been collecting, then I would be with you.

But I do have to say that if they have been collecting money from people for the last year or year and a half that it was never the intent, it was never collected before, was never the intent of the legislation and it's simply an error by the Public Utilities Board or some issue with the legislation that allowed it to happen, even though it never happened before, it was never allowed to happen, then it seems to me that perhaps the insurance companies found a loophole and they explored that loophole and they were successful in doing it. That's on them, and I don't think they should be rewarded for it.

So I would agree with my colleagues that they should have to pay that money back. I know you've made your decision and I respect that. You're the minister, that's your call, but I don't agree with that part. I think they should give the money back. If they're not going to issue cheques back, it would be

very easy for them to simply – the people that are involved there – calculate what the money is and when they come up for renewal say, okay, your rate this year is \$2000, minus the \$300 we owe you, you only pay in \$1700. They don't have to go issuing cheques.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you for the feedback.

So I do have some dates that were in my speaking notes. In June 2022, a year-and-half rate filing, Facility requested the rate increase of 13 per cent for taxis including a 6 per cent profit. The order that was issued in September 2022 allowed the profit. Before it made that ruling in September 2022, that was when the Public Utilities Board gave this notice in newspapers and sent the notice to the taxi operators.

It was in 2021 filings that Facility was asking for profits. So it's been in place for taxis since September 2022; it wasn't in place for everyone else since then. I don't have all the filings in front of me but they're all publicly available on the Public Utilities Board website, of if and when – because I believe there's been no commercial insurance Facility filings. There are no commercial insurance Facility members currently paying profit, because I know for a fact that no commercial have gone through this process yet.

I believe there was a request for regular auto insurance. I don't have in front of me the date that was approved by the Public Utilities Board, but that will be on their website and I can certainly get that.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** I would just conclude, Mr. Chair, by saying, you look at, for example, when the CERB money came out. I'm just using this as a little analogy. There were people that legitimately applied – I know there were people who illegitimately applied for CERB, but there also were people who legitimately applied for CERB. It was kind of thrown out there haphazardly, and at the end of the day the federal government came back and said you received money that you shouldn't have received. They had no problem being punitive on the average person, to say you've got to give us our money back. So I'm not sure why we would be so concerned about insurance companies who are making tens of millions of dollars, having to give back a bit of money to the consumer, given the fact that they collected money that they ought not have collected.

Thank you.

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

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

Thank you for the comments. I do have some new information from my team. The average savings for a taxi will be \$423 a year per taxi. The average saving for a private passenger vehicle will be \$138 per vehicle a year. In the 2019 Public Utilities Board review of automobile insurance, they did indicate – this is on the Public Utilities Board website – that profit was not allowed on Facility business.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

Just a question. Given the background of Facility and making these changes, was there any report or anything done on this and the effects that the profit had or was it just, I guess, of the department to just go and make this one correction? Was there any actual research or anything done with Facility on this profit or was it just blanketly, like we're going to just fix this little loophole?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you.

We are clarifying a piece in the legislation that is not clear. Historically Facility never had profit. In what I've read, in the rulings from the Public Utilities Board and in a request from Facility, it is solely for the principle of having profit on this business. That is the sole purpose of it. As I've said, my argument is they're getting their allowed profit, fair. They don't need the extras, so that's what we're trying to clarify.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

Given the changes for Facility, is there any ongoing work now that your department is doing on the rates for average insurance company and those kind of profits that they're allowed to make?

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

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

The Public Utilities Board sets the percentage allowed and in their 2019 review – it's a fascinating read, if anyone is really bored sometime. They are allowed an after-tax return of equity of 10 per cent on average for all business. As a government,

our next legislated auto insurance review, we have to announce a decision, I think, around January 2025. This is not comprehensive; we're just clarifying an unclear area to provide some financial relief, but the next big auto insurance review we'll make a decision on whether or not that'll proceed in 2025.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**E. JOYCE:** I'm just going to stand and have a few words on this because I was involved with this back years ago.

The few questions I would like to ask and have answered because a lot of this is concerning to small businesses, the people with the taxis, who, \$500 a year, would be a lot of help to a lot of those individuals. What happened back years ago when the insurance rates were a bit higher and there was some talk about putting a cap on soft-tissue injuries in the province – there was big uproar from the legal society about that. So to try to mitigate some of that, the insurance companies said, okay, what we'll do now; we'll put in a Facility. Anybody that we feel has more accidents or maybe a possibility of someone that may have accidents we'll put them in this Facility Association which will drive up their rates.

The question I would ask the minister on that – and this is something that hasn't been discussed here today – who decides who goes in to that Facility Association or Facility rates and how do we justify that whatever they're charging those individuals, they're not making profits? That's the question.

As we all know, we drive our cars. Everybody in this House of Assembly got a car. We probably drive it a few hours a day. A taxi is going 24 hours a day. The

possibility of an accident is much higher in those cars. It is – much higher.

So the question would be who decides who goes into the Facility? How are the rates decided that there is no profit being made? If the minister stated that, yes, there was \$400 or \$500 made that shouldn't have been made, shouldn't we and the minister look at some way to help with that?

This idea of the insurance across the province is big. The bigger picture of the insurance companies – and I remember getting all the briefings on it and meeting with all the insurance companies – is that the big insurance companies, they're on the stock market. If they make money on the stock market, they say they try to subsidize the car industry, auto industry.

Then when you've got all the massive floods across Canada, that a lot of these insurance companies have got to pick up, they're saying, well, we've got to make our money somewhere. This is where the insurance rates for vehicles are tied into the whole insurance. But when they break it down and they say, okay, how can we make more profit? That's when the Facility Association, the Facility section came into is that we think that three over there in that part, it is a good possibility you may have more accidents so we're going to up your rates.

What the rates were, were decided, but it was never, ever found that: Okay, how do we know that those three people are going to have more accidents than these three people? That's where the loophole was in the system at the beginning that they tried to fix, is that the insurance company decides who should go in there and who should not and who has a greater possibility of having a car accident.

That was the big question for a lot of people that were running them out of business, especially for the taxi industry, for courier businesses and others; younger drivers are another example. I'm sure they have stats

that they can show, but what happens is a lot of people who are private business, say for taxis and couriers, they're getting lumped into this whole scheme of higher rates because there's a certain group that's got more accidents. But you're part of this group; you've got to pay anyway.

So I'd for the minister to answer those questions, if possible. I'm not trying to put the minister on the spot with that because that's a lot of the information to be answered here today. But she could bring it back for a third reading on that issue, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

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

So fair questions, absolutely. In terms of who goes in Facility or not. We have a private auto insurance market, right. There are a few different companies. If you were an insurance company, you're in the business of making money. You decide which driver is a risk that you're prepared to take on. So the actuary, the math experts that work for the insurance companies decide how many accidents, how old you are and all that kind of stuff. Maybe not age, I think we took that out. But what makes up a driver that we're prepared to insure.

So if you can call an auto insurance company and get a policy, that's great. If you call around and they say no, I'm sorry, we don't have an insurance product for you and you've called all of them, then you go to Facility.

Facility is a non-profit association of all the insurers. They have to be members of Facility insurance. The idea is that they all share in the losses from the riskiest drivers because, on average, that pool of people who are the riskiest drivers, they cost more money than they pay in premiums. So all



the insurance companies pay in the losses for that.

That's kind of how they decide who goes into Facility or not. If no insurance company will insure you, then you go to Facility.

Then, I guess in terms of what the rates are. The insurance companies have to file rate filings with the Public Utilities Board. They have to outline: these are our costs, these are our claim costs. Then the Public Utilities Board makes a decision on that. I have to say, their closed-claim studies in the 2019 review are really helpful to explain what the makeup of those kinds of costs are, I encourage any Member to read it if you are interested in learning more about all the different costs that go into claims costs and everything.

My understanding is pretty scientific; the Public Utilities Boards allow rates based on the input of costs. So that's the best I can answer the question.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As we come in here this morning, I'm hearing that a company of Facility, who was never supposed to be profit driven, were non-profit, managed to make profits at some point off our taxi drivers, our private citizens, over the past year or so, and that's not the way it was supposed to be.

Of course, we're all looking for ideas to put money back into Newfoundlanders and Labradorians' pockets. I'll say it again, I think that it's a shame that we came in here today and we didn't have a little more to this legislation that could have put more money back into Newfoundlanders and Labradorians' pockets because, at the end

of the day, that's exactly what we're here to do, especially with the cost-of-living crisis that we have.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Chair, I would like to make an amendment to Bill 47.

I move that Bill 47, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act, to add clause 34: This act is considered to have come into effect retroactive to April 1, 2023.

That is seconded by the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

Like I say, this is a great opportunity for all of us to vote on this amendment and put money back into Newfoundlanders and Labradorians' pockets where it belongs.

Thank you, Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

We need to call the rest of the clauses. I'll ask you to put your amendment in at the end, okay?

So we are on clause 1. Any other speakers to clause 1?

If not, shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 through 33, inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 33 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 33 carried.

**CHAIR:** I recognize the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

Like I say, we heard this morning – and, listen, we realize that legislation, that's what this House is for. This House is for debate, it's a House for ideas. I said it yesterday; this is the people's House. This is the way debate is supposed to go. We can put out ideas, we can add to legislation and we can make it stronger. That's exactly what we're going to do here today.

I know the minister said it would be quite inconvenient for them to issue cheques this year. Well, I have to tell you, for a company that wasn't supposed to make profit, we here in the Opposition are not going to lose any sleep over the inconvenience of re-issuing cheques to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that truly need it.

Again, I move that Bill 47, An Act to Amend the Insurance Companies Act, to add the clause 34: This act is considered to have come into effect retroactive to April 1, 2023.

This is seconded by the Member for Cape St. Francis.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

We will recess the Committee and have a look at the proposed amendment to see if it's order.

Thank you.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

After reviewing the proposed amendment by the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, the amendment of Bill 47, it's determined that the amendment is not in order.

**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 to Amend the Insurance Companies Act.

**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 47 carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 47.

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.'

Motion 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 47 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 47 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**J. HOGAN:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**J. HOGAN:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 8, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022, Bill 48.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

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

I'm pleased to rise in this hon. House today to bring forward Bill 48.

**SPEAKER:** We need a mover and a seconder.

**B. DAVIS:** I move Bill 48, seconded by the MHA for the beautiful District of Gander.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 48, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022." (Bill 48)

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

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

I'm pleased for the second time to rise in this House to start to bring forward Bill 48. I apologize for not getting the process

correct. But I'm excited to be here nonetheless.

We're seeking to amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act. This bill incorporates amendments to the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act and provides bereavement counselling services for survivor dependants after work-related fatalities that occurred on or after January 1, 2022.

Sadly, Mr. Speaker, 30 workers lost their lives in 2022, eight workplace incident accidents and 22 occupational diseases. Over the past five years, some 145 workers have lost their lives. One life lost is one too many, and the impact on families is enormous. This change is very, very important.

Speaker, WorkplaceNL currently provides compensation to dependants and up to \$10,000 in burial expenses following a work-related fatality, but does not cover bereavement counselling for surviving dependants. This will be rectified here today, is my greatest hope.

Reaching back for almost two years brings us back to a time where the pandemic heightened awareness about mental wellness and when more workers' dependants began asking for counselling services, Mr. Speaker.

WorkplaceNL have received various requests in 2022 for bereavement counselling sessions to be added to the supports provided by WorkplaceNL for dependants of deceased workers. Newfoundland and Labrador is one of the few jurisdictions in Canada that does not currently have this to provide this service, so we want to rectify that today.

This change would align us with other Canadian workers' compensation boards where eight provide bereavement counselling services to dependants. The

regulations will address the finer details of such as the number of sessions.

Speaker, by adding bereavement counselling to the benefit available to dependants, we are acknowledging the significant impact work fatalities and helping them navigate through tragic loss. This change will also reduce financial burdens to accessing mental health supports and demonstrates the provincial government's leadership in trying to advance psychological health and safety.

The proposed changes will not have any significant impact on the injury fund and will not increase employers' assessment rates. Also, I won't go on for too much longer, because I think this is going to be supported by my colleagues in the House, I'm hopeful, and ask all Members in this House to endorse the amendments of Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act.

I look forward to the debate and the subsequent questions that will come after this and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

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

It's always a privilege to get up in the House of Assembly to speak on such an important bill, actually. This bill, I think, is important to the injured workers of our province.

First of all, I would like to touch on the compensation act itself, I guess, and just make a brief note on that one. Speaking of the compensation act, many injured workers find themselves in difficult situations, financially and mentally through no fault of their own. We need fast action to

accommodate those injured workers, to give them the security they need. We need fast action from the compensations to make sure those are adequately determined and the compensation is provided to them so that they can deal with the everyday life and strives that's happening, especially with the cost of living, that they can carry on their normal lives as best as they can do.

I've heard many stories related to WorkplaceNL and compensation, especially dealing with the cost of living, the fast actions that they need to have the compensations in place to help them with the high cost of living, their regular day living and the supports they need to carry on with their regular day. That part of the act certainly would be appreciated.

Speaker, in regard to Bill 48: "This Bill would amend the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022* to provide Workplace NL with the authority to pay for bereavement counselling services for dependents of a worker who, as a result of an injury, dies on or after January 1, 2022."

We will support this bill, no doubt. During the technical briefing, department staff indicated this change came as result of heightened awareness and sensitivity to mental health issues over the past few years. I can understand that, Speaker, because with the cost of living today and the way it is, and I just mention the compensation act itself, to find themselves in those situations with no financial help basically, sometimes it takes a period for them to get situated into the compensation act and get the money flowing. So that causes a lot of stress on families, causes a lot of stress on the individuals themselves sometimes and it is certainly good to see the compensation stepping up here and paying for those types of costs.

In response to a question on that date chosen, January 1, 2022, staff indicated that it was operational and fiscally year related. The dependants and children of cohabiting

partners will be included. The number of sessions being provided will be specified in regulations. That would be something that we would be interested in seeing, of course, the number of sessions that would be specified.

I guess that's on a case-by-case basis but I'm sure that, you know, when the dependants of a worker find themselves in bereavement because of an injury from compensation their life changes. They are turned upside down. They don't know where to turn. Their safety net is not there anymore. They need help, they need some compensations, they need bereavement issues dealt with and it's very hard on the families and the dependants so the number of sessions would depend on that.

But it's a good initiative for the compensation to certainly step up here and to help those individuals that need that help, especially for the bereavement periods that they need because this causes devastation, not only to the partners, but to the families and everyone involved.

We've heard too often across our province, of course, even if it's once, it's too often when someone loses a life in regard to the WorkplaceNL issues and in regard to injuries at work. If it's one, it's one too many but hopefully we can change that as well.

This bill was certainly overdue; it should have been done a long time ago, but it is good to see it come into effect. We welcome the long overdue change to provide counselling services to those who have lost loved ones; so that is a good initiative to do. We have heard in every district and every community of our province that people are touched by workplace fatality.

I just explained that it is touched by every one of us here in the House of Assembly. Every one of our districts is touched by workplace fatality. It is sad that happens; I wish it didn't happen, but the facts are there and facts are true.

We need to do more to support the families that are grieving, that have lost a member – I explained that earlier. We need to put every support that we can in there so the bereavement, for those people that need the help, especially in the sessions, how long that would be and the help that they need, especially on the mental supports, would be greatly appreciated.

It is unfortunate that in 2023 we need to change legislation to provide counselling. One would have thought that government would have wraparound supports for families during these difficult times. It took until 2023 to get this done; we would have liked to have seen it in past prior. But it is a good initiative and we will support the initiative and support this bill, but we will certainly have more questions in the Committee.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

I'll just speak briefly to this. First of all, I will say that I want to acknowledge the loss of a worker, this past week, in Labrador West who was killed on a mine site. I want to acknowledge that, today, in 2023, workers are still being killed on industrial sites. We still have a memorial service and stuff on the day of mourning for workers; we still see new names added every year. This is unfortunate in this province, in 2023, that we're still losing workers on job sites so I want to acknowledge that first.

I thank the minister for also acknowledging that as well. We have a lot of work to do as a province for health and safety, but unfortunately we do have to put in an amendment today about grievance counselling. Something I figured was actually already covered in such circumstances but we're going to rectify that now. It is a small step forward for families of

workers who were killed on the site, but it still doesn't replace the fact that their loved one is gone and was killed in an industrial accident.

Right now, we talk about wraparound supports and mental health and stuff like that, and this is a good first step forward and I hope that going forward that the minister's department will actually look at how wraparound supports can be given to families of those who were injured or killed in the workplace, because even those who are injured suffer long-standing trauma, them and their families.

