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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Good afternoon and welcome to everyone in the public gallery.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Humber - Bay of Islands, Labrador West –

P. LANE: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to say that I believe that, in terms of all Members of this House of Assembly, it's not just important what we say in this House, but also what we say outside of the House. I just want to say to my colleagues on the Public Accounts Committee that yesterday when I had made a call to the *Open Line* show talking about the MUN audit and so on, I think I was asked something about Public Accounts and so on, it should go to Public Accounts and I said yes, it should. I was asked how active is Public Accounts? I said I haven't heard a whole lot happening in Public Accounts.

I think some of my colleagues may have taken some offence to that. I understand the Public Accounts Committee has been very active as of late for sure. Certainly, while it did not happen in this House of Assembly, I just wanted to apologize. It was certainly no intention to mislead or take away from any of the good work that my colleagues are doing in Public Accounts.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Although it's not a point of order, it is a point of information and appreciated.

Thank you.

Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the District of Humber - Bay of Islands, Labrador West, Placentia - St. Mary's, Mount Pearl - Southlands and Mount Pearl North.

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

E. JOYCE: Last weekend, the Newfoundland and Labrador Volleyball Association started their season with the VolleyWest tournament held in Corner Brook. Thirty-nine teams from across the province competed in both the junior and senior high school levels.

Today, I am very pleased to recognize the Templeton Tigers junior high girls' and senior high girls' teams from Templeton Academy in Meadows, who both won gold in the Tier 2 divisions and brought home two banners for the school. Their hard work, team spirit and sportsmanship ensured that they could win, while at the same time, having fun and doing their best.

Congratulations also to the coaches: Greg Sharpe with the junior team and Chantille Brake and Glendale Payne with the senior team.

On the weekend of November 3 and 4, both teams will be competing at the VolleyCentral tournament with the junior competition being held in Grand Falls-Windsor, while the senior team will be in Lewisporte.

I ask all Members to join with me in extending congratulations to the Templeton Tigers senior and junior high school teams and wish them all the best, as they get ready for their next competitions.

Great job, ladies.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to acknowledge an alternative rock band based out of Labrador City and Wabush called Ptarmageddon. Ptarmageddon was formed by Scott Neary, Jenn Edwards and Matt Soper. Ptarmageddon has earned four MusicNL nominations to date, including two Alternative Artist of the Year. Their video "Nightmare Song" was recently nominated for Music Video of the Year by MusicNL.

The trio had come together in 2021 as a COVID project, live streaming concerts from their living rooms. When the venues opened back up, they began playing in local bars and the Arts and Culture Centre. Over the past year, Ptarmageddon has toured Arts and Culture Centres across Newfoundland and Labrador and played the opening ceremonies at the Labrador Winter Games and the Derina Harvey Band in Wabush.

In collaboration with Brad Dillon, Ptarmageddon has released three music videos, all showcasing Labrador City and Wabush locations, including Smokey Mountain Ski Club and the Kash Nightclub.

In such a short amount of time, Ptarmageddon has accomplished much, much more. On behalf of Labrador West, I'd like to thank them for continuing to showcase Labrador West in their work.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in wishing Scott, Jenn and Matt continued success with their band.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Hilda Whelan has been the mayor of Whitbourne for 12 years. Born on October 6, 1948, she has seen her share of personal adversity; adversity that has molded her go-getter personality and positive attitude.

When Hilda's mother was 36, she passed away leaving 10 children under the age of 12. Hilda was six. Hilda's first husband, Ron Phillips was killed in an accident. At 19, she found herself a widow with a 22 month old and a six week old. Nine years later, she married Bill Whelan. Bill encouraged her to go back to school. In three months, she had completed 36 credits, graduated and then completed an administrative program.

Hilda led the pursuit for pensions to be returned to widows from workers' compensation. She was given a standing ovation in this House of Assembly for this accomplishment.

She has battled cancer and won. Hilda has been recognized by the Army Cadets for her contribution to their movement. She is a volunteer with the Lions Club and President of the local 55-Plus Association. Today, she is focused on improving the application of the Practice Ready Assessment model for physicians.

Hilda's motto is: Do it.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in this hon. House to recognize the accomplishments of five amazing community volunteers who have given much of their time and talents to the people of Mount Pearl as members of the Kinette Club of Mount Pearl.

This past March, Ms. Deidre Levandier received a certificate from Kin Canada for 50 years of service. What an incredible legacy of community involvement.

In April, Donna Collens, Marion Joy and Kim Smith were presented with their Life Memberships, the highest award that can be bestowed on a Kin member.

In June, our colleague and my good friend, Lucy Stoyles, received the Kin Atlantic District 7, Zone D, Richard Levandier Outstanding President's Award in recognition of her community commitment and leadership in her role as president of the Mount Pearl Kinettes.

There is so much praise I could heap on all of these amazing ladies and many personal stories I could share working side by side with them through various community events and initiatives, but I'll just say thank you. You are valued. You are appreciated. You are awesome.

I ask all Members to join me in recognizing these amazing volunteers and thanking them for their outstanding service to the community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. STOYLES: Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to pay tribute to one of the longest-serving groups: the Mount Pearl Lions Club.

April 17, 1956, was their charter night, when they laid the foundation for one of the finest service groups in our province. For almost 70 years, this group has continued to show us what community support is all about. One fine example of this is the Mount Pearl Santa Claus Parade, which they have organized since their inception.

They have collected thousands of pairs of eyeglasses, and in 2016 they even went to Haiti with Team Broken Earth and delivered the gift of sight. Plus they have donated thousands of pairs of eyeglasses to our local prisons.

The Lions Club are present in our schools as well, as they organize and sponsor public speak-offs each year. The members of the Lions Club are very community-minded; they continue their great work while they still deliver our community suppers. They also help fund the Lion Max Simms Camp and many other community activities.

Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in saying thank you to this amazing group.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Speaker, I'm pleased to rise in this hon. House to highlight how our government is helping Labrador youth, Special Olympians and sports teams travel to other areas of the province to participate in provincial competitions, development camps and tryouts.

The Department of Labrador Affairs is increasing financial assistance through enhancements in the Labrador Sport Travel Subsidy program. The changes include increasing the subsidy to offset the higher cost of team airfare, improving the mileage claim process and enhancing travel for Labrador athletes who qualify for provincial teams.

Through *Budget 2023*, Labrador Affairs also increased funding to School Sports NL by \$100,000. This boost in funding is

expanding opportunities for student athletes from Labrador, and laying the groundwork for the development of Indigenous-themed games. Total spending on both programs now amount to \$830,000. Speaker, full details are available on our Labrador Affairs website, for those who wish to look.

Encouraging and promoting physical activity at an early age improves self-esteem, mental and physical well-being, builds leadership skills, improves discipline, and I could go on. Young athletes across Labrador have proven they have the ability to compete at a high level, and many times in the past couple of years on the world stage. In order to tap into this incredible potential, it's essential they have opportunities to grow, develop and mature.

As a government, we recognize the need to do more and we will continue to support young athletes from Labrador through sport development.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

We, too, in the Official Opposition support the athletes and teams from Labrador who compete in provincial championships and attend development camps and Canada Games and provincial team tryouts.

It's encouraging to see an increase in the Labrador Sport Travel Subsidy program, a program that for many years has been underfunded and, in some cases, has denied opportunities for teams and athletes to compete in various competitions.

This increase is a good start in alleviating the shortfall that had occurred for many

years. We encourage government to continue growing their financial support in the future. Programs like this certainly support and achieve the goals we all want to see in our youth: improved physical activity, self-esteem, mental well-being, cultural understanding and the opportunity to achieve their athletic goals of competing provincially, nationally and internationally.

Thank you.

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 her statement.

We commend the government on hearing our calls asking for greater investment to support our athletes and help them reach the podium.

We now call upon this government to do more, first, by monitoring the success of this investment, and also ask them to look at the barriers that prevent our Labrador athletes from being able to travel to competitions accessible by the rest of this province.

We are grateful and we applaud this investment. We also look forward to this government delivering more to elevate our Labrador athletes to a level playing field.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise in this hon. House to recognize the work happening throughout Newfoundland and Labrador to improve access to high quality and affordable child care.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: On January 1 – three years ahead of schedule – we implemented \$10-a-day early learning and child care for children of all age groups. According to a report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, this has decreased the cost of regulated early learning and child care by almost 70 per cent for pre-school aged children, and almost 80 per cent for infants.

We're also focused on increasing access to early learning and child care through space creation initiatives, as well as the recruitment and retention of early childhood educators.

We recently announced \$7.5 million to support infrastructure and renovations to regulated child care services availing of the operating grant program. We also increased funding for projects operating under the Child Care Capacity Initiative program which includes an hourly wage increase to \$25 per hour for developmental workers.

Our efforts are working. We have created close to 1,100 early learning and child care spaces this year, and we are currently close to 8,400 child care spaces operating at \$10 a day or lower here in the province.

Recently, we launched our Child Care Demand Portal to help us assess and understand current demand and to continue our efforts and I encourage all families seeking child care to visit the site.

Speaker, our government will continue to work so that all families throughout the province are able to access early learning and child care services that they need.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the hon. minister for the advance copy of her statement, which unfortunately only came less than 30 minutes before I came in here. In any event, I get a response.

Speaker, anything we can do to make child care more accessible is to be celebrated. Everyone on this side of the House has talked to desperate parents seeking child care, some who have not even been able to go back to work.

Recent reports states we are only have enough registered spaces for 14 per cent of the children, third lowest in the country. Speaker, unfortunately the minister still cannot give us any indication how many people are actually looking for child care.

It took years open a portal for parents to register. I suggest the minister make a quick call around to various centres who have long wait-lists of 100 or more. Speaker, what is the good to have \$10-a-day child care if you cannot access it?

Having met and talked to many operators, it's astounding that despite providing 60 per cent of the spaces in this province the minister has shut out private operators from any expansion plans. Many have financial operational (inaudible) to expand to meet the demand but are denied by government. Does this make any sense?

Again, the minister needs to work with the entire industry.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Child care desert was how our province was described and ECEs are still without good benefits, retirement plans, affordable housing and more. Until these gaps are addressed, equality in child care cannot be achieved. Wait-lists continue to grow; just look at my own District of Labrador West.

These announcements by government will continue to be nothing more than self-congratulations until they get down and do the hard work and get more spaces opened.

Thank you.

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: Speaker, the people of the province have lost confidence in the Liberal minister of Housing.

I ask the Premier: Will you show leadership and replace your minister of Housing immediately?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As we've discussed in this House for the last two weeks, housing is a real crisis across the province. That's why this government has tackled it from two different approaches: the five-point plan to help change the market dynamic for housing that's affordable, while also tackling

affordable housing and unlocking \$3 million of funds to help renovate the 143 units. We have 750 housing options that have been in development and 850 more to come, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, CBC is reporting deplorable conditions faced by those sent from Tent City to a private shelter in the capital. They report rat feces on the floor, rat poison near cooking utensils and violence; not the safe, stable homes that the people were looking for.

I ask the Premier: Did your officials inspect this shelter before sending people into that space?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I've already asked the department and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to review that situation that was reported. It is unacceptable. It was troubling for many of us to watch. They do regular inspections and I've asked for an inquiry as to how this has happened, for this particular one, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, one of those sent to this shelter by the Liberal government said – quote – there is no oven. The water is not working right. It's ridiculous.

I ask the Premier: How did this happen?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I've asked for a review of how this happened, Mr. Speaker. I can't comment as to why or the exact details, as it pertains to a particular individual, Mr. Speaker. I don't think that would be fair, but, needless, to say the reports were unsatisfactory to the level of commitment that we have to these people, Mr. Speaker. We'll endeavour to figure out why and, more importantly, change how we do it in the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it's just not good enough. Neither the minister nor the Premier was willing to speak to the media yesterday to address this serious situation.

I ask the Premier: Why are the Premier and the minister hiding from the media on this important issue?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, yesterday, I spoke to the media, after speaking to Choices for Youth –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: – which was a national conference with respect to dealing with some of the complex issues that face youth, Mr. Speaker, including housing challenges for youth. I answered questions there for 10 to 15 minutes with respect to certain media outlets. The day before, I was available for 20 minutes. I'm always available for media and I'm happy to talk again to them today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: I would hope that the minister of Housing has the same availability.

Speaker, Food Banks Canada says there has been a 44 per cent increase in food bank usage in our province since 2019. They say: Of over the 15,000 reported food bank visits, one-third of those were by children.

Speaker: How is it acceptable to this Liberal government to have children standing in lines at a food bank?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The report that the Member opposite is referring to suggests that there is a national issue, a national crisis with respect to food banks. That said, as always, this government will be looking after the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We take the issue of child poverty very serious, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to make sure that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

A. FUREY: I'm happy to continue, Mr. Speaker, if you'd like.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

AN HON. MEMBER: Write another letter.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Well, you can't read them so it doesn't matter if I write them or not.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to do the work on behalf of the people of the province to ensure that we are tackling child poverty. It's a serious issue. It deserves a serious response and I can tell you this government has been fully seized with the child poverty issue. You can expect an announcement in the not-too-distant future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, a point of order.

Section 49 – I can read. I can comprehend. I stand in this Legislature and if the Premier of the province wants to stand in this place and say we cannot read –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Do you want to keep your point of order for after we finish Question Period, or do you want to use Question Period?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Deflection. Deflection. Deflection. That's all that was.

Speaker, child poverty is a concern across our province and parents are struggling to keep food on the table. Again, in April 2020, a bag of oranges at a local grocery store costs \$3.99. That same bag of oranges today costs \$8.99.

I ask the Premier: How do you expect families to provide healthy food options when they can't afford to?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

You know, this is a very serious issue. The cost of living has increased, substantially.

