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Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

In the public gallery today, I would like to welcome individuals from WorkplaceNL, which is the subject of a Ministerial Statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, Corner Brook, Fogo Island - Cape Freels, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune and Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, from March 8 to 14, 321 athletes, including myself, from 21 communities gathered in Happy Valley-Goose Bay for the Labrador Winter Games. Since 1983, those Olympics in the North, affectionately known as the Friendship Games, have celebrated not only sport and sportsmanship but also the rich cultural traditions of Labrador. They continue to bring Labradorians together, fostering pride, connection and belonging.

This year's energy was incredible with strong attendance and record-breaking sponsorship exceeding \$250,000. The inaugural torch relay was also a great success, connecting hundreds across 23 communities in Labrador. Athletes performed at an exceptional level.

Christopher Penny of Charlottetown broke the one-foot high kick record kicking at nine feet three inches, while Claire Sainsbury of

Cartwright set a new mark and went over the rope more than 60 times.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: A heartfelt thank you to Pauline Russell, the board, volunteers and sponsors, and I especially want to extend my thanks and appreciation to the Town of Happy Valley-Goose Bay and 5 Wing who, without their support, the games would not be possible.

Congratulations to all participants. You've made your communities proud. Some went home with medals and we all went home with beautiful memories.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize and congratulate Branch 13 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Corner Brook on their recent bi-annual veterans' dinner. It was a meaningful event that brought together veterans, families and community members in a spirit of gratitude and remembrance.

This gathering was more than a meal; it was a powerful tribute to the men and women who have served our country with courage and sacrifice. Events like this ensure that their contributions are never forgotten and that their stories continue to be shared in future generations.

Veterans are the ultimate public servants and this event was an important reminder to everyone of the privilege that we enjoy as Canadians. Our veterans have done so much, but they continue to do so much. Whether it is supporting veterans and their families, organizing commemorative events or contributing to our downtown Corner Brook tourism efforts, Branch 13 makes important impacts on our community. Their

efforts embody the very best of community service and volunteerism.

To the members of Branch 13, thank you for your continued service and commitment to honouring our veterans and strengthening our community.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize Beothic Fish Processors Limited.

Beothic Fish Processors Limited, a Newfoundland company, operates in Bonavista Bay with their head office and processing facility in the community of Valleyfield. Beothic processes groundfish, shellfish and pelagic species into a variety of products and forms and utilizes a variety of marketing channels and techniques to market products internationally. They have personnel who are always monitoring issues to ensure customer satisfaction.

Beothic operates its Valleyfield facility under very stringent quality guidance and processes all raw material soon after it is landed. They strive to maintain the quality of the raw materials from the time it leaves the water to final product. Beothic sources raw material from approximately 900 independent fish harvesters from all over the province and employs 325 unionized workers and 75 non-unionized local workers. Beothic pays particular attention to customers' needs, packaging products of the highest quality to precise market specifications. They are a growing company and are always looking at the improvements to processing methods, and are willing to try new species and products.

I ask all Members to join with me today in recognizing Beothic Fish Processors

Limited's contribution to the seafood industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Mr. Max Taylor of Boxey for his unwavering dedication to volunteering in his community and beyond.

A volunteer is someone who chooses to serve, not for recognition, not for reward, but because they care. It's about stepping forward when something needs to be done even when no one asks. Max Taylor served his community for many years on council as mayor, Lions Club member, managing and operating the ambulance service for many South Coast communities and president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Community Ambulance Operators Association.

Volunteering isn't always easy. It requires time, sacrifice and a deep sense of care for others, and he has shown all of that time and time again. One example that comes to mind is making over 800 fish cakes as a fundraiser to support the annual South Coast Arts Festival in St. Jacques. His leadership has helped guide his community, his compassion has supported those in need and his generosity of spirit has inspired those around him. His love for this family is like no other.

Personally, I sincerely thank him for his leadership, his friendship, mentorship and guidance over the years. Please join me in thanking Max Taylor for his years of service to his community and province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand today to congratulate three outstanding young women from my district, Kelsey Fifield, Paige Morgan and Sierra

Murphy of Ascencion Collegiate, on receiving the 100th Anniversary of Women Achieving the Right to Vote and Hold Public Office Scholarship.

This scholarship is an initiative that I had the privilege of introducing last May as the Minister of Women and Gender Equality. It is intended to be a reminder that democracy flourishes when all voices are included and when every individual has a seat at the table. Each of these young women have demonstrated leadership, dedication and a strong commitment to, not only their school, but their community. Through their involvement in academics, the arts, volunteerism and student leadership, they are already making meaningful contributions and setting an example for their peers.

Speaker, these young women represent the values that are at the heart of a strong and healthy democracy and are setting the stage for the next generation of leaders here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Kelsey, Paige and Sierra, as well as all other recipients on this well deserved recognition and in wishing them continued success in the years ahead.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, as Minister of Labrador Affairs, I am honoured to stand here today to recognize March 31 as Labrador Flag Day.

As a Labradorian, I can tell you all how proud Labradorians are of our flag; we have been since it flew in March 1974. Labradorian Michael S. Martin designed this

powerful symbol that represents Labrador's geography, cultures and communities.

Our flag reflects the beauty of the Big Land with its colours representing the snow, the water and the land. The growing sprig of black spruce calls out the hope and tenacity of our people that call Labrador home. The Labrador flag is a proud reminder to us all that this majestic land is distinct and is a vital part of our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, our new government recognizes that Labrador has unique challenges and tremendous opportunities. To all those who call Labrador home, know this: We are listening to you and will take action to make life more affordable, provide better health care and make communities safer for all Labradorians.

Today and every day we celebrate our beautiful flag, and we will continue to honour everything it stands for, the past, the present and future of our homeland, Labrador. To honour this occasion this evening, Confederation Building will be lit in the colours of the Labrador Flag and our flag will proudly fly in front of the Confederation Building.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement.

I, too – and everyone on this side is wearing the beautiful Labrador Flag today – join the minister in recognizing Labrador Flag Day and this powerful symbol that unites Labradorians.

Our flag tells a story of resilience, pride and deep connection to the land, and that pride is as strong today as when it first flew in 1974. This past summer, I had the tremendous privilege of presenting Mr.

Michael Martin, the designer of the Labrador Flag, with the Confederation 75th Anniversary Medal as a thank you for uniting Labradorians under the flag for the past 52 years.

While we celebrate our culture, heritage, strength and resilience, we also have to be honest about the reality many Labradorians are facing. Today, as the minister marks Labrador Flag Day, vital supports that benefit Labradorians, the Labrador Air Access Program and Hope Air, are set to expire with no clear plan to continue. For many in Labrador air travel isn't a luxury, it is a lifeline. So while we join the minister in celebrating the flag, we also call for action to support the residents of the Big Land because Labradorians refuse to be forgotten.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for the advance copy of the statement.

We, too, would like to take this opportunity to celebrate Labrador and its wonderful flag, and call on meaningful action to support its proud and resilient people. That is why we remind this House today of MHA Brown's PMR last spring which saw Members vote unanimously in support of an improved air access and affordable ticket prices.

We once again call on the government to work with Indigenous partners, municipalities, businesses and their federal counterparts to implement a plan that reduces cost and increases accessibility to air travel to and from and within Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize a milestone in our province's history for workers' compensation and safe and healthy workplaces; 2026 is the 75th anniversary of WorkplaceNL.

On April 1, 1951, the Workmen's Compensation Commission first opened its doors, laying the foundation for the workers' compensation system we have today. Since then, WorkplaceNL has played a vital role in protecting workers, supporting recovery from injury or illness and promoting safer workplaces across Newfoundland and Labrador.

In 1951, the lost time injury rate in our province was three times higher than it is today; 3.82 injured per 100 workers compared to today at 1.2. That decrease reflects decades of prevention, education and collaboration. This did not happen by chance. This is the result of the dedication of WorkplaceNL staff, the cooperation of employers, the leadership of safety partners and the commitment of workers themselves.

When injury or illness strikes, WorkplaceNL steps up – let me say that again, WorkplaceNL steps up – to provide essential supports to help workers recover, return to work and to maintain financial security for themselves and their families.

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, I congratulate WorkplaceNL on 75 years of service and wish you continued success in the years ahead to protect our greatest resource, people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's West.

K. WHITE: Speaker, I'm happy to rise today to celebrate the 75th anniversary of WorkplaceNL.

For 75 years, WorkplaceNL has played a critical role in protecting workers, supporting recovery, and promoting safer workplaces across Newfoundland and Labrador. That is something all Members of this House can recognize and appreciate.

The progress we have seen, from significantly reduced injury rates to stronger workplace safety culture, did not happen by accident. It reflects decades of collaboration between workers, employers, safety partners and governments who understand that protecting workers must always be a priority.

Speaker, while we recognize this milestone, we must also know the work is not yet done. Workers continue to face challenges when it comes to safety, timely support and returning to work. So as we mark this milestone, we must remain focused on ensuring that WorkplaceNL is able to continue to modernize, remain responsive to workers needs, and uphold its core mission: protecting the people who built this province.

To the staff, partners and workers who have shaped WorkplaceNL over the past 75 years, thank you and congratulations.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement. Congratulations to the workers who have served WorkplaceNL for the past 75 years and worked to keep us all safe on the job.

But government can do more to support workplace safety and workers themselves when they are injured. In that spirit, we ask

that government increase the income replacement rate to 90 per cent, and in the interest of transparency, publish all OHS inspection reports on its website.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Just today, gas has gone up in this province at the pump by eight cents. Last night, this House had an opportunity to lower the cost of gas for people in our province, but the Conservatives chose not to do anything to help.

So I ask the Premier: Why won't he do what he knows is right, and lower the gas tax while prices continue to skyrocket for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, we all understand the situation that's happening in the Middle East and the war that's impacting not only the gas prices here in Newfoundland and Labrador, but all over the country and all over the world, for that matter.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, what we did yesterday was ensure that the gas tax would not go up, would stop immediately, it would not be increased and we put that in legislation. But what I can also tell you is that in Newfoundland and Labrador, we have the lowest gas tax of any province in the entire country, and the second lowest in diesel.

So what we ought to be at now and what I intend to do and we all should be taking part

in, is encouraging the federal government to do their part to lower gas prices across the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I'm glad I heard the Premier recognize and finally admit that the gas tax just stayed the same over the course of the next few days after passing the bill last night but, unfortunately, there was a motion on the table to make it lower, which is what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want. Now we hear today that the PUB has started making decisions on prices five days a week, instead of the usual once a week.

As I said, it's already gone up eight cents today. So can the Premier explain to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians why he failed to implement legislation to deal with rising prices and the extraordinary measures now being taken by the PUB?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I alluded to in my first answer, this is not a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador problem. We have addressed the issue with gas tax in Newfoundland and Labrador by ensuring that it remains the lowest provincial gas tax in the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: The second lowest gas tax on diesel in the entire country. What we need now is the federal government to do their part, because every single province in Canada is hurt and being impacted and every person in Canada and in Newfoundland and Labrador has been impacted by these high prices and the federal government needs to step up and do their part.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I know this House of Assembly is responsible for solutions that are made right here in Newfoundland and Labrador and there was a solution on the table last night that the Conservatives refused to acknowledge and to vote for.

So I ask the Premier: Why is he waiting for other provinces and the federal government to do what is his job? The same way Nova Scotia is getting ahead of us in defence spending; the same way Nova Scotia is getting ahead of us with deals with Quebec on energy.

Why won't the Premier focus on what's right for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and deliver a solution in this House of Assembly for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I can assure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that's exactly what we're doing. We're focused on doing the work before we make the announcements and what we're focused on is what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador told us that they want to see the focus on: better health care, lower taxes and safer communities. We're continuing to deliver them.

In our upcoming budget, Speaker, you will see the results of that and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador will see more money in their pockets.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think we already know that one of those platforms was a fail because they had an

opportunity to have a lower tax, yesterday, but they voted for the tax we implemented four years ago.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: We know how much the Premier and his Energy Minister admire and have been praising the federal Liberal government under Primer Minister Carney, yet the minister has not signed on to the federal government's one project, one review agreement, which will cut red tape on major projects. All of the other Atlantic provinces have done it. They've signed on.

Why is our minister leaving Newfoundland and Labrador behind again?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This province has been left behind for 10 years. October the 14th, that changed. We are not going to be left behind ever again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: This previous government had an opportunity to sign onto that, and we are signing onto it; but here's what else we're doing. We're lobbying to make sure that our offshore is included in that, not just something that we can't control, something that the feds deserve the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – they need to look after our offshore, the same as we do on our onshore.

So we are a part of that. We will continue to be a part of that. Projects are moving faster now than they've ever happened before, and they've failed in the past.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, we certainly weren't left behind when we signed a \$5.2-billion rate mitigation plan to keep electricity rates down –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: – and we certainly weren't left behind when we signed a \$227-billion MOU, which they are about to leave behind.

Speaker, the Premier keeps saying he wants to wait for his biased review panel. One of the members of that panel has already come out publicly against the MOU, and the other is the lead architect of the Muskrat Falls boondoggle. The Minister of Energy admitted in the House recently that the election was actually a referendum on the MOU.

How can the government expect anyone to believe what this panel says when and if we finally see a report for them – if we ever see it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll remind the Member about pharmacare, which they didn't sign onto. I'll also remind him that the one member that is not on that Committee anymore used to be the former premier's boss and should never have been on that Committee. There has been – who made decisions prior to the debate in the House of Assembly, which, again, was not even a debate because they had already signed the document.

It was pushed because this Premier fought for it to come into the House. It was always a misled project from the beginning. It will be delivered by this Premier and this government for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We will be the primary beneficiaries. We know that, and it will happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaking of misguided, let's talk about Muskrat Falls. We can have that conversation any time you want.

As for the MOU, the day it was signed, it was posted online for everyone to see. We still haven't seen the Bay du Nord deal, which was signed, let alone debate it, so we don't know what's in there.

Speaker, it's alarming to hear that the Premier has stopped all negotiations and contact with Quebec while his biased review is ongoing and won't say what he intends to do after the report, one way or another. Will there be a referendum? We don't know. Will we see what's in the deal? We don't know.

What is the Premier's plan or are we going to squander yet another deal on the Lower Churchill?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

L. PARROTT: Ten years, Mr. Speaker – 10 years – this government didn't put one benefits agreement online – not one benefits agreement.

As a matter of fact, they did things like Snow's Lane, sole-sourced a penitentiary. They did all kinds of underhanded stuff which they never made public and now they're here talking about an agreement that has four proponents: BP, Equinor, OilCo, Newfoundland and Labrador government. We're in a process of making sure that this agreement is made public. It has to go through the process to make sure that there are no commercial sensitives. It will be made public.

