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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.

Before we begin, in the public gallery today I would like to welcome Joan Dawson, Dan Goodyear and Melissa Noseworthy from the John Howard Society. They're joining us this afternoon for a Ministerial Statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise today on a point of privilege.

O'Brien and Bosc in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* states that a "Member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation."

As I indicated through an email on March 1, 2024, I asked for your guidance on making a point of privilege. I have given you notice and a written copy of the point of privilege for March 5, 2024.

I am so honoured to represent the great District of Humber - Bay of Islands, who have placed their trust in me over seven elections, over 21 years in this hon. House of Assembly, and stepping aside for two Liberal premiers. I will always stand up for the people of Humber - Bay of Islands and they would be very disappointed if I did not stand up for my rights and honour. I love helping people, but the constant tarnishing of my reputation should be discouraged.

Mr. Speaker, it will be the great, good people of Humber - Bay of Islands who will decide if I represent them, not the attempts to tarnish my reputation from this House.

I don't want to be standing here presenting this point of privilege, but if I don't, I remember what happened in 2018 and what my family went through.

Mr. Speaker, I was falsely accused of bullying and harassment in 2018 and the Rubin Thomlinson report was in agreement that there was no bullying and harassment.

With political interference from the former premier, Dwight Ball, with the act not being complied with the Management Commission withholding information, except for the Member for Burgeo - La Poile, I was found in violation of Code of Conduct Principle 10, which did not pertain to government Members.

Mr. Speaker, I wrote the Management Commission on new evidence and asked them to bring it back to the House of Assembly. It was voted down.

I asked the Government House Leader at the time: How could you do this? He confirmed to me on many occasions that I got screwed. He stated: I'm following orders. Which I replied: The only one who can give you the orders is the premier. He stated: He's the boss. I stated: You sold me down the drain. To which he replied: You know how this works. The Member was referring to the current premier.

Mr. Speaker, Members of the Management Commission took an oath to act independently and make decisions based on information presented to them. With decisions made on political influence and not on evidence, it has damaged my reputation.

Knowing that the former premier interfered with the decision of the Management Commission that is affecting my reputation is of great concern and interference in the process by the elected official or an Officer of the House of Assembly would be a breach of their oath. That is why I have no

confidence in the process and why I continuously stand to state the facts.

I filed a civil suit in the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador and it was rejected due to parliamentary privilege, not on the facts. I would follow the same course of action to have my reputation restored and the truth known and put the facts in the public domain.

Mr. Speaker, the judge made an order that I pay a percentage of the court costs, which I had no problem following the court order and I endeavoured to follow this order and put this chapter behind me.

As the three lawyers in the House of Assembly would know, there had to be an agreed costs for services. If there was a dispute or disagreement, then a taxing master would make the decision. The entities who were awarded costs would have to submit their bills for payment. The cost would be different if it is registered at the Sherriff's Office for collection, which would be public knowledge. The bill of costs was registered in late October 2023 with the Registrar, not the Sherriff's Office for collection.

Mr. Speaker, on October 19, I received a letter from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards asking for proof of payment of each bill as issued by the court master, and I was in possible violation of the Code of Conduct.

I contacted the Commissioner concerning her letter and the tone of the letter. During the conversation, I was threatened with calling the taxing master. I mentioned that I could possibly use my severance and she stated she would not allow that as I may be elected for the next 40 years. I informed the Commissioner that I tried to have this matter resolved six or seven months ago, which she argued saying that it didn't happen and if it was true, it would have been taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, I put some of concerns in writing to the Commissioner on October 27, 2023, and explained to her that I would notify her of any changes of my status if it went past 60 days as I have not received any information. In an email, she asked me to contact her when I get the information, knowing I did not have the documents, Mr. Speaker, on October 27.

On December 21, 2023, I received an email from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards stating: There has been a non-compliance with your statutory responsibilities. I will be exercising my discretion to inquire and report the matter to the Speaker. The Commissioner went on to say: There's a public interest in ensuing that the public is aware of the costs. The letter was sent to my office, to my email and the Commissioner also couriered a copy to my private address, while I was away doing humanitarian work in Africa, as a form of bullying and harassment, which I take offence to sending stuff to my personal address.

Section 36(2) of the act: "The commissioner, on the commissioner's own initiative, may conduct an inquiry to determine whether a member has failed to fulfill an obligation under the code of conduct where in the opinion of the commissioner it is in the public interest to do so."

Section 37(2): "Where the commissioner conducts an inquiry under subsection (1), the commissioner shall give the member to whom the inquiry relates a copy of the request and at all appropriate stages throughout the inquiry the commissioner shall give the member reasonable opportunity to be present and to make representation to the commissioner in writing or in person or by counsel or other representative."

Mr. Speaker, I was the victim of the former Commissioner for Legislative Standards who mislead the Management Commission

when he stated I refused to participate when he did not follow section 37(2) of the act.

I refuse to be another victim by a Commissioner for Legislative Standards making statements in a letter dated December 1, 2023, that I was in non-compliance and February 22, 2024, that it was a prima facie administrative non-compliance with conducting the investigation and following the statutory requirements for an investigation.

Mr. Speaker, as I stated, I have tried to pay these liabilities since May 2, 2023. If any costs are registered with the Sheriff's Office and it is public knowledge, my reputation would be called into question, which it was.

On December 21, 2023, while trying to defend my reputation while I was doing humanitarian work in Africa, I received an email from the Speaker's office which advised: The cheque can be made out to the Newfoundland Exchequer and delivered to the attention of the Clerk of the House of Assembly; or, two, the cheque can be made out to the former Speaker, who could then submit a cheque made out to the Exchequer and deliver it to the Clerk of House of Assembly.

I tried to fulfill my responsibilities nine months earlier. I received two letters from lawyers saying that they have received instructions to register the certificate of taxation as a judgment which will be public knowledge. Who contacted these lawyers to instruct them? These two lawyers did not register these costs with the Sheriff's Office. They asked for payment and the bills were paid, and they were true gentlemen.

Mr. Speaker, the last invoice I received was January 12, 2024. I contacted the two lawyers and asked if they can put this through the House of Assembly. They contacted the House of Assembly and one of them told me that I had to deal with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, and the second one said my arrangements

were not acceptable, even though they were all notified in May 2023, that I was trying to pay the costs.

Mr. Speaker, if this was true, I ask who they were speaking to as it is contrary to the letter of December 22, 2023, which states I can pay through the Clerk – from your office for the former Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as there was a threat of a report to be tabled and I had no information or opportunity to make a presentation to the Commissioner, I wrote the Speaker, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards and the Minister of Justice seeking information. This was a violation of section 37(2) by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards during the investigation and I had to try to defend myself as the same investigation.

Justice Green in his report on the Citizens' Representative stated that defendants are entitled to all notes of meetings, emails, information and all evidence pertaining to the allegations in an investigation.

Mr. Speaker, all costs were paid within 60 days of receipt, except for one, which I was waiting for a response while I was in Africa. It was paid immediately upon my return and was mutually agreed upon. The lawyer was one of the individuals who asked that it would be put through the House of Assembly, but it was rejected.

Mr. Speaker, I had to gather my own evidence as I was still under an active investigation by the Commissioner for Legislative Standards. This House cannot allow this abuse of authority and contravention of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* to continue, as it happened in the past. Your duty is to ensure all rights of Members are upheld. You are the protector of my rights.

The Minister of Justice responded with the information he felt he had in his department: emails, et cetera.

The Commissioner for Legislative Standards refused to respond to the information I requested and give me any documentations, emails, et cetera, and who she or her legal counsel spoke to, as I know they have.

Mr. Speaker, your office stated that I have to apply under access to information for any information that will be decided to be released under the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy that I might get. You are the protector of all rights and refusing my information was not welcomed.

Mr. Speaker, I had a former Speaker withhold information in an investigation which damaged my reputation and I will not let this happen again. I will provide information in my later submission of your office's involvement.

Mr. Speaker, in the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 7, it states: "It is the responsibility of the Speaker to act as the guardian of the rights and privileges of Members and of the House as an institution."

Mr. Speaker, you've refused to provide a Member with information to safeguard his reputation, which is of great concern.

Mr. Speaker, I will explain other concerns that I have expressed.

You, as Chair of the Management Commission, representing the Management Commission, wrote me on several occasions that only the House can change the ruling. Your letter was sent on behalf of the Management Commission, who I assume agreed with these statements: December 9, 2022, the House made the decision and it is only the House that can reverse the decision. These are your words, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot challenge your ruling you made. You made a ruling in the House of Assembly after the Supreme Court

decision that Members are not government employees that I violated the preamble, not Principle 10. I asked you to provide me with the *Hansard* where the House of Assembly concurred in any debate with a violation of the preamble. I asked the Hansard office to locate the vote and it never existed.

The motion on November 6, 2018, as cited by the Deputy House Leader: The Member be reprimanded for violation of Principle 10 of the Code of Conduct. Mr. Speaker, you wrote me stating that Members are not government employees.

Mr. Speaker, I have no confidence in reports when the process is not followed.

Mr. Speaker, in April 2023, the lawyer for then Speaker and my lawyer agreed on the bill of costs as awarded by the court. On May 2, 2023, I wrote the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board indicating my requirement to pay the cost. The minister confirmed that any payment would be made through the Clerk of the House of Assembly. It was sent to the legal counsel at the time in your office.

Mr. Speaker, I received a copy of the letter dated May 18, 2023, from your office that was sent to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board stating that your office would be in contact with me. There was never any contact made until it was registered in the Sheriff's Office, almost nine months later. Your office did not contact me to explain how I could proceed with the payment, as per the letter from your office, until December 21, 2023.

The Minister of Justice and the current Commissioner for Legislative Standards were copied on the letter and they never followed up to have the bill of costs agreed upon so it can be paid. By neglect of duties by these three parties, having several in the Sheriff's Office for a collection, which was public knowledge, is calling into question my reputation and a prima facie case of privilege.

Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards did not fulfill her obligation to have this matter resolved and now is stating I am in violation as per her two letters.

Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner made several threats she was going to contact the House of Assembly, call the taxing master and several others. She interfered with the process, causing me stress and anxiety and for two months withheld information pertaining to an investigation and not proceeding with the investigation. This is abuse and a form of bullying and harassment.

After requesting information on several occasions from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards to provide context of her allegations, due to the fact that section 37(2) was not followed, I received a letter dated February 2, 2024, stating: It is not in the public interest for me to inquire further into or report on this matter. She dropped the investigation, after I requested the information.

I agree, it is not in the public interest and should never have been brought forward. The investigation was ceased, but, Mr. Speaker, the two bills of costs that were put in the Sheriff's Office were from the former Speaker's lawyer and the Commissioner for Legislative Standard's lawyer and both were paid immediately, well within the 60 days. It was then public information, which would be classified as the delinquent owing of funds.

Mr. Speaker, the Commissioner made several statements in her letter of February 24 that I feel are inaccurate and should be reviewed.

There are two judgments made to the High Sheriff, as I have confirmed in writing. The Commissioner provided me with amounts that were not registered for payments. If I never provided them, how did she obtain them? I have been informed her solicitor did contact at least one lawyer on several

occasions, which I am not aware of the contents of the emails or the conversations.

Mr. Speaker, having informed me of the investigation of December 1, 2023, and not following the act which involves investigation is unbecoming of an Officer of the House of Assembly and has caused stress and anxiety and it must be discouraged by this House of Assembly. I cannot have these letters on my file in her office as there was no investigation without the Commissioner knowing the facts.

Mr. Speaker, my rights have been tarnished. I feel strongly that this type of bullying and harassment cannot be tolerated and information pertaining to a potential investigation must not be kept from a respondent, as Justice Green stated in his report, concerning the former Commissioner for Legislative Standards.

I'm trying to put this chapter of my life behind me and I've taken every step possible. I will stand when there is a wrongdoing as any one of the 39 Members here in this House could be next.

Mr. Speaker, if the decision is that this is a prima facie case, which I'm confident it is, I'm asking that you refer this matter to the Citizens' Representative and report back to the House of Assembly of his findings.

As stated earlier, if a Member's reputation is called into question, then it is a prima facie case and there's no doubt my reputation was questioned and failure by the three entities not to carry out their responsibilities.

Any officer of the House of Assembly must conform to the legislation that guides their duties and I ask that my rights be honoured.

O'Brien and Bosc quotes Maingot as stating: "The purpose of raising matters of 'privilege' in either House of Parliament is to maintain the respect ... of these privileges, to uphold its powers, and to enforce the enjoyment of the privileges of its Members.

A genuine question of privilege is therefore a serious matter not to be reckoned with lightly and accordingly ought to be rare, and thus rarely raised in the House of Commons.”

I refer to O’Brien and Bosc, page 141, where the matter involved privilege before the House of Commons are treated with the utmost seriousness.

As outlined this week, there is a formal process to be followed, I have followed the process and notified the Speaker of my intentions to raise the issue of privilege, and this is the earliest opportunity for me to raise the issue.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to have a few words about what my colleague, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, had to say. Because as I’ve raised in this House before, I, too, have concerns about the process that is supposed to be in place to govern this House of Assembly, to govern the conduct of Members, and also to offer protection of Members from any wrongdoing that may be inflicted upon them.

What I’m hearing from my colleague here is concerning. What I’m hearing – and I’m not going to get into everything he had to say. But the gist of it would seem to be that the man decided he was going to pay the court costs, which he had to pay. Again, not based on the fact that the concerns he had raised and had brought to the court were false, but simply because it was considered parliamentary privilege because it happened here in this House of Assembly or within the confines of the definition of the House of Assembly.

At the end of the day, he had to pay the costs. What I’m hearing is that he made attempts to pay that cost, he got the run-around and, at the end of the day, he ended up being put in a position where it was sent to the Sheriff’s Office and, arguably, it was done that way in order to try to embarrass the Member because it would be part of the public record and so on to embarrass the man.

Now, that’s what I’m hearing and that’s very concerning to me as a Member of this House, and I think it should be concerning to every Member of this House, regardless of what side of the House you’re on.

I get the fact that maybe the Member here, and certainly myself, we might be a pain in the royal derriere from time to time. Picking at things, picking at government, criticizing things. I get that. I understand that. I’m sure the Member understands that. But we cannot have any kind of political interference going on in this House, and we certainly can’t have Officers of this House being party to any kind of interference. It cannot happen. It’s supposed to be here to protect all Members in this House on all sides of the House.

The sense that I’m getting is that the Member has concerns that his rights were violated. I think it does need to – it warrants further discussion. It should go to the Management Commission to find out if, indeed, that is happening. We had concerns with the former Commissioner for Legislative Standards that we all know and now we’re having concerns raised about the current one.

I can say, Mr. Speaker – and I wasn’t going to get into this. I’m not going to get into great detail, but we all know about this report here that was done on our Citizens’ Representative. That was done after we confirmed the fact that there was a report on whistle-blowers that nobody would bring forward, claimed didn’t exist but, of course, it did exist. Then the Commissioner for

Legislative Standards, based on a complaint – I don't know where that complaint came from. Quite interesting, I can remember watching the news and the Premier and the Minister of Justice were all concerned about the fact that I knew all this information. We've got to find out where it came from.

Anyway, a complaint was lodged with the Commissioner for Legislative Standards against the Citizens' Rep. For the information of Members who may not know, I was called in to the Commissioner for Legislative Standards and asked how I knew the information and I said, quite clearly, because people call me. Because whistle-blowers called me because this matter had been before the Citizens' Rep for months and months and a report had been written months ago and it wasn't moving anywhere.

So, they weren't getting any answers. They called me and they called the former Leader of the Opposition as well. Fair enough.

So, I got called in and asked. I told the Commissioner for Legislative Standards –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I've given the Member lenience. Stay to this particular point of privilege, please.