We are very consumed with ensuring that we are helping the people of the province. That's why we lowered our gas tax by eight cents. That's why you're not seeing it at the pump – eight cents. We also increased – and the Member opposite would appreciate this – the Prenatal Infant Nutrition Supplement. That's why we have the low-cost child care made available. That's why we increased the Income Supplement by 15 per cent.

All of those programs are to help support the people of the province. Half a billion dollars we have invested and given back to the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Again, from the report: 46 per cent of people in Newfoundland and Labrador struggle to access fresh and affordable food due to the high cost of living. On average, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians pay more than 30 – three, zero – per cent of their income on housing.

I ask the minister: How do you expect families to put a roof over their heads and keep up with all these high cost of living?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Normally, I wouldn't stand up and I'd leave it to our very capable Minister of Finance, but one of the things that comes up here is whenever we talk about issues that affect us across the country, they always say what about Newfoundland and Labrador, which we are talking about here?

But I'm reading something here that I'm willing to table after. It came from this week's Telegram and the headline actually says: Newfoundland and Labrador has

Canada's lowest cost of living. This was a study using statistics from Statistics Canada and the Canadian Real Estate Association. It talks about how we are bolstered by some of the lowest scores in terms of costs amongst a number of factors.

So I just wanted to point it out there that, yes, we certainly have challenges here in this province but the fact is we are doing quite well when we compare ourselves to the rest of Canada as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I guess I will demonstrate to the Premier that I can actually read and I'll start off with my first question.

Speaker, the Marine Institute Student's Union is the latest group to speak out about the lavish spending exposed in the AG report. In an open letter they called for an end to students paying for chocolates and limousines.

Minister, what are you going to do to change the culture of entitlement at this university?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I have received the letter that the Member opposite referenced and would like to encourage all of the student unions to take the opportunity to reach out to me, to speak to me so that we can further these conversations.

But with the matter at hand, when we talk about the things that were released in Auditor General's report, it's often easy to pick some of the things and sensationalize

them. The issue that is more overarching or more concerning to me is the lack of governance that was identified there.

I've had the opportunity to speak with the president, with the chair of the Board of Regents and they have shown significant steps forward in correcting some of the issues that have been identified. They have given me assurances that they are working on a plan to correct all of the issues that have been identified as we work to further the university here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, that reminds me of the foxes in the henhouse. It's public money, the same people there. This doesn't make sense. This is what we're looking at; the same people have been there before. It's the same people opposed this report, Mr. Speaker. They didn't want us asking for it.

Speaker, the administrative bloat at the university has been clearly laid out in the AG's report, including significant costs on the backs of students.

Speaker, why does the minister think the same executive team at the university can (inaudible) out any change?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to speak to the point that the Member opposite made about the people that are involved in this equation, and identify that we have appointed 16 members to the Board of Regents. There are very few of those who are continuing on. So there are new people, not the same old, same old, that would be in the Board of Regents.

So we know that they have a great amount of work ahead of them, and we have some very capable people who are on that board, many of whom were elected by the alumni association of Memorial University who have faith in the people that they've put forward, and they've shown significant steps on some of the issues. We're continuing to work with them to ensure that there is a movement towards changing the culture that's often represented at Memorial University.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, do you know what the public are saying about that AG's report on the university? It's one word: outrageous. And it's too bad the government doesn't feel the same way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: We do. We're all outraged.

Speaker, the Board of Regents, which government appoints, mind you, has had some of the same members on it for years – not everyone, some of the same members for years, including the chair.

Again, if none of these people saw a problem in the past few years, and did nothing to rein in the problem, what makes the minister believe now they'll be the champions of change?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we share the public sentiment with respect to the concern in the AG report. I met with the president yesterday and I expressed the public opinion with respect to that report. They need to do better.

I gave him a mandate to do better, to make sure that he is correcting the operations, Mr. Speaker. I encouraged him to do it quickly, I encouraged him to do it with key performance objectives, and to do so with significant timelines. Because the people of the province do deserve better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, a week later, finally I've got something along the same line we feel. I'm glad the Premier's outraged, and we're looking forward to action soon.

Speaker, these are some of the same groups that removed the *Ode to Newfoundland* from convocation ceremonies, which demonstrates how out of touch they actually are. Again, Minister, they're all the same individuals.

I'll double down again: Questionable decisions are being made and millions of dollars are being squandered. When is the minister or the Premier going to take action to protect the students and clean house?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I just would like to identify the fact that the Board of Regents are appointed by the Independent Appointments Committee through recommendations that come through there. There are also elected officials on the board from the alumni representatives at the university. There are faculty representatives who are appointed by faculty members; there are student representatives who are elected by the student body.

So the individuals who are present on the Board of Regents are individuals that represent the interests of the university as a whole. I am fully confident in the abilities of the individuals that have been put forward by their peers, but their colleagues, by their alumni as elected officials to represent them.

In speaking to the matter at hand, as the Premier has identified, there is a serious issue and we do take issue with the report that has been presented by the AG.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, 730 days, over two years of a young life spent locked in a cell. Jack Whalen has been vocal about his experiences in solitary confinement in the care of the provincial government. He and other survivors of physical and mental abuse deserve justice.

Will the Minister of Justice listen to victims and eliminate the statute of limitations for victims of child abuse?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I had the same question last week and I'll give the same answer that obviously my condolences go out to anyone that's been a victim of abuse, physical or sexual, at the hands of institutions in this province. As I said last week, it's very unfortunate that we do have a long, painful history of that abuse in this province.

This government and governments before it have done a lot to try and help individuals that have been hurt. Unfortunately, some of the things that can only be done are provide compensation. I know that heals some wounds, but not all wounds. We continue to

work on that with cases that are with the Department of Justice today.

As for any specific case before the courts, I certainly can't comment on it as the Attorney General, but I will say, as I said last week, we continue to look at all policies and statutes within the control of government, and specifically the Department of Justice and Public Safety. That includes the *Limitations Act*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, continuing to look at it, as the minister says, suggests that there is an opportunity or hope for reviewing this.

Justice delayed is justice denied. We live in one of only two provinces in the country to have a limit on claims for childhood abuse.

Other governments have listened to victims. Why don't you?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

We do listen, we listen every day and we read stories every day. Files come across my desk every day where I have to read and sign off on settlement authority with regard to cases that happen in this province – horrible, horrible cases. Things I never thought I'd have to read but I do have to read. We do listen, we do compensate and we do hear them.

We try to move those cases forward as quickly as possible as well, because as the Member said, justice delayed is an issue and we want to help those victims get that compensation so they can move on with their lives as quickly as possible. We do take it seriously; the department works very

hard on each and every case that comes across the desk at Justice and Public Safety, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, I doubt very much that we have the lowest cost of living in the country in Newfoundland and Labrador. I would certainly doubt that we are doing quite well in reference to the rest of Canada. I can tell you that in the District of Bonavista that is not the case and we struggle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I'm not sure what it's like in Burgeo - La Poile. I can't speak to that, but I can speak to the District of Bonavista.

We, on this side of the House, understand that we are in a cost-of-living crisis. Residents of our province are struggling mightily entering the winter season.

What new measures will the Liberal government provide to help those struggling as winter approaches?

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

A. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm going to stand up and respond to that. Again, as I told you, this is an article in *The Telegram*. I didn't write it; *The Telegram* wrote it based on a study that was done using facts from Statistics Canada. Now if you want to question the media, you fill your boots and have fun with that. I'm just writing on this and I'm reading the headline. You have the same access to this.

But you'll note, did I say that we do not have challenges? Certainly not. I can tell you we have challenges in Burgeo - La Poile, we have challenges in Bonavista and we are

doing what we can to address them. We are always advocating for that and we'll continue to do so.

One thing, as I mentioned yesterday, just last year, we had to put \$190 million into rate stabilization so our citizens could get cheap electricity because of the debacle that was left to us from before.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, I don't want to play on words, but when the minister stands and says that in Newfoundland and Labrador we are doing quite well in regard to the cost of living in reference to the rest of Canada, that is what I've got an issue with.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Because in the District of Bonavista that is not the case. He can cite *The Telegram*. He's not citing the CBC story where it says more than 15,000 visits were made to food banks in Newfoundland and Labrador, a 12 per cent increase over last year in March.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Move on to your question.

C. PARDY: He is not citing that.

Josh Smee, the CEO of Food First NL –

SPEAKER: Move on to your question.

C. PARDY: – has stated that if you doubled the current income of Income Support clients in NL, they would still be below the

poverty level. Now with the Liberal carbon tax –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Thank you.

I'm happy to stand up again. They don't even have questions this time. They want to combat what I'm saying.

But, again, what I'm saying is not an opinion. It's not my opinion. It's based on information from Statistics Canada and a study done by others and reported in the media here. I will reference some more than was here: Newfoundland and Labrador was bolstered by some of the lowest house prices and the highest average income. We also were amongst the cheapest provinces in terms of child care, rent, eye care, dental services and restaurants. I could go on.

So, look, you can get upset with what I'm say, that's fine, but I would suggest you go out in the scrum after, talk to the reporter from *The Telegram* and tell them how they and Statistics Canada are inaccurate.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: He didn't reference the CBC article, which says that we're in a crisis situation with the food bank visitations, so he is being selective.

The question that was asked earlier was: What new measures will this Liberal government undertake? No answer; nobody stood to answer that question.

This one, we know that the Liberal carbon tax is creating excruciating financial pain, in addition to the existing cost of living. I would like to be able to tell the Sandra's and the Joey's in the District of Bonavista what to expect from this Liberal government going forward.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm absolutely happy –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. DAVIS: – if the hon. Member would let me speak and stop interrupting me, because I didn't interrupt him – absolutely happy to stand up and talk about some of the new initiatives that we started with this government.

The oil to electric program that the hon. Member in Estimates brought forward some concerns that other people shared in this province. We, as a government, looked at those concerns that were brought forward by, not just that Member, many others, to put wraparound services for oil to electric users to transition people from oil to electric. Some of the most generous contributions that we can make, anywhere from \$5,000 to \$17,000 per household.

That is a new program, Mr. Speaker, he asked for an answer and he got one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

We don't need data or any media reports to know how people are struggling in this province. We go outside our homes and we talk to them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: We talk to them on a regular basis.

Speaker, the Salvation Army paid over \$2,000 to take homeless people off the streets in Grand Falls-Windsor and into warm hotel rooms after they were turned away by government's homeless network. When the Salvation Army requested to be reimbursed by government, they were denied.

If we neglect the charitable organizations that are doing government's job, how many more tents will be pitched, Speaker?

I ask the minister, I ask the Premier: Will you do the right thing today and give this amazing organization back their money so they can continue to do the work in my community?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

We value and honour the work of the Salvation Army.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: I can tell you they are an incredible community partners. I know that they are a partner with government. I know they are a partner in the community. They offer incredible services and we work very, very close with the Salvation Army.

Speaker, allow me to say more things that were in this year's budget. We've already talked about the 850 affordable homes with a focus on seniors that we put \$70 million in it. In addition, we put \$25 million for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness or intimate partner –

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: – violence, including emergency shelters, transition homes, supportive living program; \$17 million to maintain and modernize provincial housing. Again, Speaker, Members opposite voted against it.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

Minister, just do the right thing and reimburse them. That's the right thing to do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Speaker, yesterday, the minister for Housing stated the 143 empty units did not include the 32 in Corner Brook that are now going to be torn down. Speaker, his staff told our office on October 16, it did.

Why did the minister deliberately mislead the people of the province?

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

P. PIKE: Thank you for the question.

The 143 units were the units that were identified for repairs. The 32 units that sit in Dunfield Place, they are beyond repair, I should say. We've done a cost analysis and they're going to be demolished. They will not be included in the 143 repair units that have to be done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Speaker, when you do nothing for seven years, they're going to be in disrepair. You should be doing it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Speaker, the minister had two press releases on October 16 that contradict what our office was told in writing.

Did he misspeak again?

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

P. PIKE: Could you repeat the question?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Speaker, the minister had two press releases on October 16 that contradict what our office was told in writing.

Did he misspeak again?

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

P. PIKE: No, I didn't misspeak again. The 143 units that we're going to repair across the province, our stock, our houses, do not include the 32 units in Corner Brook because they are not slated for repair. These are slated to be demolished and replaced.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Again, because of maintenance and everything else that the government is doing, they should be looking after this stuff.

Speaker, the housing crisis did not start with tents in St. John's, it has been brewing across our province from east to west, to north, for years.

Why did the government allow affordable housing to rot until the answer is a wrecking ball?

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, I'll remind the Member opposite that he didn't even vote in favour of the initiatives that we're doing: the 850 affordable homes, \$70 million in affordable housing program that will help construct over 850 affordable homes. I talked about the \$25 million for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. I talked about the \$17 million to maintain and modernize the provincial social housing – \$140 million, Speaker, in social housing.

We also have an issue with housing affordability. That's why we've put in place a five-point plan that does things.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: I know the Members opposite are chirping quite a bit.

The rental property rebate program, the loan program for housing –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Speaker, I didn't vote for carbon tax either.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Speaker, 32 families in Corner Brook will now stay in shelters and hotels because the government allowed 32 homes to become uninhabitable. It would be unbelievable, except it's true.

Why is the government tearing down housing units in the middle of a crisis?

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

S. COADY: Speaker, that's why we've put \$70 million in this year's budget to ensure that we construct over 850 affordable homes with a focus on seniors. That's why we've put that money towards it. That's why we've put additional money there to improve the social housing that we already have.

The Members opposite fail to see –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

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

S. COADY: We've also put \$10 million in grants for homeowners in low income to complete repairs in their homes. We've also helped with housing affordability. We've unlocked surplus government lands. We've made sure that, for example, there's a basement suite incentive.

Speaker, we're doing everything, but –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I was at the MNL conference this morning speaking with local leaders. The top concern they brought to me was housing and getting affordable housing built in their communities.

Municipalities want to be a part of the solution but this government has their hands tied when they should be their partners.

I ask the minister: What is the department doing to help municipalities with the gaps and get homes built in their local communities?