In some cases, people can never go back to work after being injured and they, too, need wraparound supports. We want to talk about mental health, when it comes to this. A lot of the injured workers that I spoke to do suffer from a lot of mental health issues and stuff after having sometimes in cases very horrific accidents. Then we go back and talk about those families who have lost loved ones.

This is a good first step forward. If I can give anything back to the minister and his team, is to go and do a comprehensive review on how do we handle these kinds of things over at WorkplaceNL. Because not only just this one first step but also there is so much more when it comes to mental health and counselling and stuff like that that needs to be addressed for injured workers, families of those who were killed on the worksite and so on and so forth. This is just on top of all the other things that we discuss and we talk about: WorkplaceNL, the compensation and how that process goes through.

I get a lot of calls and stuff to my office talking about delays and why was I rejected. Why do I have to go to appeal? Things like that. There are a lot of issues and stuff that are inside there as well that we need to work through, but at the same time, we bring in this one good thing but we'd like to see that a review of how we treat injured workers, especially those who are having

mental health issues and stuff after their accidents. It's traumatizing, especially those who lose the ability to work, lose the ability to continue on.

We want to see that they're also taken care of because, like you said, most cases it's no fault of their own that these things happen and they lost the ability to work is also a very traumatic thing as well.

I do applaud this, I do support this move and I hope to see the minister take back some of comments and maybe hopefully soon see some more changes that will be positive when it comes to mental health with those who are injured or the family of those who were killed in the workplace.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'll just take a couple minutes as well and talk about this great piece of legislation that's been brought forward today for the workers throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

First of all, I'd like to remind everybody out there, whoever is listening, that every worker in Newfoundland and Labrador has the right and the obligation to refuse unsafe work, if that's ever come up. Safety is everybody's responsibility. Every person here. Every person on every job site. You have to watch out for yourself. You have to watch out for the person next to you and ensure that they go home to their family safe at the end of the day because nobody wants to see an injury or a worker that lost their life. Over the past year, those numbers are astounding. Thirty people – it's absolutely terrible.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, our geography dictates how many tough jobs out there that there actually are. You watch these men and women come in in choppers on the power lines. It's amazing. We have our oil and gas field out there that, you know, it's a danger zone. Every second of every day you've got to be paying attention. Lots of us here have worked in blue-collar jobs and we have a lot of hazards out there in our workplaces. We need to ensure that we do everything we can to mitigate the hazard. But at the end of the day, it's going to be human consciousness that picks up on the hazards, that mitigates the hazards.

So to see this piece of legislation come forward is absolutely fantastic. People, at the end of the day, we want them to go home to their families. I often think about the road workers alongside our highways and people zipping on through, not paying attention. Those road workers are on the highway during traffic. They leave their families in the morning; they just want to go home in the evening. So I would compel everybody to watch your speeds.

We live in a day of cell phones now. I'll just keep it tight and quick, Speaker. I think it's relevant. We live in a time of cell phones right now where: I'll check that real quick, just a moment. Well, that can go sideways real fast. So I encourage everybody to do the right thing, to do your part to ensure that our moms and dads, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters go home at the end of the day. It's extremely important so, of course, I'm sure that we'll be supporting this legislation.

It's great for mental health. It's great for those people who have lost in the past. I know many families who have lost a worker on the job. You kiss your husband, your wife, your significant other in the morning; you expect to see them at 5 in the evening. Not everybody does. When you get that phone call lunchtime and it can be an absolutely devastating phone call to your family.

So the government bringing forward legislation to ensure that those families get the help that they need, it's an absolutely great piece of legislation and I look forward to supporting it.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

I'll be supporting Bill 48 as well. It won't take too long to speak to this. I'll just say that prior to becoming a Member of this House of Assembly I worked for many years as an occupational health and safety practitioner, that's what I did for a living, in any number of fields here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I worked for the City of St. John's as safety officer there, for about four years and oversaw the construction of Mile One and the Convention Centre. We looked after, of course, the depot; all of the roadwork that would be contracted out by the city, Bay Bulls-Big Pond and Windsor Lake and so on; recreational facilities. I later worked for Oceanex; I was there for about a year or so as safety manager down there. We all know what Oceanex is related to and the type of environment they work in.

Of course, before becoming a Member I worked for the A. Harvey Group for 10-plus years, and that would have included Browning Harvey, a production facility of course, for Pepsi in Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as Harvey Autocarriers, Harvey's Oil, Argentia Freezers.

So I guess the bottom line is I've been involved in many, many areas of industry, many different types of work, both as a safety practitioner and as a disability claims manager on the other side. So I'm quite familiar with, sadly, workplace accidents. I'm quite familiar with serious incidents, serious injury, I've had to investigate, and

unfortunately I've had in my career three or four, fatalities in different places, due to the nature of the work, dangerous environments, and unfortunately things happen.

I understand completely the impact that a workplace accident, a serious incident and certainly a fatality – I understand the impact that that can have on a family. As a matter of fact I can recall having to track down a family member, spouse of a person who had died at the worksite. And I had to go to the home along with a chaplain and so on, and break the news. So I know how heartbreaking it can be. I know how devastating it can be on families. I know what they have to go through.

Anything that we can do to assist families when it comes to, as we're saying here, bereavement counselling services for dependants, whether that be spouses or children and so on of those who have been lost at a workplace, then I think it's a very positive move. I certainly commend the government for bringing this forward.

I would say although it's not in this particular bill, I think it's related – and I'm not sure if there's something in the act already. I don't think there is anything in this act or in the Occupational Health and Safety Act, but I would just put out to the minister as a thought that when a serious workplace accident occurs, particularly if it's a fatality, while it's obviously devastating on the family of the individual or individuals involved, it can also be very, very devastating on the coworkers.

I know that there are a lot of companies out there that have good EAPs and so on to address these things but I would venture to guess, in my experience, that not every company out there, especially the smaller companies and so on, would necessarily have an EAP or whatever in place.

So I just throw it out there as food for thought, something to consider perhaps in



future amendments to just look at that issue to ensure that there are some mechanisms in place that would have some kind of a requirement – again, I know a lot of companies would be doing it anyway, but to have some kind of requirement or perhaps even a little funding through workers' comp, whatever, if necessary that if there was a workplace fatality that there would be some services available to coworkers of the victims of workplace accidents as well, because that, as I said, can have a devastating impact on the workplace. I've seen it first-hand and it's not a good thing.

Anyway with that said, as I said, this is a positive thing and I will certainly support it wholeheartedly.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I just want to speak briefly on the bill. This is a positive improvement and I think it's long overdue for bereavement counselling. My colleague from Lab West spoke about the trauma and spoke about mental health issues of people being impacted not only from a loss of life, but also a traumatic injury that impacts everybody, coworkers and families. It's really, really important that we make sure that mental health supports are available to all those impacted.

The only concern I would have about this is the limitation for a spouse, children and dependants of the person who's deceased. If you're 19 or 20 and you lose a parent in a workplace accident, that's a lot of trauma as well. I think what we should be doing is we should try to be extending to make sure that people don't fall through the cracks, that people are looked after, that the supports are there as well.

I know, for example, with some insurances somebody who's over the age of 18 is still covered if they're a student or they're doing something that would make them eligible. Maybe that's something that this legislation should look at including as well.

Very, very important – yes, we're going to provide bereavement counselling for workers, the dependents and the spouse. But in this province right now we have a lot of people who are looking for counselling, looking for support for mental health issues that they're dealing with, they're struggling with and we look at the long wait-lists. We really need to make sure that mental health supports are available to people who need it when they need it. That's really, really important.

We can amend all the legislation we want but if we don't put the resources in place so that when people want to avail of counselling, it's important that they can. There's such a backlog.

I just listened to my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands. He knows how many people died on his shift. Any worker that works in industry you know how many people – even if you weren't at the site. Even if you were on turnaround. If they died on your shift, you knew about them.

Do you know something? Not only did you know about them, you remember them, you know the impact, you know what happened to their families and you know what happened to their colleagues. It's really, really tragic and it's very, very traumatic.

If we're going to actually make supports available, we have to make sure that they can avail of them when they need them. It's really, really important that we put more effort into mental health supports.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no further speakers, if the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL speaks now we will close debate.

The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

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

I thank the hon. colleagues for the support from both sides of the House. Starting with the MHA for Exploits, I thank you for the good words about heightened awareness and ensuring that we all have a responsibility to ensure safety.

The Member for Lab West, we're very sorry for the loss that your community has experienced over the last week. One loss is one loss way too many.

Mount Pearl - Southlands for his detailed résumé and experience and the knowledge that he does have for safety and the experience that comes to the table, it's very helpful in the House of Assembly when we have bills like this come forward.

The Member for Torngat Mountains for bringing forward some of the concerns. One of the concerns she just raised is one that I can say is covered up until 25 if you're a student, similar to what you just expected. So I did want to let you know that right away.

The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans who also had the opportunity to highlight reducing the stress levels and anything we can do that's going to help people move forward in a quicker way and get the help they require. That's why we're doing this.

I'm anxious for questions, so I'll give everyone the opportunity to come forward with questions. I'm looking forward to it.

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

The motion is that Bill 48 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 48)

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

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

I move that this House do now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 48.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

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

We are now considering Bill 48, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022.

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

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair is recognizing the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Just a couple of questions there.

Can the minister explain why he is doing this now?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

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

A very good question. With the heightened awareness that came from the COVID-19 pandemic, we were looking at that through WorkplaceNL. The additional requests that came forward, we looked at there was a gap in the system that we wanted to fix, so we looked at a jurisdictional scan. The second we started that process, we backdated the coverage to include the time at which we

were first brought to the awareness of this. We wanted to do that to bring us in line with the rest of the country.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Can the minister outline the consultations held?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

**B. DAVIS:** So this is an improvement to the benefit. The consultations would have been internal. They would have been with areas with respect to our own legislation to look at the jurisdictional scan as I mentioned earlier with the rest of the country. That would bring us in line with the other eight boards. This is a positive improvement. There would be no reason, I guess, to go out publicly with this to the people until we actually brought it to the House of Assembly like we're doing here today.

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

**P. FORSEY:** So what were the results of those consultations?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for Workplace –

**B. DAVIS:** What you see here today –

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

**B. DAVIS:** I'm a bit too quick. Sorry, Mr. Chair, I am so excited to answer his questions.

What you see here before you is what the results of those jurisdictional scans are. We wanted to make sure that we brought this forward to bring us in line with the rest of the other jurisdictions in our country to serve the people that we serve. We want to ensure that those individuals that are dependants,

when probably the most impactful thing in their life is ever going to happen, they get the services they require with no cost to themselves.

So we look forward to the implementation here as quick as we possibly can.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Why was the date of January 1, 2022, chosen?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

**B. DAVIS:** Another good question.

It aligns with when we were first brought to awareness of this issue from people reaching out to us to receive that bereavement counselling. So we wanted to do that, as I said, jurisdictional scan, get that information in line and then we backdate it to the point at which we started that process which would have been the start of that fiscal year of 2022, January 1.

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

**P. FORSEY:** During the department briefing, staff indicated that the date was chosen for operational and fiscal year issues. Why does that trump the needs of grieving families?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

**B. DAVIS:** It absolutely does not. The reason why we chose that date was around when we started that process, it just aligned closely with that time of the year, so we figured, for ease of opportunity to do that, at the start of a year would be the best way to do it. There was no rhyme nor reason not to do it earlier than that. That was just when we started the consultation period and it lined up very closely with January 1 of 2022.

It started after that but we wanted to go back to ensure that started that fiscal year.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Will the minister limit the amount of grief counseling sessions an individual can have?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

**B. DAVIS:** Another very good question; that will be dealt with in the regulations. I don't know the answer to that question, yet. That is what we're going to be consulting with some of our industry players, some of the best practices that will be across the country.

We look forward to those regulations being put in place very, very quickly. But we do want to make sure we do our due diligence on ensuring that they get the number that they require. If that needs to be changed, either up or down after the fact, we're willing to do that, as we need to for the people that we all represent.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Again, how would the number of sessions be determined?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

**B. DAVIS:** Through consultation; looking at the best practices across the rest of the country, as well; talking with our stakeholders, ensuring that is where we need to be.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Just a couple more quick questions. Will both the spouse and children

be eligible for counselling, with no family cap?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

**B. DAVIS:** Yes, both the spouse, the children, dependants – if you've got, for argument sake, your stepmother living with you, they would be considered a dependant. Provided they meet that qualification, they would be able to avail of that service as well.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** So that applies to benefits as well.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

**B. DAVIS:** Yes, thank you.

I can get the answer exactly with the benefits, but yes, the dependent spouse would receive the benefits of the deceased person, of course, like they do now, currently. This is just dealing with the bereavement counselling, to ensure that they would be able to get the counselling that they would require once they – hopefully nobody has to have that tragic news come to them – but if it does and we know because of the line of work that a lot of people are in in this province and around our country that that happens from time to time. We don't like it and we don't want it to happen and we're going to do everything we can to stop it but after this worst day of your life has happened in your family, we want to make sure that there is counselling that can be covered by WorkplaceNL at no cost to you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** Thanks.

Just one question actually. Given this work that was done in consultation, I guess it was brought to the attention of WorkplaceNL to look at this, is there any more work being done on the side of mental health services for either grieving members or injured members services that they could avail of through the compensation?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

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

I just want to address that there's no family cap. I wanted to jump back and answer your question, no family cap.

To your question directly, we've moved a lot in WorkplaceNL, as you've seen; we've brought some progressive legislation forward over the last number of years. We're going to continue to do that, evaluate what's required, whether that be additional services, presumptively like we've done with cancer for firefighters, volunteer and career, or whether it's going to need to be mental health services, which we've done as well.

We're always looking at ways to improve legislation and availability of services to the people that we all represent and we want to ensure that they get it as quickly and as fast as we can in consultation with our stakeholders, which Workplace is doing, I would say, on a daily basis but definitely very, very often.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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:** Clause 2.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

**CLERK:** 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 to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022.

**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. Deputy Government House Leader.

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

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 48 carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 48.

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 48 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 48 be passed without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

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

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

I move that this House do now stand in recess.

**SPEAKER:** This House do stand recessed until 2 p.m.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Good afternoon, everyone. First of all, I'd like to begin by welcoming the public gallery today, Dennis Flynn. Dennis will be recognized this afternoon in a Member's statement.

Welcome.

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

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the District of Stephenville - Port au Port, Conception Bay South, Humber - Bay of Islands, Torngat

Mountains, Harbour Main and Waterford Valley, with leave.

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

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

Volunteers do not necessarily have the time; they just have the heart. Rosie Keats of Stephenville and Dave Kane of Stephenville Crossing are shining examples of people who have heart.

Several years ago, the Cancer Care Garden of Hope infrastructure was put in place at the Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital in Stephenville; however, it needed much care and attention to make it an inviting place for patients and visitors. Rosie and Dave, two gardening buddies who share a passion for gardening, accepted the challenge to revitalize the Garden of Hope.

Without funding available, the pair reached out to friends and family for donations of plants, soil, paint and stain. Often working 10 hours a day, in extreme temperatures, Rosie and Dave filled every planter and applied all 20 gallons of paint to the boxes, benches and fences.

Today, the Garden of Hope is a spectacle with its beautiful blooms and colourful decor. As one palliative care patient told his nurse as she was tucking him into bed for the night: "If Heaven is like that Garden of Hope, I am ready to go."

Thanks Rosie and Dave for brightening the lives of patients, workers and visitors to our hospital.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Speaker, the Town of Conception Bay South is celebrating its golden anniversary. Incorporated in 1973, Conception Bay South consists of nine communities: Topsail, Chamberlains, Manuels, Long Pond, Foxtrap, Kelligrews, Upper Gullies, Lawrence Pond and Seal Cove.

Conception Bay South has changed significantly over the last 50 years. Amalgamating nine separate communities together improved living conditions and expanded the range of services due to accessing government funding as a town.

We are now the second largest municipality in the province, thriving with over 27,000 residents. CBS is a linear community that follows the beautiful coastline, with spectacular views of Conception Bay. It is truly the best possible mix of rural and urban living.

CBS has been busy hosting numerous festivals, events and family activities throughout the year. Some of the highlights were the Canadian Forces Snowbirds airshow, magic and fire shows, outdoor movies, senior socials and, of course, the Kelligrews Soiree.

On Friday, October 27, please join us in celebrating the 50th anniversary concert at the CBS Arena. Performances by Shanneyganock, Rum Ragged and Conception Bay South's own Mallory Johnson and Darcy Scott.