As for Muskrat Falls, these guys couldn't deliver. They couldn't build it. They didn't know what they were doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Speaker, bridge work is a focus in the roads plan this year announced by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. The Isle aux Morts brook bridge on Route 470 continues to see a drop in weight restrictions, which we can assume is due to safety concerns.

Can the minister assure the residents of my district that any concerns with this bridge are being addressed?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Member opposite – I want to inform the House actually – we have 1,184 bridges in the province. We have a very qualified staff over there to assess every bridge. There is no bridge in this province that people are using – if it's unsafe, it's closed. If there are restrictions on it, they're posted.

Bridge replacements are happening year over year. There are a lot of bridges in the roads plan this year and the remaining in the coming years, but with 1,184 bridges, it's an endless list. We are on top of it and our staff are doing a great job of it.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

The Minister of TI said yesterday, "I can't commit to what has been committed to in

the previous administration... Is it on the list? Yes. Is there a decision made? No.”

Minister, are you saying that you don't plan to complete the projects just because they're in Liberal districts?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I say to the Member opposite, I plan to complete the roads program and the roads that are required. The roads in need, we will fix them regardless of what district they're in, but I'll repeat, people need to realize for 10 years PC district roads were neglected beyond. I've got that message loud and clear from the industry, from officials and I have planned on bringing a balanced approach. Next year or the year after, when we get it balanced out, everyone will get it.

There are Liberal districts getting roadwork, believe it or not, but they're just looking at their own. The Member opposite has had an atrocious amount of roadwork. One of the highest amounts in the province, I've been told. So I think she's done quite well and, stay tuned, she may get some down the road, but right now we've got to spread it out across the province.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, we hear the government talking about spending smarter, yet the culverts are currently in the ground on Route 100 between Branch and St. Bride's and the minister has decided to not complete the paving of the road.

The Minister of Transportation said yesterday it's not about cancelling; if that's

true, can he explain how leaving this project incomplete is not cancelling?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, they are challenging. We have 10,000 kilometres of road in the province, and they're picking out bits and pieces all over the place. I'm trying my best here.

If I'm not mistaken, the piece that she's referring to, the contractor pulled out. They wouldn't do that section of road. They pulled out. Now, going back there is going to cost an excessive amount of money. I'm aware of that section actually, and I've talked to people in that community. It's a bit of a struggle right now, but it's not about cancelling. That's not where we are. We have to spend wisely and spend smarter, and we will do our best.

Right now, that road is driveable. Will it be paved? If we can find a way to get it paved at a reasonable price, sure we'll go ahead and do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, when I asked the Minister of Transportation a question about his roads plan yesterday, he said their administration wanted safer communities. A previous roads plan identified resurfacing and rehab work on a key stretch of Route 90, but this has now been cancelled.

Minister, why are you compromising safety?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, we campaigned on a promise of safer communities, and we will deliver on safer communities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: But I think, in fairness, the Member opposite and her other colleagues need to realize there are 40 districts in the province, not 15 and that has to be looked after in that light.

Right now we're trying to find balance, and I'll continue to say that because that's exactly what I'm doing. It's not picking one over another; it's trying to find a balance. There are other areas in the province that need attention.

These Members opposite have done quite well – and I tell you quite well – over the years. People should go back and look at the roads program, because they've done really well. Their colleagues probably should look at the roads program and their roads and wonder why they got so much and they never got as much. That's what I think they need to do.

Internally, we're going to continue to keep our communities safe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Speaker, to continue with this theme, the minister stood in this House yesterday and he did say that his government is not about cancelling.

Can he explain why he cancelled Winterland Road, Route 220 to St. Lawrence, Little Bay East to Harbour Mille, Point May to Fortune and Lord's Cove to Lamaline, all located in the District of Burin - Grand Bank?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, it's unfortunate when you get Members up listing off the roads that are not done, but they never list what they had done. There's a problem down in some areas of the province – it's not about the cancelling. If I'm not mistaken, some of the areas that the Member opposite is talking about, it was a tender that came in at a very high price and it was found that the department had to cancel it. Not me, the tender was flawed. The department actually cancelled the tender down in the Member's district; it wasn't me. And it wasn't the department, it was done because the tender was inaccurate. They had no choice.

So, to the Member talking about that, maybe we need to go back and retender, but right now, again, we're trying to do a balanced approach, and we will have safer communities for all of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: I don't think we should be blaming bureaucrats for these mistakes at all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: But, you know, when I look at these roads as well, children travel by school bus on these roads.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. PIKE: Speaker, the minister said his administration wanted safer communities.

Can the minister confirm today, here, on record, that cancelling these projects doesn't affect the safety of drivers in my district?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I got a question. We've been here for five months. They were there for 10 years. Were these roads not safe five months ago or last year? When did they become unsafe, last week? Give me a break. You've got a government that was in power for 10 years, and now they're complaining five months later for what they forgot to do for 10 years.

That's not my problem. I will make sure our roads are safe –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: – our roads are safe for all of us, Speaker, not just a select few – all of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the –

L. DEMPSTER: Here we go, not his problem, Speaker.

People are –

SPEAKER: I haven't identified you yet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: Not his problem, Speaker. I guess the people are expecting too much again, and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: – I'm not choosing bits and pieces. The minister said there are 40 districts. I'm going to ask about four.

People are angry. This year, there are zero dollars going into Labrador in roadwork, and in the 10 years we were there, we had a lot of fixing up to do after 10 or 12 years of Tory government. Tory times are tough times.

Can the minister explain to the people of Labrador why we got goose egg this year in roadwork?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Trans-Labrador Highway cost in excess of \$1 billion. We have a –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: – a north coast ferry service that costs hundreds of millions. Labrador is very important to the people of this province and this government. It's very important. We have three Members on our side from the Big Land.

AN HON. MEMBER: There was no roadwork.

B. PETTEN: Listen here, the roadwork was an issue for everybody –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Do you want me to start naming Members? Because I will.

Order!

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I have a lot of expression from my colleagues. They needed brush cutting; it was more important than the pavement to a lot – not important, but right now the priority was brush cutting. The Member opposite has had more than her fair share of roadwork. She had 10 years to do what she accomplished and now she wants me to do it in five months.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Speaker, yesterday I asked the Minister of Tourism about the Johnson Geo Centre. First, she said it rested with the university; then, when pressed about its impact on tourism, she claimed, like I said, we are working with Memorial University, but she hadn't actually said that.

Can the minister explain which version is true? Is she involved, or not?

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

A. BARBOUR: Speaker, the Geo Centre is owned by Memorial University; it is listed on the Tourism website, as everything else is. Many things are. Airbnb is on there. There are many, many things listed on our Tourism website.

If the Geo Centre goes up for sale, we will work with the new owners. If Memorial University decides to keep it, we will work with Memorial University. Let's just wait and see what happens.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Speaker.

So I guess that's no, they are not currently working with Memorial University.

Porter Airlines has introduced a fuel surcharge, due to rising oil prices, thereby making it more expensive for tourists to get to Newfoundland and Labrador.

What is the minister's plan to deal with this risk to the tourism industry?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, we will look at anything that will provide an advantage for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. If it means to invest in something to make access to Newfoundland and Labrador much better, if it means investing in something to make the life more affordable for residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, you can count on this side making sure that we make the right decisions for the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, a return trip from Wabush to St. John's this weekend cost \$1,400; from Nain to St. John's, \$2,700. Our Liberal government introduced the Labrador Air Access Program to help make travel more affordable but it ends today.

I ask the Premier: Can you explain, Sir, to the residents of Labrador, why there will be no discounted airfare for Labradorians after today?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

L. EVANS: Speaker, the way that Air Access subsidy was rolled out was misleading to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. People on the Island thought we were getting actually a discounted rate; we weren't. We were getting access to two subsidized tickets a year, and it was very, very difficult to get those tickets when we needed them for travel.

In actual fact, we have to do things better. We have to bring down the cost of affordability for people who want to travel, and we are doing that. The Member knows that we are preparing a budget. We have things in the budget that are going to address the real problems regarding air access.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, how long will people have to wait? There's a gap right now. People flying out for Easter from Lab West, \$4,500.

And ask the 1,000 people who used that program how useful that program was that we put in –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: – ask them, 1,000 people.

Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: – over 250 physicians have signed a petition warning that the simultaneous roll out of CorCare and CorCare link will reduce patient access to care.

Will the minister commit today to a staggered implementation starting with CorCare only, as is requested by the front-line physicians?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, we took government in October; we were sworn in. I was sworn in as Minister of Health, and one of the things that I'm doing different as Minister of Health is actually reaching out and working with the doctors to make sure that their concerns are addressed.

In actual fact, Speaker, the way it was intended to be rolled out, it was going to alienate family doctors. We were going to lose a lot of family doctors because of the way they were rolling it out.

We are working with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services and the physicians. We are actually going to save positions. We are going to do things different. What we're going to see in terms of government is government working with doctors.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I don't know who the minister is talking to but physicians are telling us that their feedback has not resulted in meaningful changes to this roll out and there is a risk to patient safety.

Why has the minister allowed this implementation to proceed without listening to front-line providers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, what I hear from doctors, family doctors, physicians, it's really disturbing the way they've been treated under the previous government and under the previous administration. I hear the word being bullied – and the journalists up there, they've heard it. I've heard it when I'm driving down the road, listening to the radio. Also is not being able to think outside the box, too rigid.

We've only been in government now for, what, six months. We've already turned the corner. We will work with physicians. We will work with nurses. We will work with the agencies. We will work with the unions. We're going to do government differently. We're going to deliver.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. KORAB: Thank you, Speaker.

We haven't had a very good response here of getting actual answers, but I have confidence in the Housing Minister here.

The government's Conservative cousins in Ontario work with the federal Carney Liberals to remove HST on new homes, not just for first-time homebuyers, in order to encourage new home construction and make ownership more affordable.

Will the Minister of Housing commit to a similar program here in Newfoundland and Labrador to help residents?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being, and Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite for the question. I will make one correction. It's a Progressive Conservative government (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Speaker, as the Minister of Housing, we are looking at every option that we can to work with the people of the province to make life better, to make housing better for people in our province.

I will take that away. We must have that conversation. My staff and I have discussed it already but I'll certainly have that discussion and let the Member opposite know that we'll have a plan for the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Labrador Affairs, when she was over here, lobbied hard to have the freight boat

between the Island and the Coast of Labrador. She lobbied hard and asked me many times.

So I'll ask the Minister of TI or her: When are you returning the freight boat between the Island and the Coast of Labrador, now that you're around the Cabinet table?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, we've had many conversations about that issue actually uprising. There's a lot of a freight that has to get up the coast this year, we've already made it clear. My colleague has done a great job of that, my colleague from Torngat Mountains, and she has advocated.

We're working actually, trying to get extra runs put on. The middle of June it usually starts, but the minute the ice can break, we're going to try to get earlier. We're going to put another boat there, hopefully another ferry vessel, to get the freight up there, because we know it's very important to have it up the coast for this coming season and my colleague has done a great job advocating for the Big Land, Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, last night the government invoked closure and passed legislation to make the gas tax reduction permanent. While many people drive, many do not, but everyone must heat their home. We also know from the story of the gentleman who walked into the ambulatory health hub, many cannot afford to do so.

I ask the Premier: Now that he has passed the gas tax, will he commit to removing the provincial portion of the HST on all forms of

home heating, actually cut the tax and help people heat their homes?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, it's an opportunity for me, when they talk about the permanent gas tax, that they said, well, they would have done it; but did they do it in 2022 – make it permanent?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

C. PARDY: Did they do it in 2023?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

C. PARDY: How about 2024?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: 2025?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: No.

C. PARDY: I can tell you from the budget, there was no planning to have it permanently reduced this year.

The Leader of the Third Party, we will look at every affordability measure we possibly could. Every affordability measure to offer supports for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Wish I had a little more time but either way –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I only want to hear the hon. Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: I remind the Minister of Finance that we weren't in power to make those decisions, but thank you for assuming we are a government.

However, if we were, not only would we put the measures in, but we would have also reduced the HST of home heating. That's one thing we would have done.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: No, not yet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: Speaker, it mystifies me why the party that has lower taxes as the middle name of its slogan and promotes it as an affordability measure is so reluctant to help people heat their homes. While people may be able to park their cars and drive less, they do not have the same flexibility when it comes to heating their home.

So I ask the Premier –

SPEAKER: Question.

J. DINN: – why won't he put the same effort into lowering people's heating bills that he put into maintaining the gas tax?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: When we debated yesterday on keeping the gas tax permanent, there wasn't a qualification of what you were asking for in your amendment to make it pertinent and believable for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: The Member for Ferryland filled up his vehicle, 50 litres –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: – in his Chevy Equinox and, with your one cent further reduction, he would have saved 50 cents, and that has value. That has value.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands said yesterday that we were left with a huge deficit in this province and a debt, and I would say we've got to make sure we give –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: I would just like to remind the minister that we're over here. The NDP are over here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, when asked about rent control, the minister responsible said they couldn't make promises due to budgetary restraints.

I ask the minister: What costs more, people being priced out of their homes and ending up homeless, forced to go to for-profit shelters, hospital ERs or the justice system; or spending the money to hire staff to implement rent controls?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I think I have to address the passion here, anybody in the gallery must hear it, but I'm also passionate about housing, passionate about people, passionate about solutions and how we find those solutions.

It's evident, Speaker, there are a lot of housing issues, there are a lot of rental issues. When I was mayor I dealt with it quite often. I'm here to serve the people in their best interest. I'm going to continue to meet with stakeholders, as I have. I'm up for ideas. I'm not here to bash. I'm going to continue to serve people in the best interest, and I'm going to do it progressively and conservatively for all of us.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi for a quick question.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

In 2024, the Premier said the social worker shortage reflects a struggling health care system. Now, with a 20 per cent cut in seats in Memorial University's social work program, the situation is getting worse. With vacancies and overwhelming caseloads already impacting social workers and the care they deliver, I ask the Premier: What action will this government take to address the shortage of social workers?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

This is deeply important. We, as a Progressive Conservative government, deeply value our social workers here in the province. In my Department of Social Supports and Well-Being, we have over 300 social workers working day in and day out for the people of our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: It is truly saddening that we have less seats at Memorial University now for social workers. My department and our government will continue to lobby to have more seats available because we know the importance. We fully know the importance of social workers in our province, and I'll do whatever I can to make sure that we have enough to serve the people.

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 Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm pleased to stand in the House today and table the '26-'28 strategic plan for the Oil and Gas Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents.

L. PARROTT: I'm further pleased to stand here today and table the '26-'28 strategic plan for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

L. O'DRISCOLL: I rise in this hon. House today to table the '26-'28 multi-year activity plans for the following entities: Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board and the Appeal Board of the Professional Fish Harvesters Certification Board.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents.

The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

M. GOOSNEY: Speaker, here today in this hon. House, I want to table one document.

In accordance with section 5 of the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, I hereby table the 2026-2028 strategic plan for WorkplaceNL.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. FORSEY: Thank you.