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

P. PIKE: Thank you for the question.

We recognize that many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, like other Canadians, are facing challenges when it comes to housing. That is why we just released a five-point plan to help make housing more affordable. It is why we continue to work diligently to make social housing units – our units – available as quickly as possible to get those on the wait-list into homes. That's key to us, that's very important.

We also encourage those people that are experiencing homelessness to avail of a new non-profit shelter space with wraparound services provided.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Never heard a single thing that will help municipalities in that.

Speaker, municipal leaders are frustrated with the red tape and roadblocks this government keeps tossing their way and it's

preventing houses from being built for the people of their communities.

I ask the Premier: What is this government going to do to address this issue and add resources to municipalities to get homes built in their communities?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Speaker, in my previous role, I had the opportunity to do some serious work with municipalities. I would like to inform the House and all municipalities that may be listening that there, right now, are no legislative impediments to municipalities facilitating them from engaging in any housing activities or working with partners to build these houses.

Right now, we recognize that municipalities have a role to play. The issue that's at hand is certainly significant and going to require collaboration on behalf of all levels of government. Municipalities are the ones who are front line and they have the understanding of how their communities function and what the needs may be.

We'll continue to work with our municipal partners. A part of that has been modernizing the legislation and I would encourage people to stay tuned for that to come to fruition in a few days.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Two days ago in the House of Assembly the Minister of Health stated that housing would be discussed in the All-Party Committee on Mental Health, as it is a factor of social determinants of health.

Now, Speaker, we know the lack of action on housing and the rising cost is impacting

the mental health of residents everywhere in this province, but residents on the North Coast of Labrador are especially hit hard. This is reflected by having the highest rate of suicide in the province.

So I ask the minister: Does he agree that the lack of action on social determinants of health in this province is impacting the rates of suicide on the North Coast of Labrador?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are concerned, as is every person in this province, I would say, with the rates of suicide. It is an important issue. Part of what we are doing – we've released an action plan with a number of recommendations, looking towards the prevention of suicide and providing supports to individuals throughout the province, including in the Member's district.

The All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, which we are planning on meeting as soon as all of the Members are in place, will focus on a number of issues, including the issues the Member has raised: the social determinants of health. The social determinants of health, Mr. Speaker, were part of the Health Accord. It is a major focus of this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Three suicides in one month: two mothers and a 13-year-old child within one month.

So, Speaker, during Question Period in October 2022, I asked the Minister of Health to outline real action to address the high rates of suicide in my district. He responded by saying, there are a lot of external factors

such as financial pressures that influence that number.

I ask the minister: Seeing as it's a year later, does he agree that this government has not done enough in addressing the inequities facing the people of my district, such as not being included as simple as the oil-to-electricity rebate, and not finding solutions for the high cost of food and heating our houses in my district?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We had *Towards Recovery* which provided 54 recommendations, addressing many of these issues. It is a solid foundation; much more needs to be done. We've announced an All-Party Committee Mr. Speaker, to build on that solid work and to look at some of these issues – the important issues that face the people of the province when it comes to mental health and addictions, how we help in long-term mental health.

This All-Party Committee hopefully will do the same work that the All-Party Committee did previously in providing the framework for the 54 recommendations that were in *Towards Recovery*. We look towards that All-Party Committee to discuss many of the solutions that can help create and build on *Towards Recovery*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, during Question Period, I believe I used unparliamentary language. I wanted to unconditionally withdraw that and apologize to the Member opposite. It was done in the heat of responding to chirping, Mr. Speaker; we're all subject to that.

That said, it's not good enough decorum for this House and we need to raise the debate, and I unconditionally apologize.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday October 30, 2023.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, Bill 60.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

A. PARSONS: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Mineral Act, Bill 59.

Further, I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Quarry Resources in the Province, Bill 58.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Are there any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand on a petition today again.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor. The above-mentioned legislation changes would be retroactive and apply regardless of the expiry date of the previous limitation period.

I stand again on this, Mr. Speaker, because I feel strongly that this should happen. I know the minister said that he will look at it and work at it and I have confidence that he will, to do what he can to get it done. But I just want to keep raising the issue and I know this is going to be the last day that Jack is going to be here for a while and I wish you all the best in the future with your endeavours. I just want to support it and I think it's just the right thing for us to do, as a Legislature, is to come together and try to work this out and get this done. We need closure.

I commend Jack because I'm sure it's not just Jack. When it's all said and done, there are going to be a few others come forward and if it's just money, if the money is the issue, money shouldn't hold back the rights of people in Newfoundland and Labrador. Especially young people who are vulnerable, young people who cannot speak for themselves. For young people who need a voice, this is the Legislature where they can have a voice.

I urge the government and I'll urge the minister to review this as soon as possible, to work on this as soon as possible, so that we can get closure for all the young people that were abused in the facilities and that couldn't speak up for themselves, that we need to do it for them. This is a very serious issue for a lot of people and sometimes we don't look at the mental stress that it causes people and the issues that go way back and it's hard to give it up, hard to let it go.

This here with the recognition, Mr. Speaker, would help with that bit of closure. If this House of Assembly could help in any way to ease the pain and the suffering and show that you were wrong, I think we should do it. I encourage the minister and I feel confident – I have confidence in the minister, I have to say, that the minister will work on it and do the right thing. I really, truly do.

So I look forward to it. I thank the minister and I thank the government, and I think we all should support this, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitation periods do not run during any time a defendant willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about essential elements of the claim, loss or damage has occurred that was caused by or contributed to by an act or

omission or that an act or omission was that of the defendant, or willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of the proceedings as means of remedying injury, loss or damage.

Mr. Speaker, most of these claims involve young men and women who have gone through traumas and should never in a lifetime have to deal with anything like this. We've said time and time again – I heard my hon. colleague for Harbour Main say today – one of two provinces in the country that hasn't enacted this.

I also heard the minister over there talking about how sympathetic he was and how they would review it, but sympathy and reviews haven't gone far enough. This has gone on far, far long enough and it should be fixed pretty much immediately. As the minister said, justice delayed is justice denied.

I have looked at certain people in this lobby over the last two weeks and they have spent more time in this hon. House than some of us have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: If you have taken the time to talk to them, you will quickly find out that this is not about Mr. Whalen, this is about justice and about his ability to push this subject forward and to try and help the justice system come to some kind of actual real, realization of how this affects many, many people in this province.

I urge the minister to expedite the review and to be as sympathetic as he can during that review because, at the end of the day, justice delayed is justice denied.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition:

The closure of the Canning Bridge in Marystown has had a devastating impact on residents, fire and emergency services and the local economy.

The Department of Transportation and Infrastructure was well aware of the poor condition of the bridge, most recently documented in a bridge inspection report completed in January 2020, which confirmed the Canning Bridge was in poor condition.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately begin the process to replace Canning Bridge.

The reason why I wanted to present this petition today is because when I asked questions in the House yesterday I was a little bit surprised to find out that it wasn't going to be government, let's say, implementing some financial relief for the burden that has been placed upon the people without their knowledge in an immediate situation. So, like I said, it was a bit surprising.

I have talked to some officials with the Town of Marystown and I've encouraged them to apply, but in doing the petition today, I am hoping that the minister will address it and let the community know exactly what application they need to put in because if it is anything to do with MCW or anything, we know that closes here is couple of days. We want to make sure that whatever is needed in Marystown is not only implemented now but is prepared for the next budget that we're expecting the first of April.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

P. PIKE: We've had the opportunity to attend the meeting with the residents of Marystown regarding the Canning Bridge and our government is committed to getting moving on that as quickly as possible. As well, in that meeting, we talked about the fact that we may need some transportation issues worked out, especially people living in the Little Bay area and, of course, anywhere on that side of the Canning Bridge.

We realize there are hardships and we're willing to work with the Town of Marystown and any other partners in addressing them.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition to urge the House of Assembly to ask government to amend the *Limitations Act* to clearly state there is no limitation period for civil harms involved in a child abuse case of any form.

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

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitations periods do not run during any time a defendant willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about essential claims of the claim. That is the fact that an injury, loss or damage has occurred and was caused by or contributed by an act or

omission, or that the act or omission was that of the defendant, or willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of the proceeding as a means of remedying the injury, loss or damage. The above-mentioned legislated changes should be retroactive and apply regardless of the expiry of any previous limitation period.

Speaker, this is important and the minister did say earlier in Question Period, that we, unfortunately, as a province, have had a long history of abuse from institutions. I can look no further than with my own family. My wife's mother, grandmother, great-grandmother were all victims of residential schools. It's in my own family. I understand what harm it is and generational traumas.

In any case, having this and you cannot seek justice, you cannot go and find peace and find the justice that you deserve. It's hard. We only have two provinces that have such a limitation on it and it is concerning because we should look at this, we should remove these limitations and let individuals seek that because others have had the opportunity and unfortunately people within this limit don't have the same opportunity to find that.

I truly encourage the minister, his department and his staff to go fix this and follow in line with the rest of our country. Compensation is a cold comfort for what happened and what an individual endures, but it is a start. It is a path forward and by putting a roadblock in place so someone can't find their path forward is hard.

Seeing it within my wife's own family and the generational traumas there, I understand that this is a big move that we should make. Let's right some wrongs of the past and give people the peace that they want so they can find justice for the things that have happened to them.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

The reasons for this petition:

WHEREAS individual residents and municipal leaders have spoken to the deplorable road conditions in the District of Harbour Main; and

WHEREAS the district is made up of many smaller communities and towns like Holyrood, Upper Gullies, Seal Cove, Cupids, Colliers, North River, Roaches Line, Makinsons, who have roads in desperate need of repair and paving, specifically Route 60 and Route 70; and

WHEREAS these roads see high-volume traffic flows every day and drivers can expect potholes, severe rutting, limited shoulders and many washed out areas along the way.

THEREFORE, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately take the necessary steps to repair and repave these important roadways to ensure the safety of the driving public who use them on a regular basis.

Speaker, the focus of my petition today is with respect to the Town of North River. The Town of North River, the mayor and the councillors are very concerned, they are very angry and they're very upset. Now, I will acknowledge that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure did take the time to come out and join us in July, the end of July, for a meeting. Yet, Speaker, the dissatisfaction is very serious there in the town.

Why is that? Because there has been no action. Because in over 15 years, there

have been empty, unfulfilled promises by government. The concern is back in 2019, two kilometres were completed; they were paved. The remaining three kilometres were left undone. There were promises that this would be done from Route 70 in through North River Road. Four years later, the road conditions have worsened; they have deteriorated.

We see a high volume of roads used by residents, not only residents but other towns. We see emergency services using these roads. We see that detours happen often from Veteran's Memorial when there are traffic accidents on the Veteran's, yet we see that nothing is being done.

I think what is of most concern to the town and to the mayors who have recently contacted me, by letter – and I'm going to provide that to the minister, but they are so concerned about the 380 All Hallows Elementary school students who are bused in from other areas and towns and they're forced to travel on this unsafe road.

Speaker, it's hazardous. The town is alleging that this is irresponsible, it's dangerous and it's shameful that the government has not repaved this area. They must do the right thing, once and for all, for this long overdue, dangerous situation that is in the Town of North River.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a response.

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I certainly appreciated the opportunity to go to North River and meet with the town. Some of the language the Member is using in describing their feelings, their reactions, their words, were never uttered when I was in that room.

What we discussed was a way forward and how we can work together to address the needs in North River, the same when we went to Holyrood, the same when we went to Colliers to make sure we worked together to solve their roads issue. I am committed to making sure that that happens.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition urging the House of Assembly to ask the government to amend the *Limitations Act* to clearly state that there is no limitation period for civil claims involving child abuse of any form.

Victims of child abuse may take many years to process and come to terms with their trauma, and find the courage to report it. Victims may be reluctant to bring forward claims because of misplaced shame, guilt, fear of coming forward, or simply the desire to avoid thinking about and confronting the horrendous pain. Those who have experienced child abuse may not discover their claims right away, especially when the abuse was committed in a climate of secrecy and where the abuse produced severe physical, emotional and psychological damage. The damage from child abuse may be lifelong. It may present itself later in life.

The passage of time may exacerbate and compound a victim's suffering where they do not receive the help, treatment and closure they need. Child abusers should not be able to rest easy under the protection of a limitation period while the victims continue to struggle. Limitation periods of child abuse send the wrong message; they enable abusers to perpetrate harm.

Speaker, this petition is not only about the person that brought it forward to the House of Assembly. This petition is not just about Jack Whalen, who's been a serious advocate for getting this legislation changed. This legislation is about civil claims. And a lot of people think that's about money. That was raised by my fellow MHA from –

AN HON. MEMBER: Terra Nova?

L. EVANS: No, Bay of Islands.

When you're harmed as a child, when you're denied your education, when your life is altered and you're exposed to trauma and torture – I'm talking about while you're in care, while you're under the care of – and that takes many forms in this province, and that's still ongoing, where our youth, our children are in the care.

So when you're denied that, you're denied access to a life as an adult. You're denied that life that other people have. A lot of times the only way you can reclaim that is through help and assistance. The government and those who harm our children in care, that's supposed to look after them, should be responsible for ensuring they have the wherewithal, the ability to do that.

That is what happens to civil claims. Does this person have a claim? We talk a lot about not being lawyers, but I tell you right now, I am a human being and I am a Member of the House of Assembly and I have support on this side tremendously. We need to change this law.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

The Joint Working Group on Regionalization suggests that viable LSDs within the province be incorporated as municipalities to provide better governance for its residents. Better governance leads to stronger and more viable communities, which is a noble goal. It appears the government is not creating a smooth pathway, however, for those communities and LSDs seeking to become municipalities.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to create an improved and more acceptable path for viable communities and LSDs who wish to become incorporated as municipalities.

This is Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador conference week; this is their annual conference that they're having. I think this is fitting, because it was part of their working group that suggested that viable municipalities would have the opportunity to become a incorporated as a municipality.