Speaker, I am happy and I'm proud to call Conception Bay South my home. Well done, CBS, on celebrating 50 years of incorporation as a community.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Three remarkable women, with personal connections to the Ronald McDonald House, raised almost \$20,000 on the Ronald McDonald walks this year, which I was fortunate enough to attend.

Jenn Power Martineau, Cindy Wells and Vickie Travers and their dedicated group of volunteers had three tremendous walks to bring awareness and raise money for Ronald McDonald House to help with the financial burden that families face when they need a place to stay when their children are sick.

Griffin and Friends, Tanya Penney and the Town of Lark Harbour also stepped up to help make the walks such successful which was so thoughtful.

These funds will help children and their families in a time of stress and while these groups may never meet the families that will be helped, in their hearts they know, first-hand, the warm and comforting feeling of staying in a Ronald McDonald House.

Jenn, Cindy and Vickie have opened their hearts to help families in need and their hard work is a show of their compassion, which make all of us proud of the three ladies.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join with me in congratulating the three groups of volunteers for their continued commitment in supporting such a very worthwhile cause.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Rigolet's own Brooklyn Wolfrey won her way to the world podium seven times at the 2023 World Dwarf Games.



Four gold medals in open badminton singles and doubles; gold in track 60 metre and 100 metre; three bronze medals in soccer, basketball and 25-metre swimming.

She also competed in open volleyball. Her Anânsiak Charlotte explained the open category best. Brooklyn, only 15, competed in the adult category for badminton and volleyball.

Brooklyn is also a repeating world gold medalist, winning gold at the 2017 Games in swimming and floor hockey. When she took the podium to receive her first gold medal, it was extra special because Brooklyn brought our Nunatsiavut flag and the hearts of our Nation along with her to the top of the world podium.

I would be remiss not to include at varsity regionals and provincial competition and at NAIG, the North American Indigenous Games, Brooklyn competed against athletes twice her height, winning gold in badminton doubles at regionals and fourth at the provincials. At the North American Indigenous Games she won gold in doubles 16U and silver in doubles 16U.

We are humbled and proud at what this young 15-year-old Inuk has accomplished so far in her young life.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, I rise today to recognize a remarkable writer and photographer from Colliers in the District of Harbour Main. Dennis Flynn is a proud graduate of Memorial University, holding four degrees, the author of two books and over 260 published articles of stories celebrating Newfoundland and Labrador and its people; stories that celebrate exceptional seniors, adventure

tourism, hands-on travel, incredible local athletes and artists, as well as aspects of the unique arts, culture and traditions of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In 2003, he received a National Writing Award of Excellence from the Canadian Community Newspapers Association. In 2021, he won a provincial Arts and Letters Award for Visual Art. He has hosted the St. John's Story Circle and Storytelling Festival many times. His photographs and articles have been featured in various books, magazines and other publications. His photographs have also been selected for numerous art shows, exhibitions and museums throughout the world.

Dennis is also a lifetime volunteer and an active runner who has participated in over 270 races, which include marathons and ultra-marathons.

I ask all Members to please join me in recognizing Dennis Flynn for his extraordinary accomplishments and contribution to the arts community in our province.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley with leave.

Does the Member have leave?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Leave.

**SPEAKER:** Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

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

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

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

I'm not sure if they're asking me to leave or if they're giving me leave, but I'm staying.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to extend congratulations to Mary Oakley on being chosen as an inductee in the Newfoundland and Labrador Sports Hall of Fame in the Veteran/Athlete category for softball, rowing and soccer.

Ms. Oakley played her first game of softball at age 21 and has emerged to become one of the foremost pitchers in the province. In addition to softball, she has excelled in both soccer and rowing and has made a major contribution in the area of sports in Newfoundland and Labrador.

As a proud member of the community of Shea Heights, Mary single-handedly organized the recreation program for youth in the area. In doing so, she helped build character, teach the meaning of sportsmanship, commitment and confidence among youth and, in turn, providing them with the tools necessary to meet the challenges in their futures.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in paying tribute to Mary Oakley for her achievement as a new member of the Newfoundland and Labrador Sports Hall of Fame.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

#### Statements by Ministers

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

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

I'm very pleased today to rise to highlight the successes of the Family Care Teams throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, Family Care Teams are a collaborative environment

where various health care professionals, including physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, pharmacists and other allied health professionals work together in the delivery of primary health care.

To date, Family Care Teams have been announced for 19 locations throughout the province, including Port aux Basques, Happy Valley-Goose Bay and Burin.

Just this month, new teams in Clarenville and Grand Falls-Windsor have begun accepting patients.

As a result of our efforts, the number of people who have been rostered to Family Care Teams has risen from approximately 28,000 the last time this Legislature sat, Mr. Speaker, to more than 49,000 today.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Access to good medical care is a key social determinant of health that guides our efforts. With every new team that is established, we are taking the right steps to increasing access to primary care.

I encourage any resident without current access to primary care to visit the Patient Connect website to be assigned to a Family Care Team when one is available in their area.

Speaker, Family Care Teams are welcomed by health professionals, which is helping with recruitment. They've also been received well by the general public.

We look forward to reaching our goal of 35 Family Care Teams to connect more Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

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

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

I think it fails to note that it's almost two years ago now that the Health Accord had this recommendation to establish 35 new community teams. Of course, two years later, we're not even close to that 35.

The Health Accord at the time of that recommendation indicated that 100,000 – it was 100,000 people without primary care and only recently the doctors have indicated that has grown to over 136,000. The minister thinks those numbers are not nearly as bad and that's the problem. The same with housing. The same with the cost of living. If government refuses to admit there's a crisis, then it will not respond as if it's a crisis.

I've met with many health care professionals throughout the province and they talk about the lack of respect. We depend so much on the health care professionals throughout the province and we need them to staff these community care clinics. So until we start to treat them with respect, we're not going to see the successes in recruitment nor the successes in retention.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

Many people originally registered with Patient Connect when it was first launched nearly two years ago have yet to hear back. While it's encouraging to see new clinics open, which we fully support, but as long as the province is not addressing health care worker retention, it is not succeeding.

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.

Everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador continues to feel the pressure as the cost of living continues to rise, no more so than people on fixed incomes or low incomes.

Poverty reduction should be a priority, not simply an afterthought. The Liberal government scrapped the poverty reduction with only a vague consultation about starting a plan.

I ask the Premier: Why has your government refused to introduce a new poverty reduction strategy?

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

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

A good question and I thank you for it, Sir. Poverty reduction is incredibly important to everybody, I assume, in this House. I am assuming it's one of the reasons we're all in this House. Our team has been working with stakeholders through the Health Accord and others to look at the social determinants of health. The most important one of which is poverty reduction.

I would tell the Member opposite that we have been working on it and something will be coming in the very, very, very near future, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, that's good to hear, but at the same time we haven't heard it for eight years.

Speaker, I believe the Seniors' Benefit should be indexed to inflation to ensure our seniors never fall behind on the cost of living.

I ask the Premier: Will you index the Seniors' Benefit to inflation?

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

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

Very important point that the Member opposite is making about the Seniors' Benefit. We have a Seniors' Benefit that about 50,000 seniors are taking advantage of in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's providing them help and care. We've recently increased that by 15 per cent, Speaker – 15 per cent.

This is just one of the things that we're doing to help our seniors. For example, the home heating supplement is also available, that will give \$500 for those that heat their homes with oil, to give them a supplement for that. We also provided free medicals for those who are aged 75 or over so that they can continue to drive and make sure that they have the full payment of that service.

Speaker, we've been able to introduce those programs. We've been able to support the seniors, Conservatives voted against them.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, we know exactly what we voted against. We voted against carbon tax. We voted against sugar tax.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** We have voted against the option.

These are wonderful things the minister stands and talks about, but they're measures. They're not a poverty reduction strategy. What we need is a poverty reduction strategy.

Speaker, the Liberal government will take in \$35 million in carbon tax revenue this year, according to their own budget.

I ask the Premier: Will you rebate, back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the \$35 million you've taken in on carbon tax?

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

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

It's always a privilege to talk about the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. Once again, we stand here in the House –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, as you're aware, it is a federal government tax. Despite the fact that everybody is taking a civics class, despite the fact that there's a legislative handbook, Mr. Speaker, the Members opposite do not want to acknowledge it. So don't take my word for it; here is the Supreme Court of Canada ruling. I'm happy to table it, if the Members opposite would like to read it because they haven't read their civics books, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to table the whole Supreme Court of Canada.

Right now, it says, Mr. Speaker, according to Chief Justice Richard Wagner, writing for the majority, the federal government can impose a minimum pricing standards on all provinces, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has a carbon tax; Ontario has a carbon tax, all because of the federal government.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Premier's time has expired.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Simply confirms, Speaker, simply confirms the carbon tax is a Liberal tax, brought in by Liberal governments, supported by a Liberal government, increased by a Liberal government.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** The carbon tax is a Liberal tax. As a matter of fact, to quote one minister in this Liberal government, said: The more you drive, the more you're going to have to pay the carbon tax.

I ask the Premier: How do you suggest someone from Trout River get to the health care centre without burning gas?

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

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

Again, I am happy to stand and debate the nuances of the carbon tax, the federal carbon tax, Mr. Speaker. I have written the

prime minister. I have had discussions with the prime minister. I take great exception to the federal Environment minister's failure to recognize the uniqueness of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker.

But if we're giving quotes, I am happy to deliver one back to the Member opposite. From his side, it was the MHA opposite him who said, "... it was brought in by the federal government, and we acknowledge that."

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

**A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, that is coming from the Member sitting next – the Opposition House Leader.

So as the Members opposite realize, this is not the right instrument. We agree, it is not the right instrument. That's why we continue to fight the federal government, Mr. Speaker.

The people in this province can't be punished by the carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, and we will continue to fight the federal government on that.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I will guarantee you 100 per cent that nobody on this side of the House voted for carbon tax.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, that very same minister who now stands in his place to oppose the carbon tax once said in this House – and I quote: "The carbon tax is the right policy ... and we need to stick with it, come high or low ...."

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** I say to that minister, you voted twice to make it higher and now you're upset about it.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** I ask the Premier: Do you regret your Liberal government's support for the carbon tax?

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

**A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, again, I am happy to stand and talk about the carbon tax because it is not our tax. In fact, when I came in, Mr. Speaker, and the carbon tax went to go up, we had to be very aware of –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I am not going to have the Members shouting back and forth. If you want to have discussions, take them outside so we can hear the speakers.

The hon. the Premier.

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

I think we all agree the fundamental premise of the carbon tax is flawed, Mr. Speaker. It relies on options. There are no options here in Newfoundland and Labrador for people in Trout River, for people in St. Anthony. There are no options to take –

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

**A. FUREY:** Pardon me?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. FUREY:** We gave some of that money back, Mr. Speaker, by cutting the gas tax in half.

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

**A. FUREY:** That was the responsible thing to do to offset the carbon tax for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, it took polling for the Liberals to understand what was obvious. Making life more expensive for people of Newfoundland and Labrador is a bad policy.

I again ask the Premier: You say you are against the carbon tax; will the Premier again rebate the money that he has collected from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in this year's budget?

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

**S. COADY:** You know, Speaker, we've been helping families with an eight-cent reduction – an eight-cent reduction – in the price of gas. We've been helping them for example with \$10-a-day child care, we've been helping seniors with a 15 per cent increase in Seniors' Benefit, and making sure that we have a home heat supplement. We've been helping businesses with lower taxes.

And do you know what the Conservatives did? They voted against every one of those supports. On the \$35 million, Speaker, we've already given it back to the people of the province with an eight-cent reduction in their gas tax.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, let me tell you and remind the people at home in Newfoundland and Labrador what actually happened. They brought in a budget last year that had measures in it – measures. It took three

times for us to force them to change their budget to get them to take additional measures that she talks about to help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So again, I simply ask, if you're so opposed to the carbon tax, you've got \$35 million collected.

I ask the Premier: Will you rebate that back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

Again, we're giving \$500 million back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**A. FUREY:** The Member opposite likes to talk about what he would get rid of, even if it's beyond his reach, Mr. Speaker. What we do know for sure, what is fact and not fiction, is that Member opposite would definitively take nurses out of the system, to close clinics out of the system, Mr. Speaker.

That's what he wants to cut. We're looking to fight the federal government with respect to carbon tax; when given a mandate, he wanted to take nurses out of the system. That's unacceptable on this side, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

What's clearly obvious here is the Premier doesn't have any answers. What I will tell the Premier, and I think I can speak for the majority of this province, as Premier of this province you should stand up and defend

the people of this province who elected you (inaudible).

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

**B. PETTEN:** That's not what's happening.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** That's not what's happening, Speaker.

Speaker, 77 per cent of the province is living paycheque to paycheque. A family in my own district reached out to me last night, who are working three jobs and looking for a fourth and fifth, I might add, while trying to provide for their kids.

Speaker, they're not looking for luxury; they're just trying to stay afloat. What does government say to them?

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

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

These are very difficult times, there's no doubt, and there's concerns around the cost of living. That's why this government, the Furey government, has really put an emphasis and an effort into making sure that we're doing absolutely everything we possibly can.

Five hundred million dollars we've put back in the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I've talked about the eight-cent reduction in the price of gasoline. I've talked about the \$10-a-day child care. I've talked about lowering taxes for businesses. I've talked about the 15 per cent increase in Income Supplement. I've talked about the pre-natal nutrition program. I've talked about the extra money that we're putting towards Kids Eat Smart; the extra money that we're putting towards the school lunch program.

All of these help that family and we hope to be able to continue to do those things.

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

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

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

Maybe the minister can put that in her next Facebook video to update the province. Everyone doesn't listen to Question Period, so maybe the next Facebook video she puts out she can put that in because no one is paying attention to it, Speaker.

Speaker, this family works hard; they pay their taxes. Yet, must skip the occasional mortgage payment or run behind on their light bill. They are just trying to put food on their table. These parents are exhausted with worry and stress of living paycheque to paycheque.

Why does the minister feel more taxes like the sugar tax and carbon tax will help them?

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

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

I will say I'm glad the Member raised about the cost of electricity. We all know the story of Muskrat Falls, we all know that we had to – this government had to – find \$192 million to help with rate mitigation. We're going to continue to do that because we know the impacts that Muskrat Falls has on the electricity rates of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It is this government that has been putting money in for families. The Opposition continues to vote against those measures.

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

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

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

Speaker, again, it's alarming to me, so out of touch. People in this province are struggling. Right here today, this is their government, this is their Premier; this is the Minister of Finance. They want better answers than rhetoric about old nonsense they're getting on with over there. They want answers. This is not answers – this is not answers.

I hear Muskrat Falls –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** – I mean, give me a break.

Speaker, they're worried about food on their table.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker, for that protection.

Food banks in our province are being forced to adjust their hours of operation in response to exploding demands for hampers from the working poor. Proud, hard-working individuals are stopping at food banks on the way home from work in order to feed their children.

Again, why does the minister feel the carbon tax and the sugar tax are helping this family?

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

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

As we've repeated many, many times in this House, the carbon tax is not the right



instrument; it's not the right policy at this point in time. We've said that. When the federal government made changes to the carbon tax and wanted to expand the carbon tax, it was this government who stood against that. We're fighting against that with the federal government saying this is not the right time to increase carbon tax, it's not the right time to expand carbon tax; it's very harmful to the people of the province.

We, as a provincial government, have put \$500 million back into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We're going to continue that fight. I'm glad to see the Opposition is encouraging us in that fight but we're going to continue to do everything that we can to keep costs low in this province.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** I'd like to think and tell the residents of the District of Bonavista, we saw the vision of where the carbon tax was going and we had the foresight to vote against it.

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

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, on June 2, 2021, the then minister stated there were 140 Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units sitting empty for over a year because – quote – we don't have the dollars available to do the major repairs. The same year the government posted a surplus in their budget.

Why did the Premier deliberately choose to not adequately fund low-income housing units?

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

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

**P. PIKE:** Thank you, hon. Member, for that question.

I would just like to say that over the last two years, I don't know where people have been, but we've actually created 750 housing options for this province, for the people of the province. This year alone, in *Budget 2023*, we created 850 housing options.

The first one was options, the second one is housing starts and, hopefully, we'll have those completed soon. We have applications out now. We are going through them. The deadline has passed. We are working through these applications to see how many units we'll be able –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** The minister states he's not sure where we've been for the past two years, but let me ask another question. If 140 units were empty for a year or two in 2021, we now still have 143 empty today.

I asked the Premier: Why did you choose not to prepare these units over the past two years.