P. LANE: Thank you.

I'm trying to establish a precedent and a concern based on what this Member is saying because after going through that process – and I felt like I was on trial to some degree and the Member can confirm because he came with me. I finally had to say, hold on now. Are you questioning me? Because they're asking me, how many phone calls do you take in the run of a day? Do you write down information? Do you take people's names? I'm like, am I on trial here? Ask me the question that you want to ask me. Did the Citizens' Rep tell me about this report? The answer is no. Am I under

investigation? No. Okay, good. See you later.

The next thing you know, lo and behold, on March 8, 2023, I receive a letter from this same Commissioner for Legislative Standards telling me that –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind the Member, again, to stay pertinent to this point of privilege, please.

P. LANE: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what I am suggesting is the Member is raising concerns about the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, political interference, bullying and harassment and tarnishing Members' reputations. I'm just saying here, for the record, that I get a letter saying she is considering investigating me and considering investigating me for coming to the House of Assembly and asking a question about a whistle-blower report. There was no complaint, by the way, and she cites this section of the act –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member, again, stay with the particular point of privilege we are discussing right now. If not, I'll move on to another speaker.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

My point is, citing a section of the act that she is using her own discretion, with no complaint, to investigate me. I can tell you she got quite the lengthy response and that is a year ago now – almost a year ago. Quite a lengthy response as to how outrageous it was and go ahead and do your investigation. I look forward to discussing it here in this House of Assembly and in the public.

A year ago, it went away. She never even responded back to say, well, I'm going to

continue on or I'm not continuing on or whatever. That's almost a year ago. It magically went away when I stood up for myself.

That's what happened. It is absolutely ridiculous that I, as a Member, or this Member here should have to be threatened and bullied by Officers of the House of Assembly simply because we're doing our job and asking questions. And yeah, sometimes it might be tough questions and sometimes there might be things there that government don't want asked, but that's what we were elected to do.

I don't care what side of the House of Assembly you're on, all Members should have the right to come into this House of Assembly and ask questions on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador without fear of any kind of retribution for doing their jobs.

So, I would just say, in tying into what the Member is saying here in his point of privilege, I agree with him that there are concerns. I have concerns. I personally have reasons to have concerns, the same as he does, and I would like for this House of Assembly to take these matters seriously.

I'd like to see the Management Commission review these matters and ask yourselves: Is what is happening here proper? Is it right? Do you want to be next? Do you want to be next? Does some other Member want to be next because you don't happen to fall in line? That somehow, now, because you don't fall in line, we're going to go after you. Try to put pressure on you. Try to embarrass you. Try to bully you. Try to intimidate you. Is that what we want? This is supposed to be a democracy. We're not living in some Third World dictator country somewhere. This is Canada. It's absolutely ridiculous that these kinds of things should be happening.

So, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat, but I will concur with the Member that I

have concerns about the process as well. I think we need to take a long, hard look at the process that we're following, at the rules that we go by, how they're enforced, who are enforcing them and we need to have some kind of checks and balances so that if Officers of the House or anyone are not following the rules, they're overstepping their bounds, then someone can step in and do something about it. Not just, oh, go to the Management Commission who have a majority on the government side and they're going to vote everything down. That's useless. There has to be a way to air these grievances in a fair way.

I'm not saying it for me. I couldn't care less. If she wants to write 100 reports on me, fill your boots. I'll provide the paper, I say, I don't care. But we have to make sure democracy is protected for all Members in this House of Assembly.

So, with that said, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, I have received the point of privilege in advance. I'll take it under advisement and report back to this House at a later date.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Harbour Main, Humber - Bay of Islands, Labrador West and Mount Pearl - Southlands.

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to honour a group of athletes who are great examples of hard work, dedication and sportsmanship.

Last week, the Special Olympic Canada Winter Games were held in Calgary and, once again, our hometown heroes came through with great success. Our curlers came home with a silver medal for our province with the support of their coaches Paul Mercer, Sara Pinsent and Pauline Price. This amazing team comprised of Joshua Gardner, Margaret MacNeil, Tony Kyritsis, Kim O'Neill and Sarah Brown brought pride to our community once again.

Special Olympians from across the province have made their mark at these games in the past and this year was no different. With Coach Trevor Wicks, my good buddy Liam Gibbons was a gold medallist in bowling, achieving the fourth highest score in the whole competition. I have personally gone head-to-head with Liam on the lanes and when he tells everyone he kicked my butt, he is telling the truth.

Please join me as I congratulate the athletes and the coaches of Central Newfoundland and Labrador on their amazing performance in their respective sports. To the Team Newfoundland, you have once again made Newfoundland and Labrador very proud. You all rocked it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, today I rise in this hon. House of Assembly to recognize and honour Leslie Kenny, a resident in the District of Harbour Main. Leslie made history earlier this year becoming the first-ever female fire chief hired by the Town of Holyrood.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Leslie began her volunteer career with the fire department in 2018 and now, two years

later, she's become a full-time staff member. Leslie, in becoming fire chief, has broken ground for other women who aspire to become firefighters.

She admits that traditionally firefighting has been a male-dominated occupation but is proud of the fact that 11 of the 29 firefighters in the Holyrood department are female, which is a positive step forward for women and young girls.

Leslie's philosophy in her role as fire chief is to work hard each day, create a supportive environment for her entire team, have an open-door policy to members and, ultimately, see the fire department continue to grow and prosper to best serve the community.

I ask Members to join me in congratulating Fire Chief Leslie Kenny and thank her for her service and commitment to her department and community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, today I am very pleased to recognize an amazing group of young individuals from my district and beyond who are currently showing leadership in their community.

Over two years ago, this group of young men and women, founded by Abby Welshman of Mount Moriah, came together and started a non-profit organization focused on giving back to their community. Better Tomorrow foundation was formed with a goal to create a better tomorrow and this group is certainly trying to do that.

They have visited the long-term care facilities, organized town cleanups and helped fundraising events such as talent shows and basketball tournaments with funds being donated to causes such as the women's shelter; \$1,000 to the Western NL

Community Mental Health Association; \$1,300 to the Hurricane Fiona relief fund and other worthwhile causes.

On February 3, I joined with others from Mount Moriah and surrounding areas to support another successful fundraising event in the Town of Mount Moriah.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating these young men and women who are doing their part in making a difference for a better world and wish them continued success in the future.

Great job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Labrador West Chamber of Commerce for hosting the Future of Lab West Summit late last month.

The Future of Lab West Summit was an event where many of the issues that Labradorians face were the main topics of discussion. The summit focused on six main topics: labour, energy, travel, mining, housing and health care.

This event brought major stakeholders and government officials together to give my constituents in Labrador West a chance to voice their opinions and concerns over a wide range of topics.

I would like to give a special thank you to Toby Leon, president of the Labrador West Chamber of Commerce, and Lydia Rickards who is the executive director for the Labrador West Chamber of Commerce. Even though Lydia is not originally from Labrador West herself, she has given so much time and dedication to creating the event for residents of Labrador West. On

behalf of Labrador West, we send Lydia a big thank you for her taking on this massive project.

I would like to ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking the Labrador West Chamber of Commerce, especially Lydia Rickards, and for those who attended in Labrador West, a big thank you.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. LANE: Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to recognize the tremendous success which was the 42nd Annual Mount Pearl Frosty Festival in the City of Mount Pearl.

Once again, this year's festival included various activities for citizens of all ages, including: a pedestrian parade of lights; two community breakfasts; Frosty's big birthday party; a concert featuring the Masterless Men, The Irish Descendants and Shanneyganock; a winter block party; Frosty's Brewfest: Beer Tasting event; cold plate dinner and an Irish Pub Night; Battle of the Brains trivia night; a Snowball Dinner and Dance featuring Bic and the Ballpoints, just to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, as I'm sure you can appreciate, any festival of this magnitude would not be possible if it were not for the hard work and co-operation of a number of community partners.

I would therefore ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating the City of Mount Pearl, the Frosty Festival Board of Directors, the various community groups and organizations, the corporate sponsors and all of the community-minded volunteers who contributed to the great success story, which was Frosty Festival 2024.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to celebrate John Howard Society Week in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: For over 70 years, the John Howard Society has been a dependable, consistent advocate for people involved in the criminal justice system. This organization plays an important role and does so by working closely with all stakeholders, including government.

Speaker, the Department of Justice and Public Safety proudly works with the John Howard Society to better meet the complex needs of a changing inmate population. Recently, we supported the launch of the New Day Program, an intensive case management program for individuals living with mental health concerns. In addition, the department supports other trauma-informed programs, such as Seeking Safety, which is a recovery-based program that helps those impacted by substance abuse make changes in their lives; or Anger Solutions, which is a person-centered program that helps those who want to better manage their emotions.

It supports and services like these, and so many more, that make the provincial chapter of the John Howard Society so important. I commend the efforts of Cindy, Joan, Dan and Melissa, and all the team, who work so hard towards a more effective, just and humane response to the causes

and consequences of crime, including an improved correctional system.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in acknowledging the work of the John Howard Society of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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 his statement.

As we recognize John Howard Society week, it is essential to commend the unwavering dedication and important work of John Howard Society in Newfoundland and Labrador. The tireless efforts of the team in advocating for individuals within the criminal justice system and their contributions to implementing programs, like the New Day Program, highlight the integral role it plays in our communities. These initiatives not only support individuals facing mental health challenges, but also aim to address the broader issues within our correctional system. Their mandate is to foster a just, humane and effective response to crime and its causes.

It is, however, well established that our criminal justice system is in dire need of positive reform and organizations like John Howard Society are crucial in leading the change. After having the opportunity of volunteering with John Howard Society in Ontario for many years, I've witnessed first-hand how impactful this wonderful organization can be with the proper supports of government.

It is crucial, therefore, that we support the work being done by organizations, such as the John Howard Society, and we in the Official Opposition implore the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to fully commit to enhancing the necessary support services,

like bail supervision, electronic monitoring and other programs which encourage the rehabilitation of individuals in the criminal justice system.

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 the statement. We sadly feel that this government is holding back critical work the John Howard Society provides to the community. If this government really wants to celebrate their work, they should ensure resources and supports are available so that our inmates and parolees are given a real chance to rehabilitate and return to society with the tools they need to succeed after serving time.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, we have harvesters in this province who cannot find anybody to buy their product.

I ask the Premier: What do you say to these harvesters?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

S. COADY: Thank you very much.

I want to acknowledge the hardworking harvesters that are in our galleries today. This is spring. I know how important spring is to a harvester, having come from a family of harvesters and know that very precious time is the spring of the year in getting ready for the fisheries.

I know that there have been very important and numerous meetings with the Premier and ASP, with the Premier and FFAW, with the Premier and harvesters, with the minister and FFAW, and ASP and the harvesters. I know a lot of work is taking place. I hope we come to a resolution soon; a resolution that works for all.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, I say to the Premier, it's unfortunate that we see all these fish harvesters in the gallery here today, instead of on their boats preparing for a fishery because here we go again.

I ask the Premier: In your discussions with the fish harvesters, what is your opinion on the proposal for a 20 per cent holdback on the value of their catch?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

From the South Coast of this province, who appreciates the early startup of any fishery and in my district, I have the lobster fish, I understand that those harvesters that are in the gallery today – and we did meet with some of them that spoke on behalf of them yesterday, we had a good conversation and we'll continue those conversations.

I guess last year was a difficult year and we did not want a repeat. The Premier initiated to start the process early. We started that process early and recognizing that we want the boats to be on the water. We met with ASP this morning. We met with FFAW this morning, as well. We met with three of the voices for the harvesters that were in the gallery yesterday.

So the talks are continuing, but I know discussions are not what they want to hear. They want action and we pressed them on that this morning.

SPEAKER: The minister's time is expired.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

The last thing was the most important thing. They want action not more meetings, so the time for meetings is over. The time for action is now.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I've been told by health authorities that they sought ministerial approval before entering into an arrangement with Canadian Health Labs.

I ask the Premier: Are you telling the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that the health authority is wrong?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an operational issue. The health authority decides if they need a contract and if they need the services of agency nursing.

What they are required to do under the *Financial Administration Act* and the *Provincial Health Authority Act* is to seek ministerial approval if they are going to

spend outside of their budget amount, if they are going to go over their budgeted amount, and the agency nursing contracts would have done that, Mr. Speaker.

They did seek ministerial approval in 2022, I believe it was, to go over their budgeted amount and that approval, as I understand, was provided.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, my sources in the health authority tell me it wasn't just seeking approval. There were detailed discussions with departmental executives.

So, again yesterday in the House, the Premier alluded that the health authority undertook a contract with Canadian Health Labs, signed this contract without any approval from his office or the minister's office; yet, I have a letter here signed off by the minister authorizing the health authority to make a deal with the company.

How does the Premier explain that?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am not aware of that particular piece of correspondence, but I can certainly look into it. That would have been prior to my time as Minister of Health and Community Services, as the Member knows, but I am aware of the requirement of the health authority to seek ministerial approval, if they are required to go over their spending limit.

They may have given a reason, which they generally do. In fact, they always do to say that the spending is for a piece of equipment, or the spending is for agency nurses, but I don't think there was any dictation or direction from the previous minister, from the Premier, and I can

guarantee not from me, to enter into a contract with CHL.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, yesterday in the House, the Minister of Health implied that he had nothing to do with Canadian Health Labs contracts.

I asked the Premier: Why do I have a decision note signed by your minister authorizing Western Health to extend this arrangement with this company?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd be happy to table that letter in the Legislature, Mr. Speaker, they were asking for permission to spend beyond their spending limit. They did give a reason for, I believe it was, 41 full-time equivalents for LPN, not for registered nurses, but for LPNs, Mr. Speaker, because they were facing closures and service cuts in that region.

As I had stated previously, any minister or any Member who is faced with having closure cuts would have said yes to that decision, Mr. Speaker. But in the information provided to me, the health authority had said that they already had an arrangement with this organization, they wanted permission to spend the money.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Yesterday, they had nothing to do with it. Now, all of a sudden, they're all over it.

On January 12, 2022, three senior staff in the Premier's office, Peter Miles, Melissa

Royle Critch and Ken Carter, were all included in an email from the head of the Canadian Health Labs.

I ask the Premier: Were you aware that your senior staff were communicating directly with this company?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Here is the letter that I will provide: To the Western Authority, I hereby provide written approval for the Western regional integrated health authority to incur expenditures in excess of the original estimate amount set out in its 2022-23 budget for Western Health to enter into an arrangement for agency nursing.

It doesn't mention the agency, Mr. Speaker, and there is no direction provided. They asked permission to spend the money because of a dire shortage in health professionals. As I said previously in the media and in the public, anybody faced with that decision would have provided that authority. It was authority to spend beyond their expenditure limits, Mr. Speaker. Happy to table it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I will be more than happy to table the decision note signed by the minister, which details the entire deal with Canadian Health Labs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it is scandalous that this government was directly involved in approving these contracts.

I ask the Premier again: When did you become aware of \$1.6 million being paid out

to this company that was never given to the travel nurses themselves?

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

T. OSBORNE: I became aware of that, Mr. Speaker, in *The Globe and Mail* article, because that is, as the former CEO of Lab-Grenfell is aware, an operational issue. That is something that no minister dictates or interferes with is operational issues in the health authority. In fact, if they do, Mr. Speaker, they get in trouble and the Members opposite would criticize them for that.

Mr. Speaker, that's where we became aware of it and I've asked the Comptroller General to enter into a review of what has happened to ensure that contracts were followed to the letter. Because there are two issues here. One is the cost of agency nursing, which I said is absolutely horrible, unacceptable, and we want to get out of it; and the other is whether proper protocols and procedures were followed in the contracts between the health authorities and the individual agencies.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the reality is the government mismanaged these contracts and should have been monitoring the expenditures, should have known how much money was being spent, and should've known what it was being spent on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: They should've known before it went off the rails, to quote the Premier.