I can speak about the province's newest incorporated town, and that's George's Brook-Milton. I had the benefit of working with a group who we collectively brought George's Brook-Milton as an LSD to a town. Thanks to the then minister from Humber - Bay of Islands, he was the one that signed off on it and permitted that to occur.

We have the second-largest LSD in the District of Bonavista in the province. That's Lethbridge and area. There's another area, Bloomfield, which is similar to George's Brook-Milton. The advances that George's Brook-Milton have made in their governance and in their operation is phenomenal. But the response back from the department for those inquiring in the District of Bonavista now is that the process – and I identify and agree with the process, but the kicker came where it was referenced that they'll need \$25,000, references for the cost of studies,

the feasibility study and so on. I would say to you if we have a great value in bringing them in as a municipality but we're going to put before them that they have to have \$25,000 to pursue this pursuit, you're going to find that a lot of them are not going to go down that road in order to have those funds. That, I fear.

Either the government wishes for LSDs to become incorporated for better governance or they don't. If you don't, what you would do is send a communication out to the LSDs that wish to become one that they're going to have raise \$25,000 for it to occur.

I would ask the current government to have a look at that process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

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

S. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that the following resolution – just let me grab my piece of paper:

WHEREAS the harmonized sales tax base is established by the Government of Canada pursuant to the federal *Excise Tax Act* and the collection of harmonized sales tax is administered by the Canada Revenue Agency; and

WHEREAS a rebate of the federal portion of the harmonized sales tax on new purpose-

built rental housing is provided by the federal government under the Government of Canada's existing and enhanced GST/HST New Residential Rental Property Rebate; and

WHEREAS the government intends to provide a rebate of the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax on new purpose-built rental housing;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a rebate of the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax on new purpose-built rental housing be provided and that the rebate mirrors the Government of Canada's existing and enhanced GST/HST New Residential Rental Property Rebate.

Speaker, I will say that this is a technical amendment. This is brought about because we do have an agreement under the Comprehensive Integrated Tax Coordination Agreement that governs HST, the harmonized sales tax.

When there needs to be a change to the tax agreement, the regulations pertaining to HST, all HST provinces are subject to this common tax base and if they are going to make any changes, the same requirements for an amendment.

The provincial rebate will mirror the existing and enhanced federal GST/HST New Residential Property Rebate. As the people of the province know the harmonized sales tax in Newfoundland and Labrador is 15 per cent, of which is both a federal as well as a provincial component. The existing rebate by the federal government is 36 per cent of the HST payable on purchased or owner-built residential rental properties. That's the existing rebate by the federal government.

For example, a landlord who purchased or built a newly constructed or substantially renovated residential rental property; made an addition to a multiple-unit residential rental property; converted a commercial

property into a residential rental property; or leased land for residential purpose.

So that's the existing program, 36 per cent of HST payable. There is also now an enhanced rebate; 100 per cent of the HST payable for purpose-built rental units of four or more units, including renovations of office buildings.

The objective of the enhanced rebate is to increase long-term rental housing supply by reducing the cost. And it could effectively lower the financing requirements. The effective date will be the date of announcement of September 14, 2023. It is to be administered by the Canada Revenue Agency, Speaker.

I will say that I think this is an important component and that we are mirroring the program that is offered by the federal government. So we're going to mirror the existing federal New Residential Rental Property Rebate and we're going to also mirror the enhanced rebate of 100 per cent of the 10 per cent portion of the HST.

Why are we here in the House of Assembly to talk about this? Again, I'll go back to technical amendment required because of the Comprehensive Integrated Tax Coordination Agreement. Any province, any HST – any provinces that are subject to the common tax base would have to come into their legislature to make this technical amendment.

Again, I'll remind those that may be watching that a rental property must contain a minimum of four private apartments that include a private kitchen, a bathroom, living areas or a minimum of 10 private rooms or suites. In addition, 90 per cent or more of the units must be designated for long-term rental for any units to qualify.

Substantial renovations to an existing rental unit would not qualify for the enhanced rebate, as that rebate is intended for the creation of new rental units, but they may

qualify for the existing rebate program. I will say that this may cost – we were just making an estimate of what it could possibly cost the province over the six years and it could cost \$15 million to \$21 million. We certainly will reflect that in our fiscal forecasting.

We're mirroring – I'm trying to see if there is anything else that I need to inform the House. Canada has already indicated that they agree that with the 120 days written notice in advance of the proposed amendment date of April 1, 2024, they will accept an alternate amendment date of September 14, 2023, and they will provide retroactive application of the rebates.

Again, technical amendment based on our agreements with the federal government that will allow us to mirror and I think it is a very important program to allow for us to have new, long-term rental availability in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: It has been a long time since I said that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Yes, Sir, and even I had to think about the name of my district. I haven't heard it too often in the House of Assembly in the last number of years but it's an honour to stand here again as we talk about a particular resolution here that, hopefully, will be a small part of addressing the bigger issue here, and a crisis issue around affordable housing and accessible housing for people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

First and foremost, on this side of the House, we welcome anything that is an approach to solving an issue, being part and parcel of a bigger picture here to eliminate crisis situations or turmoil that people face and, at the same time, helping stimulate our economy in other manners here as we look at this.

Obviously, the trend here is to follow what some other jurisdictions are doing and the federal government here, because this is noted now across this country of ours that we have a challenge around affordable housing and access to proper housing for people in this province. We see this every day, just across the street with the situation that people unfortunately are having to face. It's a big difference between having accessible, affordable housing to actually having nowhere to live. There's a big gap in there that we need to find ways to fill those gaps.

Part of it would be making incentives here for the construction industry and for those skilled individuals to be able to take it upon themselves and see the value in building and constructing houses for individuals but making it affordable – while, at the same time, we understand this is a business, that they have to make a profit. They have overhead; they have expenses as part of that. So finding that happy medium, and one of them is eliminating the burden of taxation, I get that. I know it will be a loss to the provincial coffers, but that would be minimal in comparison to the benefit, if we do this right.

But to do it right, it's not only about eliminating the financial costs to individuals; it's about all of the other administrative, some of the technical issues, and some of the other support mechanism that are necessary within the realm of construction. That means municipalities have to be on board. It means that we have to look at other line departments here where there are policies there that would reflect being able

to expedite the building process in Newfoundland and Labrador.

It means departments and divisions like Crown Lands needs to find a way to make it more efficient, expedite the process and make it more engaging for contractors or neighbourhoods, or not-for-profits, or municipalities to be able to access that land so that then can be used for the building of affordable homes for the residents of this great province of ours.

So there are multitudes of things that need to be looked at here from an administrative point of view. As we announce this now and we're debating this, I would hope five or six line departments and senior executive committees have been struck to look at all of the nuances and things that haven't been thought about that would have an impact on doing this.

I would hope the Home Builders' Association would have been included in the dialogue here as to what some of the challenges may be for their members as part of that process. I would hope MNL, municipalities here would have been engaged so that they can give feedback as to what they may have to do with their own municipalities act or their own operational procedures or their own town act itself. Keeping in mind, we have LSDs, we have non-incorporated ones, we have municipalities small and large.

So there are a number of factors here that need to be done. With that being said, that doesn't mean this can't be moved in the quickest way possible to ensure as many affordable houses are built, as many contractors understand the process, understand the application process, the impact it has; that the industries that represent them understand and can educate their members as to what the best approach will be; and that there's continuous dialogue between the levels of government and the other key players here.

As I note them again: the municipalities, the LSDs, the construction industry, even some of the suppliers here because if you're going to start building again – and we ran into this during COVID. All of a sudden, there was a need for people to get stuff done and there were no materials here. So if we're making this gesture here now, hoping that it's going to improve the amount and the timelines around construction here for affordable and accessible homes, then we need to make sure all of our ducks are in line. To do that, there are a number of players here.

So the first thing that we're doing on this side is encouraging government, not only just to announce the money part, and I give the minister credit here, that's a part that she can do and she'll build that into her budget lines and can see the value and the benefit to the people here. But there's a multitude of other ministers over there and line departments that have to be onside to make this happen because if you're just taking this out and the application process is going to take 16 months, we've just defeated the purpose. We didn't even save any money and we didn't actually invest any money in anything as part of that process.

So I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful as we have dialogue with my colleagues here that we'll get some of the answers to what's happening here with this resolution.

For people at home who may know, resolutions are done differently than pieces of legislation when it comes to a debate. Normally, we come to a consensus in the unanimous approach to passing something that we all feel is in the best interests of the people of the province. But we may not all agree on the approach to it and some of the particular things that may need to be done.

I want to start first by acknowledging that this would be a good first step to addressing the homelessness situation we have and affordable housing for all involved. But to do that, we need to collectively find all the resources that government has and that's

every level. Plus there's another group here. The federal government can't be left off the hook. They're doing their part there from reducing some of their costing, but there are going to be some regulatory issues with them also. It's not just as simple that construction is all done in a municipality or in a provincial government or just the federal government. There are all three key players here.

People need to make sure that dialogue is very much in sync and very much explainable to the average person. Because we have big companies that have accountants and lawyers and government consultants and all this, and then we have mom-and-pop operations who, just as efficiently, can build a home in a small community that can be accessible for people.

We need to know that that information can be shared very easily and understood very easily, and not confusing to them or not a burden financially, that they have to get a lawyer to look at it to get an interpretation, or an accountant to say whether or not the right forms have been filled out.

I would hope as we look at this, and I know we've done it in various other programs in the past found efficient ways of doing things, so that the bureaucracy – that's not a slight at the bureaucracy – the bureaucratic process doesn't hinder what the end result is. The end result here is improving access to housing for people all across this province.

One of the other things that I would encourage is that we make sure there's not a disparity between Nain, Labrador, for example, or Western Labrador, for example, than it would be for Conception Bay East or Conception Bay South or Burgeo or St. Albans or any other community in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We need to make sure that that works collectively across this Island here. Because

there are going to be some unique challenges as we move across the province. Part of it may be the costing; to build a house in one area, particularly in Labrador, it's going to be a lot more costly and the timelines might be different. So we have to find ways to expedite that. I just throw out simple things like freight going up in the summer, when the ferry is not operating; finding more efficient ways to make sure that's accessible and maybe even more cost effective.

I keep encouraging the fact that there are a multitude of departments here that need to be thinking about this. This may not be their priority. If you're the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, you may not be thinking: How do I get goods to Labrador for home construction? But if this is to work, things like that need to be talked about in advance of being able to move everything in the right direction. No different than it is in some rural communities, no different than it is in accessing land. In an urban area, there may not be a lot of additional land available so how do you free up what's now Crown land, or owned government land because there was a government building on it.

Things have to be found with a policy that can move things in an efficient, quick manner that will be beneficial for everybody. There has to be flexibility because, again, what works in one community may not work in the other and government policy across the board, without flexibility – I get we have to have checks and balances. We have to have policies that are reflective of the needs collectively for this province, but for things to work, we've got to be flexible on a number of things in this province, particularly if we're to address this in the timely fashion that's necessary here for people.

Again, unfortunately, like anything that we do in life, nothing is going to change overnight, but starting the right process at the right time, collectively, with all of the right players in play and proper dialogue –

we've been saying it for years, it's about being proactive versus reactive.

At the end of the day, the slight here is that there were a number of years to get things done. It got out of hand for a number of jurisdictions. I'm not just going to blame Newfoundland and Labrador because it happens all across the country here. We have an opportunity, now, not only to react to it but to react in a proactive way so this doesn't just become an immediate solution for the next three years. This becomes the next 30-years address to affordable and accessible housing in Newfoundland and Labrador.

To do that again, my encouragement here and encouragement on this side, is proper dialogue with all the players that should be involved here, ensuring that all line departments know that they have a responsibility, meaning that this has to become one of their priority lists. It may not have been on your priority letter that you got first when you took this portfolio because things like this didn't exist in the same manner. But I would hope now, the ministers would pass that on to their executive and to their key bureaucrats, that this has to fit in with our priorities now within that line department, particularly if you have a direct connection to making this work effectively in the coming months and the coming years without a doubt.

I could go on and normally my colleagues encourage me to stay for a full hour to debate this, but, as I said, I keep using the word: expediting. I think we need to expedite it in the House of Assembly, also, to get us moving in the right direction.

I thank you for the opportunity here. We look forward to getting this done and solving the problem of affordable, accessible housing and getting people in a safe environment that they can afford and making sure that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, regardless of your income, your geographic location, your age, have

access to the first and key component – a safe place to live.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Of course, it's a pleasure to speak in the House of Assembly today on such an important topic as the housing crisis that we currently face and government's opportunity to bring forth legislation that could fix this in any way.

Of course, if we see a vision for the future, just as the government does, to fix or at least alleviate some of the concerns, some of the pressure on people in housing with certain housing challenges, then we are definitely up for speaking on this today and supporting it as we see fit.

I spoke about it earlier in Question Period about the great organizations around the province who help with housing as well. One of those, of course, was the Salvation Army. I'm stuck to my question; I'm hoping they do get some of their money back because the fact of the matter is we need some of those. This current piece of legislation, it's going to take some time to see the benefit on the people's end, the affordable housing end of it, by the time it gets to that point.

Again, any initiative being brought forward, it's great to think about and it's great to put into practice, but it's going to be a little bit of time before we see that. We realize that; it's just the way things go. But in the meantime, Speaker, we have great organizations in our communities that help and I want to just say a big thank you to the many organizations that help when it comes to housing throughout the province, because they are so very important. I do hope the Salvation

Army in Grand Falls-Windsor can recoup some of that money so they can continue the work they do within the community, and I'll leave that at that for now.