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

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

I want to address this from a financial perspective.

We are making an incredible investment on behalf of the people of the province in housing, \$140 million, Speaker. You can do the math. It's a lot of money, \$140 million.

The minister has already indicated 750 units last year, 850 units this year, plus the five-point plan and new residential rental

property rebates. We have new home ownership programs. We have programs to allow for surplus land to be available for new housing investment.

Speaker, we are putting as much emphasis and effort into housing that we possibly can in this province. We're going to continue that effort. We have a great minister that's doing a great job. I think we should all be on board with continuing to emphasize this.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, I had asked why haven't they been repaired? I'm not sure I got the answer there.

Governing is about choices and the Premier chose not to adequately invest in seniors and low-income housing for years, neglecting the problem until we find ourselves in the crisis that we find ourselves in today. That is sadly unfortunate.

How long will the 2,800 remain on the housing wait-list? Two years, four years?

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

**P. PIKE:** I'd just like to say that under the new \$70 million program we have, we have a number of applications. As a matter of fact, we have a total of 116 proposals put forward for housing. Now, a lot of that housing will be seniors housing and should, in a big way, help alleviate some of the pressure seniors may have. But it's also a fact that if seniors move from their housing into the new housing that we're creating, that will also leave vacant houses. So it will have a domino effect.

We're really excited about this program. Within the next month, we're hoping to release the first contingent of applications that were successful.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, one minister stands and said they spent \$140 million; another one said we've got \$70 million. But if you're not getting the results, then what is the reason for not getting the results? We don't see it in the data.

The Premier can no longer deny that the Liberal government was aware of the problem, had solutions before them, yet, deliberately did not take action. That is totally unacceptable.

Was it only a lack of adequate planning?

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

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

I think the Member opposite – and I know he does his homework, so I'm going to refer him to the book of Estimates to see how much money we're putting in housing. We have been very diligent, especially in the last number of years, recognizing that we had challenges coming out of COVID; we have an increasing population; we have an increasing seniors' population.

Understanding all that, we put 750 new units last year; 850 new units this year. That's on top of all the other programs that we're doing around emergency shelters and making sure that we have a program for new home ownership. We're encouraging people to renovate their secondary basement apartments. We're encouraging that. These are the types of programs that I wish the Opposition would support.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, yesterday in the House the minister said – a quote – renovictions are not a thing.

A CBC story, October 4, said: “Growing number of St. John’s seniors falling victim to renovictions ...,” quoting executive director of End Homelessness St. John’s.

Speaker, does the minister believe he is telling the truth or not?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for the question.

I certainly empathize with anyone who is in a situation where they get an eviction notice. That is a very difficult, stressful situation.

Landlords and tenants have rights. Currently in our legislation, landlords can provide a tenant with three months’ eviction notice. That would be a very difficult situation. I absolutely understand for anyone, a senior or anyone –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. STOODLEY:** Speaker, anyone who would like some advice or information, we have a really easy-to-understand handbook on our website. They can give our residential tenancies office a call. Anyone can apply for dispute resolution to understand what their rights are if they fall within the policies or not.

So our team are ready and will be very helpful and we can help them resolve the issue in a variety of options.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, the story went on to note that a third of referrals to End Homelessness St John’s are seniors who are losing their homes due to renovictions. Yet, the minister says these don’t exist.

Who is telling the truth?

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

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

I do empathize for anyone, senior or anyone who gets an eviction notice. In our legislation and regulations, there’s no official word in terms of eviction for renovation. Landlords do not have to provide a reason for that three-month eviction. Many landlords might choose to do some renovations or upkeep or fixing drywall or something in between tenants and that is not, kind of, reported or tracked.

We do have to balance the rights of tenants and landlords and we have a lot of very respectable landlords and we have to balance their rights as well.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, the story goes on to say that the number of seniors being evicted because of renovictions is skyrocketing and the executive director is worried, with winter quickly approaching, it is only going to get worse.

With the minister in denial, will she now admit she is part of the problem?

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

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

So I do emphasize with anyone who gets an eviction notice. It would be a very stressful and difficult situation.

As an MHA, I receive calls from constituents, from seniors who need help and advice and we have our residential tenancies officers, they're very helpful. We have a very easy-to-understand handbook on our website. There are very clear parameters around when a landlord can and cannot provide an eviction. They can give a tenant three months' notice for an eviction.

The term "renoviction" is not the legislation and landlords don't have to provide a reason for an eviction, but certainly something, Speaker, we do empathize with the difficult situation that anyone would be under in those instances.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Speaker, societies are judged by how they treat their most vulnerable people, their most vulnerable citizens. Early morning wake-up calls for people who spent the night sleeping in a tent, removal of their tents and homes and shipping them to RNC headquarters, then denying those people when they come to reclaim their property.

I ask the Premier: Are these actions about wellness checks and public safety, or are they police intimidation tactics designed to instill fear in the tenters and force them to move?

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

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

I can say, with absolute confidence, it is for public safety reasons that collapsed tents, on the corner of one of the busiest streets in the city, were removed for safety purposes.

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

**J. HOGAN:** To say that it was for intimidation reasons is totally unacceptable and, I would say, beyond shameful, Speaker.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Government departments are here working with those individuals day in and day out to find shelters. As we knew, if someone had reported individuals that needed shelters earlier than when they had the information, those people would have had a roof over their head sooner rather than later. Rather than using that over there for political purposes and saying things that are factually untrue for their own personal, political gain.

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

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

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

Speaker, Tacora Resources filed for CCAA protection. Thankfully, at the moment, no workers have lost their jobs but we now have small businesses left in limbo, as they are owed up to millions of dollars for goods and services they provided to Tacora.

I ask the minister responsible: Will his department ensure that small businesses and workers in Lab West will be supported and not left holding the bag, once again?

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

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

I appreciate the question from the Member opposite. It's one that we've actually had some discussions on now since we all received the news last week about Tacora's process in the CCAA proceedings. Obviously it's a difficult situation for not just the workers on site, but the community in Labrador and the province as a whole. The good news, if there is any, is right now there's a status quo in terms of workers are still working, things are going ahead on site.

Right now basically what we can do is monitor the CCAA proceedings as they go along. This is a court process, not a government process. We empathize with suppliers and people that are right now out money. But what I will say is that we've seen this already in this province, where companies go into CCAA – as we saw with Rambler earlier this year, there can be a silver lining at the other end and we will do what we can to work with the company, suppliers and others as we go through this.

Thank you.

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

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

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

The Crown corporation Newfoundland Hydro is not invested in renewable energy in my district. Year after year, they keep us on diesel. The province built dams on Labrador rivers but refuse to connect our communities to power lines. Northern and Southern Labrador communities are not connected to the power lines.

So my question to the Premier is: When will this government own up to the fact that they continue to rape our resources but refuse to share in the benefits?

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

**A. PARSONS:** Mr. Speaker, I would certainly take objection to the last portion of the wording of the Member's question. But I also respect the fact that the Member –

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

**A. PARSONS:** If you would give me a chance to answer the question, I would appreciate it.

I appreciate the Member's opportunity to ask questions for the members of her district and for Labrador as a whole. Certainly, I appreciate that. What I would say is that we are trying our best but the reality is that when it comes to renewable industry, there is a huge cost that comes with that. Right now, we do have three subsidies in place for many parts of Labrador in order to keep the rates as low as they are.

If we talk about renewable industry, we know that from other places, not just in this country but beyond, employing renewable electricity and other means carries a higher cost that will be born by the taxpayers. So we have to find the right measure here and we will continue to work towards that.

Thank you.

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

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

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

While there are many people in this province excited about the potential economic opportunities on the horizon in the Port au Port Peninsula and surrounding areas as it relates to World Energy GH2 hydrogen project, there are still many with varying concerns that relates to public health, water resources, wildlife, implications to our power grid, remediation plans and the speed at which this approval process has been moving.

While we all realize the industry is required in order to provide employment opportunities for our people and revenues to the government in order to provide much-needed public services, if there's anything we learned from the Muskrat Falls inquiry, it is the need to not rush through, to allow for openness, transparency, full public scrutiny and meaningful consultation.

I therefore ask the minister: Would he be willing to pause the process for a period of time to give the people time to thoroughly scrutinize and analyze the reams of technical information coming out of the environmental assessment and engage in some meaningful public consultation as it relates to —?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

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

I don't think we got to the crux of the question but I'm assuming that he is asking about the process that we're in.

We're in the environmental assessment process, which started by advising World Energy GH2 that they had to go through an environmental impact statement, August 5, 2022. That process took over a year for them to come back to the department to bring their EIS submission to the department. That's in the process that we're talking about; it's a legislatively government process that we're continuing through where it involves 50 days of public consultation and 20 more to make a decision. We're in that process now.

I encourage all people during any process or any industry that is coming to our province to make their submissions known. All those submissions will be utilized in

coming to the end result of a decision that will be made on that project.

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

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

**P. LANE:** That is 60 days on a 4,000-page document of technical information for the average person to try to scrutinize and be able to make meaningful comment on. That is not enough.

Speaker, one of the concerns shared by many people concerning the World Energy GH2 project and other similar projects being considered by the province is that once operations reach end of life, it will be the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who will ultimately be left on the hook for cleaning up and restoring the land footprint on which the operation took place as we have seen in the past.

I ask the minister: What assurances can you provide and what mechanisms will be put in place to ensure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that their collective interests will be protected as it relates to the future site remediation?

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

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

I appreciate the question from the Member opposite because it is a chance to talk about this new industry in this province. Although, I will point out the preamble of the previous question: there is a big difference between Muskrat Falls, for which the taxpayers paid billions, and the wind industry, for which the public has invested zero dollars in that.

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

**A. PARSONS:** But the question is important: decommissioning. I can point out

that I just happen to have the guidelines here that we put online in February 2023 in which decommissioning is mentioned nine times and in which it says here that any proposal had to put in a decommissioning plan.

So what I can assure the Member and anybody else is that similar to our other natural resources, there will be decommissioning plans in place before any project is given final approval. That is something that I think we all expect. I appreciate the question.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

Another anti-temporary replacement worker legislation petition from Labrador West.

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 lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community, the local economy and as well as the well-being of 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 imbalance 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.

Once again I'm bringing this petition forward to the House for the consideration of the minister of Labour. We know that it works; it helps the balance between the worker and the employer. If the employer is able to bring in workers during a strike or a lockout, the balance is thrown off and it's known to prolong strikes.

We just have to go back to our history of our province. We had D-J Composites; we've had Vale, these things happen. If we remove one of the things, we can bring back balance and equilibrium to the bargaining process and won't have long and prolonged strikes.

At this time, I'm asking that we follow along with the other provinces and with what the federal government is planning on doing and encourage the minister to look at this and enact anti-temporary replacement worker legislation in the province to make sure there's a fair and balanced process at the bargaining table and to make sure that

we have the mechanism to stop prolonged and divisive strikes.

That's all that happens. Every time there are temporary replacement workers that are brought into a worksite, we see it drag out. Like I said, D-J Composites, that went on for years.

There is a mechanism to balance it out. I think following along with the federal way, also Quebec and British Columbia, we can fix that balance.

Once again, I bring this petition on behalf of the residents of Labrador West who would like to see this enacted.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I take the opportunity to thank my hon. colleague from Labrador West for bringing this forward again. I know that we've had many conversations on this. I'll reiterate the same points that I've said before to him. We are always agreeable to try to be looking at the labour legislation to try to make it responsive to the needs of the people, both from labour and employers.

One of the things that we want to make sure to do is keep that balance, as he's talking about, to ensure that the rights of the workers are also in line with the ability for the employers to do what needs to be done as well.

So we're very agreeable to always have that discussion on the table. We're going to continue to work with all parties, all stakeholders, on trying to find solutions to labour legislation that is more reactive for people.

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

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

The background of this petition is as follows:

This petition is not about being for or against industry coming to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but, instead, this petition is focused on responsible industry. We must learn from the lessons of the past to avoid repeating dire financial and public policy mistakes.

This petition is about making sure the province is responsible in their pursuit of industry and that they take the proper steps to have meaningful consultation with the people.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, urge the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to institute a six-month pause on approving industry projects on the Southwest Coast and urge the government to initiate an independent inquiry; and

WHEREAS, a cumulative effects assessment will be conducted to include industry risks on water systems, our ecological and protected areas, our migratory birds, wildlife, marine life, plant life, hunting, fishing and woodcutting areas and risks to our tourism industry; and

WHEREAS there will be meaningful consultation hosted by the Newfoundland and Labrador government to openly discuss the proposed projects, specifically the cumulative effects assessment, government's role, as well as the role of the Local Service Districts and Indigenous bands; and

WHEREAS, if approved, there is a regional benefits package during the entire project lifespan of company benefits provided directly to those affected in the region to be



handled and administered by local, elected representatives; and

WHEREAS, if approved, each company must be required to open an escrow account before any project commences to completely fund decommissioning and land rehabilitation required at the stage of the project and, in the event the company goes bankrupt, the province will have immediate access.

WHEREUPON, we, the undersigned, call on the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to institute a six-month pause, with time extension possibilities, on approving industry projects on the Southwest Coast until the proper cumulative effects assessment studies and meaningful consultations are concluded.

I know the petition is a bit long, Mr. Speaker. We have several signatures here from all over the province. The gist of this, Mr. Speaker, is not about being against industry. We know the benefit it will have to our province in terms of jobs and economic benefits and spinoff throughout the province. I don't think anybody is against that concept but it is about making sure it's done properly; it's done right in terms of the environment.

There are certainly concerns as well about what implications this project might have on the power grid and will any costs there be passed on to ratepayers. There are also concerns – I've already raised in Question Period. I thank the minister for answering as it relates to the decommissioning and decommissioning costs.

I will note that the minister in his answer, he did say there would be a decommissioning plan, but what the people want to see is something there specifically to say that there will be money held in bonds and securities to make sure that the decommissioning plan can come to fruition.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

**P. LANE:** Thank you.

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you.

Let me first say that I appreciate the Member bringing the petition forward. Look, every chance I get to talk about this, I'm more than happy. I might not have a chance to remember all the different points there; I'll try my best to clip them off one at a time.

The decommissioning, as I just mentioned this is not a new process. We have a province where anybody who has had a mine in their district has probably seen – this is historical. We have mines that were abandoned and companies never had to put anything forward. We remedied that through legislation years ago – not me, that was done by this House years ago. We deal with that. When it comes to resource development, we deal with decommissioning. Decommissioning is going to be a part of this. As I mentioned, it's in our planning from months and months ago.

I have to be honest, I get that people have a concern, but I think we have alleviated that concern. What we do now every company puts forward money, when they talk about a mine or other thing, they put it forward. It's held there by government and if the time comes when it is decommissioned, remediated or abandoned, the money is there. We don't have to go back to the taxpayers after that.

I will say, this will not have an impact on the grid or ratepayers because this right now is primarily based on export of ammonia converted from hydrogen. This is not talking about grid use. Now I will say, as the

Member for the NDP said, I do want to see wind integration into our grid at some point but it comes down to the cost. With the Members opposite's approval or permission, I would love to talk about this a little more if I had – again, I don't feel I've had a chance to adequately cover some of the points.

**SPEAKER:** Does the Member have leave?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** By leave.

**SPEAKER:** Leave granted.

**A. PARSONS:** And they also have leave, the minute I go a little bit silly, they can shut me down so I appreciate that.

But what I would say is wind integration is something we are studying now because we want to incorporate wind into our grid, but we have to figure out do we have the capacity, how do we do it and what's the cost to do it. Because in most jurisdictions, renewable energy and wind right now is not cost feasible and governments are paying for it, so that taxpayers don't. So we have to keep that in mind. That is absolutely a consideration and I do know that the various proponents are talking about it; we have been talking about it for months now. We have to find out where that goes forward.

I think I come back to the environmental side. Now again, the way this work is like with any project, no different than a mine or an oil exploration, the environmental assessment is separate from us. My job is to promote industry. I want to see that happen. I will say that the process we went through here, if you go to Nova Scotia, everything was done within the quiet of offices.

The winning and losing proponents were not told why they got selected or didn't get selected. If anything here, we went through a process that was very onerous and above board, and the whole point was to avoid the perception that there were illegitimate means behind decisions. This was a merit-

based process and even companies that weren't successful, they're not coming to us talking about the veracity of the process, they're saying when can I get in, is there going to be another round, when can I do that.

I think the process stands up to scrutiny, through fairness advisors and, again, it was done. It wasn't a political thing. It was done by hard-working staff in multiple departments. Will there be effects? Well, that's something that we do an environmental assessment on. The minister and his department will do that.