Again, I say to the Premier: Why are you covering up? Why not call in the RCMP and

the Auditor General to make sure we get to the bottom of this?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the former CEO of Lab-Grenfell is fully aware that ministers don't sign contracts with these agencies and are not responsible for overseeing whether or not they are followed to the letter of the contract. That's the role of the CEO, I would say, and that is the role of the health authority. As the Member knows, because he was the former CEO who entered into contracts with agency nurses while he was CEO.

What I will say is that we have asked the Comptroller General to review what has happened to ensure that if there was anything untoward, that that is addressed and then referred to the Auditor General, as has happened previously under my watch with the NLC.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I ask the minister: What are you covering up? What are trying to hide? Your name is over the door; you should be answering these questions.

Speaker, a Paradise mom with a rare gene deletion must wait almost two years for an MRI. She said: My brain is a ticking time bomb and she fears she will not make it to an appointment in two years.

Minister, do you agree with the Premier and admit that this, too, has gone off the rails?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we do understand that MRI wait times are longer than acceptable. I know that the health authority is working to reduce those by increasing the hours of usage on MRI machines. I know that they were working at it in other areas, looking for other solutions.

I have provided direction to the health authority to look for a centralized intake. We know that there's a sixth machine being added in Corner Brook as soon as that hospital opens, which will add a 20 per cent increase in capacity and should reduce wait times. The machines operating more hours should reduce wait times, Mr. Speaker. I've asked whether an additional machine again is worthy of being added and asked for the health authority to provide us with that recommendation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's amazing, you know, the minister this morning on the media, it was a revelation. He found out about these wait times today and now he's going to look into it. Every single issue that comes up, it's smoke and mirrors and this is what he deals with. He talks in a real calm voice. I just found out – I'm looking into it, in a calm manner. He's the Minister of Health. He didn't start being the minister today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: It's not a new thing. Just a minister reactivity. There's no proactive; it's reactive.

Speaker, in a two-year wait, this mother could have an aneurism. That's the state of health care in our province today. Simply not good enough. The mother said: I am so worried. What's going to happen if me and

my husband are sleeping and he wakes up and I'm seizing?

Minister, what do you say to this mom?

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

T. OSBORNE: What I had indicated this morning is I became aware of this particular case in the media. Mr. Speaker, we were aware of wait times. We, as a government, put in place a wait time task force to make recommendations to government, and to the health authority, on how wait times can be reduced.

That was done several months ago, Mr. Speaker, so we are aware that we need to meet national benchmarks in terms of wait times. That task force has provided recommendations; we are following those recommendations. If the Member wanted to be entirely honest, he would have said, I said that on the radio this morning as well.

Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do is reduce wait times in all areas, including MRI.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Don't worry, Minister, I'll be on later on the week. Don't worry about that.

Speaker, last week we also learned of a chiropractor who faced a two-year wait for an MRI scan. Her tumour is now three centimetres. If she had gotten the diagnosis sooner, she would have had other treatment options.

Minister, how could this happen on your watch?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the Member would try to have the public and the media and others in this Legislature believe that I'm in control of the MRI machines and that I control the wait-list and that I sit in emergency departments and determine who gets in and who doesn't. That's not the case and the Member knows that, Mr. Speaker.

These are operational issues. We provide policy direction to the health authority, which we have done again on MRI issues, to provide us with recommendations on how we can further reduce MRI waits. We put in place a task force, Mr. Speaker, to look at wait times in this province to reduce those. That was done several months ago. We recognize there's a problem and we are working to find solutions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

So, the minister is not concerned about wait-lists. It's operational issues; it's not his problem. He's only the Minister of Health but he's not worried about that, it's operational. Blame someone else. It's classic pass the buck. Maybe it's the minister of pass the buck; maybe I got to get this figured out better.

Minister, almost a decade of Liberals being in power, people have had to resort to using GoFundMe to cover these costly expenses and the two-year wait times for a simple MRI in our province.

Minister, how did it get so bad on your watch?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I have to address the preamble because the Member is famous for twisting words. What I said, Mr. Speaker, is we put a task force in place –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we put a task force in place to look at wait times and to make recommendations because we recognize there's a problem. But we provide policy and we provide direction to the Health Authority. They carry out the operational issues, but we recognize that there's a wait time issue with MRI. We recognize that there's a surgical backlog and wait times there. We put a task force in place. There were recommendations made. We put a full-time staff in place at the health authority to ensure that those recommendations were implemented.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: I don't know what I'm famous for, Speaker. But, Minister, I've got to ask the question: Are you the Minister of Health? Who's the Minister of Health over there? Maybe we need to get the Minister of Health to get up and speak because you're trying to pass the buck. You have been in the media every day and you have been in this House every day and it's annoying.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, they're finding all these questions funny. These questions are funny. Just think about what I just asked, those questions. They're pretty serious issues. So if you want to laugh, laugh on.

Speaker, the people of Change Islands have been without a nurse practitioner for over a year. Now the people in the community are faced with reduced trips on a ferry service, limiting access to health care even more.

Minister, is this forced resettlement?

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

J. ABBOTT: Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the – I don't know if it's a double-barrelled question or a two-part question or a question that really was not a question.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. ABBOTT: Or disjointed, thank you.

Simply put, in terms of the current issue with the ferry for Change Islands, we've had to put in a replacement vessel for a couple of months and, as a result, the number of runs to Change Islands on a weekly basis has gone from 28 to 26.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Speaker, 14 months ago, almost 15 months ago, I sent an email on behalf of my community to the Premier, to the Minister of Health, begging – begging – for supports for my district for a cancer care clinic now that we are less than three weeks of the doctors withdrawing their services. The doctors have sent them a note asking them, to plead with them, for services, for supports.

I ask the Premier today: If you truly care about the people in Central, will you commit to giving these simple – simple – supports, an easy fix, so thousands of lives could

possibly be saved? Will you commit to that today?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm delighted the Member has asked the question because yesterday he spoke untruths in the House and I will address those today. He spoke to them again on *Open Line* today.

So, Mr. Speaker, he did write me a letter, asking me to go visit. I went to visit. He didn't bring me to the cancer clinic; we did go through the hospital. He thanked me for that wonderful trip. I did pass his letter on to officials.

But I received a letter on the 22nd of February; the Member yesterday said it wasn't responded to. It was the same day. In fact, the person who sent me the letter thanked me for the quick response.

We are working with the health authority and we are working with that group to put the resources in place. I spoke to the individual on the phone as well and guaranteed them that the resources that are required will be put in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you very much.

It's good to hear that the supports are going to be put in place so maybe next time they'll take ours a little bit more seriously when we plead 14 and 15 months in advance. It shouldn't have to come to that, Minister. I did thank you for coming out; you did do the right thing.

But all I've got to ask the Premier if the – sorry?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. TIBBS: – if the Premier can stand today and let us know that he's not going to ignore the Central district any longer when it comes to this stuff. Fifteen months is a long time to be waiting.

How many people in Central are waiting on bated breath to see if they're going to get the cancer treatments that they deserve. They didn't deserve that and the doctors don't deserve that.

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So, let's set the record straight. When I did visit, at the Member's request, and I told him to bring me to the areas that need attention, the cancer clinic wasn't one of them, Mr. Speaker.

If it's 14 months and it was that anxious, he should have written me another letter and I would have gone and visited again. Because I do respond, as Members know on that side, when they bring an issue to my attention, I do the best I can to resolve it and that Member knows that's accurate as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Minister, you spoke with one of the doctors that was on that letter. You spoke to her.

Did you speak to her? Yes or no.

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to the individual on the phone, I responded to the email and I did assure the individual that wrote me the email, that I responded to the same day, by the way –

S. COADY: February 22.

T. OSBORNE: February 22 – I spoke to them and assured them that we are working with the health authority to ensure that the resources are put in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, we understand that doctor was spoken to.

While cancer patients are worried about how they will get their treatment, people in Central are also worried about showing up at an ER and not seeing a doctor. Every week we are continuing to see ERs closed and offering virtual services.

I ask the Premier: When can the people of Central expect to see ER diversions stop?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I often know that individuals on the other side speak out of both sides of their mouths. It's both sides of their mouth on the same day today.

In previous times, Members opposite have asked us to solve ER diversions, some of which were as a result of nursing. Now, they are complaining that agency nurses are in place.

One of the things that we've done is reduce the number of diversions throughout this province significantly over the past 12 or 14

months – significantly reduced the number of diversions.

We continue to work on recruitment because recruitment is the best way to stop the diversions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: We speak as we hear from our constituents.

Virtual care should not ever replace face to face with a doctor.

With so many doctors packing up and leaving Central, is virtual care the way of the future in Central Newfoundland?

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

T. OSBORNE: Another case of speaking out of both sides of your mouth, Mr. Speaker. There's a virtual cap of 40 patients per day, per doctor because we do want doctors to see patients in person.

The Member for Conception Bay South, a couple of weeks ago, complained that we should lift the cap on virtual and that it's unfair to have the cap on virtual. That cap was negotiated with the NLMA.

Virtual is important, as New-Wes-Valley and the mayor of New-Wes-Valley and CBC reported, it saved the life of an individual because we had virtual physician coverage, but it does not replace in-person coverage. We are working on recruitment to reduce virtual, but virtual is a good option to no coverage.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

One side of our mouth – no one's complaining about nurses. They're complaining about scandalous contracts that are entered into sole service and you guys are hiding away from it.

People are concerned about the changes coming to the province's ambulance services, particularly in rural areas of the province.

What assurances can the minister give that the new Liberal government's ambulance service model will not cause more chaos and an erosion of services?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to address the preamble because I think the contracts are well overpriced. We do want to get rid of agency nursing contracts. I've been on record as saying that. I've been on record saying it again and again and I'll say it again today. We want to get rid of agency nursing contracts. The best way to do that is through recruitment.

If there's anything untoward in those contracts and they weren't followed to the letter of the law, actions will be taken. I guarantee you that.

Mr. Speaker, ambulance integration is intended to provide a better service to the people of the province. We have a fragmented service now with no central command, Mr. Speaker.

Will there be speedbumps between now and having a perfect system? I have no doubt, but, at the end of the day, we'll have a much better system than we have today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: You want action, Minister. Call in the RCMP.

Our health care system is failing the people of this province. Our health care professionals are continually being squeezed under ever-increasing pressures. The cutting of essential ambulance services will only further compound this crisis.

How can the Liberal government expect residents of this province to believe that improvements are coming to the ambulance service when the entirety of our health care services is broken under your watch?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of responses that I have to that. First and foremost, we have the Health Accord, which has been applauded by Members on that side. The Health Accord is intended to fix a broken system. The Premier has admitted the system is broken. I've admitted the system is broken.

But it's not just in this province, Mr. Speaker. Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba, we are all facing the same issues where health care, Mr. Speaker, is well beyond stressed. Every minister, every province, every premier is dealing with this; read the media from any other province.

But we have a Health Accord, Mr. Speaker, which is designed to fix health care in this province, and it has been lauded by other provinces and praised by other provinces as a worthy roadmap to get there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *National Housing Strategy Act* and the federal housing advocate, Marie-Josée Houle, all recognize housing as a human right.

Does the new Minister of Housing also recognize housing as a fundamental human right?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Happy to answer this question as it relates to the legality of this. I think it's important to recognize that when we talk about housing, it's just not a –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: – it's just not a right to a structure. I'm going to read from the right to adequate housing document from the UN, which I wholeheartedly agree with, and it's "... the right to adequate housing covers measures that are needed to prevent homelessness, prohibit forced evictions, address discrimination, focus on the most vulnerable"

That, Speaker, is societal standards that this government strives to meet each and everyday, which every policy we have and we put forward to deal with individuals in this province, who are vulnerable, who need supports. I'm very proud of those policies and very proud of the position this government has taken on all those issues to help deal with people who are vulnerable.

It's not just about housing. It's about discrimination and I know when the Premier made housing a stand-alone portfolio, he showed his leadership. I look forward to

working with the Minister of Housing on this issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: So many ministers of Housing on that side.

Will the minister enshrine housing as a human right in provincial legislation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question.

Safe and affordable housing is fundamental. It's fundamental for a person's well-being. We understood that and we understand it even better now, and further, thanks to the Health Accord which was referenced by our Health Minister just a moment ago.

Dr. Parfrey and Sister Elizabeth Davis pointed out that everyone's social and economic well-being is based on housing. It is important. We understand it. The Member Opposite knows that I understand that. We worked together on the weekend trying to help somebody who was in a precarious position with respect to housing.

Mr. Speaker, he knows that I will work with him and others.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: I asked the minister what he thinks housing as a human right means in practical terms for people forced to live in tent encampments, bouncing around in shelters, people on moderate incomes, seniors

unable to afford rising rents, young families paying mortgage-like rents and unable to save for a home and for people facing addictions.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, this government has taken big steps, huge steps, to try to address the issue last year with record spending with our federal partners.

I met with the mayor of St. John's this morning, albeit very quickly. We have a formal meeting coming up. I met with the head of End Homelessness St. John's, some of his staff members. Everybody, to a person, I have spoken to since Thursday morning when I was sworn in said that there are complex issues associated with housing in many cases. Not all, but most.

There are so many different layers and complex issues associated with housing and trying to find solutions. We are taking steps, Mr. Speaker, through our poverty reduction plan, through Housing initiatives and our five-point plan there.

With other departments in Justice, in Health and Community Services, we are taking concrete steps.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

The Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality has stated in this House in 2022 that simple pay equity legislation is not a silver bullet that is going to change or solve, overnight, the gender wage gap. Then, through ATIPP, we also learned that her briefing notes coached arguments against pay equity.

So I ask the minister: Is this her way of obstructing the development of the regulations and the reset of this legislation?

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

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

Again, I'd like to say I'm proud. It's this government, for the first time in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador, to actually bring in, introduce and pass pay equity legislation here for the people of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: As you know, this process is continuing. They are currently developing the regulations. As the Premier stated yesterday, of course, this is across many government departments.

What I will say, Speaker, it's very important to get this legislation right. Not to rush it, not to have to go back to the drawing board. I'm also very disappointed that it's that Member and her party that didn't even support the progression of pay equity legislation here in Newfoundland and Labrador. I say shame on the Member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

T. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table the following two documents that I referenced in my questions today.

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

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

Thank you.

Any other tabling of documents?

I do have one.

In accordance with subsection 19(5) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* I would like to table minutes of the Management Commission meetings held on the following dates: August 23, October 15, November 1, November 30, 2023, and January 10, 2024.

Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

SPEAKER: Notices of motions?

J. HOGAN: No, sorry, no notice of motion.

SPEAKER: Little bit early.

J. HOGAN: I'm just trying to catch up time.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

No notices of motions?

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 read the petition:

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 limitation periods do not run during any time a defendant: willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about essential elements of the claim, i.e., the fact that an injury, loss or damage has occurred, that it was caused by or contributed by an act or omission, or that the act or omission was that of the defendant; or willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of a proceeding as a means of remedying the injury, loss or damage.

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

Mr. Speaker, I stand and present this petition again. As I said on many occasions, this limitation should be lifted. I know the Minister of Justice and Public Safety said, well, it's before the court. As I said earlier, if you want to stop the court proceedings, just say we're going to do it and I'm sure Jack will agree to that.

This is a claim, Mr. Speaker, and we all talk about it here. We all talk about it in this House of Assembly, about abuse and the long-term effects that it has on anybody as

a young person. You have a young person who's been abused and don't know how to get out of that situation, we'd all be appalled. We would be. We definitely would be.