With this piece of legislation not only will people get some housing, if we see more housing being developed, we see more housing being built, who knows, that could be more jobs. Not just jobs in the construction industry, but if we see a rebate coming to construction companies and suppliers can see that they're going to be busier, construction zones are going to be busier, people who are selling lumber, nails, all that stuff – anything to get that economy rolling much faster, harder in Newfoundland and Labrador is a very welcome piece of legislation. I hope so. I would love to see construction zones across the province with housing going up and we can really tackle this issue. That would be my vision as well. If that's a spinoff from it, if that's a spinoff, more jobs because of this piece of legislation, that's fantastic too. We're going to look forward to that as well.

My learned colleague from Bell Island there talked about some checks and balances. Do you know what? Of course, that needs to be looked as well. Obviously, any rebate for anybody trying to do anything good in this province, it's fantastic. That includes the home construction people. We want to make sure that if they're willing to put in the work, if they're willing to take the chance and get those units up, of course they should be rewarded for it.

But not at the cost of unaffordable rents in the future. We want to make sure that there's something there that says, do you know what, I'm going to put up my four units, but I'm going to charge \$2,000 a month. If that's going to work its way into the vision moving forward, it's not going to work. We're still going to be faced with the same problem we have today. That's affordable housing for people that truly can't afford it, can't afford it at the time.

People are losing their houses. Mortgage rates are going up and people need to rent because they can't afford the mortgage rates or they can't afford new mortgage rates. To look at a family that is spending 30 to 35 per cent of their income on rent or housing, it's very difficult for a family. I think about the young people. My God, to have what they have on their plate right now – and I get it. It's across Canada, of course it is. But to have what they have on their plate leaving university or high school even and to think that they have to tackle this world with the way it is right now, it can be very, very frustrating for them. It can cause issues with anxiety and depression. I just want to tell those young people out there that we are going to do our very best to ensure this world is left for you in a much better place than it is now and the province in a much better place than it is now. That should be our dedication.

But we want to ensure that if these young people start moving in and renting some of these four-unit homes, those rent prices aren't going to just put them back out on the street again where they can't afford it. I think those are checks and balances that need to be in place.

The other thing is – and I'm not sure but maybe the legislation covers it, my apologies if it does – if somebody wanted to put up a four-unit and do an Airbnb – I don't think so –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. TIBBS: Okay, and I hope not. I hope that there is no slippery part of that legislation where somebody can get their 15 per cent HST back. That would be a concern of mine and I'm sure the minister will tell us a little bit more about it. That was just a concern of mine because there are so many Airbnbs across the province that were rented that are now being used – rent out an Airbnb for three nights, got my month's rent back.

That's great. I'm not against Airbnbs, I'm not against free market and whatnot, but it is an issue. It has taken some homes off the market and I want to make sure that that doesn't happen with this piece of legislation. I'm sure it will be covered if it wasn't but it was probably covered anyway.

The other thing is the efficiency of these four-unit homes. We talk about rebates for heat pumps and whatnot. Will that be a requirement to have in there so the person that does move in there, that finds it's a struggle to pay their rent anyway, doesn't get hit with a large light bill?

I think that we should do whatever we can to ensure that these homes are as efficient as can possibly be and that could really help the person that is going to be moving into these homes because they are people. It's going to be people with disabilities. It's going to be people that are low income. It's going to be people with bigger families. It's going to be older folks, seniors even. We want to make sure that these homes are as great as they can be.

The other thing, of course, is Crown lands. There are going to be people who may be looking for some Crown land to build these homes on. Maybe not so much in the metro area but out in Central and on the West Coast. We want to make sure that the Crown land, if they want a piece of land to do this vision, to pull this vision out, that the government has, that that Crown land could be available and we want to make sure that that process is speeded up as well.

The last thing I'll leave us with – we just did the accessibility act yesterday. I'm just thinking what a great opportunity now if we as a province, as the Crown, are giving money back to construction companies and people who want to build these homes, what a great opportunity to look at them and say, it would be great to see a percentage of these homes built accessible.

Members of the independents said it yesterday that some new home builds now in Nova Scotia, they need to have the 30-inch doorframes, whatnot. It would be great to see if some of these home construction people could build some of these units accessible or if something in the legislation could say a certain percentage have to be accessible. If we're giving money back to them, let's ensure that they're going to do the best for the people of the province and that could be our most vulnerable.

That was all I had to say, Speaker, about all this. I think any piece of legislation; again, to move the province forward and get affordable housing, it's all right in my books. I look forward to other speakers and what they have to say and what they have to say in Committee.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always good to get up and speak on a motion, especially this one for the housing situation that we're in. Especially in the Central area we've heard a lot about housing, of course. Anything that we can do to help the housing situation is certainly a good step and we need to pay attention to the crisis.

We know how important housing is at this point. Of course, with winter closing in, we need the initiatives to be able to have the supports in place to support the housing people. People need housing. Again, at this point I've heard a lot about the housing situation.

In Central again, I mentioned the other day that we have probably over 300 on a waiting list for housing, which is a stretch. We have

them in hotel rooms, and I mentioned it before that I've had them in sheds, cars and vans over the summer. That's not acceptable in this day and age. So we need whatever supports we can to get the housing movement – and we know we're in a crisis.

It's a bit unfortunate that back in 2017, I think it was, maybe 2018, in the budget then there were initiatives made for housing and it's taken five years now to go to a five-point plan. Back then it was an announcement, I guess, and the initiatives weren't there. Now we're in a crisis. Now we've got another five-point plan. We continue to have announcements and plans but we're always late with the draw.

So now we're into the winter months to get this program in place, get it all done. It's going to take a long time for the housing units to get built so what do we do in the meantime while we're waiting for those housing units to get done?

We're back to the same situation, of course. There are units in place in Central. There are housing units that need upgrades and we need those upgrades done. So that's probably something else that can be done while we're trying to roll out this five-point plan to get people in place to be able to do that, get the contracts. By the time people apply for the program, we're well into the winter months and it's not helping the situation for the people who need the housing right at this moment.

That's where we need to pay more attention to the housing situation. It's already there in regard to the units that are in place in Central Newfoundland. They're there. We certainly need the people in place to get those units upgraded. It can be done. Now, whether it's staffing shortages, whether it's resource problems to have this done, maybe it can be contracted out at this point to get those units up and available for people who need them right now as they need housing.

It's something that the government certainly needs to look at. I hope in this five-point plan that they've taken all stakeholders into consideration when they made this five-point plan. It seems like they came out with it fast, so hopefully they did have the time to talk to all the stakeholders, all the contractors, municipalities and individuals that would be interested in the five-point plan and able to put up those units to continue with the housing units at this time to hopefully have something in place for at least next spring to get the housing units up because we need this done as fast as possible.

I heard my colleagues talk about just the availability of land. Again, we all know the piece with regard to Crown lands, how much land is available and how hard it is to get the availability to the land. So how much they can free up in a short while to have those units built on parcels of land, well that's something to be seen again.

So there seems to be a lot of moving parts, even though the five-point plan is there and the HST is dropped. You know, it's all good initiatives. Anything we can do to help the housing situation in our province, to get people off the streets, to get them into warm places, get them into beds; that is where all your hearts and all our initiatives are. Again, all the stakeholders and all parts of government, all the moving parts are taken into consideration to make this move as fast as possible so this can be done.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's always good to get up and talk about the plans that are in place, but it comes to plans and promises. Like I say, unfortunately, it comes to this point that we have to go to a crisis to really get to the heart of the matter, it really is.

Again, I'll go back to 2017, 2018 when it was announced that there was money in the budget. We knew back then there was a housing situation and it wasn't acted upon. At that point, there were still units that

weren't upgraded that could have been upgraded.

So to take a crisis and make announcements on a five-point plans right at the moment, it's too bad that it does come to that point that okay, we better react to this and we better get something done. That's where we find ourselves.

But, again, I do like the step of anything that we can do to help the people of this province find themselves homes and get the people off the street, we certainly need them because this runs through the society and it keeps people healthy. I mean, if they're in homes, their own beds and that sort of stuff, it runs right through the system and it'll make them healthier, especially mentally, to be able to be more content in their own homes and to be off the streets.

So with that, Speaker, I'll take my seat. I'd like to see some of these initiatives taken as fast as possible to get this done because I know in Central Newfoundland and throughout the province we certainly need the housing situation done. We need housing built as fast as possible. We need the units that are already there fixed up and in place so that we can get people into those shelters, into those dwellings as fast as we can.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Housing is a very big topic but housing issues for Labrador West go back long before even I became a Member of this House. Don't look no further, we've seen a continuous growth in Labrador West, even through the down period we had in 2014-2015. We actually saw an increase in population in Labrador West. Stats Can

shows year over year that Labrador West went from just under 10,000 to now over 10,000 residents of Labrador West, so we continue to grow and it continues to cause a strain on housing.

One of the first questions I asked in this House of Assembly was about housing in Labrador West and it continues to be an issue, both in the public stock of housing in Labrador West, but we also have a constraint on the private stock of housing. There is a zero per cent vacancy rate in Labrador West; there is not a single rental unit available and there hasn't been for about a year.

So, you know, initiatives like this, I agree with; we need to stimulate growth. I say that because after 2021 and 2022, the Town of Labrador City put out RFPs to develop the last two developable sections of the community, because we are completely surrounded by mines. The last two developable areas they put out RFPs; not a single company, not a single developer showed any interest. It was disappointing to come back that two prime pieces of land ready to be serviced, right in the centre of the area, next to parks and everything like this and there was not a single bid.

You go across the lake over to Wabush, who is blessed with a lot more developmental land and they have their own challenges. They had to go back to the province three times to reduce what they could sell building lots for because there was no interest in it. They went back three times to the province; it is now 75 per cent discount on 20-something building lots.

The constraints are there for the building industry, obviously, so even the private market is not interested in building right now. I was very surprised. I even had a call with a REIT; they owned a \$2-million piece of prime land, probably the best spot in all of Labrador City to build. They had the land since 2012 or something like that. I asked them: Why aren't they putting up another

apartment building? You have wait-lists for your current buildings in town. The only answer they could give me: Not this time, not interested at this time. The piece of land is massive, serviced, right in the centre of town, surrounded by amenities and they're not even putting up anything in it and they have a wait-list for their other buildings.

So seeing something like this that would probably spur, edge them along to actually do something, and I find it amazing because there are people on Labrador West that work in the mine, make great wages and have nowhere to live. It is phenomenal to see that this is where we're to in society right now.

I'm glad to see that there is something that the province has something to do. I agree with that part of it, but it doesn't mean that it is going to be affordable. That is the kicker. They could build it, but there is nothing that stipulates that they have to make it affordable. That is this little bit concern I have because where my residents are looking, there is nothing affordable right now.

There are some houses on the market. I think the last time I checked last week there was about 15 houses for sale in Lab West. The lowest one I saw was \$300,000: It was built in 1971 and it started off as a mini-home on, what I call, a postage-stamp lot. You get a driveway and that's about it. Then you have something in mid-town going for \$500,000, built in 1960-something, has a bit of a backyard and it's a fixer upper. This is what we're seeing here.

Anyone who is coming out of trade school or coming up to work in professions like nurses or public services employees and stuff like that, they don't have the credit to go and drop \$500,000 on a house on the first day of their job up in Lab West.

So the affordability thing is the kicker for me because we can build houses in a nice, new subdivision, but who's going to say that the

rent is going to be affordable? That's where my concern is with this initiative: We can build it, but will they come?

So with that, Speaker, I move the following amendment:

That the resolution currently before the House be amended as follows: By deleting the words "THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that a rebate of the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax on new purpose-built rental housing be provided" and by substituting, instead of the deleted words, the following: "and that eligibility for the rebate be made conditional on passing on a portion of the rebated amount to tenants in the form of a discount on rent paid for a stipulated period of time."

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

We'll recess the House to take a look at the proposed amendment.

Recess

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

After reviewing the proposed amendment put forward by the Member for Labrador West, we've determined that the amendment is not in order.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I appreciate you taking the time to look at that. Unfortunately it's not in order, but I'll finish off by just saying I understand and actually speaking with the minister, too, on my amendment, I'm glad that some of it has carried through and they appreciate where I'm coming from. I am trying to find affordability with this program.

I do like the idea of increasing the housing stock in the province. I do agree that we can find ways. After seeing what happened in my communities with land that's great land available to build on, to build homes, but I want to make sure that whatever is built in Labrador West people in Labrador West can actually afford it.

All at the same time, as a recruitment tool, that people come into Lab West to work because we have a lot of opportunity up there. I'm so happy to say that we do have a lot of opportunity up there in the public service, in health care, in education, in mining and in the service industries. There is a lot of opportunity up my way. We are crying for people to come, work and enjoy what I think is an absolute privilege of living up in the North. I want people to come up there, but at the same time we have to make sure it's affordable, that what's built up there, what's rented to people up there is actually what's in the realm of reality. Right now it's not within the realm of reality and we are having challenges.

Once again, I do implore the government after, I know unfortunately my amendment is not in order, but to ask the Minister of Finance to go back and maybe look at what we can even do to make housing in Labrador, in the private market, to try to find ways to make that affordable for people and actually have it in some grasp.

Another thing is I do have a large new Canadian population. I quickly want to say they, too, are finding the challenges of finding affordable housing. A lot of them I talk to, the Ukrainians, the Filipinos, those from India and Pakistan are telling me that they want to stay. It's amazing to say that after one winter – you spend a winter in Labrador and you want to stay after that winter? Well, you're a Labradorian now. I want them to stay, but they can't stay if it's not affordable. I want to keep my population in Lab West above the 10,000 mark, because it's a testament to what we've built in Labrador West.

At the same time I agree with this, with the thing – it's unfortunate that my amendment is out. At the same time I just want to say to the Minister of Finance, please go back and find a way to make some of these programs have some kind of cap on them to make them affordable so that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and my new Canadian friends can actually live and stay in places like Labrador West with affordable rent.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll just talk briefly on this amendment. As the minister alluded to, called it a technical amendment and rightly so. But with everything we do in the House, when it comes to legislation and policies or resolutions always the end result is to try and make it more beneficial to the people of the province, when it comes to whatever topic that would be on. In this particular case, it's applicable to the housing issues here.