What I will say is we have to find a way. How do we mitigate the impact that may happen? Everything has an impact. We have to find that balancing ground. I'll give you an example; some Members on the other side will be interested in this. Marathon mine, which is going to be a huge contributor to Central Newfoundland – it's huge, and beyond that it's going to be a huge contributor to this province. When they put forward their plan, it was brought in the environmental assessment they may have an impact on caribou herds so we had to work on a mitigation measure to ensure that they weren't affected. It delayed the process but when they got to the point where it was approved, then the project was approved. So the same thing will happen here.

If it is found to have an impact, there will have to be mitigation efforts, but the fact is we are a province where we know there will be an impact. You cannot tell me – and we are all accepting of oil exploration, oil drilling, oil producing. We're all proponents of mining. I look to my Member up in Labrador; we are all proponents of mining and resource development. They all have impacts. It's about mitigating the impacts and that's what this has to do.

So again, I am willing to talk all day about this industry. I do think that there is a positive here for this province. It is not right now. I think this is necessary, because

people like to talk about megaprojects and we have every reason as a province, because we have lived through some doozies in our time but there's a big difference between one that was paid for by taxpayers and one here that is being paid for by proponents. There is a big difference.

This does not have public taxpayer dollars funding the proponents. There's a royalty regime here. That is very different from the previous one. I don't want to get in to it, but I have to mention the fact that people get confused when they keep getting here, well, this could be another Muskrat Falls. This could be another Churchill. It's two different things and that has to be recognized and remembered by absolutely everybody here.

My final point is I would say this: I welcome all the petitions that come forward because the more we talk about it, the more light we put on the subject. We need to have these conversations, but it is not just a South Coast or a West Coast project. We have them in Come By Chance, we have them in Central, we have them down on the Burin and we had interest from all over. So if anything, we need to make sure this is right the first time because I do think there are further opportunities for wind and I know there are people out there wanting to do this and also to decarbonize the emissions that they have right now, including in our mining projects.

Thank you.

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

### Orders of the Day

#### Private Members' Day

**SPEAKER:** This being 3 o'clock, I call upon the Member for St. George's - Humber to present his private Member's resolution.

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

It is great to have an opportunity to present this important private Member's resolution here today.

Before I begin to talk about the resolution, I just want to read the resolution into the record of the House so that everyone here and everyone watching understands exactly what it is we're going to be debating here today. I'll read the motion into the –

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

**S. REID:** It is moved by myself, the Member for St. George's – Humber, and seconded by the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

WHEREAS Newfoundlanders and Labradorians fully appreciate the need and importance of addressing climate change; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is doing its part to address climate change by developing and deploying innovative, clean technologies and renewable energy, developing green hydrogen and reducing the province's carbon footprint by improving the energy efficiency of homes, businesses and government buildings; and

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to achieving net-zero by 2050; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada's decision to impose the federal carbon tax and to enact the *Clean Fuel Regulations* fails to acknowledge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's efforts to meet emission targets and fails to consider the hardship that residents, families and businesses are experiencing with the high cost of living resulting, in part, from the COVID-19 pandemic; and

WHEREAS the federal carbon tax and the *Clean Fuel Regulations* have a disproportionate impact on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; and

WHEREAS the Government of Canada's decision to impose the federal government's carbon tax and to enact the *Clean Fuel Regulations* does not consider this province's unique geography and economy; and

WHEREAS the imposition of the federal carbon tax and the enactment of the *Clean Fuel Regulations* further amplifies the dramatic increases in food prices, and costs for energy, transportation and other essential goods and services in this province; and

WHEREAS the Premier has publicly expressed his belief that the carbon tax and the *Clean Fuel Regulations* be repealed and has stated this belief in a letter to the prime minister dated August 15, 2023.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House urge the Government of Canada to immediately repeal the carbon tax and the *Clean Fuel Regulations*.

I just wanted to read that motion into the record before the debate begins.

Speaker, as you know, a private Member's motion is an opportunity for this House to express its views on an issue of the day, an issue that's of importance to the people of this province. Sometimes a private Member's resolution sends a message to the provincial government; sometimes it sends a message to another government. In this case, it's sending a message from the Members of this House to the federal government.

I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, that we can all speak with one voice on this piece of legislation today to send a clear, succinct message on this issue to the federal government.

This motion clearly states why we're bringing forward this motion. It's not about denying that climate change is happening or saying that it's not happening. Basically, we

recognize that climate change is something that's real, something that has to be dealt with. What we're taking issue with is whether these actions, at this particular time, are something that is needed to meet the circumstances, Mr. Speaker.

We need look no further than our own districts, in many cases, to see that climate change is a real issue. For example, when I think about climate change, I look at what's happening in the district that I represent. Within the last five years, we've had at least two very severe storms that did a lot of damage to houses, damage to roads; communities were cut off for a period of time.

In Port aux Basques, more recently, houses were destroyed; millions of dollars worth of damage done. So climate change itself has a cost and I think we should all be cognizant of that here in this House and recognize that. This motion here certainly doesn't claim that climate change is not something we need to deal with, but it disputes the way this motion is dealing with it.

The current government certainly sees the need for us to do our part and there are some programs that we have put in place to deal with some of those issues. The Oil to Electric Incentive, which enables people to buy mini splits, central heating pumps, electric furnaces, electric heaters and things like that, and the Electric Vehicle Rebate Program, just to name a couple programs that the province is part of and that we're using to incentivize people to move away from using carbon fuels.

Mr. Speaker, the main reason for this motion is that it disputes that the burden of the climate change challenge should not fall upon some of the poorest people in this country. It should not fall on them disproportionately. That is the case in terms of the way it impacts rural areas of this province and this province generally because of the nature of our economy, the nature of our geography. That's the issues

that I'm hoping will come up in this debate as well and be further elaborated on.

We're aware of some of the issues that people in this province are faced with in terms of the cost of living, the increased prices and I think we need to be aware of, as well, that the situation from when the carbon tax was implemented has changed dramatically. We've seen an inflationary environment where the increased fuel prices that we have now are very similar to the impacts that would have been had by the carbon tax.

So there are already disincentives in place because of the inflationary environment to incentivize people to move away from using carbon fuels. I want to just make those points. There are a number of things that the province is already doing to address some of these challenges of the high cost of living. I just want to mention a few of those.

One of the things the province is doing is an 8.05 cents per litre reduction in the provincial gas tax for the fiscal year 2023-24, which results in us having the lowest tax on gas of any province in Canada, except Alberta. We have continued with the 50 per cent reduction in the cost of registering a passenger vehicle, light truck or taxi. Funding for electrical vehicle rebates and charging infrastructure –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

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

I encourage everyone to support the motion.

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

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

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

Speaker, it gives me pleasure to stand in this House any time I stand to speak. It's always a privilege. It's always a pleasure and it's something I don't take lightly, but you know, we stand to talk about this carbon tax, this PMR. It's like a new revelation.

In 2018, it was brought in by the federal government. For years, we listened to this government across the way praise the virtues of the carbon tax. We've never supported a carbon tax. We've always supported climate change. We've always realized it's a problem. We always realized we've got to find solutions, alternatives.

Back in 2015, when I was first elected, that was one of the first roles I was given, the office of climate change was one of my critic duties. So we've been on this issue; this is not a new issue to me. It's not a new issue to a lot of people. To be totally frank with you, it's an issue I've learned a lot about because I think back in 2015 we were all really learning. I think people still learn a lot and as things evolved and there were different options being given, cap and trade, carbon tax, we need new technologies, how does this evolve, we have a problem, we need to tax the polluters – I mean, the debate went on for years. And then the federal government brought in this tax and provinces across this country had every right then to stand up, be united, and stand up to Ottawa.

That's all we ever asked. This passing the buck now, what we've seen now, it blows my mind. I watched the news, and for the last couple of months, I felt like I was handcuffed because we were dealing with our own leadership, and I wanted to be respectful to the three quality candidates we had running that were speaking on our virtues and were doing a great job, I kept my powder dry, so to speak.

But behind the scenes I couldn't hold back my anger, frustration, when I used to watch our Premier and ministers and even the

Minister of Health, who I got great respect for, he come out and made a shot about it last week. Now all the while health care, we're on our knees. He's got enough time to make a swipe at Ottawa. What does that tell me? It tells me that this government is feeling the heat of carbon tax. They're feeling the heat of sugar tax. They're feeling the heat from the electorate. That's what it's telling me.

So you bring in this "**WHEREAS** Newfoundlanders and Labradorians fully appreciate the need and importance of addressing climate change." We've always said that. I won't read all of them.

"**WHEREAS** the imposition of Federal carbon tax and the enactment of *Clean Fuel Regulations* (Canada) further amplifies the dramatic increase of food prices, and costs for energy," – 17 cents this winter on home heating oil – "transportation" – everything that comes into this province comes in on transportation, trucked or flown – "and other essential goods and services in this province."

That's exactly what we've been saying and what we have said when the Liberals voted for carbon tax. But what did they do? No, they laughed at us. That's basically what we heard across the way, it was laughter; it was snickers. It was so much so there last year, last fall, the Premier and his entourage decided to get a video done, heavily edited video of me speaking in this House on climate change. And what was I telling everyone back then? It was important, but it wasn't our main issue. It wasn't what everyone needed help with at that time. It wasn't the topic that we got out of bed in the morning and it was the first thing we thought about. Or the last thing we thought about going to bed.

We've seen polling and we've seen issues; climate change is far down. Do I think it's a serious issue? Yes. We all do. But to take it so much time, and then redact and edit and chop a video to try to ridicule, I guess embarrass – that don't happen easily on this

side – for what purpose and what gain? Because they didn't like what we're saying? No, Mr. Speaker, that's not what happened. They agreed with what we were saying. They were embarrassed, because they never listened to us. They never supported us.

What a powerful statement in this province. If that government five years ago instead of working with Ottawa and trying to get the Made-in-Newfoundland approach, which is not working now – we see that – why didn't they come on board with us back then? Why, over the years, when we start arguing about the carbon tax not being the way?

You have a majority government, you can bring in the little amendments and force our vote on different things and make it look like it's for – we never did support the carbon tax. We never have supported it and we never will and we're still here today saying we still don't support it.

But you have a government across the way that all of sudden is embarrassment. How do we get out of this one? So the Premier is up there, all of a sudden this good friend is Prime Minister Trudeau but we disagree on this issue. I see Facebook videos condemning climate, carbon tax. Every opportunity the Premier speaks – and I heard him earlier today at another event, we poked in the carbon tax and climate change, it's a bad issue.

Where were your voices to when we needed you? How come you never stood up for the people of the province when they needed you? It's now, all of a sudden, revelations and there's Liberals from all levels, we can't have this any more and we have to stand up against the carbon tax. We can't have 17 cents going on home heating oil. We can't do that to the seniors of our province. We've been saying that forever.

Is that something new? We have been saying this forever. But what do we hear on

the other side? Nothing but silence. They were looking at us in defiance.

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure said: “The carbon tax is the right policy instrument, and we need to stick with it, come high or low, when it comes to how popular it is or it is not.” That’s not my words; that’s his words.

Now today, we have a PMR. The Premier is planning – he’s on his election tour. He’s trying to get the word out. He’s speaking to virtues. He has the hymnbook and it’s all about the carbon tax. It’s all about how bad Ottawa is. Now, he’s still friends with his Trudeau but we don’t agree on that issue, but he’s not going to burn the bridge totally because he needs the federal government, so he’s going to say we’re against the carbon tax. Because he knows he will not get elected in this province as long as he’s anywhere near carbon tax.

Now I have been around long enough to know and some Members in this House have been around a long time, but I have been around a long time – I might be dating myself. I just became a grandfather last night, yesterday –

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

**B. PETTEN:** So I guess I am dating myself, but I’ve been around long enough to know you will not win elections when you’re taxing people, full stop.

Taxation is not a winning policy. You’ll never win elections by taxation. Carbon tax is exactly what it is; it’s a tax. Sugar tax, that’s another one. You will not win elections on that. Now that’s the one, that’s his own baby and he’s going to protect that. But he’s out against carbon tax. It’s a bad policy. But it’s not a bad policy of the Liberals when they wanted to look across the floor and defend us and deflect back to us. Not at all. Now all of a sudden it’s the worst policy in the world.

I watch him in action and you respect the office but I don’t always respect the message that comes out of the office. If that’s a way of putting it, and that’s our right. I’m elected by the people of my district to represent them and I stand in this House of Assembly in my place, I take a lot of pride in. What I’m speaking now, it’s not only for the people in my District of Conception Bay South, it’s for every single district in this province, including the Members opposite districts. Now they can’t go back and face their own constituents without saying, do you know what? We’re against this. Guess what? People in CBS have always known I’ve been against it. People in Terra Nova have always known their Member’s against it.

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

**B. PETTEN:** I can go every Member on this side of the House; we’ve always been against it. I’m proud to say we are. When I’m hearing this, it just doesn’t resonate with me, Speaker. This doesn’t resonate with me.

When I heard –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** – the Member opposite from St. George’s get up the other day and this was going to be his PMR; I remember I looked at the Government House Leader and I just said unbelievable. It’s unbelievable; it’s incredible.

I know that this stuff is dictated by the Premier’s office; I get that. Again, I’m been around. I’ve seen a few administrations. I understand and I respect the process. But this is what you’re going to try to sell the people of the province. You’ll come out with a news release this evening saying how you brought this PMR in and you’re condemning them.

Last week we were condemning Hamas down in the Middle East. Now we're condemning the carbon tax. Where's it going to stop? Keep it coming, because every day, every day there's another speech. There's another election readiness speech. You're dressing it all up.

What you have to do is – and I say this with sincerity, and you put the banter aside. I believe, and I'll always believe, no matter what party you represent, no matter what, you should always respect and support and defend the people who put you there. You're the Premier of this province; you're ministers of this Crown of this province. Stand up for the people of the province. They're the reason you're in government.

Now it's about-face, and I see this right across the board. I've seen it with the federal government and I've seen it now and I'm seeing it all across the street. The same people who were beating the drum and laughing at us, all of a sudden now it's a terrible thing. I have to ask, why did it take you so long? Why did it take this government so long to come to their senses and agree with us?

One final quote I'll say, the Minister of Tourism, a good friend, he said I do support a price on carbon; I think it's important. Mr. Speaker, I believe the people of the province are more important.

Thank you very much.

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

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

The hon. the Premier.

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

I stand in this hon. House today to question the policy, a federal government policy. A policy that I know federal MPs from Newfoundland and Labrador have trouble with, one they know has an impact on

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and one I know they are trying hard to reconcile, Mr. Speaker.

So before I begin, let me be clear, this is not an argument based on politics, rather one based on rational thought and questioning the logic, or lack thereof, of a problematic policy. This is neither a personal nor a political attack, rather a desire for a mature, elevated, non-emotional conversation and debate about the impact at this time of the federal carbon tax, the impact it has on families and the lack of impact the federal carbon tax has on the environment of Atlantic Canada, Mr. Speaker.

As Canadians and as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we all know and appreciate that we are in the midst of a climate crisis, one that threatens the very future of our planet. Make no mistake, it is an existential issue facing all of us, which is precisely why we need to ensure our approach and instruments are focused and designed to reach the collective goals.

The issue, however, does not exist in a vacuum. The pandemic has set a course of series of events that is testing the very resolve of all Canadians. The high cost of living is not only preventing upward movement, it is often eroding the middle class. Families are struggling. They need governments to be caring, understanding and responsive.

With that in mind, I feel I have to speak out, as we have by writing the prime minister, writing the minister and being very loud and focal about the carbon tax in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I worry about our approach with respect to this tax in the current Canadian economic and industrial context. A price on carbon can be approached from different levels: industrial and end consumer. Given the current financial pressures and the cost of living facing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians right now, it is the impact on



families and the consumer that causes me the most concern.

The carbon tax on consumers, not to be confused entirely with the price on carbon, is an instrument designed to change behaviour. It's not a tax to raise funds for the Treasury, as most of it, although not all of it, is being given back to consumers. This represents the single biggest problem: The undermining premise, the underpinning premise of this tax is currently flawed, as the options to change behaviour are either non-existent, limited or cost prohibitive.

The premise of change is also built into this scenario, Mr. Speaker, this very scenario and this is the one that's most troubling: Mrs. Power drives a gas-powered truck while Miss Smith drives an electric vehicle. They both receive the same rebate. Giving gas is more expensive, Miss Smith has more disposable income than Mrs. Power. Mrs. Power sees this and decides to change away from gas. That is fine, Mr. Speaker, if you live in Toronto or any other big urban city, but here is the issue. In Newfoundland and Labrador, Mrs. Power has no option to change. There are no subways or bicycle paths to work in St. Anthony. The hardworking women and men of Burin or Torbay often need a larger truck for work, for fishing, logging or mining so they can't rely on electric vehicle, even if they could afford it or find one.