Here's a situation, Mr. Speaker, where exactly that happened. Yet, the government refuses to recognize the seriousness of these allegations, the long-term harm of a person. We have the authority in this House to make that change. We have that authority.

We all speak in this House any time abuse comes up in any way, physical abuse. In this House of Assembly, we all say it shouldn't happen, has to be stopped, we have to put in safeguards, because there are long-lasting effects of it. We have an opportunity here now in this House, Mr. Speaker. This is numerous – and I know the Official Opposition and I know the NDP and I know my friend from Mount Pearl - Southlands have presented petition after petition.

We do not know what a person walks through in his shoes. We don't know the harm. We don't know. But the person who went through the harm, went through that abuse do know and they're crying out for help. It's our job in this Legislature to give them that help.

Mr. Speaker, I present this petition and I'm sure I'll present more later.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

The reasons for this petition are as follows:

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 are well aware of the poor condition of the bridge, most recently documented in a bridge inspection report completed in January 2020 which confirmed that 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 of replacing the Canning Bridge.

We have some correspondence and some partnership with government, but the reason for presenting this today, Minister, is so that we can have it on record as to what the latest announcement was as to pertaining to the Bailey Bridge.

I was very honoured to work with the people that were advocating for Bailey Bridge for a short-term solution to getting the bridge replaced, but I just want to make sure that the Bailey Bridge certainly is not going to affect too much when it comes to replacing the Canning Bridge, because it's a very important piece of infrastructure.

Just on this one alone, there are people signed on here from Grand Bank, Harbour Mille, Jean de Baie, Burin, Burin Bay Arm, Rushoon. So it's affecting everybody on the Burin Peninsula. This is not just Marystown that it's affecting. And the unfortunate part is that the people that are suffering, there has been no relief put in place for transportation because of the extra distance to go around and stuff like that. So I just want to see if that's going to be a short-term measure that's still going to be explored.

I implore the Town of Marystown to make those applications with the different departments so that we can get some financial relief for the people that are most impacted, i.e., being our seniors who have to go to the north side for their doctors' appointments and such. There's a

retirement home on the south side, which our seniors are not getting as many visits and stuff like that.

What the Canning Bridge has also done financially is clawed back the middle class that are out working as well. They still have to go to work, but it's just that extra burden on them. So I'd ask the minister if he would enlighten us with the latest announcement.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just to respond to the Member's concerns is that we've already reached out to the Town of Marystown and talked to other community leaders as well on the Burin Peninsula regarding the Canning Bridge, and we've offered our support to provide transportation for people living on the other side of Marystown, the north side, so we could bring them to doctors' appointments, shopping and so on.

So that's something we've already done, and we continue to reach out if that's something that is still on the forefront for the people in Marystown and surrounding areas. We'd certainly be willing to talk and look at providing transportation services to those centres.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: (Inaudible.)

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure that Northern

Labrador residents are provided with access to timely and adequate health care.

Frequently, patients in Northern Labrador are prevented from getting to their medical appointments and their treatment at outside health facilities because they can't get on the medical flight. There are not enough seats on the flight.

Patients who manage to get to their appointments or treatments are often facing long delays returning home to their communities. This creates additional mental, financial, family and work stresses. That's in addition to the physical burden of their illness, Speaker.

Patients often don't get timely appointments to even see a nurse at their community clinic. I've witnessed this myself. This can be a critical delay for stroke, cardiac, cancer and other medical situations. We ask for a standard to be established for appointments, especially when dealing with fill-in nurses who come from outside our communities.

Makkovik patients do not even have access to a doctor compared to the other communities where doctors visit throughout the year.

These are some of the barriers that Northern Labrador patients face when dealing with access to timely and adequate care.

So, Speaker, that's why petitions in the House of Assembly is so important to me, as the MHA for Torngat Mountains because when I present a petition in the House of Assembly, across from me are the ministers. They have no choice but to listen to what the people are putting forward in these petitions. It's very, very important. Sitting across, they have to listen.

It's not just one minister; it's all the ministers. The Minister of Health is there, the Minister of Finance is there, the Minister

of Transportation, the Minister of CSSD – because a lot of times, these issues that my district faces are related together. I've got to say, barriers to timely – what does that mean, timely and adequate access? I've had it where stroke victims, patients showing up at the clinic with symptoms of stroke were not medevaced out right away. They had to wait until the next day. Then we find out that there's no medevac even arranged for them.

So, Speaker, people suffer – diabetes, cardiac, stroke victims. Then we have to endure media events. That's what I call them, media events, where the minister and say, for example, doctors fill in with the provincial health care system, get up there and talk about cardiac care, clot busters and the timely access to care within the four-hour window.

Yet, we've had people not being able to get on the flight, not even be able to have a real medevac. What you've got to do then is where there's no medevac coming, you've got to try and get that person on a regular flight. So, Speaker, there are so many barriers and I'm really, really glad that –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Many seniors in our province struggle to make ends meet, especially in these inflationary times. The federal government has indexed their CPP and OAS only to have the provincial government claw back a portion of this federal indexed amount.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to add an indexing provision to their provincial online calculator to avoid clawing back increases that seniors receive federally.

I presented this petition last year and the minister's response, when she stood behind me, was: I will say to the Member opposite it's something that we could consider as part of budget and can consider as we move forward. We all appreciate the seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador find it very tough. We all agree. Forty of us here in this House would agree to that.

But there seems to be something a little disingenuous when the federal government will index. The provincial government issued an increase in the Newfoundland supplement and the Seniors' Benefit. But due to the calculator that they would use, they would find that they were getting a reduction in their funds. What is touted to be an increase in funds, they are getting less because the calculator brings them down.

Two things that I would throw out to the minister to have a look at in this budget coming: Number one is that the calculator would hold singles the same as couples. I would say that that may be something that we need to look into as well. But if the base amount that the calculator uses – our provincial government's calculator – has not changed since 2016, there is the problem. We've got things that we say we're doing and offering support, but if we have a formula that has a threshold that's still so low that hasn't changed in over eight years, that's a problem.

I've been hearing from seniors that, in the last couple of years, they're getting less and less money because the base amount that the provincial calculator holds them to restricts them. It brings them back. We talk about giving them increases and we celebrate it. There are desks being pounded that there's an increase going out to the seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador, only to find out that they're not getting that much increase because the provincial calculator brings them back down.

I would ask the minister to have a look at that for this upcoming budget and see if we

can finally, after eight years, make that change.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I petition to call to amend the Residential Tenancies Act to include rental increase limitations.

The reason for the petition: Concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador urge our leaders to take action to address the growing cost-of-living crisis and rental increases being faced by many in our province. A lack of supply of rental units, coupled with increased demand, has resulted in profiteering by some large financial corporate landlords simply because the market allows it.

The *Residential Tenancies Act, 2018* allows for annual rent increases of any amount, for any reason. In doing so, the current legislation lends itself to predatory rental increases for the purpose of profit and treats housing as a commodity rather than a fundamental human right. Significant rental increases are making life more unaffordable for many in our communities, especially seniors and those on income support. The private sector has failed to deliver on the promise of affordable homes.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce legislation to limit the amount rent can be increased annually.

So if we're looking at practical ways in which we can show that housing is a fundamental human right, this is one practical way. Make no mistake, what we're talking about here, we're talking about financial landlords who own multiple

properties, corporate landlords, the REITs that they operate in our province. We're not necessarily talking about the person who's renting a basement apartment. Most of the issues that come to my office are people who are living in these large corporate rental units.

Also looking at vacancy controls, which would disallow the use of renovations, of turning people so that they can bring in other renters and charge higher rent, and an end to the three-month, no-fault eviction that exists here. Now, I have written about this since 2022 to various ministers, the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, and I've received a response that basically rent increases have not been that much that we would discourage the private system. I would say that the private system has already failed people of this province.

I had an email from one landlord of multiple rental properties saying that there was no housing crisis, and that his rental prices – his rental for a three-bedroom house – went from \$1,100 a month to \$2,500 because of demand, that there were too many people seeking the same house. Now, that's not because the cost went up. It was an opportunity of supply and demand and the chance to make more profit.

Now, think about the family that's probably renting a house until they can afford to buy; there's no way they can do this. So, as far as we're concerned, this is one way in which we can control the cost for people who are forced to rent.

Thank you.

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I thank the Member for the petition and the Member's concerns. It is something I take very seriously. I'm happy to chat with anyone impacted. I know the cost-of-living

increases impact everyone, particularly those with low incomes and those in rentals, Speaker. So I take this very seriously and I thank the Member for the petition.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I'll try again to call from the Order Paper, Motion 7.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that under Standing Order 11(1), this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 5, 2024.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4, Bill 36, and I

further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4, Bill 36, and that said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4," carried. (Bill 36)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 4. (Bill 36)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 36 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Memorial University Act No. 2, Bill 69, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Memorial University Act No. 2, Bill 69, and that said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Education to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Memorial University Act No. 2," carried. (Bill 69)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Memorial University Act No. 2. (Bill 69)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 69 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act, Bill 70, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It's moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act, Bill 70, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Innovation, Energy and Technology to introduce a bill, "An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act," carried. (Bill 70)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act. (Bill 70)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.
On motion, Bill 70 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper Order 2.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 63.

SPEAKER: A seconder to that motion?

J. HOGAN: Seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We are now considering the related resolution and Bill 63, An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2025 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service.

Resolution

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

“That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to His Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2025 the sum of \$3,286,755,700.”

CHAIR: Shall the resolution carry?

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Now you should know that one.

CHAIR: I should know that one. My neighbour.

J. DWYER: Half of your district’s part of my district, I guess –

CHAIR: You’re right.

J. DWYER: – with the name.

Thank you, Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to represent the people of the beautiful District of Placentia West - Bellevue in this House of Assembly.

When we look at Interim Supply, what we’re here to focus on now is that there’s 33 per cent of the total budget expected to help get the bills paid and stuff like that, which is fine. But this needs to happen with the function of government, obviously. But we’re continually borrowing and wanting to do this kind of stuff when I feel that there’s other options that we could look at, and I’ve stated those in the last three or four years while representing the people of Placentia West - Bellevue.

I’m going to start today on allocations, I guess, because the 33 per cent that’s forecasted is based on 2023 allocations. I’ve had a lot of work done in our district. The thing is that the kind of different

dynamic of my district is that it covers 5,503 square kilometres. I don’t think anybody else has to deal with that quite as much: 36 towns, three unincorporated areas, 16 fire departments. The fire departments are what I’d like to focus on a little bit at the start of my address today.

I want to focus on the Baine Harbour Fire Department, in particular. I’ve talked to the minister about this, I’ve talked to the fire commissioner, and everybody seems to be on board now. But obviously I’ve been asking for a new rescue vehicle in Baine Harbour because the rescue vehicle is the first one that goes out. It’s the very first responder; it’s the one that goes and assesses the situation.

They’ve used as much bubble gum and duct tape as you can. This truck is not going any further. As of March 9, that truck is taken off the road because it can’t be inspected anymore and it can’t be repaired anymore. The truck was given to us in kind from an old forestry truck that was refurbished to put it into this fire department in Baine Harbour. But Baine Harbour covers from Long Pond – if people are not familiar with the Burin Peninsula and Route 210, Long Pond is only about probably I’d say 20 kilometres from the top of Mile Hill. The top of Mile Hill is just south of Swift Current.

So they go from Long Pond right to Red Harbour if there’s any MVAs on the highway or any fires or anything like that. But they also service the communities of Rushoon, Baine Harbour, of course, Parkers Cove, Boat Harbour, Brookside, Petit Forte and all points in between, being secondary with some other fire departments from the District of Burin - Grand Bank.

I implore the minister that this is not a want. This is not something that, you know, we got a truck and we just want to replace it because we want to have something newer. This is a need. This affects all of us on the Burin Peninsula. If anybody is travelling on the Burin Peninsula, I think they would like

to have the security in knowing that if they go off the road – because there's no Wi-Fi; there's no cell service. So if they go off the road, at least they know that there's going to be an opportunity for somebody to get the message to the Baine Harbour Fire Department to get on the road and go help them.

I think it's gone beyond the point of – well, it's obviously gone to the point of no return; the truck is being taken off the road. Last year, this same truck went to a MVA to help out the Member for Burin - Grand Bank's fire department in Bay L'Argent, and consequently the truck broke down on the way. So they had to be on the side of the road, flagging people down to get them to this MVA, which is just not acceptable.

There's been an application in on this for quite some time. I have talked to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety; I have talked to the fire commissioner and they are in agreement that we need to make sure that this truck gets replaced.

So, as of today, I'll let the minister know that the application has been re-applied for again; I think this is the fifth or sixth application, and we would like to see that application adjudicated properly and giving these volunteer firefighters the equipment that they need to not only be safe themselves, but to protect all the people that are travelling the Burin Peninsula Highway, Route 210, and all the communities that I listed as being primary for the Baine Harbour Fire Department.

I want to make a big shout-out to Fire Chief Christopher Keating and Mayor Todd Kenway for working with me and letting me, I guess, take their cause forward and make sure that it was falling on the right ears. Hopefully, we can work with something like that, because in the last three years, out of all the money that we're spending on fire and emergency services, my 16 fire departments got six sets of bunker gear in the last three years.

I'm hoping that there shouldn't be an issue with getting a new truck. We don't want a refurbished one or anything like that. Anybody that wants to come down and go to the Baine Harbour Firefighters' banquet, then I think they would be very encouraged to understand how supported this fire department is. Like I said before, this is not a want; this is a need.

We've given them the opportunity to succeed by expanding their fire department and town hall, and that was in kind from two residents, Hughie Reid and Helen Reid, that gave up a piece of their own land so that we could expand the fire department hall and what's attached is the town hall. So, to Helen and Huey, I want to say thank you very much from the bottom of my heart.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: It shows your community involvement and how important you see your fire hall and your town hall to be.

With that being said, we look at the brush cutting and stuff like that, which affects all our firefighters as well. We have the contract in place and we're talking about allocations for 2023, yet the work itself hasn't been carried out yet.

I have a confirmation from the minister and the department that 16.1 kilometres from Petite Forte toward Boat Harbour, which should probably get us past Cape Roger, I'm hoping that that can get done asap. Because like I've explained here in the House before, you see caribou hanging out on the roads, because they're licking the salt; but right now down in the Petite Forte area, we have moose hanging out on the roads because they can't get through the brush. So that's a bit ridiculous; it's a bit over the top.

I know that the contract is in place. I just want to make sure that we're going to follow through on that and make sure that that

happens because, again, this is another ask that I've been making for four years.

I just want to make sure that the department is listening, I guess, to the Member that represents the people of Placentia West - Bellevue. If they're unsure, I would prefer not to make any ivory tower decisions and maybe I can be consulted as to what needs to happen because, last year, we done 10 kilometres out on the Route 210, down by Terrenceville, that all we done was took away a natural snow fence that we had been building up for the last 20 years. We never had any big issues with snow and drifting and all that kind of stuff there. This year we got it again, because last year we brush cut a natural snow fence.

So, like I said, if I can be consulted, I'm the boots on the ground and I'm not making ivory tower decisions, I'm listening to the communities, I'm listening to the residents and I'm seeing what they see and I understand – I'll go make a site visit to make sure that I'm not overstepping my bounds, or I'm not making an ivory tower decision. I ask and I implore government to not make those decisions without consultation with the Member for that district. It's not about pats on the back; it's about getting it right and not wasting money. That's what I'm trying to do. If I can get three nickels out of a dime, I'm going to push to get three nickels out of a dime every time.