It's a measure to help increase more housing, increase the supply for a market that has a great demand. We talk about the homeless across the street here in the tents. Look, they're everywhere. They're across the province. Many of them may have been hidden away and they've come out and we realize they're there. More people now are realizing that.

There's a homeless population that we have to cater to, to find appropriate shelters, appropriate permanent residence for them. We've heard the stories about the emergency shelters and seen the news just last evening about some of these units that are rat infested and just in a terrible state. Hopefully, this will help to deal with that situation down the road.

I do appreciate the amendment that the Member for Labrador West had put forward and I do understand, of course, why it was out of order. But the intent is there in terms of trying to ensure that the benefits of something like this is passed on to those who are renting these units or buying these units.

Homeless is one area. New families is another area. My three daughters in the last number of years now – two have bought one is renting. It's interesting because they say: Dad, how much was this house when you moved in, when you bought it or built it? They're very surprised when we tell them and they say, it's about 20 per cent of what it costs now to buy a house. That will show the strain on young families.

Of course, we cannot ignore single-parent families with children. I hear when you go away on a trip and someone looks after your kids, that's fine, but when you're on one income and you're trying to juggle all of it with children, it's a huge strain but it's also a huge expense. So some of these multi-unit housing developments would certainly help them.

We can't ignore seniors. We know it was only in the news recently with the increase in the monthly rental rates for personal care homes and community care homes. Long overdue – I mean, no one argues that – to provide the quality care and to recruit and retain staff that's needed.

But at the end of the day, it does get passed on to the persons living there, the seniors and many who are on fixed incomes. So this amendment hopefully will create more housing that can be availed by seniors and, of course, students. We have students who come in here every fall. We see an influx of students who are all looking for housing as well. So some of these developments can certainly help there.

When I look at municipalities, having served on a municipal council in the past, when

you're doing your planning for your towns and the layout of your towns and you do your zoning and you have low-, medium- to high-density zones, depending on the amount of houses you're going to put in those areas. So I would suspect that a four-unit house in this instance would be something that you will put in a high-medium zone.

I'll mention the Minister of Education; this would be fabulous to have such a development around a new school in Paradise. It would be fabulous because that's why people move in to communities. They look for where there are schools, where there are doctors and where there are jobs. So this would be fabulous. Can you imagine? Can you imagine announcing this new high school and then this development that allows families of all shapes and sizes to live right next to a school?

So there are always opportunities and there's so much that you can do with this. But at the end of the day, it comes down to – and we talk about affordability, accessibility and building these homes. I've seen it, we had these high-density neighbourhoods and zones in Paradise, in Topsail, and they're well kept. It's not like subsidized housing, you know, when people think of it. These are some really nice housing units and if we can entice or make it more amicable for contractors to build these homes, then that would be fabulous.

I think this is a step in the right direction. It is one of, I think, many that we recognize that are needed to address the housing crisis here in the province but it is a step. Hopefully, this will result in more homes being built in this manner and more individuals, whether they're homeless, a new family, a single-parent family that they can access these homes. I know when my wife and I built our home we were considered dinks – we might have had a few dinks here in the House – dual income, no kids. You know, that's great when you've

got two incomes and no kids, you can usually afford a nice house.

AN HON. MEMBER: Can I move in?

P. DINN: If I got an extra room.

But when you do have the kids that's – now look, no less it's a joy, but it comes with a financial cost. So, again, I go back to single families, those homeless people, the seniors and that. Hopefully, this will lead to increasing the supply of affordable homes for those who really need them.

Again, we have no problem supporting this going forward. I just hope that at the end of the line that it does make a difference.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand and speak on this and I'm going to support it, of course, the motion.

I just want to talk about that housing is a crisis across Newfoundland and Labrador. I did an interview, today, with a radio station. They asked me about the minister and what I said is that this was well before the minister. This was growing for four, five, six years. It's a government issue, not the minister's issue.

Now, sometimes the way we say things or do things, it may be something but this have been on the go for a number of years. As I mentioned out in Crestview, out in Corner Brook, I wrote the previous minister, last year, about that. So this is not an issue now that fell on your lap, today or a month ago or two months ago. This has been on the go for four, five, six years and then with the influx of New Canadians coming in, refugees coming in and people want

immigration, that took the rental issue even on a higher degree.

So I'll just mention a few things that I'd like to ask and I don't know if the minister has got the answer or the federal government. If you build the rentals units and you get this subsidy, how long have you got to keep them as a rental unit? Can you turn around and change it into a bigger house? That's a big concern a lot of people have brought to my attention is once you get the subsidies and you build it, you can build it in such a way that, a year down the road, thank you very much, kick everybody out and now we're going to make it as a house. That's a concern.

The second thing is, in the rebates, is there any guarantee of the level of rent that they can charge? Is it subsidized housing? Is it affordable housing or is it just units themselves? Because if it's just units itself, the people that we're talking about in this House of Assembly, the ones that need social housing, this will not help them. This program will not help them.

You say well, then we're going to get other people who can move in who can afford it. I mean that's true but the ones that we're discussing the last few months here in this House of Assembly, the people who need social housing – I think it's \$32,500, the limit is. Anybody in social housing, this may not help them. It may help the housing crisis across Canada and it will help probably in Newfoundland for the higher end, but what's going to happen to the people that we're talking about out in Corner Brook? The ones that, as that committee said, there were 14 living in tents this summer. How is that going to help them? That's the issue that I find with this.

It's great to do it and across Canada, it's great but when you're up here and you need houses down here, you can't afford it, they're going to say well how is this really going to help the most vulnerable? How is this here going to help the people in Tent

City here in St. John's that cannot afford these high-end rentals? That's the bigger question of this.

Not putting any limit on it, on what you can charge in rent, then whoever is the highest bidder, gets in the rental. The people with the lowest who can't afford it are still going to be out there.

That's the concerns I got with it. I'm not going to belabour any further on that, but I will say to the minister of Housing, I have no problem working with you in Corner Brook. I said that before to you and if you want to come, when you do come to Corner Brook, I'll bring you around. I'll get the stakeholders together, because this is not your problem. This is not my problem. This is a government problem that we all must work together to resolve.

I know a few ministers who came out and we went around; we had a great time. No politics, just sit down and meet with the people. What would that do, Mr. Speaker, when the minister of Housing sits with this group, sits down and say guys okay, what are your concerns? What can we do in the short term, medium term and long term? That raises their expectations that they say yeah, let's keep going; let's work with the minister. Let's do things together.

I'm not trying to be critical of you here. I don't know if you heard my interview on *Open Line* about a month or three weeks ago. I said if they came out and did some work to build housings, I'd be the one sitting in the front row applauding the minister. I'd be applauding him. For me, if we all worked together, everybody wins.

So I say to the minister, I know you mentioned due to unforeseen circumstances you couldn't come out to Corner Brook, but I am urging you to come out and meet with the groups. If you want me involved to sit around, I will. I'll work with you. I'll work with the groups; I know them personally. I know a lot of the people that

aren't there. So I'm just saying this is a bigger issue than me, than the minister, than any Member here; this is a problem for Newfoundland and Labrador and we all must work together on it.

This here is great for housing. The other question I had for the minister and this is more of a provincial thing – nationally it is going to be a bigger thing – is the ability to find the workers to do it, to have it done. So that is another issue that somehow we have to recruit or train or somehow to get the skilled workers to do this for the people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I won't continue on any further; I will be voting for this, but again, I will say to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, we have to find some way to help the people that need the help right now. I used an example, Crestview, and I know the minister wrote the federal government and they've refused. Let's find some way to get the money; if the federal government doesn't come on board, let's find a way. Let's go back to Treasury Board, go out and build those 32 units. Let's do it.

There is a way to do it; there has got to be a way that we can find the finances for that. In Corner Brook, that's 32 units. That's 32 families that we can help out, plus the other 12. That is 44 families right there that we can help out to take out of the hotels in Corner Brook and take out the ones that are in the tents.

I call upon the Minister of Finance – I know sometimes it is easy for an Opposition Member to say, well, find money, find money, but there is a crisis there. If the federal government is unwilling to – just for the record, I wrote the federal minister, Gudie Hutchings, and asked her about why this was rejected. I actually wrote her and I haven't got a response yet, but I did write her when the minister mentioned that and I asked her. I am not saying that the minister is not trying to get this done; I did write the minister.

I say to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, this is a great amendment, but if you find some way to get that Crestview started. If you have to put extra money into that Crestview and as the minister of Housing said that they have the provincial side, shovels are ready to be put in the ground, let's find the other half. That would be a good step forward for people in Corner Brook.

I know the Member for Corner Brook mentioned yesterday that it is good to see that Corner Brook is the hub. Just to give you a little breakdown. He is the Member for Corner Brook, but half the district that I represent is the Humbermouth, Humber Heights area, and Curling, which is Corner Brook. So when I say Corner Brook, I mean the whole Corner Brook, half the district that I represent and the full district the Member for Corner Brook represents. So it's a collective idea that if we can get housing anywhere in Corner Brook, we all win in the area.

So I'll close on that and I'll welcome the minister to come out and sit down and meet with the advocacy groups. They're a great bunch. They're really concerned. They're really a great bunch to help out and their heart is in the right place. You would give them a lift if you came out and said okay, let's start finding a way to all work together. But, Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, please find the money I request of you, please. This would take us a long way forward to get it done.

By saying the federal government didn't put in that, we'll take care of that later. We'll take care of that election time, when that's out there. But if the province wants to make a great step for Corner Brook and we know the money is there, here's a good opportunity to get it done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm very, very pleased to have just a few minutes to make a couple of key points about this resolution before the House today. I just want to read it into the record because I want to, in particular, catch the ear and eye and attention of six companies that my office have been working with in recent years to look at some of the housing challenges in the Lake Melville area.

So to you six contractors, I draw your attention to the fact that we are here debating a resolution that says that a debate of the provincial portion of the harmonized sales tax on new purpose-built rental housing be provided and that the rebate mirror the Government of Canada's existing and enhanced GST/HST New Residential Property Rebate.

What we're talking about is the federal government is proposing they're going to remove their 5 per cent; we're going to remove our 10 per cent, therefore, that represents a 15 per cent saving on all new builds that would support any kind of rental housing. I often use an expression when I stand on my feet in this Legislature, and I call it orchestra conducting. For, I'm sure, all 40 of us, there's a really interesting bit of feedback I find that happens during your campaigns, of course, but also if you're out just canvassing and talking to people.

When you go door to door in your community, you start to get a very good understanding of the demographics and what you're dealing with. I find when I am doing that exercise and you're starting to knock on your doors, you start to understand some of the challenges. Again, back to this concept, I call it orchestra conducting because like anything in politics, making changes or trying to respond to some particular need usually means you have to move two or three other pieces. When I talk about housing – and I'll just go specifically to the community I live in, Happy Valley-Goose Bay – we have, I would say, a

couple of thousand different homes, residences and so on that we are dealing with. I often see seniors, for example, living on their own in their original house.

It's probably a two-, three- or four-bedroom home and they would like to downsize but they would also like to stay in the community. We have a challenge in Happy Valley-Goose Bay where we have insufficient seniors' housing or level 1 and level 2 seniors' care. We have an excellent facility that provides level 3 and level 4 but for seniors who would just like a little bit of support, that's been lacking.

As I said in my opening thought, I have kept track and our office has been working with six separate companies who have been looking for some kind of atmosphere or opportunity to go forward and make a substantial investment and thereby address it.

If we had those units available, folks that are in those larger homes can downsize and those homes become available to others. We have, for example, some Ukrainian families right now who are looking to move around. Other people who are long-time residents or originally from Labrador also looking to upsize and it is all kind of stuck because we don't have that one component of the housing structure.

So I say to my six colleagues in private sector, this is an exciting day. I can tell there is great support in this House and I know there is in the federal government in Ottawa, so I'm looking forward to seeing this atmosphere.

At the end of the day, we often say in government that we need to provide an investment climate for the private sector for our economy to get going. This is a prime example. This 15 per cent reduction should take a lot of the sting, a lot of the risk and you, my friends – while I'm addressing my remarks to the Speaker, I'm speaking to these six companies. I'm saying have a

close look at this. Fifteen per cent off your investment you will now be able to recoup. That should take a lot of the risk away and I look forward to you showing up in my office as soon as possible. We'll give you more details. I'm sure all the other 39 of us in this room will be able to do the same.

A very exciting initiative here today. It's so much more than just 15 per cent, 10 per cent of provincial. It actually can help a lot of the social challenges that we have in our province and I thank my colleagues for bringing it forward.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly a great opportunity to get up and speak on this resolution. It's something that's needed for sure and we're certainly, on this side, in favour of it. Hopefully it'll be able to help out some residents and constituents in our districts that would make it cheaper for them, for sure. Hopefully, that the contractors are getting this break with the HST, but we can pass that on to the residents. That's the main part of it.

I can only use a couple of examples – and it was way before my time, but there was a program that was out there and there were some units built in Goulds, for sure. They had, I'm going to say, probably 15 or 20 units. Every unit that was built they contributed \$75,000 to each unit that was built, which is a fair, substantial amount of money. But they were locked in for maybe eight to 10 years. I'm not sure the exact date, but I know they were locked in for a certain –

AN HON. MEMBER: Eight.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, I think eight.

That was locked in for a period of time. After that time I guess it's up to the individual that invested that money that they decide after eight or 10 years what's going to happen. Hopefully, with that funding that they had, that they can keep it livable for the people that are there.

He built two sets of units, and they are full. When you go around knocking on doors during the election you're seeing they're beautiful units and they're affordable for these people. These people lived in my community and moved to Goulds because they wanted to get out of their house and get into something that was affordable for them at the time.