In addition, the basic support infrastructure and grid capacity has not been established to date to support this change. We are all working hard to establish that but it simply just does not exist at this time. So the flaw is simple. The basic premise is based on options. Absent options, you have to ask, what is the point? More importantly, should we be doing something else, like incentives to accelerate the changes needed for our planet?

Furthermore, outside of vehicles, the application to home heat while the cost and time to change to electric has not been

reasonably established can be punitive and regressive to those on fixed incomes. This represents the intersection of policy with reality – the reality of families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

From a climate perspective, it doesn't work because the same numbers of gas vehicles exist and will continue to exist without significant options to change. So the environment hurts, the economy hurts and family hurts. Furthermore, in our province, the rebates do not add up with the pressures placed on families through the indirect and induced costs.

For example, oranges are not produced in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, as we wish they were. They have to be shipped here in a gas-powered truck, transported on a diesel ferry and then driven again by gas-powered vehicle. All three portions of this journey have potentially additive carbon taxes. The federal government admits the rebates do not include a consideration for this indirect and induced cost which compounds, of course, the pressures facing families on the cost of living.

These pressures are further compounded by the clean fuels regulations, which are also not included in the rebate. I argued with the federal Environment Minister that this would have an impact, immediately. It was clear to me he did not want to or clearly did not truly understand our market or rural Canada.

We have a monopoly here, Mr. Speaker, or a duopoly in a province. The pressures are different. There is threat of security of supply, despite our aggressive warnings and pleas. The minister dismissed them and now we see the direct impact this policy has on the rest of Atlantic Canada.

Compounding the direct impact is the question of fairness, Mr. Speaker. The parliamentary budget officer has suggested clean fuels alone will cost one per cent of

Newfoundland and Labrador GDP – three times the national average, Mr. Speaker. I had to ask in the spirit of fairness and the federation: Why is a senior in Carbonear on a fixed income asked to pay three times that of the same senior in Trois-Rivières? It is simply unbalanced and unfair and that is not the Canada that I know.

There are, of course, counter arguments, largely based on the need to do something about climate change, to which we all agree, Mr. Speaker. I'm not a climate change denier and I don't think many are, but this is a false dichotomy. It is not carbon tax or nothing, Mr. Speaker. In fact, others are acting differently. If we look to our neighbours to the south, President Biden is investing almost \$1 trillion to incentivize companies to work with industry to ensure that we are meeting our targets, meeting our climate goals, while not punishing the economy.

So I have to ask the federal government, the federal Environment Minister in particular, surely we have to do something, but the carbon tax cannot be the only option.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I can't help but hear the irony in the air today when we're talking about carbon tax. I don't know if it is because of a new lighting here in the House of Assembly that all of a sudden the Members on the opposite side of the House have seen the light and have now discovered –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** – that carbon tax is a bad tax.

Carbon tax has always been hurting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** It has been hurting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador since it was first introduced in 2018. When it was first introduced in 2018, I saw none of the passion that people on the opposite side are talking about now. We did not hear anything about how bad the carbon tax was. As a matter of fact, and some of my colleagues have already talked about it, we've heard all of the quotes from Members opposite, from ministers opposite, about how good the carbon tax was and how important the carbon tax was. Nothing about how bad the carbon tax was.

I stand here today and I wonder why did it take until 2023 for the Members opposite to decide that carbon tax was bad? If they were listening to the people in their districts, they would have been told for the last five years that carbon tax was hurting people; that carbon tax was a problem; that we were having lots of challenges with carbon tax as a province.

But now, five years later, they've awakened, to say that carbon tax is bad. Why? Maybe it's because of polling. Maybe it's because the Liberals now see themselves in trouble, that the people of the province and the people of the country have said enough is enough. We're tired of taxation.

So let me go through some of the clauses that are right here in this resolution. Do we support the resolution? Of course we support the resolution. We've actually done this resolution. But let me go through the clauses, the second clause:

**“WHEREAS** the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador is doing its part to address climate change by developing

and deploying innovative clean technologies and renewable energy, developing green hydrogen and reducing the province's carbon footprint by improving the energy efficiency of homes, businesses and government buildings.”

This is the PC party policy. I'm glad to see the Members opposite adopt the PC party policy. The PC government was leading on policies to address climate change and promote clean energy for a long time. I have been talking about the use of technology, not taxation. If you really want to improve our carbon emissions, let's focus on technology, not taxation.

“**WHEREAS** the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has committed to achieving net-zero by 2050.”

Again, the PC party has vocally supported net zero by 2050.

“**WHEREAS** the Government of Canada's decision to impose the Federal carbon tax and to enact the *Clean Fuel Regulations* (Canada) fails to acknowledge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador's efforts to meet emission targets and fails to consider the hardship that residents, families and businesses are experiencing with the high cost of living resulting, in part, from the COVID-19 pandemic.”

Exactly what we have been saying. And what we had said when the Liberals voted for the carbon tax. Exactly what we said when the Liberals had voted. It's exactly what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have been telling you, what your constituents have been telling you, what our constituents have been telling us.

Since 2018 they've been talking about the hardships, they've been talking about their challenges and they've been talking about the high cost of food, the high cost of transportation. It's only now in 2023, five

years later, that the Liberal government on the other side decide: We have a problem.

Listen: “**WHEREAS** the Federal carbon tax and the *Clean Fuel Regulations* (Canada) have a disproportionate impact on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.”

Again, exactly what we have been saying for so long. People on this side of the House have stood up every time the House has sat and tossed about the impact of carbon tax. Yet, we heard nothing – nothing from the opposite side. All quiet on the carbon tax front.

The only reason that the carbon tax front has come forward now is because the Liberals want to bring it. They're afraid. They know the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are upset and after five years, they finally acknowledge that the carbon tax is a problem, unbelievable – unbelievable.

I ask the Premier – he's talking about writing the federal minister, writing the prime minister telling him exactly how bad the carbon tax is – why didn't he write that letter five years ago? Why did it take five years later in 2023? Why wasn't that letter written five years ago? Why wasn't the former premier or the current Premier – why didn't they write the letter? Why wasn't that letter written?

Why wasn't it written last year when you voted to increase the carbon tax? If you were so opposed to the carbon tax and if the federal government made you do it, why did you turn around and not write this letter? Why did you not have this PMR last year?

Why? Because no, it wasn't convenient. It wasn't political because everything is about politics and it should be about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** That's what the people want us to be about and that's what we on this side of the House are about. We are about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We've been opposed to carbon tax since it was first introduced, we will continue to be opposed to carbon tax and we were also opposed to the sugar tax. We'll talk on that one on another day. I'm sure we'll have lots of time to talk about that.

But that's what happens when a political party decides to focus on politics and not focus on people. That's what happens when you are focused on the next election instead of the next generation. That's what happens and that's exactly what's happening right now.

This is a political convenience. Because if they truly believe what they're saying, they would have did it five years ago, they would have did it three years ago, they would have did it two years ago and they certainly could have did it last year.

That's what needed to happen. They needed to right this. Just at the same time last year when an increase was being provided for on carbon tax, ministers on the opposite side of the House were standing up and talking about a need for carbon tax, how good the carbon tax was, why we needed carbon tax. Nobody was interested. Nobody in the Province of Newfoundland believes that carbon tax.

There is no evidence. There is simply no evidence that a carbon tax is reducing Canada's footprint. No evidence that a carbon tax has reduced Canada's carbon footprint – none. That's why we have talked about the use of technology instead of taxation. That's why we continue to say use technology, not taxation. That's why all of us in the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador will continue to oppose the carbon tax and continue to say that the carbon tax needs to be axed.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER (Warr):** The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

**P. TRIMPER:** Speaker, I have several thoughts in my mind. I think I'm going to start by first of all congratulating my colleague across the way. He used to be my critic when I was the minister of Environment and Climate Change. Well done, Grandfather. I'm very proud for you and I'm sure it's a great honour. Well done.

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

**P. TRIMPER:** I want to start there because I'm going to end there and talk about future generations. But I also want to bring this House back. There are a few themes I think we're talking about today and we've been talking about in the last few weeks, months perhaps. It actually goes back maybe a year when Newfoundland and Labrador realized that the federal government were actually going to renege on a deal that yours truly and others fought hard for several years ago.

Let's go back to – and I look to my critic again – the 3rd of October, 2016. I'm in Montreal representing this fine province and negotiations around the climate crisis, pricing on carbon – and by the way, there are only 140 countries of the world that have a price on carbon. So what we're talking about here today is nothing unusual or particular. It's about Canada stepping up – after, by the way, many years of conservation, head in the sand.

When the federal Liberals took over in 2015, it succeeded many years under Prime Minister Harper's lack of leadership on this issue. So when I heard the leader of the now Official Opposition talk about PC policy, I go back to those days of PC policy when there was no action.

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

**P. TRIMPER:** What we faced in 2015 and in 2016 was 10 provinces, three territories, through all those years of absentee landlord leadership, we all went on our own way, including this province. I had a scientific background. I was very pleased to get into this portfolio and lead my colleagues on a strategy that we called a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador solution.

What happened on October 3, I'm actually sitting there with my team, the Environment and Climate Change team, there are only three of us, we were there of all the other jurisdictions. I look over at the federal minister and she's looking at her watch and, at the same time, in Ottawa, in the House of Commons, the prime minister is also looking at his watch. Interestingly enough, there was some kind of communications guru who said, let's do this in a joint sequence. They both stood on their feet, one at this meeting of the CCME in Montreal; the other, the prime minister in the House of Commons, and they presented how carbon was going to be priced in this country. I was in shock. We were there trying to work on the final negotiations of this, recognizing the peculiarities, the unique features of our province and why we needed to make sure everything was protected.

After I heard this presentation, I said, well that's interesting, that's there, but surely to goodness – for example, around diesel, I heard reference to communities on diesel would be exempted. I said, okay, if Perry Trimper is going back to – I'm sorry I just called myself out of order – but if I'm going to my district, where there are several communities on diesel – and I look to my colleague from Torngat Mountains – surely to goodness those same communities should be protected.

I remember the ADM went over, talked to the federal team and came back and said: No, Minister, you're south of 60 degrees. That means those communities, Makkovik,

Postville, Hopedale, Rigolet and many others including communities here on the Island were going to be now applied with an additional carbon tax that was going to make it more expensive to be in those communities where, as we both said, there's no option. I was like, wow, I can't believe it.

The next item up on the agenda was about our offshore oil and gas sector, which by the way is incredibly efficient, it's modern and for any efficiencies to be found in the offshore oil and gas sector, carbon would have to be, at that time, about \$130 a ton.

I don't want to distract from the complexity of pricing carbon, but what the point is, is our industry was already heavily advanced, or much forwardly advanced in terms of its efficiency, to put a price on that industry was just going to make it more expensive and make such an important part of our GDP more (inaudible), so I walked. I walked out of the talks; we couldn't get anywhere. I was not going to stand in front of my flag and proudly say hey, what a great deal.

So I came back here and then this province, this government, started, for the next two years, embarking on the made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador solution. That is the carbon-pricing scheme that this government supported. That is the strategy. Those were the exemptions that were secured.

I can tell you, there was no tranquility in this guy and there was no tranquility in any of the folks that followed after me because we had to take a tough stand; we had to take a tough situation. You can imagine how that spills over when you're embarrassing – as the Opposition likes to say – our federal colleagues, but we had to.

I could not come back to my district in Lake Melville and tell people that I supported an additional way to make their lives more miserable, more expensive. Ninety-four per cent of our population in this province, by

the way, lives on an island. The only way we're going to get goods and services here is by shipping, so why apply a tax on it.

Anyway, all those exemptions had been secured. However, in 2021, the federal government indicated – and this is again after the deal had been passed by ourselves, we all supported it. The Opposition may have voted against it that's just fine because I don't believe they, frankly, understood what was going on in the world and the need to take this out of partisan politics. Nevertheless, we went forward with a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador solution.

However, in 2021, the federal government signalled: we're going to review all these pricing strategies. We're going backwards. I can only think it's because so many of the other jurisdictions weren't holding up their side. Unfortunately, (inaudible) came down, Newfoundland and Labrador you're going to proceed with a new situation and those exemptions were removed. That was the signal that we received one year and a month ago from Ottawa, all that hard work, all that negotiation was now out the window, it's now being applied across the board, as we know.

I look to my colleague who was at the time the former minister of Health and Community Services; he said some of the wisest words I heard at the start of the declaration of the pandemic. He said it's going to be a lot easier to downsize, to shut down the economy, to shut things down than to get it all going back up again. He was absolutely right. The world has been struggling with how to come out of this. With this economic chaos that we're feeling, the cost of living – all these different issues, a world crisis and so on – we are facing a tsunami.

This is why this PMR is very important right now. I'm going back to the 3rd of October when we needed some recognition in Ottawa that again this province is unique in

this federation, this family of provinces and territories and we need that support from Ottawa.

I want to go back to, as I said, 140 countries of the world right now have a price on pollution. We have to take this issue out of the partisan politics. Again, I look to my colleagues, I consider the Opposition, all of them, friends, but I look at some of the policies and some of the strategies, I really wish, for example, the last two days when there have been motions on the floor looking at urgent or emergency types of debates, this is the type of matter that I feel needs to go onto the floor.

We really do need to shut down and start thinking about it. I go back to my colleague again from CBS and his newly minted grandchild. You know that in 27 years from now, I hope his grandson or granddaughter, I'm not sure what it is at this time, is not interested in Cain's Quest because if they come to Labrador and they come to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, winter temperatures are going to be six degrees warmer than they are now, on average. Forget snow. Forget snowmobiling. We are going to change dramatically. That's 27 years from now. So when my hon. colleague's grandchild is 27 years of age, it's not going to be able to pursue any kind of snowmobiling. Now that's just a little aesthetic recreational pursuit on the side.

You watch the news every night, forest fires, floods, over and over, the chaos that the world is feeling. We have to find a way to take this out of wedge political type issues. This needs to be something that we are all preoccupied on. When we have the honour to serve for four years and we need to take that seriously and say: What progress can I make?

The problem we have right now with this PMR, and why we are putting it forward, is that while we agree with a price on carbon, we need to also recognize that we need co-operation. We have to make sure that this

doesn't get political. As much as some of the Opposition Members have said and are going to continue to say that we're playing politics with it, I would ask them to really step aside. Let's start thinking about the next generations and really doing something to help. We're willing to step up to the table. This province has certainly demonstrated that but we're going to need co-operation in Ottawa.

I support this PMR and I look forward to being able to tell the grandchildren and future generations that we did everything we could to protect their future.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

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

Speaker, this has got to be the most cowardly and cynical PMR I've heard presented here. It's about sending a clear message and about one voice. The preamble acknowledges the need for an important address in climate change and then sets out to dismantle one of the more effective measures of addressing it.

If we want to look at the cost of inflation, it's probably the corporate profits of oil companies that are doing – nothing to do with supply and demand as opposed to the carbon tax, which all sides have said that it is. It's very clear – and this is from the Bank of Canada – that it contributes very little to inflation.

But let's carry on. This PMR will also rip away benefits that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians currently receive under the Climate Action Incentive Payment, which did not exist under the made-in-Newfoundland plan. It's very much also like a chain-smoker recognizing I guess that it's

going to contribute to lung cancer but now is not the time to give up the smoking.

It displays a complete lack of regard for the impact and cost of climate change on people now and disregards the need to create a sustainable world, not only now but for seven generations to come. And it ignores the fact that there is a significant cost to inaction. We're seeing it already.

This PMR also, I guess, echoes the rhetoric of Pierre Poilievre and the federal Conservatives, and ignores the fact that most families will be better off and will get more money back than they pay under the Climate Action Incentive Payment. I'll use an example, Speaker. Assuming that a person has a 100-litre tank to fill up in their car – now most are not that big – and they fill it up once a week. Eleven cents per fill-up, times 52, works out to about \$572 a year. That's just for the car.

In Newfoundland and Labrador – and I've talked to a number of seniors who don't drive – each individual in the province then is entitled to a payment under the climate action incentive payment of \$164 times four quarterly payments; \$656 they will get back, more than if they're driving. The spouse or the common-law partner will receive \$82 four times a year, \$328. The first child of a single-parent family will receive \$82 times four, another \$328. For each child under 19, \$41 times four, \$164 per child. In addition there is a rural supplement.