With very limited time, I want to look at the fact that I have all the other same health care issues. When it comes to transportation and infrastructure, we just put out a call for people and residents to put in their asks of what needs to happen in their communities and stuff like that. One lady called into *Open Line* from my district and called it a colouring contest. I kind of understood where she was coming from because I don't know how genuine the input is because I've put in these lists, year after year after year, after driving my whole district. Just before the election in 2020, I

put in a list of 186 things that needed to be fixed in my district. To be quite honest, I was only scratching the surface when it comes to collapsed culverts, brush cutting and ditching, all that kind of stuff.

I understand that the problem right now with the snow clearing and all that kind of stuff is operators, but it's mechanics. We can have all the operators we want if we have equipment that's not broke down. We got to have healthy equipment to get these operators out on the road and get the snow plowed.

It was a little over 24 hours that the Norman's Cove-Long Cove area waited to be taken care of in the last big storm there in February and, unfortunately, the reason was because of a breakdown of equipment. I can appreciate that, but I want to work with the departments to let them know what the needs are for Placentia West - Bellevue.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity and, like all Members, it's certainly an honour and a privilege to stand on behalf of the people of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune to say a few words around Interim Supply. We can certainly talk about our districts; it's first and foremost. Just to talk a little bit about my district – but I will respond to some of the comments that the Member made about firefighters and funding and everything else.

First, in terms of my own district, which is first and foremost in today's sitting of the House of Assembly, the first questions were around the fishery. There are many districts in this province that are tied to the fishery and my own district certainly is. I think the crab of my district is the lobster fishery. It sustained itself and I pat the fishermen on

the back for that, because they brought in a system of notching lobsters to help them sustain and keep the industry for down the road.

They did a tremendous job with that. They've seen growth in the lobster numbers. I'm always chatting with harvesters in my district and the lobster fishery is very lucrative, but it's also important that those harvesters that don't have lobster, that they have quotas of various species that they want to make a living out of those various species. I stress to the federal government – and I will, when I meet with the minister again within a week, to press upon that to support local harvesters.

I've had harvesters down in Hermitage area and other areas in my district that talk about not having enough quota for halibut. Halibut is a lucrative species and upcoming species, as far as I'm concerned, in terms of the world demand and catching. We know the allowable catch rates are healthy right now, so I'm looking forward to seeing what that industry will bring. Not just to our parts of my district, that part of the Island, but in many parts of the Island.

I talk about aquaculture. I've talked about aquaculture many times here. Aquaculture industry in various parts of the province, but solely in my district. Because of the aquaculture, what's going on in my district, supports Central Newfoundland, it supports other parts of the province in the supply industry and the side industries. I say Cooke Aquaculture is very important, lifeblood in our district, to supply jobs.

Madam Chair, I would like to say at this point that I send my condolences to the Cooke family, because their father, who was the founder of it all, very close to his sons, passed away. The funeral will be on Thursday. I talked to some of the employees in New Brunswick this morning. I did leave a message with a son to offer condolences on behalf of myself and

certainly the province. They play a big role worldwide. They're growing all the time. Mr. Cooke played a bit part in the growth of his family industry and certainly in the aquaculture in general. On behalf of Newfoundland and Labrador, we certainly pass our condolences along to the Cooke family.

Other things that are happening in my district, too, that I don't think we talk enough about is the mining industry. There's an opportunity now in the Town of Belleoram, the mayor, Steward May, who is working very hard in keeping the file alive. I think there's great promise there. Don't have a lot of details on it right now, but I will be seeking those details and I look forward to what that's going to bring.

That part of the coast of the province, I believe, has a promising future. One thing that's paramount and very important is health care. It was talked about today back and forth in terms of virtual care, diversions. Diversions from Harbour Breton and down on the Coast of Bays area to Grand Falls has increased quite a bit. I believe it's in efforts of the minister, this government and Central Health, in recognizing what's important and putting the proper resources down there.

The Family Care Clinic is down there. That Family Care Clinic model was developed by the workers down there. The nurse practitioners and counsellors, they worked towards that model. That model is being used throughout the province. So, virtual care, I think, at the beginning, people were scared of what virtual care really meant. That you're not going to see a doctor's face anymore so, therefore, you're not being really treated. That's not the case. I believe it's a fundamental tool that can be used to provide health care in the province because there are a lot of things – and I'll just use my own example. I saw a doctor virtually about an inner ear problem. So, I didn't have to go wait in the wait rooms for that.

I think the Member for Placentia is laughing because he thinks I have an inner ear problem because I don't listen to him, right?

Anyway, I'll move on to volunteers. Every district has volunteers and I appreciate everyone in my district from firefighters to firettes. I have to say the regional co-operation is alive and well. I preach it all the time, but I think the towns are coming together even more and I appreciate every one of them. We don't thank them enough. There are a lot of volunteers from Lions Clubs to all kinds of organizations in the district. What would we do without volunteers?

I say to the Member for Placentia and the other part: There was a significant increase in fire services last year. And you said, it's not a want; it's a need. I get it in terms of voting for the budget, but you didn't vote for the budget, which was supports for fire services.

I believe this year it's going to change, because I believe the Member for Topsail - Paradise is going to vote for the budget. I really do. I really do because of a new school in his district that's going to – and I live in the community of Paradise. My children are now grown up and won't see it. I say, the Member for Ferryland, too, he said the same thing, he would vote for the budget – you told me that you'd vote for the budget if there was a new school in your district. So stay tuned, you never know.

I'll be happy to see if he votes for the budget or not. But I do agree. Listen, fire services, it's never to be understated in terms of the importance and investing in response vehicles and the resources that's probably needed.

Madam Chair, I want to talk about sports, recreation, wellness and seniors, as well. In all districts, I guess, there are a lot of sports going on. In Conrad Fitzgerald Academy, they have a male volleyball team which is dominant. They're doing very well. Hats off

to them for their successes to date and there's more to be done during the year. Other communities as well, Harbour Breton, we have badminton players from Hermitage that attended the games and had lots of fun. When you see the smiles on their face, it's all worth it.

Recreation is always important. The town council of St. Jacques-Coombs Cove has incorporated a recreation wellness plan in their council plan and I'm supporting them 100 per cent, which is important.

The seniors' clubs, I've met with them, chatted with them, laughed with them, had fun with them but they are volunteers as well. What we do for them, there is a seniors' inclusion program now that's out and that little bit of funding is big to them. It supports them in getting them out for wellness and we need to do that. That's just one example of supports for seniors.

I will end – I didn't get to departmental stuff that I wanted to talk about, which is very important as well, but my district first: mental health services. I attended FPT meetings not long ago. We talked about, for agriculture, farmers and everybody, the mental challenges that they have. So, I made a proposal at that meeting that at every meeting from now on the first, number one issue should be mental health to talk about. Lead the meeting off, talk about mental health. It should be, automatically, a part of any agenda to talk about mental health because there are challenges whether it's agriculture or fishermen, whatever the case may be and we need to be there to support them and this government does support it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is an honour to stand here today as the Member for the House of Assembly for Harbour Main and I just want to make a few introductory comments about the purpose of today's debate. It relates back to the words or the introductory comments from the Minister of Finance, yesterday, who talked about introducing the Interim Supply bill and that it really relates to the expenses of the public service.

I, too, would like to acknowledge and thank the dedicated members of the public service for the work that they do. It is very important to acknowledge that in order for government operations to continue, we need to have this Interim Supply bill. Before the calling and the awarding of tenders, while we debate the budget 2024, it is necessary to have the Interim Supply bill.

I think it is also important to note that government requires \$3,286,755,700. That is the massive amount for this three-month Supply bill.

It is also interesting to note, Madam Chair, that the majority of this funding of the Interim Supply bill will be allocated to the Transportation and Infrastructure. I'm going to speak to that point a little later. I only have 10 minutes so I will be looking forward to other opportunities because there is much to say. I do want to, first of all, talk about some of the important issues that are facing the constituents in the District of Harbour Main.

Since the last sitting of the House, I've had the opportunity to be very present and out in my community at many functions, many events over the past few months. What I am hearing from my constituents are concerns about various issues. I'll start with health care.

With respect to health care, I've heard devastating, horrific stories about the experiences of people in our health care system. As the MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans mentioned yesterday in

debate, it is a collapsed health care system in his district and the areas surrounding. I would submit it is the same in most, if not all, rural areas in the province as well as in urban centres.

We have to remember that rural Newfoundland and Labrador is deeply impacted by this collapse of our health care system. I'll have more to say as we go on with respect to the health care system and giving real-life examples of what our people are facing, especially in the District of Harbour Main. It needs to be heard because this is the purpose of the House of Assembly so that we hold government to account.

The cost of living, Madam Chair, is another very vital issue. We are hearing devastating stories of people who can't afford to live. They can't afford to live. Whether it is seniors on fixed incomes, whether it is young families, working parents trying to hold down two and three jobs and not able to make ends meet. They're living from paycheque to paycheque.

Furthermore, Madam Chair, I'm hearing that the constituents are taxed to death and I'll have more to say about specific taxes, including the carbon tax, as we move forward in debate of Interim Supply over the next number of days.

Inaccessible and unavailable child care is also a very ever-present issue facing our families in our community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Education, as well – teachers are stressed, Madam Chair. They're burned out. I've heard from parents who are concerned about their children, about the education that they're receiving, about class sizes, in particular, about class composition as well, and I will

be referring to that as well in further debates when we have more time.

The Medical Transportation Assistance Program is failing. I'm hearing that from my constituents as well. That's it's failing. I understand it's under review, but we need to know what the status of that is. The transportation costs for patients to get health care is exorbitant and people are frustrated. It's out of the reach of average Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I'm also going to be speaking further, as we go on, about cellphone service in the District of Harbour Main and how that has deteriorated to the point of – it's just basically ineffective in most areas and it's really got to be addressed.

Finally, I want to speak about the roads, and that is a very important issue in the District of Harbour Main. Now, we heard yesterday from the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure about the \$698 million from Interim Supply bill. That's a massive amount of money that will be addressed or allocated to, as he described, new initiatives.

He referenced the fact that it will require sound management, which obviously is important, but one of the things I'm very pleased to hear is his commitment to the safest highway – to quote, he said: We're committed to the safest highways that we possibly can.

Madam Chair, I have to say, with respect to that, I hope that is true. If it is true, then I look forward to seeing roadwork and new pavement in the District of Harbour Main, in particular for the area of Holyrood, the roundabout to Kelligrews –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – because, Madam Chair, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure came out with myself. We drove over that road and he is well aware of the fact that that is not a safe road. So if he

is truly committed to the safest highways that we possibly can, then we will be seeing

–

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The Member for Harbour Main is speaking.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We will be seeing roadwork and new pavement with respect to that piece of dangerous roadway that you are expecting people to drive over, not only in the District of Harbour Main, but in surrounding towns and communities that have to drive in order to access other places within the City St. John's and other areas. It's a high-volume roadway and it needs to be addressed. So, I'm really pleased to hear the minister, yesterday, say he's committed to the safest highways. We look forward to that new pavement in the Holyrood area.

Unless, Madam Chair, we have resorted back to an era of pork-barrel politics, as the Member for Conception Bay South referenced yesterday. He talked about pork-barrel politics. What is that? It's when government provides certain districts with more funding to gain support. And guess what, Madam Chair? This is an election year, we're hearing. Oh, surprise. Is that what it is?

Is this government crossing things off the list? Is this government checking the boxes? Is it about knowing the right person to get your road paved and the rest of us over here in the Opposition are given crumbs or we're begging in our petitions or we're bringing the minister out to show him? All taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador should have access to this money fairly. And how is that distributed?

We heard someone call in to *Open Line* from the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue's district saying: Is it a colouring contest? Where's the fairness? We need to see where there's fair – how do you

measure who gets the roads? We don't know. It's arbitrary and we have a right to know. You have to be accountable; you have to be transparent.

We, in the Opposition, are going to ensure that you are. We want to know how these roads are being paved, by what decision.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm so pleased to have the opportunity to speak on some important issues that face my department –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The minister is speaking.

P. PIKE: – as we continue to try and improve the overall well-being of Newfoundland and Labrador, especially those of the most vulnerable.

Based on the recommendations of the Health Accord, our government continues to prioritize the social determinants of health and broaden the framework to better focus factors that include things such as income, education, health care, food security and safety. We continue to invest in programs and services to better support individuals and families right across their lifespan.

Poverty has always been a complex issue and it's multi-dimensional. As a government, we recognize these are challenging issues and challenging times that continue to deeply impact individuals and families, especially those living in poverty throughout the province and around the world.

Our government recently launched the Poverty Reduction Plan. This is a concerted focus on reducing childhood poverty, strengthening connections to employment, improving income and supporting our seniors.

Supporting the health and development and overall well-being of the province's children and youth is the key priority of this government. Under this Poverty Reduction Plan, my department has expanded the Prenatal-Infant Nutrition Supplement up to age five and renamed it the Prenatal-Early Childhood Nutrition Supplement to better reflect its expanding scope.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: Madam Chair, we have also increased the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit by 300 per cent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: Three hundred – unprecedented.

Given that income is critical for social well-being, in January 2023, we introduced a Basic Income Program for youth receiving residential services through the department's voluntary Youth Services Program. This program, by the way, is currently assisting approximately 250 Youth Services clients by providing them with additional supports and enhanced wrap-around supports.

These include financial and employment counselling, mental health and addiction supports, education supports and life skill supports. With this target basic income, we are helping to empower vulnerable youth in our province with the supports they need to transition into a better path for success.

Our new Poverty Reduction Plan includes important measures to improve income, such as expanding the Employment Support Stability Pilot. Launched in January 2023, this program increased supports to people

who are recipients of income support. This helps them gain and maintain employment. This program, which started here in St. John's, now is supporting these participants all over the province to increase their attachments to employment and obtain financial self-sufficiency.

My department also continues to explore the adequacy and equity benefits on how best to improve our Income Support program through a comprehensive review. We are working on strengthening and improving the Income Support program structure by reducing the number of benefit rates, starting by eliminating the lower ones. We have to make it easier for people to be able to get income supports and get supports that they need.

We have increased the Comfort Allowance by \$50 per month to now \$175 per month for those people that are living in shelters, and also a meal plan attached to that. Also under income interventions, we are implementing a target basic income pilot for people who are aged 60 to 64 who currently receive income support and services through Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services.

Starting in April, this initiative will allow for more adequate and stable financial supports. What we will do, we will increase the payments for participants to match the federal seniors' benefit that is available to people 65 and over. So it will be no big jump. When they hit 60, they'll get the same amount of money as they get for 65 plus is what I'm trying to say. That's a lot better.

Informed through extensive stakeholder consultations, including people with lived experience, this pilot program and this Poverty Reduction Plan is supported by an investment that will grow by \$85 million annually after three years. That's in addition to the already \$900 million allocated in *Budget 2023* for social programming supports for lower income families and individuals.

Our Seniors and Aging Division continues to focus on helping seniors to remain healthy, active and engaged in their communities. These are their age-friendly communities. Those of us who have age-friendly programs in their communities realize how important they are. They create safe spaces for seniors. They're intergenerational. You see trails that are built. You see gazebos that are built that will bring seniors together. You'll see the intergenerational piece where you have young people working with seniors. Absolutely fantastic to see and absolutely fantastic to watch.

My department has a number of investments to help support seniors and a couple of these would be the Senior' Social Inclusion Initiative and the Newfoundland and Labrador Community Transportation Program. As well, the Cabinet Committee on Seniors, which I sit on, is doing some great work. We want to ensure that seniors age in place with dignity and the challenges that are faced by the frail elderly.

Chair, I would also like at this moment to speak about some of the important work that we have advanced through our Disability Policy Office as part of our efforts to build a more inclusive and accessible province.

In addition to supporting the community of persons with disabilities through grants and so on, we are also pleased to make public the province's first Accessibility Plan which can be found on our department website.