Speaker, I rise today in this hon. House to table the 2026-2028 multi-year activity plan for the Chicken Farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: – pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling one Order-in-Council relating to funding pre-commitments for fiscal years 2026-27 to 2030-31.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, under the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, paragraph 7(7)(a), it is with pleasure that I table the Government Money Purchase Pension Plan Committee action plan for 2026-2028.

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to stand again.

Under the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, again, paragraph 7(7)(a), it is with pleasure that I table the Government Money Purchase Pension Plan Committee activity plan for 2026-2028.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The Table is starting to get full.

Are there any further documents?

AN HON. MEMBER: Table the Bay du Nord agreement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Today, this petition is calling for well needed roadwork in Bishop's Cove in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

WHEREAS the recently announced Roads Plan by the Conservative government features a decrease in funding by \$66 million from last year's Roads Plan; and

WHEREAS the community of Bishop's Cove requires road maintenance throughout the entire community including culvert replacement – deteriorated culverts; ditching – overgrown ditches leading to flooding due to accumulation of debris; paving – deplorable road conditions are a safety issue – potholes, cracking and erosion; and cribbing replacement.

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 address the road deficiencies throughout Bishop's Cove to ensure safety is put first for the travellers, pedestrians and all residents of its roads.

As we know, and the Member did say earlier, I managed to get some good work, secure some good work in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. I make no apologies for that. I worked good and hard for that for 10 years to get the work and secure the funding that, of course, was awarded to my district. I'm going to keep doing that. As long as I'm elected and I'm standing here in this House of Assembly, I'm certainly going to do that.

That said, though, Bishop's Cove in the community is in desperate need of new roadwork and paving. We saw, unfortunately, a decrease in over \$60 million, and we ask why? It was brought up again in Question Period, what districts are getting it? The Member even makes no denial about it to say that the PC districts are going to now avail of some paving.

That said, it's about safety and we do know that there is significant paving needed and road replacement and work needed in the town of Bishop's Cove. That said, we are getting a guide rail replaced that was desperately needed for some long time. I took a lot of time to advocate and work with the community on this; that's finally happening. It has gone to a public tendering as it is a bigger job that the local depot employees can't handle. It went outside to an outside contract.

That's happening now when weather permits, but again, I will ask the minister to reconsider for work for Bishop's Cove. There are other areas in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave District, such as the Southside Road in Harbour Grace, as well as roads in Port de Grave – Blow Me Down Road is in need, as well as Dawe's Road.

That said, yes, we got some good roadwork, but there's always room for improvements, and again I'm calling on the minister to reconsider his roadworks plan and include all communities throughout the entire province for all districts, for all of us; in particular, in this particular petition, for Bishop's Cove.

I look forward to standing again, Speaker, to petition this.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

Increase for seniors, this petition deals with. These are the reasons and background for the petition:

WHEREAS seniors have built our communities and society during their working lives; and

WHEREAS many seniors, especially those living on fixed incomes, are disproportionately impacted by the increasing cost of living; and

WHEREAS many seniors have limited options to address the cost-of-living challenges such as housing, energy and medications; and

WHEREAS seniors should be supported and able to enjoy their senior years;

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 provide the necessary funding to implement changes that specifically address seniors, including: increasing the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit, doubling the Aging Well at Home Grant from \$400 to \$800 per month, double the Caregiver Benefit from \$400 to \$800 per month and increase all thresholds for senior programming.

Speaker, the reason for that petition is that when I go into the district, I meet with a lot of seniors' groups, as you all do in this House of Assembly. Some of the biggest things that they want, some of the most important things in their lives, are home improvement and home modification thresholds. These thresholds have to be increased to allow our seniors to be able to make the necessary modifications to their homes that they require because of some health issue.

Their home improvement thresholds need to be looked at as well. I know seniors, for example, that used up their total amount of funding to put shingles on their roof. Now they need windows and doors; there's no money there. They have to wait for seven more years. All this needs to be looked at. All of this needs to be on the table.

The threshold in order to get into seniors' housing, that needs to be changed to allow seniors with a higher income to move into these houses because the houses that they're in are too big for them. They're too hard to heat. Seniors are afraid to get any extra money coming in because they're afraid that they may lose their drug cards. We need to look at all of these thresholds and the quicker we do it, the better.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition that I will table on rental increase limitations. These are the reasons for this petition:

A lack of supply of rental units, coupled with increased demand has resulted in profiteering by some 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.

I so table this petition.

Speaker, if I could just say a few things. The minister, in response formerly, had referenced dialogue with stakeholders. I'm just wondering who are these stakeholders? Are the stakeholders the renters? Are they the private market?

I'm not quite sure who those individuals would be, but there's obviously a great concern happening when we have constituents – and I have people contacting me right at this moment – eight to 10 people, who are going to be unhoused. They are kicked out because the house is going to be gentrified and, as a result of that, the rents are going to be jacked up to twice the rate.

We are seeing, in the market, when we hear the Real Estate Association discussing they can't keep up with it. It's just unbelievable. Real estate and rental leasing accounts for 13 per cent of the Canada's GDP, the largest single industry in the country, but the average and median rents have increased 30 per cent since 2020. Mostly driven by large price surges in 2023 and 2024.

Rent control is something that people are calling for so that people can be assured that – not only those that are homeless. These are people who actually have a roof over their heads who are now at risk.

So I so table.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3.

I move, seconded by the Deputy House Leader, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 31.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do not adjourn today, March 31, at 5:30 p.m.

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 is carried.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I move, seconded by the Member for St. John's Centre, the following resolution:

WHEREAS a report by the Auditor General respecting Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has been tabled; and

WHEREAS the report identifies significant findings requiring –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I think you had to select from the Order Paper.

J. WALL: Oh, my apologies.

Motion 1.

My apologies, Speaker.

SPEAKER: No worries.

We just want to get it right for *Hansard*.

J. WALL: We will get it right for *Hansard*, that is very important. We thank the staff at *Hansard* for doing such a great job, day in and day out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: There are days they have difficulty when the House is in, and I can tell you that, but we thank them for it.

SPEAKER: Go ahead.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. Member for St. John's Centre, the following resolution:

WHEREAS a report by the Auditor General respecting Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has been tabled; and

WHEREAS the report identifies significant findings requiring government action;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House express its support for this government's commitment to fixing long-standing systemic issues identified in the report, ensuring they are not repeated, and encourage the government to take immediate and decisive action to address its findings and strengthen accountability in housing services.

Speaker, this is the resolution that will be debated in this hon. House today.

SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader to start the debate.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I appreciate that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Speaker, it is an honour to rise and move this resolution respecting the report of the Auditor General on

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

I want to begin by being very clear, we welcome this report. I've said that publicly. I've said that in the House and I want to say it again. We welcome this report. We accept its findings. We agree that action is required.

This is what the resolution is about: It is about acknowledging the findings of the Auditor General, supporting immediate and decisive action, and committing, as a government and as a House of Assembly, to ensuring these issues are not repeated, because, Speaker, it's very important to say that it's simply not a procedural exercise; this is about people. It is about the effectiveness of a system that thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians rely on every single day.

Speaker, I can assure you, as I said to the media outside, that I stand here, honoured to do so, but realize that governments do change. This is above politics. I want to ensure that we have this correct going forward for governments to come with respect to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report is thorough, it's detailed and it's clear in its conclusions. It identifies significant issues in how housing services have been delivered, issues related to governance and oversight, procurement practices, maintenance and repairs and consistency in decision making. These are not isolated findings. These are in the AG's report for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

They point to broader systemic challenges; challenges that affect how decisions were made, how resources were allocated and, ultimately, how services were delivered. While much of this report speaks in terms of process and policy, the impacts are not abstract. They are real. They are felt by people. They are tangible. They are felt by

people waiting for housing. They are felt by people living in units requiring repair. They are felt by people navigating a system that has not always been as responsive or as predictable as it should have been.

This is why this matters, because housing is not just another government program. I've spoken to it many times about the personal aspect, the personal touch, the human touch that the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has when it does its work in fulfilling its mandate. It's foundational. It's about safety. It's about stability. It's about dignity.

Mr. Speaker, it's important to realize and that we understand that the people of the province who are listening to this debate today understand how we arrived at this point; because we are serious about fixing this system, we must be honest about what contributed to the challenges identified in the report. They certainly developed over time. They reflect a system that became increasingly reactive rather than being proactive. It did not always operate with clear, consistent oversight and it lacked the level of structured accountability required for a program of such importance.

In some cases, processes were not even followed when they should have been. In others, decisions were made without clear frameworks or without a consistent application and, over time, those gaps compounded. The result was a system that was not performing as effectively as it should have been for the people of the province who depend on it most.

This report was from 2021 to 2025. Under the previous administration, there was a lack of a plan and I heard that from, I believe it was 68 stakeholders that I met with since I came into this office. They looked at me, and at one point was being patronized, when they smiled and said, Minister, you're the seventh minister we've dealt with in the last two years. I understand the frustration that the people of the province are feeling when it comes to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

This is a report card, Mr. Speaker, and I want to be very clear, it's not on the hard-working staff and public servants that we have.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I've met with them. I've spoken with them. I've sat down and listened to them. This is not on their backs.

Mr. Speaker, today I look at it as a key turning point in our province, and I sincerely mean that. I'm honoured and privileged to serve at the discretion of the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I'm honoured that I'm chosen to be in Social Supports and Well-Being, and Minister Responsible for Housing. It is a heavy load, I can assure the people of the province of that, but I'm excited at the same time to make sure that this work is done from the Auditor General's report.

Speaker, this is where the focus of the debate must be today because, while the report identifies the many problems from 2021 to 2025, it is now our responsibility to deliver solutions. I'm happy to say that work is currently underway. We are taking immediate and decisive action to address the findings of the Auditor General's report and to strengthen the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

We will be strengthening governance and oversight. We are establishing clear lines of responsibility, defining accountability at every level and improved monitoring of decisions and outcomes, because a system without clear accountability cannot deliver consistent results.

We are improving procurement and financial controls, and we are reinforcing procurement rules, ensuring processes are followed consistently, and increasing transparency in how contracts are awarded and managed. This is about ensuring the public funds are used effectively and, as the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board says, spending smarter.

Every dollar contributes to real outcomes for the corporation.

We are fixing maintenance and service delivery. It is important that when I sit and speak with the staff at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation involved in maintenance, involved in repairs – they take pride in their work, they certainly do – there's just simply not enough of them, Speaker. The positions that have been cut over the years at the housing corporation have had a drastic effect on what was reported in the Auditor General's report – no doubt directly related.

We are implementing clear service standards for repairs with defined timelines and performance tracking systems because the people who we serve should not be left without the proper answers and the proper timelines. I've heard that from both sides of the House since I've become minister, from my colleagues on both sides of the House, who reach out and who know that they can reach out to me when it comes to any housing issue that we have in the 40 districts of this House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: Yes, that's 100 per cent true.

J. WALL: I thank the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair for that.

Speaker, yes, we are reacting to the Auditor General's report. As I said, I welcome it. I had the privilege of serving on Public Accounts and working directly with the Auditor General, and I see the important work that she and her staff do. This will make Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation stronger.

We must build a system that anticipates the needs and delivers consistently, year after year. That's why it's important we're having this debate today to ensure, whatever government sits on this side of the House, that the work is done properly, that the corporation is supported efficiently and

given the proper guidance to do the work for people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: We also recognize that improving internal systems is only one part of the solution. The housing challenges we face are broader, and we face housing challenges in every corner of this beautiful province. They include supply pressures, affordability concerns and change in demand across the regions. That is why our government is also focused on increasing the housing supply, working with municipalities and those in the private sector, removing barriers to development and ensuring long-term sustainability in housing policy.

Speaker, I'm also blessed to have a background in municipal politics. I carry that with me each and every day in decision-making, when we look at working with our municipal leaders. The municipal leaders want to step up and support the residents that live in their towns. I see that and I hear that, and I'm so pleased to work with municipal leaders to make sure that this is done; but, Mr. Speaker, what I won't do is wait for 18 to 20 months for a rezoning of a particular piece of property that holds up a particular build for the Housing Corporation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Cutting through the red tape, working with municipalities to ensure that the builds happen much faster is what is important, because we have experienced, and we have four Members opposite who were in the department, who know the challenges within the Department of Housing and have worked over the years, but I can certainly tell you, going forward, under the guidance of our Premier, we are cutting through red tape and we are working with municipalities to make sure we have efficient time on builds so people can move into safe, affordable homes much faster.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Mr. Speaker, our government is indeed focused on increasing our supply, and much work has been done in the short period of time that I've been in this department. I can assure the people of this province that work will continue because fixing the system and increasing supply must happen at the same time. It is crucial; one without the other will not deliver the results that the people of our province expect and deserve.

This resolution speaks directly to accountability. It calls on this House to accept the report, to support the action that's needed and to ensure that these issues are never repeated again. I'm going to repeat the last one; ensure the issues are never repeated again, because that is critical.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: As I said earlier, this is tangible and many times it weighs heavy on the heart. I'll speak openly to that. My caucus knows where I stand when it comes to that, but I can assure you that accountability is simply not acknowledging what went wrong, it's putting systems in place to ensure it never happens again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: That means I will operate with transparency, ongoing reporting, clear expectations and measurable outcomes within the Housing Corporation of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, I realize that there will be much debate today, and I certainly hope that we have Members on both sides of this House stand. I want to hear how they're going to support this resolution because, as I said, this transcends partisan politics when it comes to the important work that's needed for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I understand there will be much debate today. I do know that we have Members eager to stand, and we'll certainly hear today how we got to where we are, and

that's going to be appropriate. The people of the province – and I've spoken to many across our beautiful province with respect to housing. I know how important it is, I do, and it certainly weighs heavy, but I can tell you the plan going forward with respect to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation is that they're going to be given the proper direction and support.

Mr. Speaker, we have dedicated people there, and I do know, because they reached out to me before I stood on my feet today, that we have staff from the Housing Corporation listening, but we also have board members from the Housing Corporation listening today. I want to say to them directly that as minister and as government we certainly value what they have offered, their contributions to the Housing Corporation over the years and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I can say without a doubt, and I said this to them last Friday and assured them I would say it publicly, that this report does not lay on the shoulders of the board of directors of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, because over the years, the decisions made – and facts matter, that's said many times in this House. The decisions made by the previous administration certainly had an effect on the board of directors. They feel this report.

They told me they're carrying this report where they shouldn't have to; because, in 2024, when the previous administration said Newfoundland and Labrador Housing was coming into core government without a plan, without direction and we're told to stand down, not to fulfill further board positions but to just remain status quo. That lack of direction certainly affected the board of directors.