So in other words, a family of two parents and two children stand to claim in the payment \$1,312 annually, in payback. That's what they're getting back. We don't hear that discussed, for some reason, but that's the facts, right there. Again, I would argue that for the seniors that have contacted me and said where is this money coming from, it's a big benefit. For my mother who doesn't drive that much, it's a benefit.

If we want to basically really look at how we can help people then, I will move the following amendment: That the private Member's resolution currently before the House be amended as follows: By deleting all the words after "THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House urge the Government of," and by substituting instead the deleted words with the following: "Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately repeal the provincial portion of HST from home heating."

Not just the carbon tax but all home heating whether it's electrical or oil.

We talked – I heard it is not the right instrument. The need is important to address climate change and disproportionate impact on Newfoundland and Labrador. The provinces unique geography and economy, the dramatic increases in price, energy and transportation. I've heard all the arguments there.

Well, here's an opportunity because if we look at the provincial portion, it is already tax on a tax. It's added on after the carbon tax. So here is an option where we can both, in many ways I would argue, fight climate change. Add to the benefit that people are already getting under the Climate Action Incentive Payment. It's not just gasoline but it's also other methods of making life more affordable.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

This House stands in recess so we can look at the proposed amendment.

### Recess

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

After considering the amendment moved by the Member for St. John's Centre to the

private Member's resolution, it is deemed to be not in order.

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

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

Speaker, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warned in 1990, 33 years ago, that human activity was driving global temperatures and we would have to address it. We have ignored it in that time. The Global Carbon Project speaks that we have a 50 per cent chance of staying within the 1.5 degrees Celsius and that basically we can emit another 388 gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> if we are to stay within that range. That is it; that's our carbon budget.

Now, I know the Members on the other side talk about budgets. They understand budgets, about how we don't want to leave a debt to our children. Well, basically, if we're not living within this, we are indeed leaving a tremendous carbon debt to our children.

In 2022, there were 37.5 gigatons of CO<sub>2</sub> emitted. At this rate, we will well exceed the carbon budget in 10 years. We are handing and building a growing, huge, carbon deficit to our children and grandchildren.

Only six weeks ago, I had the birth of our third grandchild. I'll be gone long before the worst effects of climate change come, if they're not addressed. They will be living through it. I can talk about it in the short term here, about doing something that's politically expedient, that will get votes, but in the end I've got to look to the future of the world that my children and my grandchildren will be living in. As the Indigenous cultures say, seven generations to come.

It's clear that in 2022, the parliamentary budget officer said raising the carbon tax to \$170 per ton by 2030 will eliminate 96 million tons. That's equivalent to 4 million passenger cars. That's significant. People are already making changes; some because



they believe in it, some because there are incentives and sometimes it's because of the stick of carbon tax. But here is the thing, it's great to talk about how we all believe in climate change, no one's disputing it, but if that's where it ends, or that we're making small steps to address what's a very serious problem, we're not going to get anywhere.

We've had the worst fire season in history. It came our way, literally, in terms of smoke. It's affecting our ability to grow food economically. It's affecting our building supplies; it's affecting insurance costs, which all drive up the cost of living for people living right now. That's the reality. So when I think of climate change, I take it seriously. I'm looking at it when I see the smoke wafting here from fires in British Columbia and what that means to the economy, to the lives of people who lost their homes and, in some cases, lost their lives.

I'll end with this. We're already paying a significant carbon tax in the form of the astronomical prices that we pay for fuel from basically inflationary costs of our oil companies. We reward these oil companies then with huge subsidies. They will say that their prices reflect supply and demand, which somehow makes it natural and fair; however, we know that OPEC simply has to ratchet up or curtail production and prices jump. The threat of war, hedge funds and speculation will drive oil prices up far more than any carbon tax; yet, not one of us here are speaking about how we need to address that issue and have a concerted effort to maybe start making the oil companies realize and forcing them to price more fairly so that people can afford the product, if that's the case. If that's really what we're about.

So with that, Speaker, thank you. You can probably tell where we'll be standing on this.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

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

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

I think this is an important opportunity today to speak to the private Member's resolution. I think it's important if I again repeat what the resolution is about, just so that people are clear: "... this House urge the Government of Canada to immediately repeal the carbon tax and the *Clean Fuel Regulations (Canada)*." I'm going to speak to both of those, both the carbon tax and the clean fuels, and their impact on all of us as Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I would like to say that changes to the carbon tax on fuel as well as the clean fuel regulations are costing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians a lot more money. I want to review for the people in the House and the people of the province why we feel that.

I listened to the Leader of the Opposition who, when he was shouting across the House, was talking about why now? Why now? Allow me to talk about why now. This is driving inflation. It is causing hardship in the province, so why now? Why are we, as the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, now talking about it?

You heard from the MHA for Lake Melville who spoke about the rationale and the reasons for what we were able to extract when the federal government decided to implement the carbon tax. You heard from the MHA for Lake Melville, who was the minister at the time, talk about extracting from the federal government the most we possibly can in the-made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador solution.

Right now, what we're seeing is the federal government has said we're going to expand the carbon tax. The process of the made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador solution, the carve out that we had on home heat, the carve out that we had on agriculture, the

carve out that we had on fisheries, for example, that they wouldn't be touched by the carbon tax, the federal government has said no more, we want you to implement the carbon tax on everyone and that caused quite an impact.

If you heat your home with oil, it was just over a 17 cent increase in your price of fuel come July. It was significant, Speaker, and I say that is one reason, is because the expansion of the carbon tax. Secondly, we're now seeing some of the prices of fuel due to global events. Today, I think the price of fuel is about \$92 a barrel, much higher than it was when the carbon tax was introduced. Plus the federal government has said we're changing the mechanism. It's not going to be \$10 per ton. It's now going to be \$15 a ton. So we've said that these are concerns for the people of the province, especially coming in a time when there's high inflation, time when there's a big, serious concern about the cost of living, that the provincial government is helping extraordinarily with.

I'd also say that the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, utilizing the money of the people of province, we've been doing a tremendous amount to lower our emissions. We have done – and I'll give kudos to the minister and his department and, of course, former ministers and their direction, but the province has really been supportive of making these huge changes. We have the management of greenhouse gas emissions. Speaker, you were minister at the time and you brought that into the House. I remember it well; it was a concern for industry, but we were able to move through it because, of course, we all recognize.

I listened to the Member for St. John's Centre and his impassioned plea around addressing climate change. I say that we have to address climate change. We must address climate change and we're doing a tremendous amount to address climate change. I'll say that we are committed,

absolutely committed to net zero by 2050. As a matter of fact, Newfoundland and Labrador – and I could be corrected, by the minister, but I think we contribute about 1 per cent to the Canada's greenhouse gas emissions and Canada contributes about 3 per cent of the world.

So our 1 per cent that we're really working to eliminate, very, very diligently. We have the oil to electric home heat program. We want to change people from oil to electric. We are investing in renewable energy. Newfoundland and Labrador, about 98 per cent of our electricity grid is with renewable energy. We're supporting the purchase of electric vehicles. We're putting in electric stations across the entire province. Those are the types of things that we're doing.

So we're saying to the federal government, we disagree with your federal approach about removing the carbon tax exemptions on home heating, municipal operations and agriculture and fisheries. We really want to ensure that the people of the province are not overly impacted. The Premier has met with the prime minister. He's met with the minister responsible. He's met with our MPS. He's explained why now is not the time to increase or expand the carbon tax. Things are challenging. We spent Question Period talking about the cost of living.

The Premier, in September, wrote again, yet again, to the federal minister and he said: "The current price signals provided by the market are far stronger than the signals that removal of these exemptions would have provided under normal economic circumstances, and they are already generating the changes in perspective and behaviour that the Federal Government desires."

Speaker, I can say to the people of the province, they're paying approximately 14.31 cents today in carbon tax. Now, as you know, we've given back – in our provincial gas tax, we've taken eight cents off already. That was eight cents this time.

We've taken money off in previous years as well. I think I remember when the former administration, the Conservative administration, they had 16 cents. We're down to eight cents now in terms of provincial gas tax.

Speaker, that is going up. In five years' time that'll be almost 31 cents. In five years, that'll be 31 cents. I'm saying to the federal government that these are concerns for the people of the province, there are other mechanisms, there are other means. Pause; change right now because we need to address the cost of living. There are many, many, many things happening to address climate change. We need to continue to address climate change.

While I have a moment, Speaker, I also want to address *Clean Fuel Regulations*. Back in 2023 I can tell you that the federal government changed the clean fuel regulatory framework. We had an exemption under the former regulations. The former regulations recognized – which were the renewable fuels regulations – that due to various factors in Newfoundland and Labrador, like the challenging cold weather, performance of fuels, containing renewable fuels, the limited infrastructure that we have in the province for mixing and distributing renewable fuels, like the limited supply options for mixing and the existing distribution network of these fuels, we were exempt. Now the federal government has said, nope, no longer exempt; you have to now pay for this clean fuel standard. And pay we do. It is significant, actually.

A report from the federal independent parliamentary budget officer has found these regulations will disproportionately impact Atlantic Canadians and increase costs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians up to 17 cents per litre. That's in addition to the carbon tax. It's 17 cents per litre for gasoline and 16 cents for diesel by 2030. Now, that's in addition to what I've just talked about in carbon tax.

Speaker, I will say again that we have been very clear to the federal government. We had a full carve-out on the former, what was called the renewable fuel regulations and say to the federal government we should have carve-out again. It disproportionately impacts Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Before I conclude today, I want to say that we're trying. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has done a tremendous amount in addressing climate change. We've also done a tremendous amount in address the cost-of-living concerns.

I've talked about the eight cents per litre that we've been able to give back to the people of the province. I've talked about the 15 per cent increase in the Seniors' Benefit, the 15 per cent increase in Income Supplement. I've talked about the 50 per cent reduction in the cost of registering your vehicle. We eliminated the tax, for example, on home insurance.

Those are the types of things that we've been able to do. We implore the federal government today to now address and repeal the carbon tax and the *Clean Fuel Regulations*.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you very much.

I now call on the Member for Terra Nova.

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

It's always an honour to stand in this House and speak.

It's kind of funny that the Minister of Finance tried to explain why now. Certainly, the Member for Lake Melville stood up and he said one year and one month ago we knew this was going to happen. So why now is a pretty valid question.

Last May, when Bill 38 was brought to the House and there was a debate here, it was turned down by the Liberals. It just wasn't their idea. So let's make no mistake about what this is. We listened to Premier here today and he mentioned federal MPs and all this stuff. Well, I'll tell you right now, one federal MP that has voted against this recently, voted for it four or five times.

So we're clear, he's on the way out and he's just trying to make a name for himself to probably run provincially. So we're being completely honest, 100 per cent. Here we are with five other MPs who haven't said a squeak – not a squeak.

Last May, we stood in this House and there was an amendment proposed, and we said at that time perhaps the Liberals, the Conservatives, the independent Members and the NDP should all come together and go to Ottawa. Here we are, nine months later, and this is a good idea.

This is not a federal tax; this is a Liberal tax. Here's the reality. In 2018, when this tax came in and there was a made-right-here solution where the money came back to the provincial government, it was a good idea. But the minute it got taken away and it went to the federal government, now it's a bad idea.

That is what this boils down to. That's why right now.

**S. COADY:** That's not true.

**L. PARROTT:** Well, it certainly is true because we can go back to the \$35 million that came into the budget this year, and the minister has stood in this House and said we already gave it back. Well, you wouldn't have to give it back if you didn't take it. That's the issue here in the House.

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

**L. PARROTT:** When you have people pay too much at the pumps or paying too much

anywhere else, the bottom line is you're taking it from one pocket and putting it in the other, robbing Peter to pay Paul. You can use any adage you want. But people are struggling every day and this carbon tax is a regressive, rural tax that affects everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador. If you're an individual who drives from around the bay somewhere to get where there's a hospital or a grocery store, then you pay substantially more.

We talk about what has been offered to people, the ability to put in heat pumps and these subsidies. Just think about what happens this year with the home heat rebate, \$500. It's about \$271 in carbon tax to fill up one tank – one tank. Just think about that.

Do you guys know anyone who gets one tank of fuel through the year to heat their house? I certainly don't. Now, go to rural Newfoundland where people are operating on 100-amp services. They don't have the ability to upgrade to a 200-amp service and put in a heat pump, nor do they have the money to do it.

Now I understand this year the rebates have changed and people have a better opportunity to do those types of things, but they still have to have the money upfront in order to do it. Now, we're not talking about people who've got thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars in their bank account. We're talking about people who are trying to decide between food and heat; between medicine and heat. That is the reality that we face right here.

Yes, listen, this PMR is good; it's a PMR. But we had an opportunity to put legislation in last summer with a bill that could have stood strong.

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

**L. PARROTT:** You guys shot it down. You sit in here and talk about what we didn't vote for but you guys voted for this. That is

the reality. The Liberal government, the provincial Liberal government has voted for the carbon tax with their federal brothers and sisters year after year, time and time again and now that they don't like it, they're afraid to even say the word Liberal. It's now, all of a sudden, the federal government and the Furey government. They don't even say the word Liberal anymore. It's the funniest thing ever.

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

**L. PARROTT:** We talk about climate change and there's nobody here who doesn't believe in climate change. I find it amusing that we have the Minister of Environment – I know, I know, I agree with you – who's down there and we talk about forest fires and we say this year was the highest forest fire index in our history. And do you know what? It was, 2023 was the highest. But if we're going to talk about how high our forest fire index is and stuff that's happening throughout the globe, specifically in Newfoundland and in Canada, then we ought to look at the real data.

Do you know what the next highest forest fire index was? I'm sure you guys can all do math: 1989. So this hasn't happened overnight – 1989. In 2023, we have this substantial jump and, all of a sudden, we've got to tax people into (inaudible) and get rid of carbon. It makes no sense. These conversations happen all the time without merit.

We had an opportunity in this House back last May when we repealed the carbon tax – and I understand how it works and the minister knows, we've had this conversation. We repealed the provincial carbon tax; we had no choice but to do that. The reality of it is, if we didn't we would have ended up paying carbon tax twice. Fair. Fair bet. I get it, but we could have given the province a break, provincially. We had an amendment in that asked for a two-month hiatus on carbon tax. You guys voted against it, every one of you.

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

**L. PARROTT:** But now all of a sudden, there's an election in the air, or whatever it is that's going on, and this is a big matter. Now, all of a sudden, you guys feel that the Liberal carbon tax is a bad idea. But we sat here and listened to this government over successive years talk about the Liberal carbon tax, how good it was and how you believed that it could tax us out of carbon and into prosperity. The quotes are all out there. You can shake your head all you want. They're there. Go back through *Hansard*. Facts matter.

At the end of the day, now all of a sudden, we don't support it anymore. We're doing a PMR. But why a PMR? I think that's the greater question. Why a PMR and why today did the Premier come into this House and talk on a PMR? In two years, he's never said a word on a PMR – not one.

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

**L. PARROTT:** As a matter of fact, in the last three budgets, I don't know if anyone over there stood up and debated anything. I don't know if anyone stood up during a budget debate and said a word, with the exception of the Minister of Finance.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Well, there you go. Do you know why there's no debate? There's no debate because you can't be wrong. You've got to be right all of the time, but you're wrong on this. You're wrong on this. You're wrong on your support for the carbon tax over the years. This PMR is great but we all know what it means. The same as every other PMR. We've put in numerous PMRs that this House has passed unanimously and it goes nowhere – nowhere.

So the reality is maybe you guys should bring forward legislation that we can vote on –

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

**L. PARROTT:** – to eliminate the carbon tax that does stuff for the men and women of this province.

**S. COADY:** (Inaudible.)

**L. PARROTT:** When?

**S. COADY:** (Inaudible.)

**L. PARROTT:** And accepted.

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

I remind everyone to please address your remarks to the Speaker.

Thank you.

**L. PARROTT:** When we talk carbon tax and we talk to the Liberal government's support of the federal Liberal government's carbon tax, when the money was coming to the provincial coffers, it was a great idea.

Listen, I agree, we shouldn't be taxing home heating fuel. We shouldn't be taxing farmers, fishermen, anybody, but the reality of today's fiscal situation is we need to be looking for a way to lower the tax on everything, certainly when it affects the cost of living and gasoline and fuels affect everything we do on a very daily basis.

For us to toe the line – and I don't mean just the Liberals, but for this whole House to support this bill, which I think they should, but it is a frivolous bill, make no mistake about it. It goes nowhere; it is the same as every other PMR.