AN HON. MEMBER: Good plan.

P. PIKE: It's a good plan.

The plan was prepared by my department's Disability Policy Office and informed by contributions of key stakeholders, many of those with lived experiences.

The *Accessibility Act* also requires all public entities to prepare and have accessibility plans. They had to have those in place by

December 31, 2023. I am happy to report that the Disability Policy Office supported over 100 participants from public entities across the province to prepare their accessibility plans.

A key element of the legislation was the establishment of an Accessibility Standards Advisory Board in June of 2022, which is certainly playing a key role in the development of accessibility standards, regulations and policies, as well as removing barriers of inclusion.

I just want to extend my sincere appreciation as well, before I close – I have a couple of seconds – to recognize the social workers in my department and the staff that support them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: They're doing a great job. They play a vital role in our department in improving the health and well-being of people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It is a pleasure to get up here and speak to Bill 63. Although a money bill, we get the opportunity to speak on a number of things.

It is interesting, you know, you're getting barbs from across the way. I kind of look at us as a family.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. DINN: Yeah, maybe a bit disjointed.

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, very much so.

P. DINN: Maybe a bit dysfunctional. But, yeah, there is a bit of a family atmosphere here. I want to acknowledge, like many have this week, the loss of Derrick Bragg. A huge loss to us, to this House, to this family. My condolences go out to his family and friends.

We've had Brian Warr step down and we all know his character. A great loss for us, although he has gone on to better and brighter things. I know when David Brazil was going through the health issues, we were very supportive, as well as others over there. But we also can't forget Perry Trimper and his wife, Caroline. They are going through a very hard time now and I hope I can speak for our disjointed family in saying that our thoughts and prayers go out to him and Caroline as we proceed.

So, I understand, yes, we'll get into the barbs and we'll do that, but at the end of the day we're all elected here to do what we think is the best for our constituents and the province as a whole.

With that, I just want to talk about a few things that are happening in Paradise. One being a new school.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: A new school. A new high school. I hear the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde over there, you know, you're voting for the budget.

Well, do you know what? If I got a bag of rotten apples, I'm not going to buy the bag for the one good apple. Maybe the minister is. Maybe the Member over there is. We've got to look at the whole budget, so I'll reserve the decision on that until this whole bag of apples comes out and then I'll figure out how many in that bag are good.

AN HON. MEMBER: That sounds like sour grapes to me.

P. DINN: We're all in the produce section. There you go.

Talking about some of the apples I want to see, some of the apples I want to see in that bag for Topsail - Paradise is Route 60. Route 60, going through Topsail, is just terrible, deplorable conditions. I've met with four different Transportation and Infrastructure ministers over the past five years and the current Member and I've submitted the – I said this earlier the week. I actually went out the day before the snowstorm on Valentine's Day and took pictures and submitted more information to the department and the minister.

I met with the Conception Bay South Seniors Advisory Committee in the last week. They're very, very, very concerned about the state of the road. You know, you've just got to look at the pictures, but you really got to try and walk it or drive it. The shoulders are totally eroded. There are crevasses and gaps and potholes, but it's a real safety issue. So, that's another apple I want in the bag when the budget comes around. I want to see that done.

We have a tremendous seniors' community in the district who do so much work, so much volunteer work. But we need to be doing more for them, as well. Just this week, getting calls on access to the shingles vaccine or the measles vaccine and seniors not being able to access those; either they're having to pay or they just can't access them. So, along with all the other issues around long-term care and personal care, that's an apple I want to see in this bag.

It's already been mentioned, daycare, child care. There have been all these good intentions with the \$10 child care, but your after-school programs are suffering. The after-school programs are suffering because they're not offering them anymore. I know Members across the way who have children. I know some of them have spent huge dollars for nannies, because they can't

access adequate child care. So in a District like Topsail - Paradise, with such a young community, I want to see that apple in the bag.

Mental health has been mentioned. Just this week Kristi Allan who has been a long-time advocate for mental health in this province – and I apologize if I get the number wrong, but it got to be approaching 170 weeks, Mondays, being out in front of this building advocating for better, long-term measures for mental health. That mental health goes the gamut over a lot of issues, and particularly our schools, our education systems when you talk about 70 per cent of mental health issues originate in childhood or adolescence. So that's an issue that needs to be dealt with.

Everyone out there, all the groups, all those with lived experiences have spoken to mental health and talked about it doesn't do well on wait-lists. Mental health doesn't do well on wait-lists and they want some continuity of care. So that's a real important issue.

Another issue that was brought, actually, again by the Seniors Advisory Committee in CBS – but it's been brought up to me by many others – is the access, for all of us, to proper mental health care, to doctors, to nurse practitioners, to be able to get the help you need. We talked earlier about the virtual care, which only goes so far. That only goes so far. Doctors and that are a huge piece up in my district.

Talking about health care and talking about young families, issues that have been prominent to me and have been brought forward to me have been around IVF treatments in this province, which is lacking. It's non-existent, actually. It's in every other province, except PEI. Government came in with a subsidy program that is less than adequate. The Premier made a promise four years ago that those services would be available in this province. They are not yet available.

We have two doctors in this province who have put in proposals, who have been willing to do this at next to no additional cost if any additional cost at all to the province. People will argue oh, they don't have the experience to do it. But that's not our choice.

The families, young women who want to be mothers, that's their choice because right now they don't have a choice. Many cannot afford to go away to get this treatment, so they have to resolve themselves into, well, I guess a family is not in the cards for us. So that's a definite need that helps us with our population, that helps us with keeping people here. So hopefully in the upcoming budget, that apple will be in the bag that we have an IVF program in this province.

The other apple, which was maybe a green apple in the last budget, was continuous glucose monitoring devices. Proven – proven – to do better for the health of those struggling with diabetes – proven. Thirty per cent of strokes, 40 per cent of heart attacks, 50 per cent of kidney failure requiring dialysis, 70 per cent of non-traumatic amputations, the leading cause of blindness – by investing simply in these continuous glucose monitoring devices, you can eliminate or at least make a big cut into that. That can save this province, the Canadian diabetes association says up to \$80 million a year. Tell me that's not a nice, ripe apple to be in that budget bag, which I'll be looking for.

The last thing, of course, is in the Town of Paradise itself. We've certainly been looking for additional ways in and out of that town. There are huge traffic issues there, so I'm hoping that there will be some money or a nice apple in that bag. A nice apple in the Member's bag over there that he can chomp into, and those in Paradise can bite into, that will solve the traffic issues going in and out of Paradise.

So, I look forward to seeing that big bag of apples when the time comes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and congratulations on your new position.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: Madam Chair, the Member for Topsail - Paradise, I think, was uber-excited yesterday morning to talk about the new school that was announced for Paradise. I think when he refers to the harvest, the budget that we're going to present here in a few weeks, it's interesting – I'm pretty sure that he's going to have a hard time not voting for the budget. I really, really think so. It's going to be tough. It's a new school for his constituency that he campaigned hard for.

But that being said, my colleague, the Member for Mount Scio, and my colleague, the newly elected it's Fred from – oops, sorry, I am not supposed to say that – the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island and the Minister of Education also worked very hard for this new facility as well. Lots of kudos to go around.

It's certainly always a pleasure, Madam Chair, to stand here and represent the District of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde. It's certainly a privilege. I'm running into 10 years now doing so. It was a privilege 10 years ago and it's still a privilege today.

The Member for Topsail - Paradise did reference – and I would be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity on the record to pass along my condolences to my good friend – Minister Bragg's family and everybody involved. He was a good friend of mine, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: And certainly missed this week when I look to my left and notice that

he's not there. We shared a lot of good times together and I'll always remember that and the life that he brought to this caucus and to this House of Assembly. He brought a spark to this House and he will surely be missed. Not only by his colleagues on this side, but I think all of his colleagues in this House and from around the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: Also, to echo the remarks of the Member opposite, my colleague, the MHA for Lake Melville and his current situation and assure him that he's in all of our thoughts and prayers as well as he deals with a difficult –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: – situation in his own life.

But again, it's certainly a privilege to stand here today and it's a privilege to stand here as Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation. I'm just going to take a few minutes to reflect on the department at this opportunity.

I'll talk a fair bit about tourism and the tourism recovery post-pandemic. In the department right now, we've committed to stop referring to 2019, because that was the baseline that we continuously went back to when we talked about tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador and getting ready for a new normal.

But just to share with my colleagues some of the stats from the 2023 peak tourism season – and right now I am using a baseline of 2019 – the occupancy rates in the province were up 12 per cent this year over 2019. The number of nights sold were up 22 per cent. Revenue was up 39 per cent to almost \$266 million in room-night revenue.

Marine Atlantic visits, up 19 per cent over 2019. This is something we're seeing coming out of the pandemic. We now

believe it's a trend that we're opening ourselves up to more and more visitors by road. I'll get to air momentarily because air has also been a challenge, but we're seeing successes on the air file as well.

I've met with the federal Transportation minister, the federal Tourism minister, and talked about the need for added capacity on Marine Atlantic. The reality is, July and August coming to Newfoundland and Labrador, Marine Atlantic has reached its capacity. That's our highway and we will continue to impress on the federal government the need for more capacity on that run. It's our bread and butter, and we need that.

When somebody phones up Marine Atlantic, we don't have the luxury as a jurisdiction for someone to say well, no, you can't get the ferry on a Monday; you can get it on a Thursday. That person in southern Ontario or on the Eastern Seaboard of the US have booked two weeks holidays, they can't make that adjustment. So we need flexibility with Marine Atlantic going forward and we've had a receptive audience in Ottawa to that.

Just to take a little glimpse. The Premier spoke last week, I think, at the HNL conference here in St. John's, a very well-attended conference, and talked about the numbers of air access. We're seeing this year, this season coming, St. John's International Airport is looking at a 25 per cent increase in seat capacity over 2019. So now we've surpassed 2019 and the new benchmark will be 2024 when we surpass the numbers of seat capacity by 25 per cent.

If you look at the West Coast of our province, in Deer Lake, we see even a greater increase in seat capacity. We have seat capacity on the West Coast this summer looking at being up over 30 per cent of 2019 numbers. So, extremely impressive the resilience of our tourism operators in this province and what they've

done to rebuild this industry, which is so important to many, many regions of this province. So it's been extremely important, the due diligence, the work that operators have put in and we'll continue to be there to support them.

This year, obviously, one of the other things that we're doing is celebrating the Year of the Arts. The arts in this province bring so much to our tourism industry, brings so much to the fabric of this place and I really look forward to the coming weeks and some great announcements. Again, some more apples in that basket of the 2024-2025 budget that will make it really difficult for the Members opposite to vote against the budget.

I really assure them –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) into a pie.

S. CROCKER: We're going to bake a pie that is going to be really, really hard to resist for the Members opposite this year.

I also want to take this opportunity as my time winds down for this, to thank the organizers of the Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games in Gander this past weekend.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. CROCKER: My circumstances of the last 10 days didn't allow me to get to Gander but my colleague here, the Member for Gander, did a tremendous job in representing the province and delivering the Premier's Cup on Saturday afternoon to team Avalon? No, St. John's. Sorry, my apologies, St. John's/North. I was cheering for Avalon. Fair.

Again, thank you to all the volunteers, the organizers, for the hard work. Congratulations to all of the athletes that took part in the Newfoundland and Labrador Winter Games, and we look forward to this August, the Newfoundland and Labrador

Summer Games in Bay Roberts and, again, giving those young Newfoundland and Labrador athletes the opportunity to shine on that stage.

Again, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll take my seat and look forward to a future opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Always an honour to stand and speak in this great House.

We talk here all the time about our differences, but we're more alike than we are different, and someone mentioned the word family earlier and I think this last year has highlighted the struggles of the Members in this House. Whether it was illness or close ones who were in this House who have deceased and friends who have decided to leave the House, it has touched every one of us. I can tell you from personal experience, if you get sick, you hear from everyone in this House and it is a really heartfelt reach out from everyone. So, we are all in this together.

Interim Supply is about keeping government running while we are going into a budgetary process and it is very important. What is more important are the people who require Interim Supply in order to do their jobs on a daily basis.

As the Minister of Finance said in her opening preamble, I think it is really important that we recognize the fine public servants that do the work for this province, and certainly not just the reason that we are here, the reason that this province succeeds every day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: It is easy for us to talk about all the good things, and it's funny the minister was just talking about the budget and how everyone is going to support it and perhaps it was going to be a cake. Well, I would suggest that we should have red velvet cake with blue icing, but we'll wait and see how that looks.

P. DINN: (Inaudible) have a file in it.

L. PARROTT: Oh, I don't disagree. But when we don't support a budget, it isn't because of the things that are in there; a lot of the times it's because of the things that are not in there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: And I think we're all clear on that.

Yesterday, the Minister of Finance indicated that in her previous life, in business, she used performance indicators. I'm very familiar with performance indicators. But when I sit here and I think about where the province is, the performance indicators that stand out for me are poverty, there's a crisis. Housing, there's a crisis. Health care, there's a crisis. Cost of living, there's a crisis. If those are the measurable indicators that we're utilizing, then we have to have a hard look at how we do our jobs in this province. I think we fail on so many levels.

When we talk about the state of the situation when it comes to poverty and housing, we must understand how bad it is. As a matter of fact, up until last week, we didn't have to have a stand-alone Minister of Housing but now we do all of a sudden. So, obviously, there is a crisis.

In a week or so, we're going to be bringing a bill to the floor on the Colonial Building and the only thing that's happened since the Colonial Building has been done up is that there's a tent city set up down there. Do you know what? Some of that money could have

been spent elsewhere, there's no question. So there's lots going on here.

Last week I did a segment with the Minister of Environment and it was a good segment, there's no question. Prior to going into that, I listened to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure talk about the successes of P3s. It's hard to measure the successes of P3s, and I'm not saying I'm against them but what I will say is that we cannot measure the successes of them, maybe, for five or 10 years down the road. What I see right now with the P3s, the P3s are supposed to be public, private partnership. What I see is preferred bidders, patronage and photo-ops. It's been a repetitive – repetitive – amount of announcements and moving forward.

When we talk about preferred bidders or sole-source bidding, we have to understand what that does to us as a province and what it does to us from a spending standpoint. It really shocks me that it hasn't become more of an important issue. Now, we're talking about going out and paving roads with P3s. I'll be the first one to stand here and say there are jurisdictions in the country where it's worked. So, I'm not against it. I'm definitely not against it. I need to see what the model is, but at the end of the day perhaps we need it.

What does concern me is the minister stood up, or he was on *Open Line* and he talked about it and he said part of the reason we needed to go to this model is because we can't get staffing. We can't do things. But doesn't that highlight the failure of government? If government can't hire people to come to work, then what are we doing wrong? If we can't supply the equipment, what are we doing wrong?

At the end of the day, in my district I know, without a question, I've got mechanics who are brought in here to St. John's because St. John's can't get mechanics, which leaves my district short. We have drivers that are brought from my district to other

districts because they can't get people to do it. Here's the reality: We talk about 24-hour snow clearing. Well, I used to be in that business. It's so essential to be proactive.

I'm willing to bet you that if anyone in this House of Assembly who's experienced snowstorms or snow events in the last couple of years looked at the number of vehicles that have gone off the road – I'm not talking about private pedestrian vehicles; I'm talking about our actual snow clearing equipment. It happens to me in almost every snow clearing event and it happens because we're not proactive. It happens because when the snow starts at 3 a.m. and they can't get someone – and I'm not saying they don't make attempts to bring people in, but on the weekends we don't have people on standby. There's a lot that happens in Transportation and Infrastructure that can be changed. We have had vehicles off the road for days – days.