I'm here today to say I support them, the work that they do and, of course, going forward, we will work to make sure that the board that's going to be there will fulfill the mandate of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

Speaker, I want to say that, in closing, this resolution is very clear. It's clear, it's concise and it reflects the acceptance of the Auditor General's findings. It's a commitment to immediate and decisive action, and it's a responsibility to ensure that these issues are never repeated.

That is what a responsible government looks like. That is what accountability requires. That is what the people of this province expect and deserve. So I ask all Members of this hon. House to support this resolution today. Let us move forward, not just by acknowledging the problem, but by fixing it. I can tell you, Speaker, by God, I'm going to do that.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

Thank you to the hon. minister for his presentation and his opening remarks. It's very encouraging to the people of the province.

I'm so pleased, as well, to stand here today to represent the wonderful District of Burin - Grand Bank. In that district we do have a number of housing units and anything that we can do to improve those or make the stock bigger is certainly beneficial to us.

For our listening audience and viewing audience today as well, I'd like to talk a little bit about Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. It's a Crown corporation whose mandate is to develop and administer housing assistance policy and programs for the benefit of low- to moderate-income households throughout the province. It also has a wonderful board, a great board, an 11-person board of directors including the CEO. A good board, they do great work. I know a lot of them personally, and they certainly work really hard to ensure that people in this province have adequate housing.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation owns and administers 5,560 social housing units throughout various parts of the province, with the greatest concentration of units located here with 3,192 in St. John's and 802 in Corner Brook. Now I'd like to see more housing units in rural parts of the province. The need there is great. There is always a wait-list in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, but we are hoping for more units, and that was our intent.

I spoke to the minister just yesterday about a lady that receives 24-hour home care, lives in a unit and the furnace was broken. The minister, being the great guy he is, got on it; that furnace is now being replaced.

We, as Members, face these types of situations every day, on a daily basis, people living in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing complaining about the state that the houses are in. We have a lot of roofing issues that are being addressed and are about to be addressed in my area, but let's add to the stock if that's at all possible. Speaker, let's add to the stock. We need more.

Low-income earners are the beneficiaries of this program with rental rates based on 25 per cent of net monthly income. That's great for those who are on low income. Approximately 55 per cent of the tenants pay their own rent and they're working or on fixed incomes. There are an estimated 14,000 individuals housed in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units under this program.

I remember when I was minister, thinking about these numbers, and thinking, my God, what an organization, how busy, and make no wonder it's a Crown corporation because it involves so many individuals, so many people, so many social workers. It's huge. It's huge, but it's something that's really needed in our province and it's something that really needs leadership.

The demand for housing has changed drastically in the last 20 years – drastically. We've had a change in population and

provincial demographics that has had a significant impact on the many aspects of our society, including housing. Our population is becoming older, and I read a while ago that we have the distinguished opportunity to do a lot of things here but we also – I'm trying to search for words here – just reached 25 per cent of our population of seniors, the highest in Canada. It's wonderful, but with that also comes needs.

Presently, the largest cohort of people in the province is age 60 to 64. One aspect of this population size is that houses serve larger families and now, of course we hear it all the time, it's too much now for these couples, these individuals to maintain those homes. Add to that that they don't even meet the needs of our modern families, which are much smaller now. We have had a change in the family social structure resulting in fewer people to be able to rely on family and community supports.

One time families lived together. They lived in meadows. They lived close in proximity to each other. Now that doesn't happen anymore, so they don't have the same amount of supports. Those of us who are lucky to still have parents and to reside in the same communities as our parents, we're the lucky ones. We're the lucky ones.

In response to the need for increased labour supply, we've seen an increase in immigration in our province, and all of Canada I should say. Immigrants have few supports and relationships in the community resulting in an increased demand for housing.

In the community I live in, for example, in St. Lawrence, you can't buy a house and you can't rent a house; the reason being, we have new industry in town. The mine is reopened. The fluorspar mine is reopened. Activity in the town is booming. Hopefully soon the fish plant will open. We have NordSpace in the area. They're soon going to be launching rockets from St. Lawrence – amazing – but we don't have enough housing.

Of course, with prosperity also comes the fact that housing gets used up, but the cost of rent goes up as well. It's a natural phenomenon, and with that comes people not being able to afford to rent in the community. Compared with a few decades ago, we have seen very low interest rates as well that acted as a stimulant for buying. While this is positive, it also drives up demand, which has driven up prices as the supply impacted that demand.

In the past two decades, we've seen an ever-increasing demand on the supply of homes. There's a supply shortage of homes. One factor that has added to the housing challenge has been a move by property owners from more traditional rental units to rentals for vacation homes, B & Bs. There have been a lot of units that have come off the housing market due to this, and this is impacting rural Newfoundland.

People see rural Newfoundland as a great place to go and relax, take in the scenery, fish, do whatever they want to do, just mingle among the people in these communities, but what that's done is taken houses off the market because of the increased need for B & Bs. They're quite profitable and a lot of people use them.

The increased demand for housing has driven up prices, which also resulted in a decline in affordability. In some areas, the ability of people to enter the housing market has seriously impacted the price. I've seen demands for rental units line up. There are lineups for rental units, basement apartments – basement apartments now, there are lineups of people that want to get in, but the prices are really high so a lot of them can't afford to get in.

At the national and international level, the COVID-19 pandemic placed significant pressures on many aspects of our society and, of course, housing wasn't exempt from that. For the last 30 years, Canadian housing policy has focused much on allowing the market to continue in as unfettered a fashion as possible. In the early '90s, the federal government completely stopped – completely stopped – developing

new affordable housing and passed this responsibility on to the provinces. Some provinces continued to develop housing, though at rates much lower. That's what happened in a lot of cases.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, the supply for new affordable housing has effectively flatlined, along with maintenance programs to protect the existing stock due to a lack of funds. I'm sure the minister knows this first-hand. A lot of our units are in states of disrepair. We've even had to tear down full blocks of housing units. We had to tear them down because they were unfixable and inhabited by animals and so on. This paired with a deepening trough between wages and the cost of living has brought us to what is widely recognized as a housing crisis that is affecting the well-being of the country.

Our Liberal government understands that buying a home in the province today has become increasingly difficult. This government recognizes that, not only our party. This is due to the rising real estate prices, high interest rates and limited housing supply. In our larger cities, average home prices are above what most households can afford, even as borrowing costs have surged following the multiple interest rate hikes. This has pushed the monthly mortgage to record highs, making home ownership unattainable for first-time buyers.

Housing inventory in the urban areas is certainly very, very limited, leading to intense competition and still higher costs. Every day we hear of houses on the market going well above the asking price – well above the asking price. I have friends that have sold houses recently that have gotten quite a significant amount of money over the asking price. As a result, too many people in this province are settling for smaller properties, or they have no choice but to remain in the rental market indefinitely.

We have tried and had a lot of success in the past to improve housing. We announced an \$82-million affordable – this is what I'm talking about the last four years, what things

that were done trying to address this. I know you're going to do great things as well, and I know, as I mentioned before, you're going to try and build on what was already started, which is so important. We teed it up.

Speaker, an \$82-million Affordable Rental Housing Program to build 800 units –

AN HON. MEMBER: Twelve.

P. PIKE: No one misspeaks in this House, do they?

A \$36-million four-year plan to build provincial housing in Western and Central Newfoundland, and Labrador West; a further \$26 million for upgrades – and this is what we wanted to do – \$4 million for the Secondary and Basement Suite Incentive Program; \$3 million for repairs and upgrades to homes in Makkovik, Hopedale and Nain; \$3 million for the HST rebate on rental properties; a further \$225,000 to continue the First-Time Homebuyers Program, which has helped 240 families buy their first home. This was our 2025 platform.

We would have also looked at increasing the First-Time Homebuyers Program so that applicants with a combined income less than \$95,000 are able to qualify for the amount of the loan, with families of \$105,000 or more qualifying based on a sliding scale. We would have also, again, provided developers with low-interest financing programs. This is important. That provides capital to assist with the construction of purpose-built rental housing – I know that the minister is over there is nodding his head because he's looking at the same thing, I know – including modular construction projects.

I see these projects cropping up all over the world, but mostly I focus on the ones being built in Canada. It's a place where you have got to move, unquestioned, the conversions of existing non-residential structures into rental properties. I see this is my own community. A couple of stores in the community that I live in now, one of those was converted into an eight-unit seniors'

home and the other was converted into two rental properties, repurposing.

We also would have liked to implement the \$125-million agreement signed with the federal government through the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund aimed at existing municipal infrastructure needs and those associated with future housing developments. I'm noticing that in communities as well – although the towns themselves do not want to get involved in housing projects, I'll tell you that upfront. They do not want to be involved in housing projects; however, they do want to provide land that's available in their community. They do want to provide land.

If the town owns land in a lot of cases, and there's a developer out there willing to build seniors' units or affordable housing in their area, they will provide land. I met with a developer a while ago who is interested in putting units on the Burin Peninsula in one of the communities. He already has the land. He got the land very cheap from the town. He's ready to go, just like the minister said to me earlier, shovel ready, and that's the way we have to be.

The other issues that we have are Crown lands. We need to identify what Crown lands are out there for possible development and use the funds from the lease or sale of Crown lands and put that directly back into affordable housing. We know that finding affordable rental properties can be a challenge and we need to avail of quality rental properties.

We also know that renters, such as those with children, disabilities or even pets, often face discrimination from landlords. We need to work with municipalities and developers to review zoning requirements and existing regulations to encourage more multi-unit and mixed-use construction projects.

The \$4-million Secondary and Basement Suite Incentive Program, that provides \$40,000 to homeowners to create an affordable home with their existing property, will also include tax incentives for homeowners who already have unrented

apartments to list them on the market. We need to follow that rental market. We need to pay close attention to the rental market. People have basement apartments in their homes that they're not renting. We need to work with these people to rent these apartments.

We also need to look at multi-unit housing projects receiving government assistance to have a minimum number of accessible units for persons with disabilities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: Why thank you. I know you agree. Accessible units are so important.

We also need to require a number of units to be designated as pet friendly. A lot of seniors and a lot of couples have pets, and we need apartments, more apartments, that are pet friendly.

I'm just going to, while I got time – it's great to have so much time, really. I don't get this very often. I'm just going to take what we did when we were in, and this is just to help the other side and the minister to look at some of the things that were done to build. I'm all about helping here today. I'm all about trying to make sure that we all work together.

On April 10, 2024, the provincial government invested \$20 million to construct 50 provincially owned units in Corner Brook. The project would include multi-unit buildings that feature a combination of one- and two-bedroom homes.

On April 15, 2024, the provincial government partnered with End Homelessness St. John's to operate the transitional supportive living initiative located on 106 Airport Road in St. John's.

On April 24, 2024, the provincial government announced a partnership with the Community Housing Transformation Centre to establish a \$1.5-million Newfoundland and Labrador Community Housing Growth Fund. Government

released standards for serving people experiencing homelessness in shelters throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. These will apply to all emergency shelters that receive provincial government funding and will ensure the delivery of consistent, evidence-based, compassionate service while enhancing accountability for shelter guests, operators and government.

In August of 2024, \$1.3 million invested toward the creation of a new transitional housing initiative in Gander to provide 15 individuals with transitional housing, beds and supports, including mental health and addiction support, life skills development and assistance finding stable housing.

September of 2024, through a joint investment of \$17.12 million over five years, the Canada Housing Benefit will be enhanced to help survivors, including women and children, find a safe, affordable place to call home.

In September of 2024, progress in the first 11 months of government's five-point plan included 132 families purchasing homes under the First-Time Homebuyers Program. That's very successful, by the way. We had 132 families able to start their homes – wonderful. That's great.

Speaker, 11 projects which resulted in the creation of 450 new rental units; five projects conditionally accepted, resulting in the creation of an estimated 300 new rental units and 29 affordable secondary or basement suites. They're not big things, but these things add up, and they're certainly things that this government can build on.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at the AG report on housing, I noticed a couple of things here, but one of the things, it says, "Overall, without strengthening governance, data quality, planning and execution, the Corporation will remain limited in its ability to provide timely, appropriate social rental housing to the most vulnerable who rely on this essential public service."

It says as well, in the final sentence, and it struck me that I think everybody is part of

this, "It is concerning that many of the issues in this report were also found in our 2008 audit, and had not been corrected." So most of the things that she found in this audit have been on the books since 2008. I think we all had a part in it.

I guess I'll end there, because I have a few other things but I guess I'll end there. Thank you for the opportunity to speak. Housing is certainly something that's very near and dear to my heart, having served as minister. I have to agree with the current minister, the staff down there are unbelievable, very committed to their work. They work well together. They're out in front of most everything that they need to be doing.

The repair piece of that is massive. The people that are in various areas of the province that work with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, they're certainly – we need more of them. We need to attract more people working within housing, but they do great work. They do their best to get to people as quickly as they can.

I thank the minister for bringing this forward today, and I'd like to have more opportunity to talk about it at another point.

Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Power): The hon. the Leader of the Third Party, Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

If only half what I heard was implemented in the last few years, we'd be further ahead.

Look, I've been passionate about housing long before I was in this role, and I can tell you that what I've spent – and let's call a spade a spade here. This report rests entirely on the previous Liberal administration purely, pure and simple.

I felt, I guess, nothing but frustration over the last few years trying to deal with housing. I even lost my speaking privileges

because I called out a discrepancy between 750 and 11 houses that were actually built. My colleague from Labrador was totally frustrated with the lack of affordable housing in Labrador West. This sense of futility; the resistance to any constructive solutions.

So let's keep in mind that what we see here with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing is not a fault of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. It didn't happen by accident. It did not happen by accident. It was a failure – and maybe even deliberate, I don't know. It was a failure on the part of the previous administration to support Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, to provide it the resources it needed, to encourage it to come up with deeply affordable housing.

It explains so many things that I've written many previous ministers about over and over again, and to get brushed off. It explains why there has been no increase in non-market housing. Under their watch, inventory decreased by 57 between 2021 and 2025. There was no planning. It was done on an ad hoc basis while there was an increasing demand.

It explains why we've seen an increase of emergency shelters in that time, and with that came an expensive price tag. I think in 2025 at one point, midway through, it was at \$14 million a year. It had increased from 2019 for \$4 million. Think about that. Three times the amount of money, money that could have been, if it had been put towards Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and had a plan. We could've had affordable supportive housing.

I think last year, between April 2024 and March 2025, \$8.1 million was spent on emergency shelters. We've seen the loss of housing. We've seen, for the first time in our history, people sleeping in tents. When was the last time we had an encampment across from the Confederation Building?

So while 2008 might have been a problem, we didn't have people sleeping in tents.

We've got seniors and those on fixed incomes for the first time in their lives

sleeping in tents, in the rough and in fear of losing their housing. We've got an expensive lease agreement with a political supporter when we could've taken most of that money, bought the building on Airport Road and put that money into supports –

AN HON. MEMBER: Where? Airport Road?