Hopefully after eight or nine years when that's done – and the time will soon be up on that they don't jump the rent on them. But they got to do what they got to do sometimes. It all depends on what's available in the area, whether they're going to put the price up or leave it where it's to. But it's very important that we keep it at these rates for these constituents, for sure.

I have a resident that lived in Trepassey. Because of health issues they moved to Bay Bulls area. There was an old school in the area at the same time. They renovated this school and made 14 or 15 units in the community and they're full. Somebody else built another unit next to that under the same program, I think – and I don't know the details because it was well before my time in regard to the program. That's full as well. Every time they become available there's always somebody to go in them, so it's really important that we get this.

I had another gentleman that only called me the other day and he's looking to build four units. It sounds like it could fit in to the five-point plan. I spoke to the minister the other day and he gave me the five-point plan. I went up in my office this morning read it and sent him a number that he can speak with this gentleman and try to get this moving. Something that's encouraging him – the one

big issue, I'm going to say, is he's buying land. He has an opportunity to buy some land to do this project. Hopefully if he gets the right information and the right help, he can make this happen.

The one issue that hopefully we don't run into is the red tape – and I don't mean that facetiously, I mean the red tape that's going to slow these projects down. That's what we have to try to get it clear of. You have to do your due diligence, I get that, I understand that, but you have to make sure that we don't slow these projects down. We need housing and we need it right away.

So we've got to get on that. Let's not slow it down but, again, do your due diligence. The issue we're going to have is some of the Crown land that needs to be released to do some of this. We know how long it takes. I'm not going to stand up here and jump down everybody's throat about Crown lands. We are dealing with major issues in Crown Lands and maybe there are things that we can offer to do whatever we can to make that happen. Someone said, when I asked the question here a couple of years ago, how long did it take to get Crown land approved, 60 days and I sang out, not on your life, not a chance, 60 days – never happen, based on the application. There's never a simple application.

So I'll say to the minister, let's see what we can do to rectify that problem; not be a year or two years trying to get Crown Lands straightened out. The minister is making a good initiative here. Let's get with the other departments.

While I'm up speaking on that, when you're making an application in the department – and I learned this myself only in the last couple of years – and I'm saying this for the people at home – it has got to pass through every department and be referred back before it clears. I never knew that before I came in here. So every department has to have a look on it to make sure that it doesn't affect their department, which is great. So

they're all doing their due diligence on it. They might look at it and read it, that has nothing to do with us, sign off and send it back.

So there you go. That's 14 departments. If the second department happens to have an issue with it, how long is it going to sit on that desk that's going to slow that down? It's going to be a long time. Hopefully not a long time but, listen, we've been in here and we know the issues that we've got in Crown Lands. Let's see if we can help this along. Let's move this project. We're talking about housing. We want people to be able to get in them. We don't want tents out on the roads or down on the corners. We don't want that. We need this to move as fast as possible. We really do and we've got to get this as quick as possible. There's no question about it.

Again, if you're going to build these, I know you're going to be looking at accessibility and green energy. We all have heard all those comments as well. The Member for Bonavista, last year, had a couple that were looking to sell their property and they couldn't sell it because it wasn't their land, and they're still trying to move out of this house for specific reasons. I'm sure one of them is because they're trying to downsize. They are some of the issues that we have got to help these people with. I've got parents at home that they are in mid-70s to my father who is 80 and they're in a house that's probably too big for them now but, at some point in time, who knows what happens. They have to have this opportunity to be able to do that.

Another resident in my district, right now, is looking for housing since last year, a full year, and she has some doctors' notes to prove that she needs this help. She needs to get to St. John's, out of my district. She needs to get closer to St. John's for medical appointments for cost and she's been waiting a year. So that's the kind of stuff and hopefully, Minister, when you're doing this

that we think about the residents and it is very, very important that we look at that.

Again, I said I'd get up and have a few minutes to speak on it because it is important for every district and there's lots of housing around now. Does my district have as much housing? Certain areas, yes, and other areas, no. But it's something that we should certainly get a chance to get up and speak on and represent our constituents in that area.

Thank you, Speaker, for the chance.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Speaker, I'm just going to speak briefly on this motion that was brought forward by the Finance Minister. Her motion was to mirror the federal HST rebate on the purchase of existing rental properties and the construction of new purpose-built rentals.

They say this is a part of their new five-point plan to address the housing crisis, but I just want to take a brief minute and look at housing crisis. What does that even mean, we're in a housing crisis? As part of the five-point plan they're going to remove this rebate off rental properties and new purpose-built rentals. That should help by putting some rental properties back into the market.

Speaker, just looking at what the housing crisis means, we look across the road to Tent City. When we look at Tent City it's obvious they're homeless, and we have to ask the question: How did we get there? How do people get to be living in tents across from Confederation Building in the capital city of our province? Was it the cost of living? Was it the lack of access to mental health services? Was it addictions and the failure to actually get help with addictions? Was it about lack of family supports? Was it about the lack of community supports?

At the end of the day, we have to have more than just rebates on the construction of rental properties. Will this help the homeless who are living in Tent City? I don't think so. Also one of the things we have to look at is how do they secure shelter? How do they secure a home now?

I was listening to an interview of one of the women that was over in Tent City and she talked about human decency. She talked about the treatment. She said actually in Tent City there along with the homeless people living in a tent, she had a sense of community. Then when she was moved to housing, to shelter, and the abominable conditions that she was exposed to and the way she was treated, she said she lost that sense of community.

So this is something that we need to address. It's not only about people who are very visible, like those in Tent City. What about our hidden homeless? There are a lot of people out there, all across our province, now that are homeless. And they're not that visible. So we've got to make sure that we're addressing their needs as well.

Phrases have crept into our language: couch surfing. But the problem with being homeless and couch surfing is that you're staying in somebody else's house. So you're at their mercy. Because at any time, if they're not in agreement with you, they could actually remove you from their house, from that security, from that safe spot, that place where it may be warm. So the hidden homeless really, really don't have a voice. I think the message is: Does everybody have to form their own Tent City to get their needs met?

At the end of the day, we have to be aware of the hidden homeless. What about the people who are on the verge of becoming homeless? They're one paycheque away, you know. They're one struggle away. The crushing stress that they're under, to keep a house over their head. Homelessness is an issue, but what we've got to look at is

there's so many people out there now, due to the high cost of housing and also the high cost of living, are on the verge of becoming homeless.

We've got to make sure their needs are addressed; we've got to make sure that they can actually have some security. When you look at those two issues that are impacting people who are on the verge of becoming homeless, the high cost of living and the housing crisis that we're in, the first week that we came back to the House of Assembly both the Official Opposition and the Third Party requested through a motion that we would discuss these important topics, and we were ruled out of order. We never had the opportunity to discuss these important issues and to debate and find some solutions.

For me, just looking at this motion – and I'll just read from my briefing notes: As part of their five-point plan to address the housing crisis, the provincial government announced their intention of mirroring the federal rebate by bringing in their own, which removes the provincial portion of the HST for purpose-built rental construction.

Now, there's an assumption, or there's a wish or a hope or a prayer, that the savings that the developers that will build these units will actually take some of that cost saving and pass it on to the renters. And we know that's not going to happen. I know that's not going to happen. I'm sure the people in the Official Opposition are not confident that it's going to happen. But in actual fact, I was at the municipal conference this morning and the mayor of St. John's spoke. He was on the panel for housing. He spoke – and I'm paraphrasing, but he said: Even if the HST is taken off, even if there are more houses built, they still won't be affordable.

So we need a commitment from government that if we are going to be giving rebates to contractors for the construction of rental units, that in actual fact when they're built, people will be able to afford to rent

them. If not, we are going to go back into the categories of the hidden homeless, the visual homeless and the people on the verge of becoming homeless, and we are no further ahead. All we did was pad the pockets of big business and of people who can afford to be in business to build these houses and access rebates.

We just have to look to my district. The construction rebate that went on, you know, to help the construction industry get out of the dire impacts of COVID. For up to \$25,000 in renovations, you could claim back 25 per cent of that.

I'm getting a little bit angry and frustrated, so I'm not even sure if my numbers are accurate. In actual fact, that construction rebate, that would have allowed people in my district to access up to \$10,000, was denied them because that rebate didn't transfer to the people in my district.

Another rebate that would help people to be able to try and heat their homes and have access to stable home heating this winter, at a great cost but less than the cost of stove oil, would be the transfer to electric. In the oil to electric rebate, it says there, right in black and white: Torngat Mountains District, Southern Labrador is not eligible. We cannot be a part of that rebate. We are excluded. What does that do for our housing crisis? What does that do for our cost-of-living crisis that we are in?

It's really, really important to realize that we have to make sure if we are going to be giving rebates out to a big business, that it is actually transferred to meet the needs of this motion. This motion is about trying to make sure that more rental units are built and they are affordable and they will actually help address the housing crisis. Because putting apartments out there that people can't afford is not addressing the housing crisis and we all know that.

So you just can't be willy-nilly with the language. You have to make sure that the

intent of a motion is being met. I have to say, the motions that we brought forward requested to speak on the cost-of-living crisis and on the housing crisis. We were denied that opportunity here in the House of Assembly.

I've got 11 minutes left. I think I might just stand up here and run out the clock. But at the end of the day, Speaker, we've got to make sure that people who are homeless have access to shelter. Listening to that homeless lady talk about human decency, self-respect, we've got to make sure that it's not just a shelter bed where they can access it in the night and actually have to be put out in the day to roam the streets. That's not about respect, that's not about human decency and that's not solving the housing crisis.

We also have to address all the people who are homeless that are hidden from our view – out of sight, out of mind. We've got to make sure that those people have some way to be able to have consistent housing, a roof over their head, and have the security and the reassurance that they're not going to be cast out on the street. Right now, a lot of the homeless people who are couch surfing who are hidden from us, they're actually always on the verge of being out on the street, out in the cold. We're going into the winter, right?

And then when we look at the people who are on the verge of becoming homeless, people assume it's low-income people. I also want to raise the question in this House: What's low income anymore? Because you look at the huge cost of living, the cost of food, the cost of heating your house, the cost of rental or homeownership. All of those costs are outrageous now. So when you look at low income, there are a lot of people who actually had no issues with paying their bills and being able to raise their children, being able to have access to food and comfort and reassurance in life, quality of life. Now, because of the cost of

living, they're down amongst the low-income bracket.

Speaker, this government has been in power since 2015. We've seen the erosion of people's quality of life throughout the province. It's not just housing, but housing is related to quality of life. It's related to your mental health. It's related to your overall health. One of the things that's really important – yes, it's a part of their five-point plan, but at the end of the day, we've got to make sure the intent is realized. We've got to make sure that there are no loopholes so businesses can profit from this rebate.

At the end of the day, the people have to have solutions. I'm a bit uncomfortable with this motion. I support the intent of it, but at the end of the day I don't want this just to be something that businesses can profit from.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to talk a few minutes – a few is three – say four or five minutes on this resolution. We are in support of it. At least, I am in support of it. But I want to recognize two people who are watching and I'm going to bring one of them into a little short anecdote related to this resolution, from Elliston, Pam Fleming and Scott Martin. They're watching from Elliston now. I had a conversation with Pam which has a relation to this resolution, and I want to be able to add that a little while.

We've got two situations, and a huge crisis is ongoing. We've got an overall crisis in housing; when we watch on the news that people are lined up for a block, or quite a distance to view a basement apartment – and I think it might have been in Mount Pearl at that time – then you know we've got an issue. We've got an issue with available accommodations in our general population.

The other crisis or issue would be affordable, safe, secure housing. That's a good point. So my previous speakers talks about that; this is going to take a strain off the housing market. If anybody has done economics 101 – now the Member across the way has done it. I did not do economics 101. I just want, for the record, the Member for Bonavista did not do 101. But the basic is supply and demand.

The basic premise in housing would be supply and demand. If you have a large supply, the prices come down. If you have a lack of supply, the prices go up. We have developers who would look at it and say: Listen, when there was a lot of available market in the City of St. John's, the prices of apartments dropped. And I know that for a fact. Now we're into a situation where you can't find a place, and all of a sudden we find that the rates are going up.

So this resolution will inject housing into the market that has got to affect the affordability for people looking to rent. There's no doubt about that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We mentioned about Crown lands. And Pam Fleming, who I just referenced now – I texted her to ask permission to say can I reference her. On September 27, when I was going to an affordable housing session at the College of the North Atlantic in Bonavista, I was leaving Elliston after visiting this home I just referenced, she had mentioned about all the dilapidated homes and abandoned homes that would be in a municipality.

Point: It is not from the lack of effort. The Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs stood up and said there is no regulation that would affect either municipality from investing into low-income housing or any kind of housing project. He is correct. But the problem that we encounter in the District of Bonavista is that when we have a municipality that is trying to get a property

free up on tax arrears, now they are finding that Crown Lands does not remove themselves from an investment in that property.

So if you or I were going to buy that property in order to create more tax roll and create more housing, they will find that they are not inclined to buy that property because we did not have Crown Lands's voice that are going to withdraw any claim to that land, and that is a showstopper.

We find that in the District of Bonavista that's a showstopper. One thing that we mentioned, myself, the Member for Terra Nova – and at this particular meeting I'm going to reference in a second, the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology. We were at the Newfoundland-Labrador Federation of Co-operatives. We all stated in that meeting that this would play a role.

If we look at co-operative housing initiatives they are something that we ought to be looking at. My friend and colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands wondered about – and he's probably going to ask on the resolution now – is it available for not-for-profits. I would assume yes, it is. Not only developers but I would assume if anybody is going to develop it, not-for-profits, assuming they have the financials, may be able to avail of it.

But a good question, because that is the two crises we would have. One is a general one we've got here. The second one that we inquire is that we've got the affordable housing, and that would be a good question to have answered.

The last piece I would say, in the District of Bonavista, people and contractors who are interested in building units would ask: How long is this on for, MHA Pardy? And I would say, right now, I don't know.