The last snow clearing event in my district, I had a plow off the road for almost three days waiting to get back on. Which meant I had multiple communities in Southwest Arm who were snowed in for multiple days because we couldn't get a piece of infrastructure back out on the road. Why? Poor planning, quite simple – poor planning. If we had the ability to put the drivers or the equipment on the highway, then we wouldn't have to deal with that. When someone gets killed or hurt it is far, far too late.

What else is a problem? Communication. When you talk to the employees and they're saying they know there's a snow clearing event coming or a storm coming and it's on Thursday and they're not scheduled to work on the weekend, they're not asked to stay by their phone. They're not paid standby or anything like that. They go home. I tell you what, I can tell you first-hand there are a number of them who take their phones and they put it away, because they have no indication whether or not they're going to be

called in. That's, again, poor planning. It's government's responsibility to make sure these plans are in place.

Twenty-four-hour snow clearing, as important as it sounds, right now planning is equally as important. What we need to do is start making people understand that we're there for them and these needs.

Right now, there are a group of mechanics across the province that work for Transportation and Infrastructure and there are a lot of vacant positions. All you have to do is go online and look. But they're vacant for a reason. Do you know what we do with our mechanics in Transportation and Infrastructure? We cycle them through. We bring them in on an apprenticeship program, they get their skills and they go somewhere else. Do you know why they go somewhere else? Because they're making \$35, \$40, \$45 an hour. We need to do a job class review on the mechanics in order to keep them there so we have equipment that works.

A P3 project for highways is not going to solve that problem. Because do you know what's going to happen when we put out for P3? The individuals who are looking at doing the snow clearing, where do you think they're going to get their workforce? They're going to take more people from Transportation and Infrastructure. They're going to want the skilled people or not? I'd take the skilled people. That's where I'd go as a businessman. There are a lot of things that we need to consider before we go to that model.

When we talk about – it's funny the Member for Harbour Main and the Member for CBS talked earlier about pork-barrel politics. We've seen it. We've seen the promises, and when a government can stand up and make promises to people with their money, this is what the electorate overlooks. They aren't making promises with money coming out of their pockets. It's your money they are making the promises with.

So a pork-barrel type of approach is really pulling the wool over their electorate's eyes. At the end of the day, we are making promises to the electorate that we are going to do things with their money and it's not called for this day and age. We should know what we need going forward.

We are talking about all the roadwork and the rush to get the roadwork in and how good the budget is. We say there may or may not be election, but obviously with all of these announcements, there's probably an election coming. If you were to read the tea leaves, I would think that it is more likely than not likely.

Doctors – we talk about the nurses and this sole-source scandal of a contract that was signed, but there's another issue that is happening in this province and I haven't heard a person speak up about it and we are dealing with it every day in my district and I guarantee you it is in every district. We have doctors that are now quitting full-time jobs in order to become locum doctors. Why?

I don't think we have to ask too loud why. We are pricing ourselves out of health care. You're wondering why we can't get the numbers. If I'm a doctor, a surgeon at G. B. Cross, and I can walk away and come back and work for a locum and make \$1,800 a day versus \$1,100 a day as regular surgeon, not have a schedule and be able to decide what I want to do – it's a scary thought what is happening out there, folks, and we are doing it to ourselves. At the end of the day, we can recruit all we want but a big part of what we need to do is retain.

Retention is key for recruiting because when we recruit certain numbers, when we need to get to a certain level, we have to have people in place in order to maintain that level. If we've got people going out the door the same time they are coming in, it's like the Liberal's policy on spending. You know, they take it out of a person's left pocket and put it back in their right and they

think it is okay. We can't do that with our doctors and nurses and that is exactly what is happening here.

If we don't find a way to maintain our health care system, if we don't find a way to retain the doctors, nurses and other health care workers and treat them with dignity, then we are going down a slope that we will never recover from. The minister stands up all the time and he says it is no different than any other province. Well, guess what, folks? I don't care about any other province. What I care about are the nurses and doctors that are here in this province and the patients that need them.

On that note, I'll take my seat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

Just speaking a bit on Interim Supply for my district. Again, the issues that I would raise when it comes to the issues my district faces would be the cost of food. I've raised that many, many times, how expensive the cost of food is in my district and it's really impacting people's physical health and their access not only to food but nutritional food. It's impacting their mental health because the stress and strains of not being able to afford enough food, so you're not hungry or your children are not hungry, or the Elders are not hungry is creating a lot of mental stress as well. So, it's adding to the harm done to the people in my district.

Also, I raised the issue in the past, over and over again, the issue of inadequate housing. Then we see through reports, we see the federal housing advocate for the federal government go into my district and produce a report but, at the end of the day, what resonates with me is that what she said in her report is what I've been advocating for in the House of Assembly.

When she looked at some of the housing conditions in the District of Torngat Mountains, she said she had nightmares. She called the conditions abominable. So, these are some of the issues people in my district face. But at the end of the day, too, is we have to look at how is this impacting our overall quality of life.

So, in my district, can you afford to heat your house? Even people with good-paying jobs are struggling to be able to afford to heat their houses. Through petitions and through questions, and through speaking on bills, I've been trying to raise the issue of the cost of heating your house.

When we look at how much a person, if they're using a furnace or a stove to heat their house, would pay in the run of a month, in the middle of winter, it's between \$1,000 and \$2,000. But really the facts and the reality is, sadly, most people can't afford to heat their house adequately because they can't afford that money. Who can afford between \$1,000 and \$2,000?

In actual fact, I was talking to a lady from Natuashish just the other day and she said, in actual fact, Lela, it's more than that, because we were talking about 1,000 to 2,000 litres. She said, in actual fact, in the winter months we may actually end up having to pay more than that. But what's happening now is where people can't afford it, a lot of times they'll have the furnace on or the stove on in the morning and then before they go to bed, they'll have it on again. What's happening is warming and cooling in people's houses. That's creating mould conditions and it's actually causing a lot of problems for people on low income.

Even people who actually have high-paying jobs, they say being able to adequately heat your house is a struggle and it's really creating a lot of harm.

When we look at past harms in my District of Torngat Mountains, we talk a lot about intergenerational trauma. In Canada, we

talk about the intergenerational trauma done to Indigenous people. In the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, we talk about intergenerational trauma done to the people within our province, the Indigenous people; but, in my district, we can see the intergenerational trauma and we can actually point to the decisions that created intergenerational trauma.

The forced relocation of our communities north of Nain, where the Inuit people were told in the church – because the Moravian missionaries and the provincial government Members knew that the Inuit people wouldn't speak up and voice their opposition to being forcibly relocated and, when they were moved, the housing that they were promised wasn't there. There was inadequate housing at the time when they were forcibly resettled into communities, creating overpopulation for the communities and it created a lot of problems within families.

When we look at the harms being done – so when you look at Indigenous people, there's a report here Newfoundland and Labrador *Report on Child Welfare Services to Indigenous Children, Youth and Families 2021-2022*. It is an Indigenous report.

When we look at the Seniors' Advocate, she mentions coming up to my communities. I have to say when she was coming up, I was overjoyed that somebody at that level would go up and talk to our people about the issues that they were facing, the struggles our Elders were facing.

And our Elders, what did they talk to when they spoke to the Seniors' Advocate? They talked about the cost of food. They're on a fixed income. The cost of food in Northern Labrador is outrageous. How can you afford to eat?

You look at the Newfoundland and Labrador Nutritious Food Basket. This is another report. It actually talks about the cost of food. In Northern Labrador, in a month, the

average cost is \$1,868. That's compared to the provincial average of \$1,200.

So when we look at that, what the people in my district said to me wasn't: Well, at least we're drawing attention to it, Lela, so they know now the cost we're facing. They said to me: Lela, this is not accurate. We're paying much more than that, especially if we're trying to buy nutritious food.

It was really good to have the Seniors' Advocate come to my district and talk to our Elders, because the Elders don't only speak for themselves. They also advocate and they support the children in our communities. They support the families in our communities. So, for us, it was really a welcome change to have somebody at this level come up and actually talk to our people. We had ministers come in, but they usually come in on the morning flight and leave on the evening flight.

Before I was elected the MHA, the former MHA brought a lot of people from government – and I know that because they told me when I'd meet them in the hallways or I'd meet them in meetings. Oh yeah, I've been up to your district; I went fishing with the former MHA. They never went and looked at the housing. They never went and looked at the price of the food in the stores. They never looked at the struggles and the lack of infrastructure and services in my district. They went up fishing.

And the people in my district told me that the biggest problem they saw with that is these government members, maybe ministers and people working in government, came back from fishing, just in time to catch the flight out of the communities. So, to have a Seniors' Advocate come and talk to our Elders and spend days in our community, talking to our people and going down and looking at the realities, is a welcome change. I have to say, I can't say enough to try and be supportive of this new Seniors' Advocate.

But also, there are other sad reports: Missing and Murdered Inuit Women, Girls and 2SLGBTQQIA+ People. This is a document ITK came out with, because at the end of the day, we know about the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. About how many Indigenous women and young girls went missing. In an actual fact, very little was done – very little was done; we were easy targets.

But when we look at some of the things that came out in that report, what's referenced a lot is the Highway of Tears over on the West Coast. It wasn't just that Highway of Tears; in our northern communities, we have a different Highway of Tears. What that is, is a lot of our Indigenous women went south and was subjected to much harm because they were vulnerable. When they went south was because they couldn't access food. They couldn't access housing. They couldn't access a warm, safe place in the northern communities and that made them more vulnerable. So, in actual fact, we have a Highway of Tears here in our province.

So, at the end of the day, I keep saying that over and over again, so many reports. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing – when I got elected in 2019, there was Newfoundland and Labrador houses standing vacant, not repaired, not put back into service. I met with one minister, brought up the issues about these housing being left vacant, trying to get something done so those houses could be repaired and put back into circulation. Then that minister, within a year, was replaced by another minister.

CHAIR: The Member's time has expired.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: I've got a cheerleading squad over here I didn't even know I had.

Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me congratulate you on your new role. I am certainly pleased to see you in that role.

I'd like to just take a few minutes today to talk about some of the highlights from the Department of Education over the last few months. I'm not, by any means, standing here claiming that we figured it out all or that all the work is done. There's certainly room for improvements and things that we have to continue to work on, but I do think it's important to recognize progress that we've made.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) report to the principal.

K. HOWELL: Report to the principal.

But there's been a lot of hard work on behalf of the staff in the department and our stakeholder groups have been very engaged and participated in a lot of the things that we've been able to see success on. I think it's important just to take a few moments to walk through some of the things that we've been able to accomplish.

Not the least of which was the undertaking to integrate the English School District into government. We were able to amend the Schools Act to allow that integration to happen. We did that in December and rolled things over so that as of January of this year, the English School District is now rolled into the government. Through that process, we've been able to recognize a lot of efficiencies. A lot of interdepartmental work and support has gone on to make sure that that's a smooth process.

It has given us a new lease on a relationship with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure and I thank my colleague in that department and all of his staff for their availability and their ability to solve problems and work closely

with the Department of Education to ensure that the transition was seamless and staff and students on the front lines didn't have any interruptions to their day-to-day happenings.

So, we've recognized the ability to work closely now that everybody is under the one banner; the ability to make changes, to see the problems that may be arising and intervene before it becomes a major issue. Those are things that we have been able – just in these few short months – to improve upon as part of our integration process.

Again, as I said, not all the wrinkles are ironed out in that process, but we have recognized, certainly, that there are benefits to being able to work that closely with our partners.

Another piece of that, and in conjunction with our friends in the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, is our ability to look at our resources in terms of our schools and look at some of our aging infrastructure, some of our buildings that needed to have work done and some places where we maybe needed to make an additional investment.

Over the past year, we have been able to announce sites for new schools in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, as well as Kenmount Terrace and, most recently, in the Town of Paradise.

We recognize, as a department, that a significant investment in infrastructure gives our students an environment where learning can be enhanced, where they feel connected and they have the space to grow in a modern type of environment for a modern world so we're creating students that are able to go out anywhere in the world and interact and become part of the society that they're living and working in.

I got a few notes here if you'll excuse me just a minute. We've also had significant work in our evaluation of our students.

We've changed our public exam format and we're introducing a new model of assessment and evaluation of high school students by the 2025-2026 school year. That's in response to a lot of questions, a lot of concerns and issues that were raised by teachers and parents all across the province in how we are evaluating our students.

We are looking to promote a culture of literacy and numeracy and ensuring that our students have the ability to do higher order thinking and not simply just regurgitate facts that are printed on a text book. We want them to be able to handle circumstances, take the information that they have learned, formulate an appropriate response and react in an environment that is diverse, and it could be anywhere in the world, but we want them to be able to take the skills that they have and deploy those in their workplaces. We are continuing to work on that.

In terms of making education more accessible, we've had the ability to phase out the 1.6-kilometre busing rule and that has removed a lot of barriers for students who may not have otherwise had safe transportation to schools. The beginning of this year, we were able to remove half of those 1.6-kilometre regulations and then in the next school year we'll be able to remove the rest and provide busing services to all of our students across Newfoundland ensuring that everybody has a safe ride to school. That's certainly something that we're very pleased to have been able to do. Again, as I said, we want to continue to remove barriers that students may have encountered that may prevent them from having a positive educational experience.

To that end, we also want to ensure that our schools are safe. By and large, students and parents do report that they feel safe in their schools. But there are often incidents where that's not the case. We want to make sure that our students have a feeling of safety. To do that, we introduced the Kids in the Know program, which is a body safety

program. We've been able to have 58 schools by the end of the '24 school year that will have access to this program, expanding it to all of our K-9 schools by September 2025.

That's a program that teaches appropriately about how they can interact, what's appropriate in terms of conversation, what's appropriate in terms of physical contact, what's appropriate in terms of good secrets and bad secrets. That's as an adjunct to our already in place curriculum that teaches these measures in an age-appropriate fashion. But to have this packaged nicely, this Kids in the Know program, packaged and presented to our schools as a resource that teachers can use to ensure they're informing their children in the most appropriate ways is something that we're certainly very proud of and we worked very hard on.

When we talk about some of the roles and responsibilities of teachers, we do recognize that teachers have changed and adapted since the pandemic. The roles and responsibilities and the way in which they've been flexible and been able to communicate with their students appropriately is amazing in some instances. They're genius at trying to communicate with these kids.

We know that they've borne an extra burden, so we were pleased to host a Teachers Think Tank in partnership with the NLTA to identify some of the issues and then speak of possible solutions that we may be able to implement as we work towards a better learning environment and a better working environment in our school system. We had some very difficult conversations on that day, but I think at the end, everybody who participated realized that there is certainly a directive of government to move forward on how we can improve things.

Like I said, we didn't have all the answers on that day, but we continue to work with our stakeholders to identify ways which we can improve it. One of the things that they

identified was the mental health and well-being of teachers as being one of the priority points that has arisen in their profession as of late. So, we were very happy to be able to provide \$450,000 of funding for mental health supports for teachers in the system here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We also had the opportunity then to support the classroom settings with an addition of 125 hours of student assistant time. That'll go a long way in ensuring that our classrooms are regulated and that resources are there for students who may have particular challenges or needs and we were very happy to be able to introduce that.

But there are more things that we have to do. Certainly, recognized coming out of the Think Tank that there is an air of change about in education and, certainly, in the types of students and in the ways that teachers are having to react to students. It's different. Times have changed and the teachers are expected to roll with those punches, so we want to continue to be able to support those circumstances.

One of the big things that we think we can do to address some of those issues is the introduction of our Education Accord. We have some very qualified professionals who are chairing that committee and that will be taking a look at educational opportunities here in Newfoundland and Labrador from our early learning space through our K-to-12 system into our post-secondary and beyond.