J. DINN: On Airport Road.

I can see why there's been no appetite for rent and vacancy control or why there doesn't seem to be any interest in that deeply affordable housing. Now, mind you, we've always had the impression that the previous administration was on top of it. They were dealing with it.

This report shows otherwise. This report shows otherwise and is a condemnation of what went before. No two ways about it. We can talk all about the pressures on rent, but it was the responsibility of the previous government to deal with that and to find creative solutions.

Now, I can tell you, we've all brought forward solutions. They have been rejected, because I guess they knew better.

Page 21 – I'll just take a few here. I won't have time to go through it all, but I'm going to pick out a few highlights here that really – I will say this. When I read this report, I didn't sleep that night. I was that angry. "We found that the Corporation often built social rental housing units slowly."

Now I would say that comes down to – not in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing because I talked to most people. They don't have the supports and the resources that they need. That seems to be deliberate.

Let's move on to, again I'll look at page 22, "no funding for reconfiguration."

Where does that come from? Where does Newfoundland and Labrador Housing get its money? Where could Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation get its money if it were a true Crown corporation, if

it could borrow money, if it could get the resources it needs?

Page 23 – man oh man. Okay, let’s think about this, and I’ll look at this because it talks here about the sale of properties, and again it mentions it on page 34, as well, about the sale of properties. “We found that the Corporation’s property sales did not comply with its own policy because it did not forecast future demand for units as required, and several sales occurred in areas with high demand.”

I’ve brought this up many times, about the need for more units. My God, if you were spending more on emergency shelters and you saw people sleeping in the rough, you didn’t need a plan; you just had to look out the window. There actually was an encampment set up on the grounds of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. What was the response? Get the police and move them off.

Officials indicated that, in Marystown, a property had been permitted to fall into disrepair and that’s why they sold it, and that there was no demand in the area. Down on the bottom of this page, it talks about how units had been permitted to fall into disrepair. I wrote the minister at the time about the need for the repair, that basically Newfoundland and Labrador Housing was turning into a slumlord.

Page 15 – you’ve just got to look on page 15 and see one of the houses there that has been in disrepair for just about the entire time I’ve been in this position. It’s only after that letter that they decided to do something; but here’s the thing that really angers me. Management or the minister, I don’t know who, because I found out from workers that what they were saying is that I was blaming the workers for this – how neat.

AN HON. MEMBER: Who was the minister?

J. DINN: At the time – there were so many. They were changing ministers like

underwear. I really don’t know but I have it here. I can find that letter easily enough.

But I will tell you that when I spoke to the workers I had to set them straight. I provided the letter to them and they said they understood, because it had to do with the fact that they’ve cut the people that they need. I’ve asked that of minister after minister: Do you have enough resources? Do you have enough people? Oh, no, we’ve got enough. I can tell you, talking to workers and talking to CUPE, they can tell you otherwise. The story is different.

Here’s one: Officials indicated that the properties had been – I can tell you from the description here, this is on Livingstone Street. Oh no, actually let’s go back, “...multi-unit buildings in downtown St. John’s were sold at a time when 941 applicants were waiting for housing in that area.” That’s 104-106 Livingstone Street. It was burnt in 2023, and at that time, “Officials indicated the properties had been damaged by fire and were sold for \$214,900 in total, due in part to the high cost of demolition and renovation.”

Here’s the thing, I wrote the minister at that time, there was a gentleman next door where the fire started who was willing to sell the property to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing at a fair price. He wasn’t looking to get a major amount of money for it, but there was an opportunity to actually buy that up and expand the housing stock. We were told it was on a hill; it wasn’t accessible. It wasn’t needed.

Now I will tell you that I asked for the reports, because apparently they had reports. There were no reports. There was no documentation, yet I was told there were reports that they had, but they wouldn’t share them with me. Prove it to me, is what I wanted. I wanted the data to show that.

Here’s the other part of this – guess what they did? They sold it because they couldn’t be rebuilt, and what did the person who bought it do? He didn’t tear it down, which is what I figured the only thing you’re going to have to do based on what the minister said

at the time, he renovated it. He repaired it. Now you have another four units or so there, six units or whatever it is – four to six units that are going to house people but, I can tell you this, it won't be affordable housing. It will not be affordable housing. Speaker, \$214,000 is a pretty good deal downtown.

Then, by 2023 we were trying to get a community centre on the go on Livingstone Street. I know that the group had approached the minister then to use that building as the community centre, which would have been a fantastic site. It would have allowed space, even maybe some affordable housing built into it but it was going to be a fantastic community centre. It could not be done.

Now I wrote the minister back in 2023-2024, and I can tell you that, again, I found out later on in 2024 that – guess what – after several attempts, they decided to sell those units. I had written on December 2023 about the Member at the time who was minister, the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, about that offer. I had written, in 2024, to the CEO of NLHC about the use of it. I had spoken to the minister following Minister Pike at that time, and then we find out it's been sold – gone. It could have been a great community centre. Lack of vision.

I will tell you I think that's been the most frustrating. Speaker, I've got file folders of letters I've written to the ministers in the previous administration, and it seems to have fallen on deaf ears. It is frustrating. I guess, though, in the last few minutes, I'm going to say this: The answers are in the report, and I'm going to go with this because I will take the – and I have to say this is not on this government at this point in time. It's not. Don't worry, there will be plenty of times when I will hold you to account, but right now, this is not on their shoulders. It's on their shoulders to fix it; that's for sure.

I look at the oversight and I think the problem here is, I really believe overall this came down to maybe the lack of guidance at the top or the lack of commitment or the lack of political will to stand out of the way

and let Newfoundland and Labrador Housing do the work it needs to do, because it seems that you have a chief executive officer and a board of directors. So who's making the decision?

I can't blame the board of directors, by the way, because if they're making decisions – but it seems here the minister is making decisions without consulting with them, then you have a problem here. You have that lack of leadership. It says here: the board did not provide effective oversight. How could they if the minister is the one who seems to be making the decisions?

It is interesting because I look at the response to the homelessness piece, the encampment and the amount of pressure that happened and that it took, finally, to get them to act and to even come up with a very expensive response to it down on Airport Road. Now, mind you, if it was \$23 million, \$33 million or whatever it was to actually put into the services, I wouldn't blink an eye, but to spend it on an expensive lease when we could have bought the building and staffed it properly and everything else, it would have been a better investment.

Here's the political aspect of this that has sort of come into view for me since this time and since the election. At the time, I was advocating for a constituent to get into the hotel. He was in desperate need. What do I get back? What do I get back from the executive director of End Homelessness but a letter saying that, somehow, I was trying to create a side entrance or side access or a side deal. That angered me because the people I represent, the people I speak for, are the most vulnerable. They are voiceless. They are hungry. They are homeless. They are in the rough.

The current minister was there at the meeting when I laid this out, but here is what happens then after. In my own riding, who do I see offering himself up as a candidate for the Liberals but the director of End Homelessness, and now I've got to wonder if, all along, there's been this lack of political will to address the issue. If, indeed, somehow I was being limited in my ability to

advocate for the most vulnerable for that reason. If, indeed, we chose a more expensive lease operation instead of basically addressing the issues that necessitated them being in that transitional housing or homelessness.

I have raised in this House solution after solution. Whether it's about models like Indwell supportive housing, whether it's about land lease communities, land trust, investing in the Co-operative Housing Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, there are models out there. None of them are my ideas. They've been around for a while. I just find it difficult to understand why they haven't been followed.

But if I were, in my last two minutes, speak to if we want to fix Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, then I think the answer lies here. Give them the autonomy, give them the funds, allow them to raise the necessary funds and let them do the work. It's encouraging to hear the minister that he's not going to wait 18 months to get the permits. He's going to get it done and get it done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: I'm assuming government still has land. Rather than sell it off, why not establish land lease communities, why not establish land trust, and to retain the land but make sure it goes towards that deeply affordable housing? We raised or promoted a similar idea in our platform with NL Homes, which was basically to give it that autonomy.

I think then there's a working relationship that could happen between the minister and the CEO of the corporation, but give them the autonomy to do it. Do not let this become mired down in politics. The people I represent cannot afford it. Their health cannot afford it. They need to be housed. We need to have more supportive housing. There are models out there that work.

But I will tell you this: I have a lot of respect for those private developers; there's a place for them, but I do not think in deeply

affordable housing there is. That's got to be the role of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, of government, and of community organizations, not-for-profits, to help them with that.

So this has been a long time coming. But I'll tell you right now, it puts into context the frustration I've felt over the last number of years and, more importantly, what else we need to be doing.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise in this House today to address the report of the Auditor General on Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and the resolution before us. Before I begin, I, too, want to express my sincere gratitude to acting CEO Mike Tizzard and to the dedicated staff of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation across this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Let me be clear, this report is not a reflection of your commitment, your professionalism or the important work you do every day on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, this report is a reflection of something much larger. It is a reflection of a system that has been allowed to become unclear and ineffective; a system shaped over years, by previous administrations that failed to provide the direction, accountability and leadership required for success.

It is a system where staff are too often left without the tools, the clarity or the authority needed to deliver the outcomes Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve. Today is not about placing blame on the people doing the work. It is about acknowledging that the system they were asked to operate within was not built to succeed, and that is where leadership must begin with clarity, with accountability and with a willingness to act.

So let me say this clearly, we welcome this report, we accept its findings and we agree that action is required.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: This is what this resolution reflects. It reflects a government that is prepared to acknowledge where the system has fallen short and, more importantly, a government that is prepared to fix it. Because, Speaker, this report is serious. It outlines systemic and governance issues in how housing has been delivered in this province.

Those issues have real consequences for real people – people who are waiting, people who are struggling, people who depend on a system that must work and has not always worked as it should.

Much of what is contained in this report is not new for us. In fact, it reflects concerns that we have been raising for some time. We have said that the housing system was under strain, that people were waiting too long for housing, that repairs were not happening quickly enough and that decisions were not always being made in a consistent or accountable way.

We said that the system had become too reactive. We said that oversight needed to be strengthened, government needed a plan and we said Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserved better – better service, better outcomes and a system they could rely on.

Speaker, the Auditor General has confirmed those concerns, not in general terms, but in

detailed, independent findings that make clear the scope of the challenge, and that matters because it gives us a foundation to act.

Speaker, this report tells a story. The Auditor General's report identifies serious issues across key areas of housing delivery. It speaks to weaknesses in governance and oversight, gaps in procurement and financial controls, delays and inconsistencies in maintenance and repairs and a lack of constituency in decision-making.

These are not minor administrative concerns. These are core elements of how a system functions and when those elements are not working as they should, the entire system is affected.

Speaker, let us be clear about the impact that had. It meant repairs took that too long; units that were not maintained as they should be; people waiting longer than they should for housing; units being sold when a demand existed; and decisions by the former Liberal government that were not always transparent or predictable. This is not just about process. It is about people's daily lives. It is about whether the system delivers the stability and support that people need.

The previous administration made it about announcements and knee-jerk reactions. That's not how our government will operate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, we have a responsibility in this House to be honest about how we arrived at this point because these issues did not happen overnight; they developed over years. They developed under the previous government, and they developed in a system that, over time, lacked consistent oversight, allowed processes to drift and did not maintain the level of accountability required.

This is not speculation. This is what the report reflects, a system where decisions were not always guided by clear frameworks or a plan, processes were not

consistently followed and oversight was not as strong as it needed to be. When that happens, when oversight weakens and accountability slips, the result is exactly what we see in this report, a system that is not delivering as it should.

Again, I want to be clear. This is not about assigning blame for the sake of it, but it is about recognizing responsibility. If we are going to fix the system, we must understand what led to its current state, and the reality is this: the previous government allowed a system to develop that was too reactive, too inconsistent and not sufficiently accountable. The consequences of that are clearly outlined by the Auditor General.

That is exactly why, in our blue book, we made housing a priority, because we recognize that the challenges in housing were not isolated. They were systemic and we committed to addressing them. We committed to increasing the housing supply, improving accountability in housing delivery, ensuring access to safe, stable and affordable homes and taking a more structured and responsible approach to decision-making.

Those commitments were not made in a vacuum. They were made because we understood that the system needed change. The Auditor General's report confirms that we were right to identify those challenges and right to make those commitments.

Speaker, now let me turn to what matters most, what we are doing, because this government is not waiting. We are acting. We are putting in place clear lines of responsibility, defined roles at every level and stronger oversight mechanisms because accountability must be clear and it must be enforced. We are enforcing the procurement processes, reinforcing procurement processes, ensuring compliance and increasing transparency because public confidence depends on knowing that the decisions are made properly and that public funds are used responsibly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: We are implementing clear service standards, defined timelines and performance tracking, because people should not be left waiting without answers. We are moving towards better planning, better coordination and long-term thinking because reacting after problems arise is not good enough.

Speaker, we also recognize that fixing internal systems is only part of the solution. We must also increase housing supply, we must address affordability and we must ensure that our housing strategy reflects the needs of today, not the conditions of the past. That is why we are working with municipalities and community partners, engaging with the private sector, removing barriers to development and focusing on long-term growth.

This resolution commits us to ensuring that these issues are not repeated. That is critical because accountability is not just about acknowledging problems, it is about building systems that prevent them. That means transparency, reporting, measurable outcomes and clear expectations.

At the end of the day, this is about people; people who need housing, people who need repairs and people who need a system that works. They aren't interested in excuses. They're not interested in looking backwards. They're interested in results. That is what this government is focused on delivering. We accept the findings. We are taking the action necessary. We are building a housing system that works for all of us.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity to stand up.

I have to say to the Member, the Leader of the Third Party, I commend you for the work you've done over the last while, over the number of years, to bring this to a forefront.

Then, with the Auditor General's report, you are 100 per cent right of the issues you brought forward on behalf of your constituents; not only your constituents, but this was highlighted all across Newfoundland and Labrador. So I just want to recognize that.

I already had a meeting with the Minister of Housing. I had a very good meeting on this, and I explained some of the concerns that I had around the West Coast. I go back a bit further than most in this House dealing with housing. There's always a struggle to get the proper housing for the number of people, because back years ago when housing was built, there was four houses for four bedrooms, sometimes five bedrooms, and families are smaller now. Two bedrooms or three bedrooms are usually what's needed more, and it hasn't followed through with the growth of the families themselves and how the families are living these days.

There are a few things over the years, and I'm going back the last six or seven years, that I sat down with the ministers, I sat down with people and I tried to explain the issues. I really tried to work with them. I even got to the point where I offered to ministers to come to Corner Brook: I will show you the 67 units that are not repaired. I offered that. That's how confident I was that the Auditor General – what the Auditor General said, I knew for years. I offered: come out and I'll show you. Don't go listening to me. Don't go thinking I'm just standing up here asking questions, and I was never taken up on it.