There is one thing I think that we should be saying and we should be honest with ourselves. When I say that, I don't think that we should be calling this a federal carbon tax, we should be calling it exactly what it is, a Liberal carbon tax.

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

**L. PARROTT:** On that note, I will move the following amendment, seconded by the Member for Ferryland.

We move that the resolution now before the House be amended by deleting the word "federal" whenever it appears and substituting the word "Liberal."

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

We will recess for a brief period of time to consider the proposed amendment.

### Recess

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready?

We have considered the proposed amendment by the Member for Terra Nova and we find that it is not in order.

The Member for Terra Nova has one minute and twenty-six seconds remaining on his time.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** It's a new sitting of the House. Last sitting of the House a PMR was a private Member's resolution; this sitting of the House it's a publicly misleading revelation.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** Now here we are.

The carbon tax for the people of Newfoundland, based on our geography and population, how we do our business on

a daily basis, this is a rural tax. It's a food tax. It taxes people in this province, disproportionately and, again I'll say, I support this PMR; I just think it's too little too late.

Thirteen months ago when you guys knew this was going to happen, this government had the opportunity to do stuff. Back in May, during the debate of Bill 38, this party recommended that all three parties get together, go to Ottawa together. We were willing to do that. No one wanted to do that. It's the time for collaboration. If you want to talk about it, it's what we need to do.

When we mentioned that, people across the way shout, yell and say, what letter did you write? Well, guess what? The letter-writing campaign doesn't work to your brothers and sisters up in Ottawa. They've obviously snubbed their noses at you and they're not listening. So perhaps it's time for us to come together as a House and go to Ottawa and see what we can do with the carbon tax.

The reality of it is, everyone in this House is here to represent the people who put them here, and I think we all feel strongly about it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

I next call on the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

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

**G. BYRNE:** Thank you very, very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to all colleagues for participating in this debate.

It's really an interesting one because as I listened and listened intently from a perch elsewhere I tried to glean as to whether or not there would be a substantive public policy exchange. Whether or not there'd be an examination of taxation as a way to

induce consumer behaviours or whether or not what the impacts may be on economies and so on, but I really could find none of that debate here except for what the Member for Lake Melville had to offer, which I really do appreciate.

But what we did find, though, Mr. Speaker, it became abundantly clear is this is a political debate and it's a rhetoric debate. It is a purely political debate from the point of view of the Opposition, from the Members of the Progressive Conservative party.

That's a bit of a shame because it's a straw-man debate that they promote. They promote a false assumption. They promote a fallacy as the basis of the argument and try to knock down the argument on a false presumption. Because as they say that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador supports the carbon tax, they know, and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador know, that that is a false premise. They try to defeat an argument by enriching the negativity around the argument so that they could make it believable. That, Mr. Speaker, is why they will fail.

I will say this and say it with some satisfaction, that as this argument and this debate progresses across the entire country what they can depend on, and arguably what we probably could depend on too, is that the only reference that the leader of the Conservative Party of Canada will ever make and has ever made in his assault to the carbon tax is a reference to the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador and his arguments against the carbon tax.

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

**G. BYRNE:** That is the truth.

Mr. Speaker, while they may want to promote –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**G. BYRNE:** – their political argument, that this is a Liberal tax, the leader of their cousin's, Pierre Polar Bear and others – Pierre Poilievre, excuse me – he will be arguing that one of his greatest allies in a purpose policy debate against the carbon tax, he will be siding or using as his aid the arguments of the Liberal Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador in his point.

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

**G. BYRNE:** As they advance this straw-man argument, what they are really depending on is for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to sort of ignore that point. Because what they have said is that we really don't agree with just purely political arguments; we want substantive arguments.

If we were to get into the history of this thing, the history of gas taxes in this country falls back on Joe Clark, the 1979 gas tax that defeated his government. If you really think and following the line of argument by the Member for Conception Bay South, that taxes are not a winner, that taxes lead to defeat, the greatest tax in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador is the PC misguided Muskrat Falls tax, which will be the legacy of the PC Party forever and ever and ever.

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

**G. BYRNE:** So, Mr. Speaker, this is a very, very simple, straightforward calculation. I've been in the vocation of public service and public life for many, many years. I have come to be more aware of things that make me uptight and make me concerned from a political point of view, things that make me uptight and concerned from a policy point of view. I can tell you that from a policy point of view, the carbon tax is very disturbing to me; we have gone past the point where the carbon tax could ever be seen to be effective when you consider market pricing of carbon, when you consider the evolution of carbon pricing from a market point of

view, the tax itself has defeated itself from that point of view, from eliminating carbon.

But looking away from the policy argument and now to the political argument, what I know to be true is that as long as the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador and its current leadership advances an argument simply based on politics, on a straw-man argument which is based on a false premise, and as long as they project that over and over and over again, their support, the support of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the believability that they will have within the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will go farther and farther and farther down as they understand that it's the Liberal Government of Newfoundland and Labrador that as times changed, circumstance changed, we pivoted based on the circumstance, the reality that we faced.

We struck a deal originally that eliminated all carbon taxes for farmers, for fishermen, for mining, for municipalities. We made sure that there were rebates in place, we had certain provisions in place and the government then subsequently changed that deal. We took the honourable and responsible thing and pivoted accordingly, Mr. Speaker. If that is a mark of shame in politics, to actually act on reality and circumstance as opposed to acting on a straw-man argument, I will stand with this side of the floor any day of the week, any day of the year, and we will advance better public policy as a result.

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

**G. BYRNE:** But Mr. Speaker, if the Progressive Conservative Party wants to continue on trying to promote a fallacy, trying to entrench a fallacy as the principal argument for their future electoral success, I wish them the result that they deserve.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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



**SPEAKER:** Thank you, Minister.

I now call on the hon. the Member for Exploits.

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

It's always a privilege to get up here and speak on the PMR in the House of Assembly, and it's always nice to get up here and follow the Minister of Immigration. I am sure there is a career after politics for the Minister of Immigration. I'm sure there is.

Let's get back to why we're talking about this PMR. When it comes to climate change, we've seen the climate change effects. We're not climate change deniers. When the vote was here, we weren't climate change deniers then when we were trying to give reasons to the government not to vote for the carbon tax in the first place. We weren't climate change deniers then; we just said that the carbon tax wouldn't work and this wasn't the way to do it.

We're not climate change deniers. It's been there and we've seen it – we've seen the climate change; climate change is real. You know, we've seen more storms. The Member for Burgeo - La Poile, we've seen a big storm only a few months ago in his district which ripped apart his district and we certainly don't want to see storms like that. We've seen wildfires all across Canada in extremes that we don't want to witness, that we don't want to see. We've had it here in Newfoundland.

I see the government is very concerned about their PMR and what everybody got to say because they're listening intently over there. Even the wildfires that we had in Central Newfoundland last year, it shows the extremes of climate change. There were people on high alerts; towns were on high alert. Especially people with illnesses, especially in the hospital. It is not something we want to challenge; it is not something we want to see. We know climate change is

real. I don't think any of us is denying it, but a tax on climate change doesn't change the climate change. The climate change is still going to happen; the tax doesn't solve it. That is why we tried to tell the government at the time, when this vote was going down, that the carbon tax wasn't the way to go.

We even gave implications of what would happen. At the time, we gave implications. We warned that they fuel tax would go up. We warned that the farmers would be in trouble with regard to getting the equipment in to plow their fields and do the work in the fields which would increase our crop production. That the end result would come on the tables of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We already said that. We already said that when we voted against the carbon tax in the first place.

Now they're just realizing this. Is that what's happening here? We knew this in the first place. We gave implications of what people were going to be paying for fuels for their vehicles. We all gave examples of all that when we were having debate against the carbon tax and we voted against it, which you voted for. We gave examples then. You didn't listen – you didn't listen.

We gave examples of the home fuels. We gave examples of what would happen to farmers. We gave examples of people who are driving to work, how that would increase their cost of even getting to work and trying to feed their families, what would happen. We gave all examples of that at the time, yet the Liberals across the way got up and said no, carbon tax is the way to go. They voted for the carbon tax. That's true. That's fact. You did it.

Now, today, you're standing there. We don't believe in the carbon tax. What changed? What really changed? You voted for it. The whole line up, you all stood up there and you voted for it. Is it because you finally heard from the people? We were speaking for the people back then.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Back then, we were speaking for the people. That's what we were doing but they didn't listen. They didn't listen. They said no, we'll bring in the carbon tax. We'll make the people of Newfoundland and Labrador suffer. That's what we'll do.

I think, in the past few months, there has been a change in the rethinking –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Saw the polls.

**P. FORSEY:** Probably they may be rethinking what they do. I wonder was it a poll. May be it was a poll. I don't know but they've heard through different grapevines, we'll say, of what's really happening there. You know, you look at the federal end of it. You look at the provincial end of it. There are things happening. People are talking.

People are always saying that they can't afford this, they can't afford something else and they can't afford to feed their families. You know what? They can't. We hear it every day and I know you guys do, too. That didn't change the fact that you voted for the carbon tax. That does not change the facts. You voted for it. You didn't listen to us in the beginning and now you're backtracking, you're flip-flopping on your initial decisions.

You made the choice. You had the choice in the beginning to get up there and vote with us. We all wanted to be collaborative in the House. How many times has that word been used? It's been used ever since I got here. Ever since I got here that's the word that's been thrown back at us. So we gave all the implications of what was going to happen, we said that the carbon tax wasn't the way to go. We said we believed in climate change. We said all that. We're not climate deniers; we said that tax wasn't the way to go with it. But no sir, that wasn't good enough. They had to get up there and go against us, just because they could.

They know now that a tax is not the way to go. Actually they found out that in 2016, that a tax is not the way to go. Their tax in 2016, when they started coming with taxes, levies and fees, showed what the difference was in 2019. It brought them down to minority government in 2019, because of the taxes and levies and fees. Guess what? Now they're hearing the word "tax" again, their tax on carbon, their sugar tax.

They're hearing that word "tax" again. Guess what? There are rumblings in the air. Guess what? They're thinking it might even go farther, which is probably what's going to happen. Because they do not listen to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**P. FORSEY:** So that's where we're to with this carbon tax right now, Speaker. It's unfortunate that we had to come to this point; we could have been a collaborative government right here at this House of Assembly. We had a chance. We gave them the chance. We wanted them to vote with us. We gave them all sorts of ideas, all sorts of ways that this carbon tax wouldn't work. But no, they didn't go for it. So now we're in this situation today; now they want us to work together.

But you know, I believe in the PMR. It's way overdue – way overdue. They had their chance to do it then. Why are they doing it now? I think it shows.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

I now call on the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

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

So I have a bit of a story to tell, the *Clean Fuel Regulations* story. This is like six months in the life of the minister responsible for the *Petroleum Products Act*. So I have

not had enough time to talk about this; now I don't know if seven minutes will be enough, but I'm going to tell the story of the *Clean Fuel Regulations*, Speaker, because that's a piece I think that is missing in the discussion.

The *Clean Fuel Regulations* really sets regulations for the people who produce oil and the wholesalers in Canada. There are different ways. It came into effect July 1, and the first time they'll have to report on it is next year. It has to do with the carbon intensity of the fuel that they're selling. So there's a whole range of ways that they can meet their requirement under the *Clean Fuel Regulations* –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

It has become a little difficult to hear the minister.

Order, please!

Thank you.

Please proceed, Minister.

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

So there are a range of ways that these companies can meet their requirements of the *Clean Fuel Regulations*. For example, they can buy electric cars; they can buy credits. There are a lot of problems with these regulations, which I'm going to touch on. One of the core problems is that the carbon credit market in Canada is not yet established. That doesn't exist. It's not going to exist for another year.

The biggest problem we have in Atlantic Canada is we have regulated gas prices and it kind of goes against the spirit of the *Clean Fuel Regulations*. If you think about Ontario, BC and Alberta, the wholesaler determines the prices. It's more supply and demand that we have here. The Public

Utilities Board regulates gas prices. They define a certain price and that's the maximum price, as we all know, those change on Thursdays.

Speaker, it's a really difficult situation because in Atlantic Canada we all have this regulated market where all of a sudden a maximum gas price doesn't apply. The *Clean Fuel Regulations*, the spirit of it, doesn't work in Atlantic Canada.

I'm trying to condense what I'm trying to say into five minutes and it's challenging.

We were bombarded with communications from the Fuels Association, from Irving, we had meetings with all of these groups – really upset. How are they going to recoup the costs that they are now going to incur to meet the *Clean Fuel Regulations*?

I guess in Newfoundland and Labrador, in the Public Utilities Board, in the regulations, there is no way that the Public Utilities Board could grant them, nowhere in Atlantic Canada, so they could recoup the costs of meeting the *Clean Fuel Regulations*.

We had call after call with the federal government, with the bureaucrats, the public servants. I first-hand heard the public servants say on a call that they did not consider the Atlantic Canadian regulatory model in the *Clean Fuel Regulations* design.

I cannot tell you how many nights I spent, and days, worried and working to try and keep gas prices low for people of the province, Speaker.

So all of Atlantic Canada had the same problem and I guess we were all hoping for a while the federal government would ease these off and they didn't.

New Brunswick first commissioned a Grant Thornton report on how they were going to price the *Clean Fuel Regulations* and that Grant Thornton report was very shocking. It said it could be eight to 12 cents, if you

extrapolate some of the formulas. That report is public. It was all based on the price of renewable diesel from California. It's just the most ridiculous thing you've ever heard.

When you extrapolate those prices used in the Grant Thornton formula in New Brunswick, if we had gone with that same kind of model that Grant Thornton proposed for New Brunswick, our prices could have gone up 20 or 30 cents per litre. I spent so many nights desperately trying to find any way that this wouldn't happen.

So Nova Scotia issued a request for proposals wondering how they were going to handle the *Clean Fuel Regulations*. They had a different consultant, R Cube, came back – and this report is public as well – arguing a different formula.

Our Public Utilities Board commissioned Grant Thornton. I was really afraid that our Public Utilities Board was going to come back and say that we should have eight to 10 cents added for the *Clean Fuel Regulations*, Speaker. This was a primary concern in my department for a good few weeks.

I don't have time to go through all the ways that we tried to minimize that or reduce the risk of that, but, essentially, I don't know that people in the province understand that when you go to the Public Utilities website there is a gas price thing here and it shows you the breakdown of a litre of gas. This is today. The maximum price in Zone 1, which is here on the Avalon, is 171.30. There are taxes: the retail markup, the wholesale markup and then there's 3.74 for the carbon price adjustment, Speaker.

This does not go back to consumers. This is an extra cost that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are paying directly to the wholesalers and suppliers so that they can meet the federal government's *Clean Fuel Regulations*. There is no supply and demand here in our regulated market in Atlantic Canada.

I'm really glad that this is 3.74 and not eight cents. In New Brunswick, their utility regulator decided to go with exactly what was in the Grant Thornton report and in New Brunswick they had an eight-cent carbon price adjustment added to their gas price. We have no idea what the cost for the wholesalers and suppliers actually are. So these are just guesses right now. It's absurd. I can talk about this all day.

New Brunswick went with eight cents. Thankfully, Nova Scotia had some sense and went with 3.74 cents and thankfully our Public Utilities Board also followed with 3.74 cents, but that is temporary, Speaker, and that is going to be continuously monitored.

I only have one minute left so I fully support the PMR. We no longer have a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador solution so we are vehemently against the federal government's – I don't even think I pronounced that word right, but we are against the federal government's carbon tax. They made fundamental flaws with the design of the *Clean Fuel Regulations* and I'd be happy to talk about that all day.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** I call upon the Member for St. George's - Humber to close the debate.

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

It's been great to hear some many views today on this private Member's motion. It's been especially good to get some of the history from the Member for Lake Melville and the Member for Mount Scio. It was great to hear those pieces of history because it's good to put the way we got to where we are and recognize that this has been a long-term disagreement between our provincial government and the federal government.

I think this sort of argument sort of replicates an argument that, in a lot of cases, we're not heard. Our concerns aren't taken into account and that's problematic. So it's good to get that history to recognize that history.

Again, I'd like to thank everyone for participating in this debate. It's all about where do we go from here. It's all about sending a clear and concise message on this issue to the federal government.

I'm just going to take my seat now so we can do the vote on this and send off the message to the federal government.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**SPEAKER:** Motion carried.

Before we adjourn the House, the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality just reminded us today is National Persons Day and we ask that all female parliamentarians to come forward to the front of the Speaker's chair after for a photo.

It being Wednesday, and in accordance with Standing Order 9(3), this House do stand adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.