We're wishing to create lifelong learners and to support them as they do their work, as they move through our system. There are going to be a lot of different things that feed into the Accord and I would encourage anybody who has the opportunity to give feedback through that process, to do so. Education is something that touches us all. We've all had our own experiences.

As I close, I think the one thing that I would say in my role is that I could only hope that students in Newfoundland and Labrador get the opportunity to have an educational experience as I did. I enjoyed my entire spectrum of education. So much so that I stayed at post-secondary long enough that it just about drove my father mad, but we'll continue to work and build a system that supports students in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

Again, congratulations on your new position. I didn't do it yesterday, but certainly reminded when everybody else did today, so I certainly bring that up, congratulations again.

It is certainly a privilege again to be able to get up and speak in this House to speak on the budget issues and stuff that's been happening in my district.

First of all, I'll start on the ambulance issue that has been going on in Trepassey in the last couple of years now. We have one ambulance that's left in Trepassey and we know the conditions. I've certainly brought them up over numerous occasions, driving over the barrens, more than two hours from the closest hospital, just the conditions that they have to drive in. Right now, with one ambulance left, when that ambulance leaves today, you're guaranteed you'll get a call most every day, then they're in a red alert. We're not allowed to say that word but I can say it, we'd be in a red alert. That's what happens. So, the people are left stranded.

Tonight, there's a meeting in Trepassey. The volunteer fire departments from Portugal Cove South and Trepassey have a meeting because they're the ones that have got to respond. When the ambulance

leaves the area, they've got to respond. They're trying to draw up or raise some money to do some training to be able to attend to these calls that they get, the emergency calls to life-saving stuff that's happening in the district.

Do you think that – hopefully, we'll see it in the budget. These people are trying to raise money for training and they're trying to get together tonight, and they asked me if I could go. I said I won't know until I get out of the House of Assembly and don't know how long that will be. But they're having a meeting tonight, because the volunteer fire department needs to get training and they need to pay for it. They need to figure out how they're getting the funding. They've got applications in or they're trying to get applications in, but they're expected to show up to these calls.

Now, we have another volunteer fire department in Ferryland who don't answer to these medical calls. The people in Trepassey have no other alternative means. They got to have people that are going to respond or at least try to take care of them until the next ambulance is available.

We do have a rapid response unit in the district and that came because of our action that we pushed the minister for it last year and I have seen it on many occasions driving through. I've seen it in Mobile. I've seen it sitting on the side of the road in Cape Broyle and I've seen it in Fermeuse. This responds when there's no ambulance and when it's in a red alert.

So, that's a big concern for our district. Now we've got a new communication coming out on ambulances in the district and it affects every district right now, how they're going to be covered, what's going to happen and where's it's all to.

There's a new report supposed to come out in April. I think it's moved back until July 1. We have no idea what's in it. We didn't even get asked if there was anything we can offer

to help, if there's anything we can add to the equation to see what could help. Never questioned, never asked – never.

It's a very big concern. I was going to do a petition today on the ambulance, just to bring up that point that we got volunteer fire departments in Trepassey and Portugal Cove South meeting tonight to try to figure out how they're going to get the proper training to be able to respond to these medical calls.

It's not acceptable this day and age that these people are not trained and they've got to go out and try to fundraise in a community where there are probably 120 in Portugal Cove South, 300 in Trepassey and it's the same people that they're raising for every other occasion that goes on in the community or every other event that they're trying to raise money for. All the same people are paying for this and this should be something the government should be looking at.

Would I vote for a budget that didn't have this proper training? Not a chance. Yes, there's some stuff in it that we certainly agree to. We're not allowed to clap our hands and show our approval for it, but there's other stuff in that we'd love to have and love to see but it's not always that way. So, it's something that I wanted to bring forward.

Also, I was looking at schools and I just heard the minister speak about schools. Yes, we have a school in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, we have a school in Kenmount Terrace and we have a school in Paradise. Paradise – he's certainly been plugging for that for the last couple of years. I didn't see the school that got dropped in 2015, in the budget, in Mobile, to get reinstated. Didn't see that come back, but we've seen the schools in L'Anse au Clair, over in another person's district that I'm looking at and she smiled at me – and I'd be happy, too, if I got a school in my district, no doubt about it. But they dropped a school. Never mentioned

again. Never came up. So it was needed back then, it was signed off on, they cut it, but they got a school now that they got a new Member. Now they have one in Paradise, St. Philip's area that would be a part of it.

AN HON. MEMBER: How come?

L. O'DRISCOLL: I wonder how come? Maybe because it's a red district; is that the way it goes? Is that how that works?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: Well, why did it get dropped? Why did the school in Mobile in 2015 get dropped? That's why. We ask why – why did it get dropped? It didn't get added back. So there it is. Pork barrelling is what it's called. You forgot about it.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: We didn't forget about it up our way, I can tell you that. We didn't forget about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. O'DRISCOLL: One point six busing – they just said that they made some changes last year and some new changes coming this year. That was all because of this side pushing for the 1.6 busing to be eliminated. That's the reason for it. So, that's the reason we got 1.6 busing, because of pushing from this side.

Also, we talk about teachers and you got a new school reform –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

L. O'DRISCOLL: – and you're trying to bring it out –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Ferryland is speaking.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

I appreciate it.

Again, back to the schools and the 1.6 busing, like I said, we pushed to get that eliminated and it got eliminated. Also, I look at the teachers. You have some school reform coming up and you spoke to the stakeholders. Now, if I was in this position in here and 40 representatives in this House of Assembly, is there anybody any more qualified to answer questions on school than a former principal or a former NLTA president? Do you think they might have a little bit of wisdom that you could ask and get some help on and add some character to it?

I beg to differ that you didn't ask him. But they have a lot to offer and they have a lot of interest in it. But you're going to go to your stakeholders, engageNL and people that have been in the system for years, they're the people you should be asking. They can certainly offer some advice on how you could improve the system, that's for sure.

How we ever got to have a 0.1 or a 0.25 position in teaching blows my mind. I have no idea. How can you be one-quarter productive as a teacher, a 25 per cent position? No wonder you can't fill the position across the Island. In some of these remote areas, they're going for a 0.25. That's impossible. You can't make a living on a 0.25. Totally out to lunch.

Where it came from – and I'm not saying this government done it, but it's totally out to lunch how you get a 0.25 position to go

teaching. You're either teaching or you're not teaching. It doesn't make any sense that you're going to be teaching for a point – and then you leave and in one school you're getting a 0.25, you drive a half hour or 45 minutes and you get another 0.25. Now, you got a 0.5 covering and you got to drive to go to two different schools to be able to qualify for this teaching. It doesn't make any sense, no sense whatsoever.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: I'll try.

I'm trying not to cover too many topics because I'm going to run out of time pretty soon, but I have one here that was Crown Lands. I know that we got some stuff coming up on Crown Lands and hopefully some good changes. But this one that happened, it would nearly blow your mind that it happened.

He said: Applied for Crown Lands; approved application; land was surveyed and granted to him. Someone in the community complained that it was church land. Crown Lands sent out an investigator and after his investigation, he recommended that it was church land. It was recognized as such by Crown Lands. The person was reimbursed for his expenses and the survey that he had done. At this point, he was fed up and he walked away from it.

So after discussing it with the Grand Falls diocese to buy the land, he said his aim was to build a cabin on it and he eventually did. But the diocese directed his request to the parish council of this community and they agreed to sell it to him. After he purchased the land, he got a bill of sale from the council and the parish priest. A few years ago now, he had the land surveyed and applied to have it registered through some lawyers and handle the process. During the process, it appears that Crown Lands once again considered this land belonging to the Crown after it was designated to the church.

Now, that is the kind of stuff that we're dealing with in Crown Lands. And you tell me we can't get this resolved, to try to sit down and get it fixed, it is impossible. And that is only one story on Crown Lands. I could go down through many more.

And before my time runs out, I did speak to a minister the other day. We have a waste facility in Renew and Bay Bulls that had been closed since, I'm going to say, the fall. Because it was minus seven or colder, the people that work in there can't go outside. We've been working to try to get this rectified. There is Crown Lands issues involved in that. Newfoundland Power are trying to go in, but they need to have permission to go in. The government owns the land, but they can't figure out between Crown Lands and government who owns it and get a permit. Don't go over; the place is closed.

Do you know what's going to happen? When the spring of the year comes and it's not open, the dumps are going to go in the back roads. That's the issue. You should be able to get this fixed, but it's only been five months. See how long more it takes.

I'm out of time now.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Chair.

I move the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: It's moved that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed her to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

J HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, that An Act to Repeal the

Colonial Building Act, Bill 57, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 57, An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act." (Bill 57)

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

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

I will speak briefly. This is actually really, really what is a piece of housekeeping legislation. The *Colonial Building Act* was introduced in 1974 and the Colonial Building was designated a Provincial Historic Site. Later, when it was deemed a Provincial Historic Site under the decoration under section 17 of *The Historic Objects, Sites and Records Act, 1973*, and in 1985 the *Historic Resources Act* was introduced and declared, that any historic sites previously designated under the 1973 act were deemed to be Provincial Historic Sites.

The result is that the Colonial Building was declared a Provincial Historic Site under two statutes making the *Colonial Building Act* redundant. This bill is to simply repeal the *Colonial Building Act* and has no impact on the current designation of the Colonial Building as a Provincial Historic Site.

So, as I said in my opening, Mr. Speaker, this is truly a piece of housekeeping legislation and I look forward to any debate or questions that may arise.

Thank you.

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

I appreciate the minister bringing this piece of legislation to the floor of the House of Assembly, that's An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act, Bill 57.

The purpose is to repeal the *Colonial Building Act*, obviously, and the rationale behind it is that the former bill into the House was a duplicate of this bill in a previous sitting but did not receive Royal Assent.

There is a bill which already protects the Colonial Building from any harm or in any way diminishing its historic significance to the province; truly housekeeping in nature.

The bill was first established in 1974, updated in 1985 and now, through time, is deemed unnecessary because the property and the building are protected in other existing bills and legislation.

These previous bills, when first proclaimed, were designed to protect and preserve the Colonial Building for its historic and cultural significance to the province, events like the great riot of 1932, the ousting of the Squires administration, the National Convention debates from 1946 to 1948 and the seat of our Legislature for over 100 years. The reopening of the Colonial Building allows us to tell these stories and much more.

Thank you, Speaker, I look forward to questions in Committee.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: This is clearly a housekeeping bill. It's repealing something that is redundant and, obviously, that existed for quite some time. I kind of wondered how long it sat there before, I guess, someone realized there were two acts, but I'm glad that it's that.

We can go to Committee. For now, that's all I got to say on this.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation speaks now he will close debate.

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

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

I thank my colleague, the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue and the Member for Labrador West, for their intervention on this historic piece of legislation. But, again, it is important that we actually tidied up. The Colonial Building, as the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue so rightfully said, is a Provincial Historic Site and very significant in our history of Newfoundland and Labrador, something that we will highlight, quite frankly, this year as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of Confederation here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So, again, thank you very much for your interventions, gentlemen, and look forward to any questions in Committee.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 57 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

TABLE OFFICER (Russell): A bill, An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act, Bill 57.

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

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

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 57)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts, Bill 53, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 53, An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts." (Bill 53)

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to discuss Bill 53 entitled, An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts.

With the passing of Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, on September 8, 2022, King Charles ascended to the Throne. Both the demise of the *Crown Act* and the *Interpretation Act* provide for the transition between sovereigns in the province's legal regime; however, amending the *Queen's Counsel Act* is necessary to update the terminology and the name of the act.

The act establishes the precedents in the courts in the province and provides for the honorary title of Queen's Counsel, which recognizes senior lawyers for the merit and contribution to the legal community. The precedence in the court is symbolic of traditional order of appearance and place within the court.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, we have a Legal Appointments Board, established under this act to make recommendations of suitable persons to the Minister of Justice. Lawyers appointed must be in good standing with the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador and serve a minimum of 10 years at a bar in this country.

The purpose of this bill is simply to recognize the change in monarch and to modernize some of the language, including adding gender-neutral language. The bill maintains the Legal Appointments Board and continues the precedence of the court and this honorary title.

Thank you, Speaker, I look forward to any discussion on this bill.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

Yes, it would be accurate to say that this bill, as well, is really virtually housekeeping in nature. It's clearly a minor update, modernizing, as the minister stated. Gender-neutral language is being used. I

guess you could also say that it is really tidying up the language. It's certainly not substantive by any means and it would be accurately described, I would submit, as administrative in nature.

The bill itself is pretty self-explanatory, as the minister has stated. Some of the important things that are involved here relate to the Legal Appointments Board, as well as to the order of precedence when lawyers appear in the court in this province and emphasizes the importance of the role of the Minister of Justice in making appropriate appointments in consultation, as well, with the Law Society and members of the board.

So, again, we have no issues with respect to the Official Opposition with this bill and we support it.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Once again, it seems to be mostly like a housekeeping bill when it comes to some of the stuff, cleaning up, and the passing of Her Majesty and making a precedence of putting His Majesty's name there in the titles of things. It seems to be a housekeeping bill.

Other than that, we have no real concerns about it. We'll just take it when they go to Committee and ask some questions.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Justice and Public Safety speaks now, we'll close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker, and thanks for the support from the Member for Harbour Main and the Member for Labrador West.

I certainly appreciate the housekeeping items can move through the House quickly. I look forward to the questions in Committee.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 53 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

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

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 53)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 57, An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act.

SPEAKER: Did you have a seconder of that?

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 57, An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act.

A bill, "An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act." (Bill 57)

TABLE OFFICER: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you very much to the Member of Placentia - St. Mary's, I

appreciate it and I'm glad to see you in the Chair. You're doing a great job. Thank you.

The first question I'll ask the minister: Is there protection in existing bills or legislation that the building and its assets are protected for the people of our province?

S. CROCKER: I thank the Member for the question.

Yes, there is. The *Historic Resources Act* covers all historic sites in the province and that protection is there. This, again, is a duplication of the legislation but those protections are there for the Colonial Building, as they are for all provincial historical sites in the province.

CHAIR: The Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, what was the final cost of renovations to the Colonial Building?

CHAIR: The Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

S. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you for the question.

The chairs are done. The chairs are great. They're handcrafted by a great Newfoundland and Labrador heritage carpenter. If I could digress for a second and just come off, because the Member for Terra Nova brought me off for a moment, it's actually something that's very important in our province when you talk about Provincial Historical Sites and the value of our legacy carpenters and heritage carpenters because that is an art. Those chairs are art, quite frankly, and we're very proud of the investments at the Colonial Building.

The Colonial Building reopened in 2022, after renovation had started in 2009. It was

quite a long renovation, but it came in on budget at approximately \$23.4 million. Just slightly under \$15 million were provincial government money and just under \$9 million was federal investment in the Colonial Building.

CHAIR: No further questions?

The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Just my one question adding to this. Is the act that is currently protecting historic sites that we're getting rid of, or repealing this old duplication act, the current act that's protecting sites, is there any planned review for the current holding act for all our historic sites? Is there a planned review or update of that act coming down the pipe?

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

S. CROCKER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

To the Member for Labrador West, that's not something that we're looking at, at this time. Obviously, we're always reviewing our legislation, but the current act, the act that the Colonial Building now falls under, which it already fell under, does a very good job in protecting our Provincial Historic Sites, which is extremely important that we do that. But, again, at this point in time, the act does protect our Provincial Historic Sites quite fine.

CHAIR: No further questions?

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

TABLE OFFICER: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

TABLE OFFICER: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in legislative session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

TABLE OFFICER: A bill, An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act, Bill 57.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 57.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 57.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 57 without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and

directed that Bill 57 be carried without amendment.

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.

When shall the report be received?

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 5.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's be appointed Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no speakers, is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: I move, seconded by the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.