I know the current minister already had discussions. Like I said, I had a meeting. I already had a meeting with him and explained some concerns. It took me, as a lowly independent – I'm not going to form no government. I'm not joining no party in this House. As an independent, it took me one year – one full year – and it was only because of an NTV interview that I convinced government that there were 40 units up on Crestview that were dilapidated. It took me a year – didn't believe it, not there.

That's the kind of stuff that went on for years. It went on for years. Absolutely went on for years. Then, when they finally agreed – and this is something that's really bothering me – they got an influx of federal government money. Big Crestview, 42 units I think, or 40 units, had to be torn down. No problem with the influx of money coming in. What do you see? Spent in St. John's. Crestview now, I think the minister announced just a little while ago some apartments in that area, and there was a plan then to fill up the whole area. Not done – not done and I was shocked. I was shocked.

So what happened then? Then they came out with some units going to be built, six I think. The minister just came out and announced some more in Corner Brook, and there's a lot more needed. I don't expect everything is going to be done overnight, but if people see a plan going forth, we can all work with it.

I can tell you another thing, that Airport Heights one, this is something that really bothered me in Corner Brook. I won't get into the Airport Road hotel. I won't get into how much it cost and all that. I won't get into what was untendered and all that. But here's what got me and it bothered me.

I've been around so long, I see so much stuff and there are things that bother you. When you hear that minister at the time, and others, stand in the House and say let's talk about wraparound services – we need the wraparound services. We have to have the wraparound services, that's why we had to do it. Yet, there are 35 people out in a hotel in Corner Brook, stuffed in a Corner Brook hotel, do you know how much service they got? Zero.

They're almost like, now, here's your room. You take your brown paper bag that they're going to give you for lunch and you stay quiet. I've been trying for years to get that changed. The Member for Corner Brook is well aware of it. I've been trying for years, and I know a lot of those people. I go to some of the lunches that the churches provide for. I go there. I know a lot of them.

A lot of them do have issues, there's absolutely no doubt, but the Leader of the Third Party always said if you get proper housing, you can take care of a lot of those issues.

Those people – and I'll say it to the minister – those residents out in that hotel are still living there, paid for by government at the time – still there – I'm assuming. Paid for one aspect of the government, no doubt. Absolutely no tender went out for anything for it at the time, no wraparound services whatsoever, so those people who had some issues, no doubt, it might be alcohol, it might be drugs, might be other mental issues that they have, they get no services whatsoever – absolutely no services.

Then I see the Airport Road one and we got in the House and the questions that was asked in the House – and I'm going on memory. My memory is pretty good. When he asked what it cost per resident, it came down to – I think it was CBC did the math – \$350,000 per resident. Yet, I couldn't get anyone to look at the residents – people who I knew in Corner Brook; people I've been trying to get into housing; people I've worked with to get services; people who I've helped to get in, to try and get some counselling and you couldn't get any help from government.

That's one of the most (inaudible) things that took me and I always said, what's wrong with the government at the time? Don't they know they're human beings? Don't they know they deserve some help? I seen kids separated because you couldn't bring kids into the hotel. Families being separated. I went on *Open Line* about it. I wrote about it. I did more things and there was just nothing done – absolutely nothing done.

I'm bringing this up to the minister now because there has to be something done with the Corner Brook hotel and their residents. There has to be some services somewhere. There has to be.

I'm willing to work with anybody, and I know at times when I stand up here and I get

criticized now because there are some things that I'm voting for with the PCs, but I just want to remind the people who are criticizing me and bringing up the speeches, I supported a lot of projects that the Liberals did at the time. Some I never, but a lot I did.

I'm going to support what's best for the Corner Brook-Bay of Islands area and for the province in general. I'm not going to form a government. I'm not going to be part of any government. I'm not going to be part of Cabinet. I have no axe to grind because all I want to do is help the people that elected me, and many of the people who never voted, who couldn't vote for me, I still want to help them – I still want to help them.

So when I looked at the Auditor General's report, I just highlighted a few things: "On average, at the end of 2025, households had been waiting over a year for housing support." I've been saying that for years. I know the minister mentioned it before, but I want to mention it. The staff at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing in Corner Brook are so accommodating. They go well over and beyond what most people do and sometimes what you do is say let's try this a bit.

They are so accommodating. They are so helpful. They are so concerned. I have to say the people in Corner Brook that myself and Judy deals with in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing are second to none – absolutely second to none. I know 90 per cent of them personally. I know them personally. So I just want to say thank you for all the service that they do for the people on the West Coast. I just want to recognize that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: "Waitlist Management: The Corporation's waitlist policies were incomplete and did not always reflect the processes that was carried out. (page 17) The Corporation failed to keep its waitlist current in accordance with its policies, possibly resulting in it being inaccurate."

I knew that, and I'll tell you how I knew that. I had the files. Every year, if you never got into a house, we called the clients again and said, look, you've got to refile because it's up to a year. We remind them, because a lot of people at the time didn't even know that they had to reapply and they got dropped off the list.

So that's why the list was never accurate because there were no proper files. Then how I knew so much was because we still got it that high of people trying to get into housing. We've got to try and stay current with them because they call and say, any update? We have to call and just ask for an update with it.

"The Corporation had insufficient one- and two-bedroom units for its needs." I've been saying that for years and explaining it. Even when I thought there was going to be a massive influx in Corner Brook, I was being adamant that you got to get the one- and two-bedroom apartments. You can't have these four- and five-bedroom apartments. You can't have it.

When you hear people who are moving into Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, then the only unit available is a three- or four-bedroom for probably a single person because of an emergency situation. Again, the staff out in Corner Brook, they always try to fit the number of people in a family to coordinate and be with the same number of rooms that they have. There are times that that happened and it is because of lack of one and two bedrooms over a long period of time.

"The Corporation had policies in place to address over- and under-housing; however, neither had been updated since 2017." That's just basic. So the question has got to be asked – and I've read it in the report, here also, is that a lot of times the CEO met with the minister and not with the board. I'm sure I read that, not as much with the board, the CEO.

Who was running Newfoundland and Labrador Housing? I thought the board but, obviously, according to the report, the CEO

would meet with the minister and the direction would come down from the minister through the CEO, but the board never made the decisions. Unless I read that wrong here.

"The Corporation's Lease Renewals Policy required a reassessment of tenants, but it did not have policies, procedures or programs"

I heard the Leader of the Third Party talk about a building being sold. I know buildings, right now, in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing are still not used for years. Probably too much to fix it up, I don't know. The minister asked me for a list and I will provide the ones that I know. If you can't fix them, let's try to build new ones there. If you can't build new ones there, let's make sure that we get the appropriate price for the land.

I heard the Leader of the Third Party, and I remember this one building that he's talking about that was sold for a very minimal amount for a piece of land downtown St. John's. Now it's apartment buildings. I think six apartments in it. So that's the kind of things that went on for the longest time.

"It was not possible to confirm if units were efficiently prepared for occupancy, as required by policy" – page 29.

"Inconsistencies existed in record-keeping, data collection, and form use for move-in, move-out, and vacancy inspections." I would say, the last five years, I met with the union out in Corner Brook, and they were saying that either we don't get direction to go and inspect and do the renovations in the house or we're short of manpower. That's what I always hear. We don't have enough manpower to do the repairs needed. What happens then? It's a bottleneck then. The staff can't assign the units, the workers can't get the work done, but people then are sleeping on couches and other places because there are no units.

Minister, that's a big thing, the units that need repairs. There are units in Corner Brook that need repairs. I don't know if it's

because of lack of staff, that's something I'm not privy to, but there are units. If we can get some of those units, that would take off the load for the applications that are needed.

I can assure you, I've been a part of it and I know a lot. You're getting help to get housing. I get eternally grateful knowing that they can take care of their kids, take care of their family and just have their family in one place and not being moved. You can't find an apartment because it's too expensive. So it's our responsibility here as a government to work on this. It's really our responsibility.

I'll just speak on one more thing, Government Structures, "The Corporation's Board of Directors Mandate Policy, which detailed the responsibilities of the Board and the CEO, stated that the CEO reported directly to the Minister, not the Board of Directors..." So my understanding from any government is that if you're CEO of the board, you report to the board. Hopefully, Minister, that's going to change, that the board will get direction from the CEO that comes down from government. I'm pretty confident that that will change, I say to the minister.

So I can keep going on with the Auditor General's report, or I can, for a few minutes, speak about my experiences with people. I ask the minister – and this is something that's not just on your shoulders. This is going to be a mental health issue, maybe drug and addiction, but please try to do something with the old Corner Brook hotel, whatever residents are in it.

I've seen families split up because they can't take kids in the hotel, actually split up, and it's sad. For whatever reason – and I don't mind saying it, and they can start their hollering at me – the previous government refused to acknowledge it, refused to recognize it and refused to take any steps whatsoever to help with those residents that are in the Corner Brook hotel; because, when you see them coming out at lunchtime with their brown paper bag, and that's what they get, and many times when I seen

families had to be split up, then you work harder to get an apartment to get the family back together.

If there's one thing that comes out of this, the big picture of course is the units for all across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but for me, out my way, my district, when you get more units, you're going to help more people, but when you ignore everybody put into a hotel, when you ignore their needs, their social needs, their mental needs, when you ignore that, we're failing the residents. That was one of my biggest – I almost took it personal when you see the wraparound services at the airport hotel and none for Corner Brook – absolutely none. I was like a lone wolf here. As long as they go and get their housing, as long as they get their little brown paper bag, everything is good; but it wasn't good and it's still not good.

If you could ask any resident in Corner Brook, and I'm sure the former mayor of Corner Brook is going to stand up and speak on it also, if you want to see some sad faces, because of dire situations or whatever happened, that was their last resort, it's tough. It's tough on them, and it's tougher when they have to see their kid go to some home or some grandmother had to take them because they can't stay with their mother or father. It's sad. It's really tough.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell the minister now, anything I can do to spread the word out in Corner Brook and Western Newfoundland and the Bay of Islands, I'm with you. Anything I can do if you're out for a meetings to meet with anybody, if you think I can have an input, I'll make myself available at any time whatsoever. The other thing I'll say is that I honestly believe you're going to make a difference. I honestly believe you're going to make a difference. You got that heart and you're going to make a difference.

Once you got it, don't lose it, because once you get that feeling, that you're helping people and you're changing lives, that's what it's all about. That's what it's all about in this House. If you can change lives by

getting Newfoundland and Labrador Housing on track, to put people in homes, get families back together, help the people at the old Corner Brook hotel, help them to get their lives back on track, there's no better feeling, I can tell you. That's what we should be doing here, and I have more confidence in the minister than I had in a long while with a lot of ministers.

Thank you very much for the opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's an honour and privilege always to rise in this House and speak to this resolution today, but I'd like to thank Members across the way for their passion. We're seeing it in many topics in the House, but especially when it comes to housing. I'll just say, Mr. Speaker, that nothing inspires passion in a politician than a family struggling to find a place to live. It's about respect. It's about them feeling part of civilization, of society. It's about them feeling that they're respected and that they're treated as human beings. In saying that, I'd like to appreciate the commentary from across the way.

I'd like to say, it's a great honour to get up in this House at any time, but especially today, as I have it right here, my Labrador Flag, on my chest for Labrador Flag Day. I will say to all the Labradorians and everyone out there, Happy Labrador Flag Day. I guess, from a former –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: Thank you, guys.

In a former life, many lifetimes ago it seems, I was very happy, as a former Cabinet minister, to have the Labrador Flags raised at our borders. I say that with great pride, Mr. Speaker. In saying that, I was happy to be part of finishing the blacktop between

Labrador West and Lake Melville as well. When you drive that beautiful road and you come into Lake Melville, it's not the same district it was 10 years ago, I can tell you that. We've seen depression. We've seen hard times. It's like somebody gave the district a facelift. That's honestly what it's like.

In saying that, it's an honour to speak to this. What are we doing here today? We're putting this resolution to the floor to make everybody aware of this independent report and to make sure that everybody in this House gets to stand up, talk about their district, talk about what housing issues are affecting them, and to also make sure that this never gets to this point again, Mr. Speaker, because this is the worst off we've been from a housing standpoint.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll just say social housing, it's not optional. It's a basic responsibility of this government, of our society. Like I said in my preamble there, it's a human right. Nothing inspires passion in politicians, like I said, about seeing a family struggling and seeing somebody look for a place to live, a place to hang their coat and their hat.

I'll just say that we're hearing the same thing from every single one of these districts. Every one of our constituents are coming up to us, and if it's not them that are looking for housing, it's either a family member or it's somebody we know. This is almost at epidemic proportions, I will say, Mr. Speaker.

Without the social housing, you have people and you have families and they feel left behind. That's a very truthful statement in terms of how they feel as being accepted and a part of society, Mr. Speaker.

We've seen everything, we've heard a lot of commentary about the lack of units, repairs, all of this stuff, and those repairs taking weeks, months and, in some cases, going on years and years without units being addressed. Madness, I say.

At the same time, you've got crazy wait-lists. Imagine being in that family, Mr. Speaker, when you're on that wait-list and you're unsure. I can't even imagine them approaching Christmas and trying to say, where are we going? Imagine when the kids are looking at you. I just can't imagine that.

So when you see passion from us on this side of the House, the other side of the House, that's where that comes from. It comes from us engaging with our constituents and seeing that frustration and that pain, and us participating in that frustration and pain with them until we can work with them, work with the government to come to a solution for that particular individual or for that particular family.

Mr. Speaker, some of these living conditions, this is unacceptable. It's simply that. We've got a lot of people waiting. We've got people that are living in conditions that nobody should be subject to. Now, this is unacceptable. Mr. Speaker, this didn't come out of nowhere. I mean, this doesn't happen in a year. It doesn't happen in two years. It doesn't happen in a couple of years. You throw a decade of neglect at it, this is what you get. You get this auditor's report. This is what you get after a decade of neglect, Mr. Speaker.

In saying that, we've got so many gaps and it was due to mismanagement, weak oversight, a lack of funding where needed and mismanagement. I'll say, in some cases too, we've heard different versions of that. We've seen it in the report; everybody has read the report of this. The Auditor General laid it out very plainly. It was very clear. It was fact-based. There's no politics in here. There is none of the partisan barbs and jabs and stuff that you're going to see in the commentary. There is none of that. It's void of that, Mr. Speaker. Meaning that this is a clear indication of the true state of the housing in our province. This is scary. People should be concerned; they should be worried.

I believe it was said from the Leader of the Third Party that it's on us to fix that. Our minister shouted out across the House, he

said we got big shoulders. We do, Mr. Speaker, and we're ready for the challenge. We really are. We know this is not going to be easy; it's not going to happen overnight. Just like this problem wasn't created and built overnight, nor are the solutions going to be band-aided type solutions that are going to be able to be applied and done easily as well. That's not how it's going to happen, Mr. Speaker.