We know that it is retroactive to September 14, but how long can we expect this to happen? Do they have to build it right now

in the fall, which is going to be pretty quick, or will they have the spring and the summer of next year? Is there an assurance of how long this will last in a minimum capacity?

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, am going to be speaking in favour of this motion. I just want to say, I think yesterday in the House of Assembly my colleague from Conception Bay South said I'm always throwing a lot of favour that way, over across the House lately. So I just want to say I was speaking to a gentleman today and, no offence to my colleague from Stephenville, but he felt you should have been the leader because you appeal to the everyday person and he really appreciated it. I said, he kind of does. So I'll throw a bit of favour your way.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. LANE: That's right. That's why I have red shirt, blue tie. Play both sides, right?

Anyway, I will be supporting the motion. As has been said, this is going to hopefully add to the housing market and hopefully, as a result of that, using the whole supply-demand thing, that it's going to not just provide more availability, but it's going to bring the prices down and everything as well. That would be the hope.

Now, one of the things – and I do understand some of the concerns that my colleague from Torngat Mountains raised. I understand some of her concerns about the fact that this is not affordable housing and are we missing the mark and is this going to be way for private developers to pocket more money and so on. I get that. I kind of share that concern to a degree as well. If we

were not in a housing crisis as a province and as a country, not just in terms of the affordable housing and housing for people with complex needs but just housing in general, if we never had that shortage, I would agree that I wouldn't be interested in simply putting more money in the pockets of a few people and giving them breaks unnecessarily. But we are in a situation where we absolutely need more housing.

So whatever we can do – and, in this case, we're going to join with the federal government to do our part to try to make create incentives for private developers to create multi-unit homes and, hopefully, that's going to help fill the gap that currently exists in terms of housing. Hopefully, in addition to that, it's going to maybe – maybe, and I say maybe – bring prices down somewhat. I don't think it's going to bring it down dramatically unless, of course, there's a big glut in the market and I don't see that happening. But, hopefully, it will bring it now. So I will support that part of it.

I do want to throw out, certainly to the minister, the government in general, I suppose, the minister responsible for Housing, a couple of things that have been thrown my way by people as it relates to housing. I've had a couple of people reach out and say I have an in-law apartment. As an example, I spoke to a gentleman yesterday. I have an in-law apartment. It's not a registered apartment, so it doesn't have the two metres and so on.

My mother-in-law is now gone into a care home, so I have this empty space but it's going to cost me money to change over the electrical, put a separate metre in, things like that, and was wondering does the government have any programs available that if somebody had an in-law apartment or maybe someone just had a rec room that they said I want to now put a basement apartment in my house that I don't have, maybe if there was a program to offer an incentive for me to make that change, that

would encourage more people to do it and put more apartments into the marketplace.

So that was a suggestion. I see the minister nodding her head there and, hopefully, she'll respond as to maybe there's something else in the hopper and that would be great if there was.

The other one – and my colleague mentioned it from Bonavista. By the way, a shout-out to the Linthornes of Bonavista.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: My colleague can't shout out to the Linthornes every time because he got other constituents, but I'll say a shout-out to the Linthornes if you're watching.

But the other one is the co-op housing that was referenced. I was at a co-op housing forum in Mount Pearl. I can't remember if it was last week or the week before. Anyway, within the last week or so, I'll say that, and it was facilitated by CHANAL, Co-operative Housing Association Newfoundland and Labrador, which they're located actually in my district on Barbour Drive.

Co-op housing is something that, in my view, government in general perhaps have underutilized this opportunity as it relates to co-op housing. So I throw this out to the minister as another option. Like, a person stood up at that meeting and said they have a co-op unit – I think it was a three bedroom – only paying \$758 a month. That is truly affordable. That's what you call true affordability.

When co-op housing are looking at their units, they're not looking at it just from the perspective of how much money you've got coming in to pay the rent. They're also taking into account how much money you have coming in. They're taking how much can you pay for rent. You need groceries. You need to be able to eat healthy. You need to be able to pay your light bill, pay your phone bill. If you have a vehicle, you

need to be able to out gas in the car to go to work.

They take all those things into account and so when they're charging rent, they're as low as possible because they're looking at the individual and their ability, not just to live, but also to be able to live properly and a normal life where they can, actually, have a few little comforts around and to be able to eat healthy and so on. Not just simply get enough money to pay the rent and then you are eating Kraft dinner every day because you can't afford to buy any vegetables.

So I think it's a great model. They achieve this, being able to provide this housing and at these prices because what they look to do is to partner with the government, partner with the municipalities. In their case, they would say, okay – and I'm going to throw this out as an example that I spoke to them about and I think they're going to be meeting with the minister at some point. We have public land. I'm going to take the site where Booth Memorial school is, as an example. It's one I'm familiar with. I went to school right next door at Bishops, so I'm very familiar with the area. That's a big chunk of land. It has all underground infrastructure already in place there because there was a school. So there's underground work there. The school has been removed.

From their perspective, if the government were to say, you can have that land for \$1, so to speak, and then the City of St. John' says, we won't charge you any fees for permit fees and all that kind of good stuff, then they can build an apartment building and they can charge truly affordable rates for people to live there and fill that gap.

They're ready to do it. They want to do it. I asked at the meeting: Is there a will? They said: Absolutely. We've been having communications with the government back and forth for months, trying to find us a piece of land; asking and saying, if you would give us a piece of land – now, it's not

as simple as give us the land and the next day we start construction but there's more to it than that. Basically, what they're saying is, if you would give us the land, we're prepared and we want to build more affordable housing. They're not being utilized enough. That can work anywhere across the province, utilizing government land.

I know that ministers talked about this in the past, about freeing up government land for these types of things. I encourage you to talk to CHANAL to look at co-op housing.

The final point I want to make – and I have made this, I think, in other debates around housing. Well, a couple of things, actually. I would be remiss if I didn't bring up again the issue of emergency shelters. The conditions that some of the people are living in these shelters. For someone to say I would rather stay out in the freezing cold in a tent than to go to these shelters, because I have witnessed and experienced assault, drugs, everything else and I don't feel safe there, there is a problem with that.

I encourage the government, please, look at these emergency shelters, particularly the private ones. Are we getting good value for money? Are the places that these people are being put in, fit to be in? We saw stuff in the news with the rat feces and everything else.

Again, this is anecdotal and you're only talking to people, but I am told this is ongoing, this is business as usual and this is the norm. There are also people, I'm told, being put in private houses, basement apartments, whatever – perhaps people with complex needs, again – that are just uninhabitable. I am told that the government is paying like \$2,000 to \$3,000 a month rent to these landlords to house some of these people. Now, don't take my word; check it out.

Again, I am only going by what I have been told, but please, Minister, check it out. I am

told \$2,000 to \$3,000 a month for rent and thousands of dollars going on hotel rooms. Thousands and thousands and thousands of dollars going to hotels. I am not just talking about Ukrainians; I'm talking about other citizens as well that have been months and months and months and months in hotels and costing us an absolute fortune. Are we getting proper value for money? Are people being housed properly? Are they living in safe places? These are all things that need to be looked at.

My final point, when it comes to people with complex needs, you cannot simply take someone with complex needs and say, here's a house, an apartment, a shelter, whatever, and we're done. We've given you a place to say there's a roof over your head, see ya later. Yes, there are people where that would work. There are a lot of people where that's just not going to work. There are people with addictions, mental health issues and other challenges. They need assistance with daily living. Some of these people need that assistance.

There are people who are on medications and so on for serious mental health issues. They need someone to monitor them, to make sure they're taking their medications, that they're well so that they don't end up in some of these horrific situations; or what we find happening more often than not, end up in the lock-up because the police get called, which is wrong in itself.

So housing is definitely part of it, but for some people and the most vulnerable people, people with complex needs, there has to be what I think government termed as wraparound services. I'm assuming, when the minister says wraparound services, I think that's what he means. That is a big piece of the puzzle.

You can provide all the shelter and housing you want for this subset, a smaller group, but the housing itself is not going to cut it. If we don't provide them those wraparound services, you're just throwing money away

and you're not doing anything to help that person.

That's where there has to be collaboration, I believe, between Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and the Department of Children, Seniors and Social Development and Department of Health, probably. They all have to be collaborating together when it comes to this group of people with these complex needs. Housing is part of the puzzle, but it's not the whole thing. You can't just do one or the other, we have to do it all and that has to be done together.

Anyway, with that said, Mr. Speaker, as I said I will support the motion. I think it is step in the right direction, given where we're to. I will again say, if we were not in a housing crisis then I certainly wouldn't support just simply waving taxes and putting money into people's pockets but we are in a crisis, we do need the houses, so we're going to have to do what we need to do to complement what the federal government is doing to try to incentivize the building of more houses. We need more affordable houses. This doesn't really tackle that issue, but it does tackle the bigger picture of housing for people who can't afford normal rents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board speaks now, she will close debate.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

It's been a very good afternoon, I think, of robust debate. I would like to thank my colleagues in the House: the Members for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Exploits, Labrador

West, Topsail - Paradise, Humber - Bay of Islands, Lake Melville, Ferryland, Torngat Mountains, Bonavista and Mount Pearl - Southlands, for their, what I thought, very good and important discussion points.

I'm going to try and cover off a few of the questions that were asked here this afternoon. First of all, I'm appreciative that everybody in this House is supporting the amendment that we're making today. Of course, this amendment is required to allow us to implement a rebate on the construction of new rental units in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're removing the HST from new rental construction by mirroring two rebates from the federal government.

A couple of points were raised today, and allow me to take a few moments. Do Airbnb qualify for this? No, Airbnb is short term, not long term. This is for long-term housing units.

Are we being really efficient in this? I know that one of my colleagues said we have to move as quickly as possible and this is a good first step. I think absolutely it is, and really the reason why it's being administered by the Canada Revenue Agency is to remove any duplication and any administrative burdens. We really want to make sure that we do that. We want to be as effective as possible.

I know there was a question on whether not-for-profits could access this. Yes, they could do that through the enhanced HST rebate. Those are important.

There were questions around whether or not this is for social housing, or will this make housing more affordable. It may make housing more affordable because it opens up more rental units. It's not specifically designed for social housing, but by having more – and this is what my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands indicated – units on the market it helps to drive down pricing

and helps to make sure it opens up other possibilities.

I did have a question about how long does somebody have to have these four rental units available. We're anticipating – again, this is mirroring the federal government program – that will likely be the same as what the existing program is. I'd also like to remind Members that if somebody only has it for a short period of time, they would have a very significant capital gains tax as well.

I think this is an important point to bring forward today. I will say as well, there were a couple of questions and comments around Crown lands. I've spoken to my colleague, the minister responsible for Crown lands, who's really seized with ensuring that we move very quickly on Crown lands and have timely access.

This is only one aspect of the five-point plan. But allow me first to kind of try and separate. There's the whole social housing aspect and that is housing that would be available and affordable for members of our communities. That's why if you look in our budget – and I've used this extensively last week – we've put \$70 million to help construct another 850 affordable homes, with a focus on seniors. We've had \$25 million for those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. We've put \$10 million in grants for homeowners in low income to complete repairs. We've put \$16 million for rental assistance programs that expand housing options.

We've also brought in a five-point plan. The five-point plan, one of which is, of course, this non-residential rental property rebate, but we also have things like unlocking surplus government land and buildings, and my colleague just mentioned that. There are surplus government lands. How can we unlock that land to ensure it's available to a not-for-profit or a builder who may be able to utilize that land for affordable housing or to make housing more affordable? So we're unlocking government land.

Another Member opposite talked about how do we make sure we have secondary and basement suites available. We've put forward a program – I think it's an exceptionally good program – that would allow the homeowner to renovate. I'll quote from it: Homeowners will be able to access a five-year forgivable loan of 50 per cent of eligible renovation costs to a maximum of \$40,000.

So I think that will help. There are lots of opportunities for basement apartments or putting a secondary residence in your home. As long as the homeowner continues to live in that house, certainly that money will be available to them to put in that basement suite. I used to have a basement apartment in a former home that I lived in and it certainly is a good help for people.

P LANE: Is that available now?

S. COADY: I'm sorry.

P LANE: Is that available now?

S. COADY: It was just announced in mid-October. I think the plans are now being put in place. I'm going to read my – we're hoping to have that available very, very quickly. We're just finalizing plans. The minister is telling me he's just finalizing those plans. So, hopefully, that will be very, very quickly.

P. LANE: (Inaudible.)

S. COADY: I will ask the Member, maybe talk with the minister of Housing, I'm sure he'll be happy to help answer any of those questions.

We also have a homeownership assistance program, Speaker. Applications will open on November 1. It will be through Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and qualified applicants will get a \$1,500 towards homeownership.

So those five-point plans I think are very, very important to make housing affordable so that we have social housing and housing affordability.

I want to recognize the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, he's a new minister, a brand new minister, brand new to the portfolio.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: He's been working diligently; he's been working with sincerity; he's been putting in the hard work to make these programs available very, very quickly. I want to recognize him and thank him for those diligent efforts because I think they're very, very important to our communities, to the people of our communities, so I want to recognize him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: Speaker, I did have one further question, I believe it was the Member for Bonavista who asked: How long is this program going to be in existence, the program for the new residential rental property rebate? I was just reminded of it, construction must be substantially completed on or before December 31, 2035. So certainly a long runway on these things.

Speaker, I thank my colleagues for supporting this new residential rental property rebate program. I'm hearing support for some of the other programs that we've put in place. I know the minister is working very diligently on this, so it's not just about housing affordability, it's also about the social housing requirements that we have.

Speaker, it's going to take all of us working together to make sure that we address the concerns that are there and I'm glad that today we are doing that.

I'll take my seat to take it to vote so that we can move forward expeditiously and quickly to implement this program.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

SPEAKER: This House do stand adjourned until 1:30 o'clock on Monday.

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