I'm saying we're going to take our time, we're going to look at this and we're going to do what we have to do. I tell you what if we're going to say we're going to build 750 homes, I bet you we're going to do a little better than 11, Mr. Speaker, I tell you that.

In saying that, we have to respect this report, but we're not going to sit here and just say that we respect it and it all be lip service; we're actually going to do something. I appreciate the Member from the Bay of Islands saying that he has confidence in this minister, because I do, too. I know this man, I know this man's heart and I know the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: – passion that he has.

I'll say that, Mr. Speaker, because when we were all getting to know each other and we started having some issues in our district, this minister showed up, boots on the ground, eyeballs on the problem. Not only that, in between meetings, in between seeing different stakeholder groups, this minister went and hopped aboard the cars, went with the mayor, went with town councillors, went and seen these units in disrepair, boarded up, former trap houses.

I'll say it. I'm not afraid to speak directly about the regression in my district in the last decade. We're having a hard time with everything: housing, drugs, crime, violence, you name it, we're up to here with it. That's why the people put us here, because they know that we're going to look at this in a serious light. We're not going to talk about it. We're not going to give lip service. We're actually going to do something about it.

We welcome the independent, people across the way and the Third Party as well, to take us to task, hold us accountable to this because this is what governance is all about. It's about the people putting you here to get the job done and we're going to get the job done, I guarantee it.

In saying that, we've heard about defunct boards, about the wrong people making decisions. We've heard about when you're going CEO direct to minister and you've got a board in place and you're circumventing that. Well, that's not in the best interests of anyone. I tell you what, that's the whole point of government, isn't it? Why does a government exist? Because departments then form policies. They become the backbones – the backbones of the operation of these pockets of governance, I'll say.

Meaning that the policy eliminates the judgment call. It eliminates the ability for anybody to make a call and go over and above that backbone, that policy and say no, we're going to do what's in our best interests and we're going to make the call. You've got to have that policy. When it's not being followed, your board is not being used, no documentation, as the Leader of the Third Party said. This is what you get. This is what you get after 10 years of neglect.

The reality we face is that demand is far outpacing the supply of housing. I guess when you say you're going to build 750 and you build 11, that's not going to be too hard to figure out why that's happening.

I will talk, specifically, about Happy Valley-Goose Bay here. I think we've got 270-something, 272 units maybe, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Right now, we've got 112 applicants waiting in the wings. So whether that's individuals or whether that's a collection of family members and that, that's a lot of people who are feeling unsure about how their family is going to get on, how they're going to survive, how they're going to make it.

I want to say to the Member for Bay of Islands, I appreciate your commentary when it comes to talking about these hotel scenarios. I really do because we have one in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, as well. I will say, when we talk about passion in this House and why we are here, and when you hear about families where the bus has to go pick up a child at one of these hotel scenarios, and I think about everything and I'm just thinking about kids being kids, I'm thinking about how they would be a little cruel and a little mean. I would hate to say that a government dropped the ball to the point that that's the reality we had to make for some child. That's a sad situation.

With that, I'll just say and not to just – everybody has read this. Everybody wants a chance to get up and speak today. I won't go on and on, but we've heard some of the crazy amounts. Again, when you have a Member that's been in here as long as the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands has, he certainly knows his stuff and he certainly comes out very weighed and measured in terms of what he comes across with. When he starts talking about \$350,000 per individual case put through these hotel scenarios, we start to see what a monumental waste of money.

Then you get into a Catch-22 scenario there, where you can't deal with the issue because you're so busy forking out cash in order to maintain that mismanagement and those poor moves, if you will. Then it exacerbates to the point where we got this. Then people become fed up across the province, and then you get this, which is a new government ready to take on 10 years of neglect, 10 years of problematic management that nothing was seemingly ever done to enhance.

In saying that, Mr. Speaker, I want to say, we've got The Housing Hub in Goose Bay. We've got the hotel scenario. We've got units not in operation. We've got more units needed, but we are on the ground with all stakeholders. We are talking to everybody. We're going to put forward solutions with town councils, with stakeholder groups that

are going to work for these specific communities.

If you do look in here, I will say, there's nothing more truthful than some of the Auditor General's commentary about Labrador and how we need Labrador-specific solutions for Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: Yes, absolutely.

I'm very glad to see that, Mr. Speaker, because it's so much more expensive in Labrador to live. It's so much more expensive to build. It's so much more expensive to maintain. We heard about, I guess, the crowd across the way decided to let go of some of the maintenance people before; keeping all the management and letting go the people that were supposed to maintain all these units.

I'll talk about maintenance, I just want to say one thing, we've got a beautiful, beautiful community in my district called Churchill Falls. If you were to go into Churchill Falls right now – it's a work town. I mean, probably the last one really left – you look at all the housing, and it's row housing, it's social housing, and it was, I would say, probably put together around the same time as a ton of the social housing was all across Labrador, and Newfoundland as well.

In saying that, when you go into Churchill Falls, these old units are pristine. Why? Because they're managed by the company. They're managed by the company. So you have these pristine units which are old units and it's all town housing, row housing, whatever you want to call it, but I just want to leave that thought to the great people of Churchill Falls, too, you have a beautiful community and it's well taken care of, and I hope to see you soon.

In saying that, Mr. Speaker, what it takes is good management, great personnel and somebody who is actually going to get out in the field and doing that work in order to keep those units up, like they have in Churchill Falls.

We can sit around here, and it's getting a little bit old saying this former government, what they did and all that, but, I mean, 10 years leads us to here. We are very serious about this issue on this side of the House, but we're also invigorated because we have an opportunity to help so many people; to do a much, much better job and, frankly, it's not going to be hard to do a better job than the last 10 years.

So just in my district, I have 112 applications in the chute. That's why we're doing this. That's why I'm here. That's why everybody is representing the districts and talking so passionately today. It's for those people who are just not certain where they're going to end up, and some have no alternative at all in some of the smaller towns and more rural communities. Not every place has a big shelter; not every place has somewhere you can go to get out of the cold. I will say, Mr. Speaker, even for those communities that do, like mine, it's full up. There's no room left at the inn, sad to say.

With that, I'll end my commentary. I want to thank everybody across the way for their comments and I want to restore a bit of faith in the people who are out there in TV land. If you're watching, if you're following us on social media and all that stuff too, reach out, reach out to your MHA, let them know your situation, because if you've been in this queue and your family hasn't been served, then we are going to look at things differently is what I'm saying.

So it's under new management. We're going to look at everybody. We're going to re-evaluate. We're going to make sure that people have a safe and nice place to live. They shouldn't have to be living in squalor. We're going to keep our word and our blue book promises to go into every district to talk to people on the front lines who are delivering all the NLHC, all the employees, everybody. We've got to talk to everybody. It's a full-court press, to use an analogy that the Premier would love, in terms of getting out there to make sure that we're going to address this issue seriously, put the right dollars where they should be and make sure

that we don't have families, children and elders falling through gaps.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Dwyer): The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I would like to thank, certainly, all the Members that have spoken so far, and certainly the Member for Lake Melville.

Of course, it's my complete honour to be here to represent the people of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi. In this particular district, this Housing issues is an issue, and it's not my first rodeo. With 14 years of municipal experience under my belt, two of which was deputy mayor and a short term as the lead for housing for the City of St. John's, I am extremely cognizant of the challenges of housing, not only in our individual towns and communities right across the province, but certainly in the City of St. John's.

The minister would know me. This is where we cut our teeth, in the municipal sector. We worked side-by-side for many years, so I really am appreciative of the opportunity to speak to this resolution today. It is something – housing – that I am completely passionate about.

I will start with the fact that my colleague here is too much of a gentleman to lose his cool while he is –

J. DINN: I can lose my cool.

S. O'LEARY: Well, he does it from time to time.

But, honestly, I think that I know inherently that he has been a champion on the housing issue, certainly in the City of St. John's and the District that he represents, and I know that because I worked side by side with him as a City of St. John's representative, as an at-large councillor who stepped up to try to work with him in the

capacity. We know that municipalities and the province are integrated; we work together. They are a collaborative. They do run over each other.

I've witnessed this gentleman here, for the past six years, trying to elevate the issue of the housing crisis and the fact that housing is a human right, and one that many who had been in leadership roles here in this House were unable to actually quantify or were unable to actually state that it is a human right that every single individual has a home.

When we talk about homes, I mean, what are we talking about? I remember in my role with the City of St. John's, we celebrate National Housing Day. Of course, it was a day to recognize and bring awareness about housing and homelessness. We really haven't heard about that issue, about how important it is for housing, that it is a human right and that we're in a crisis but, in the meantime, more encampments keep popping up in the district.

Of course, my colleague here, for his bit of light reading, is reading a book called *Encampment*, just so you know he's living and breathing it all the time; but to be disregarded in this House by Members of this House of Assembly for fighting and trying to champion for the most vulnerable people in our population is just unacceptable. It's unacceptable and I will speak on his behalf, because he's too much of a gentleman to talk about it on his own behalf. Do you know what? We've seen all kinds of things come and go, and in my relationship in my former role as a municipal leader, we have had all kinds of roles that, like I've said, have intertwined.

When we represent constituents, they come to us. Basically whether or not you're a municipal leader or whether or not you're an MHA, they come to you and they're desperate for housing. They need something. When I was, for a brief period, the lead for housing at the City of St. John's, we actually had a period of time where we had vacancies.

Again, we've heard other Members in this House talk about the change in the demographic. We know that especially with City of St. John's housing were built in the '70s and '80s. They were built for families. They were built for larger families, and we know that that demographic has shifted. Now that it's basically families, ones and twos that are looking for them. Some of the newcomer families, of course, are much more expensive. They have larger numbers.

But we've seen a shift in the demographic, so it doesn't quite fit. In my new role as a representative in the provincial Legislature, I understand that these are the similar kind of challenges that have happened certainly with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing over the years.

The thing that really bothers me most in life is complacency. Look, I'm a built activist. That's where I come from. The NDP, our values are built on making sure that we ensure that everybody has a right to housing affordability. So it's just really, really frustrating when we see political will just fall down on the job. It's not about the workers; it's about mismanagement that gets us into these kind of corners that we find ourselves in.

This particular resolution here – and I'll read it again: The hon. House express its support for the government's commitment to fixing long-standing systemic issues identified in the report, ensuring they are not repeated and encourage the government to take immediate and decisive action to address its findings and strengthen accountability in housing services. I'm all over that – I'm all over that. I'm getting behind that.

As the Member for Lake Melville has identified, we are here in the NDP, a strong but mighty caucus, and we are going to hold the government to account to make sure that the government will proceed and not be complacent. Because to get us to this point, where people all over my district, and my colleague's district, are living in encampments, in tents, on church grounds – today, on the social media, we see more tents coming up again – today – in churches

in the downtown core of our beautiful historic city. These people deserve to have dignity. They deserve to have a home.

We talk about homes and what that means. When I was in my role at the City of St. John's and, of course, I'm representing many of the same people, but now I'm proud to represent not only the people of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi District, but also the people of the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I'm so proud to represent.

We talked about themes of family, love, comfort, safety, security, belonging. We all deserve to have that. Most of us here, I dare say, we're fortunate enough to have that. But we're responsible for other people. We are responsible for everybody. So that is crucial that we take that on with a full responsibility and no complacency.

Accountability and transparency are two of the major, major points for the NDP. We really want to tackle the issues of accountability and transparency all the time. Every time that we're slamming something out there, when we're in Question Period, those are things that we want to do. We want to make sure to hold account. That's our job. That's what we're elected for.

I think it's extremely important then, so I'll speak to some of the people that I have to be accountable to. These are the people who should be able to live in public housing but aren't because the wait-list is thousands long. The calls that I get at my constituency office – number one, 10 vulnerable adults, many seniors, are facing eviction from a rental home in the downtown core. I referenced it earlier and it's happening right now. The house has been bought. The new owners have hired a private property manager to evict all the residents. They have nowhere else to go.

One of the tenants reached out to our office but because it is privately owned unit, we have no authority to prevent the eviction – why I'm pushing so hard on rent control. The constituent told us this morning that she has reached out to Stella's Circle, Thrive,

End Homelessness, NL Housing, Seniors NL, Connections for seniors, the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being and the City of St. John's and not one of these organizations has been able to provide these people about to be displaced people with housing. They have no options. There are absolutely no options for these people.

She asked me to put forward this question today: In a housing crisis that has gone on for half a decade, why are there still no protections put in place to protect vulnerable people?

Speaker, our second one, a constituent living in an apartment building in the East End of St. John's called our office a few weeks ago absolutely inconsolable. She was crying so hard that she couldn't even breathe, and she had received yet another notice of rent increase from the REIT that owned the complex that she was living in. Her rent was increased by \$170 a month last year and, now, it's going to be going up by another \$50 this year.

This is a senior on a fixed income. Her rent has increased \$220 per month in just over a year. Do you think her pension has increased by that much to match? Not a chance. The Residential Tenancies Act has not been updated since 2018. We have so many landlords and property management companies taking advantage of our housing crisis, with no recourse.

Speaker, my third constituent: a family with four children living downtown in a rat-infested house. They contacted my office because they were hoping to get into an emergency shelter. They don't qualify for an emergency shelter because they are housed. They told my office they sleep together in one bedroom because there's one room that the rats can't get in. I mean, this is crazy. This is absolutely an unacceptable kind of thing that we would actually treat our people like that. They're afraid to complain to the landlord because they're afraid that they're going to get evicted for causing trouble. They have nowhere else to go.

Finally, I'll just mention one more constituent here because this is important. These are the people that we are representing. These are the people that I'm representing. I know that my colleague have represented with such incredible force over the past six years. I know because I was side by side with him while he was fighting for people in the Livingstone Street area and the Carters Hill area and so on, Long's Hill area of St. John's Centre.

But another constituent, a woman living alone in her 30s, she is disabled from a car accident she had over a decade ago. Living in a one-room apartment, in fear of her landlord, she says, who's been making unwanted sexual advances against her. She has nowhere else to live. Doesn't want to go into a shelter. She can't find anything else to rent on the private market. She's been on the Newfoundland Housing wait-list for years – for years.

These are the reasons why public housing is the responsibility of our government. It is a responsibility that we all have to bear, and it is for everyone that we all have to play a role.

We can continue – I mean, we're in partisan politics here now, moving from the municipal sector into partisan politics. It's shifted. It's different. I know everybody feels different who is coming from the municipal sector, but do you know what? We all have to work together to make this happen.

I'm very happy that this resolution has been put forward, because it's been completely inadequate, and to have this AG report come forward with proof in the pudding that the people that have been trying to get into housing have to deal with mould or issues because there are not enough workers there to support them; that they have to deal with rats in the social housing scenarios; that they have to deal with inadequate windows and things like that, and those are the people who are lucky to actually get in there. I mean, it's absolutely just mindboggling that, in this day and age, in this society, people have to live in that kind of squalor. It just blows my mind.

I just want to talk about, first of all, let's go back to housing in a general sense. Housing is a human right. I don't care if you want to call it that or not in stuff like that. I know that that's been bandied about for a long time; people have been afraid to talk about it like that, but it is a human right. It's something we all deserve. Housing is in a crisis and we have to own it. We have to admit to that. We can't skirt it. We can't be complacent any longer about it.

Years ago, this evolution of housing and homelessness – this evolved. It didn't land on our lap suddenly just one day. This is something that is an evolution and, specifically to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, where, in my former role as a housing lead, we see – you know, we had lots of interactions with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. We had great people working there. I will mention the former CEO, Julia Mullaley. We had lots of interceptions there because of course people who are applying for housing are going to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and, in my district, they're applying for City of St. John's housing.

I will tell you, and I know that it's difficult to put out there, that a lot of people were not very happy. When they didn't get the housing that they deserved, the City of St. John's housing was trying to stay ahead of it, it was struggling, but the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing situation, this audit overview, it's unbelievable. We're talking about: "Waitlist grew 71% from 2021 to 2025; Waitlist unreliable, and likely overstated; Corporation had only 71% of the units needed to meet the demand; Failure to complete required inspections pervasive; Maintenance records too unreliable to assess."

That's not the fault of the workers, as my colleague has already talked about, we're talking about mismanagement. We're talking about people at the top making decisions. Supply Management, "Inventory down 57 units since 2021."

Those are probably some of the units that my colleague was talking about that could

have been housing people in social housing but were sent off to the private market.

SPEAKER: I remind the speaker to address the Chair, please.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, "87% needed 1 or 2 bedrooms" – as I talked about the change in demographics – "only 28% of units had 1 or 2 bedrooms; No units reconfigured from 2021 to 2025, to create 1 or 2 bedroom options; No evidence of strategic or operational oversight," and again, "All board members overdue for reappointment or replacement."

Look, there's a lot of work to do, and the work comes from the top. The reality is, this never should have come to pass when we have so many people who are so vulnerable, people who are unhoused.

In the District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, I talked to you about some of these stories, Speaker, about the kind of challenges that people have, and they continue to grow. The encampments continue. In the downtown of St. John's, it is completely unacceptable that people do not have the ability to have the supports that they need in order to not only thrive, but just to survive.

When you walk through the beautiful downtown historic district of one of the oldest cities in North America, if not the oldest city in North America, and we see people setting up their tents behind campaign signs, setting up tents across from shelters, setting up their tents in parks and all kinds of places and tucking away – I get reports all the time – while we have a Newfoundland and Labrador Housing stock that has just basically fallen apart, it is time to take hold of this. It is time to put the resources into the social housing because we need to support our people. People deserve that dignity.

On behalf of certainly the NDP, and certainly the residents that I'm representing, we're here to ensure that housing is a priority, that affordability is a priority and we

can't be complacent any longer. It is not something that we can do; we cannot tolerate that any longer. People need to be held accountable. We need to be transparent.

I think that this is in some ways a vindication of all of the fighting that has happened for the past six years by my colleague. I'm happy to join the ranks and to ensure that this type of complacency doesn't continue. I believe that you, Minister, will continue in your role, because you know this area so well. It is my hope, but we will certainly be taking it to task, this and many other measures.

I really, truly appreciate the opportunity to speak, Speaker, thank you on behalf of the residents of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity to stand and speak on behalf of the residents and constituents of Conception Bay East - Bell Island. It is always a pleasure.

I would like to begin my remarks, and they will be fairly brief today, by first of all saying to the Minister of Housing that we have worked very closely together over the last two years. I've been in this House of Assembly as an MHA for about two years, and even prior to that in my role in the Premier's office, we had many interactions. I think he is a man of great honour. I know that he will put his big heart into this job, wholeheartedly, and I wish him success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: I truly mean that, and I said this to the Energy and Mines Minister on the day we were sworn in. I said it to the Finance Minister and others, I wish them success because, ultimately, their success

is going to be the success for the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I have, as recently as yesterday, dealt with the Housing Minister and the Health Minister. I mentioned it very briefly last night. They helped tremendously to aid a situation with a constituent in my district, and she was very grateful for that. She wanted me to extend thanks, and I know I'm supposed to address the Chair, but I will look at the Housing Minister and the Health Minister and say thank you very much, once again, for your help on that file.

We worked together when I was on the other side with the Housing Minister, and I think he would reciprocate in terms of some of the comments that I'm saying here today, in terms of willingness to want to work together to make sure that what happens for the people of the province is in all our best interests, and housing is one of them. We know that housing is a fundamental right and it's obviously one of the fundamental determinants of health, if you've got somewhere safe to live.

As a parent and wanting to provide a safe place for your children, on a nightly basis so that they feel safe, is so important. I don't know if there is anything more important. Then there's food and there are others obviously, but having somewhere to go to call your own place to live and to feel safe there is so important. There are so many people who are struggling right now and don't have that. For the work that is cut out for the Housing Minister right now, I wish him luck.

In my brief tenure as the minister of Housing, a little under five months, it was one of the challenging positions I've ever held in my life. I can say that. Having spent 31 or close to 32 years as a reporter and being to all corners of this province and covering court for many years and covering social justice stories, housing stories, when you actually are on the front line of that job and getting to get into emergency shelters and meeting the people who require help and walking into the emergency shelters – I toured many of them here in St. John's to

see what it is we are dealing with and it's heart breaking.

It's heart breaking to see how people are in those positions and you have the ability or sometimes inability to help, if there isn't anything you can do immediately for them. To see people who are in tents, obviously heart breaking to see that. That's not something you want to see in your own community or in your province.

It was also very nice to hear today that the minister said that is above politics. I would agree it is above politics because every district represented in this House of Assembly has people who are precariously housed or without housing. I visited Burin - Grand Bank with my colleague. I was in Gander. We went to Corner Brook. I went to parts of Labrador, including Nain, to look at the housing issues that are there. In some cases, the inability to hire people as contractors to do the much-needed work on some of those housing units.

I mean, the job is huge and the folks who work at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, the 300-plus staff who are there, they do yeoman service on a daily basis and they still do. Even as Opposition, our CAs often have to call front-line staff there. There are three or four people in particular that I know personally by name now, go on a first-name basis and have their cell phones and you're able to text them and it doesn't matter what time it is, day or night, because this doesn't have a 9-to-5 situation when somebody is looking for a house.

I've dealt with the Leader of the Third Party late on a Sunday night in the past. Not perfect and I'm not trying to say we were; we tried to do our best because we also have the compassion and hearts that we want to make sure that people, if they need a house, that they can get to it. They can get somewhere where they can be housed overnight.

I wanted to say a few things just about some of the challenges that I witnessed when I was there. This is by no means to

lay out some excuses as to why things weren't done better, but this is just some context for some of what we were dealing with. What I was told when I became the minister of Housing back in early 2024, is that a year and a half prior on a nightly basis in this province, we had 75 people, mid-COVID, per night, who required emergency shelter housing – 75 people.

In less than a year and a half, that number had risen to about 425 people per night who require emergency shelter. More in the wintertime, obviously, because of the elements and the need to get in out of it. Some people in the summertime would live in different situations, but that number grew exponentially over a brief period of time. Again, none of these are excuses, but I just want to lay some context for this rapid growth of people who require it, and the bulk of the people, obviously, who required the emergency shelter were on the Avalon region.

I'm looking at some of the issues that were highlighted in the Auditor General's report. I should mention as well, Deputy Speaker, and I meant to do this at the very beginning, I support this resolution and the plan to fully support it. But looking at some of the housing units that we have – and others have talked about this – when these houses were built in the '70s and '80s, 40 or 50 years ago, a family was very different. A family now can be two people. A lot of people are looking for a single unit. If you look at the majority of the houses that are in the current stock, the 5,600 or so houses in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing – it's the largest landlord in the province – almost 1,500 of them are three bedroom, 351 are four bedroom and only 18 are five bedroom.

Another part of the report shows that – and I think the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi pointed this out – 28 per cent of our stock in Newfoundland and Labrador Housing are one- and two-bedroom units. Yet, 87 per cent of the people on that waiting list, over 2,500 people, are requiring one- and two-bedroom units. The cost associated with having to convert a five-bedroom or a four-bedroom unit and trying

to configure it so that there would be different entranceways, and the new codes that are required if you are going to touch anything in a building, prevented it from happening as rapidly as we wanted it to.

This is despite the fact that we had availed of a lot of federal funding and provincial funding for rent subsidies for people, the Canada Housing Benefit, transitional housing allowances, housing growth funds, affordable rental homes, our five-point plan. I heard, I think it was the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, say earlier about housing costs.

I knew of, when I was in the ministry, a young couple who had availed of the upfront down payment, five years interest-free, and \$1,500 for their legal fees. They bid on homes that were going for \$210,000 on the list price and they would sell for \$40,000 or \$50,000 more than that and they didn't qualify for that amount. They qualified for a certain amount, and they kept missing house after house.

The other thing that's changed in relation to the real estate market in St. John's – and you'll see this if you look online and Facebook has become basically a place where most real estate agents do their advertising now – is they show a house and they say we will not be taking any bids – they'll show it on Saturday. We're not going to take any bids until Tuesday and the last bid on Friday, and then on Saturday we'll open the envelopes and we'll tell you. It was completely different than it was when I purchased my first home. You put in a bid; they come back to you. Now it's just, okay, drop your envelope off and we'll tell you if you're successful.

This is what these folks had to do just two years ago, and I think they were on their 10th house or 12th house before they finally were successful in purchasing a home and getting in a young family. It's becoming increasingly difficult. As a parent of four children, to know what young people face in the housing market, not just the cost but the inflated prices that they have to face, it's astounding.

I can tell you as well, like the current minister, when I was there, in the portfolio, we met with Choices for Youth, we met with Stella's Circle at the Brian Martin Housing Resource Centre, the Gathering Place, John Howard Society, the Association for New Canadians, Central Housing, End Homelessness St. John's, folks in Labrador who do this. This is a problem not exclusive to the Avalon Peninsula or St. John's; this is all over Newfoundland and Labrador where people are precariously housed. We're dealing with over 2,000 people on a waiting list. Not all of them are homeless, but they're on the waiting list to get into Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, and over 12,000, almost 12,200 clients, who are working with folks at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. It's a very challenging issue.

There was money announced for Gander to build homes. There was money announced for Corner Brook to build homes. We visited areas of Labrador where homes were being built as well at that point in time, and one of the things – I'm going a little bit longer than I expected – was dealing with communities that didn't want affordable housing built in their communities because of an uprising from some citizens. When they heard affordable, they thought that meant low income, but affordable would be, and what I would say to the person who I visited during the campaign, an elderly couple who wanted to move out of their larger home, a sidesplit home that they would probably sell for \$425,000, but they would end up moving into a condo that would cost them that much or more, so they're stuck. They don't want to take on a new mortgage. They might still have a little bit left.

You've got people who are over-housed and want to get out because their kids are moved out. They want to move to a smaller place and they can't. That, of course, would free up the inventory for a younger family to move in and buy that house, but folks are staying in their houses because, if they sell it, they have to spend more to go somewhere else because the cost has gone through the roof.

With respect to the five-point plan on giving lower interest rates, like a lower interest rate that would basically be guaranteed by the government, and no GST, contractors told me, when I was in the ministry, that still wasn't enough because the price of materials had gone up so much after COVID that it didn't make it affordable enough for them to make a profit, and then to have a low rent income for 10 years before they could move the rent up in order to avail of the lower interest and GST.

Mr. Speaker, there is so much we could talk about with this, but again, I will end my remarks there by saying that I wish the Minister of Housing the very best success in this. I will, as well, work with you on any situation that we can help you with, and I'm sure I'll be coming to you with requests from members from Conception Bay East - Bell Island, as I'm sure the other Members on this side of the aisle will be coming to you as well.

Again, thank you for the time. I will be supporting the resolution.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Lane): The hon. the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

R. BALSOM: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I rise to speak on housing, an issue that touches everyone, whether that be lacking a home or living in conditions that fall below acceptable standards.

Let me begin by acknowledging a reality that we, as a government, must confront honestly. The strain placed on the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has reached a critical point. For too long the corporation has operated under mounting pressure with limited support, growing demand and systems that have not kept pace with the needs of the people it serves.

The people who rely on this system, the most vulnerable among our province, are being asked to wait far too long for housing. These are individuals and families who cannot afford alternatives, who do not have the luxury of waiting months or even years for stability. Housing is not a privilege; it is a basic necessity and yet for too many it remains just out of reach.

At the same time, those who have been fortunate enough to secure housing through the system are too often left living in conditions that are unacceptable. Repairs take far too long, maintenance issues linger and people are left feeling forgotten in homes that should provide safety and comfort but instead create stress and hardship.

This is the result of years of accumulated pressure, insufficient resources and processes that need modernization. We cannot ignore what has been clearly laid out before us. The recent report from the Office of the Auditor General has confirmed that there are serious cracks in the system, and our government is committed to acting on them. This work is made even more urgent by the broader housing crisis facing our province. Rising costs, limited supply and increasing demand have placed additional pressure on an already strained system.

As we consider these challenges, we must also recognize the very real and immediate impacts of recent events. The wildfires on the North Shore of my district have devastated communities and displaced families. People who have lost everything are now turning to the very system we are discussing today, a system that we know is under strain.

Speaker, we hear from constituents weekly about their struggles in housing. In the Auditor General's report, it highlights that it has been 30 years since a new housing unit has been built in rural Avalon. Constituents have told us that they have been advised it could take, at a minimum, three years to be placed in NL Housing. This didn't happen yesterday. With a wait-list growing 71 per

cent, simply, the system isn't keeping pace with demand.

Housing is foundational. It impacts health, education, employment and overall well-being. When we fail to deliver adequate housing, the consequences ripple across every aspect of society. We know this will not happen overnight, but we also know that inaction is not an option. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve timely access to safe, well-maintained homes. They deserve a government that listens, that responds and that takes responsibility.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortunate Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and certainly a very important topic that's being discussed here today.

As always, an opportunity for me to speak on behalf of the people of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. I wasn't going to speak today but, certainly, a conversation I had with an electrician in my district kind of – I should give this idea to the minister in terms of getting at construction and what is, I guess, barriers for people in the rural parts of the province, because we do have Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units, certainly in my district.

Before I get into that, I listened to the minister introduce in terms of the seriousness of the situation, and we all realize that it is serious. As my colleague from Conception Bay East - Bell Island said to the minister, we won't put up barriers at all for you in terms of what you're trying to do here. We will be supportive 100 per cent. You can count on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: I think that's important, but I still think, and I have to say it to put it on record, that it's going to be a difficult task, there's no doubt about it. I think we need to

realize that because some people have talked about the blame. I don't think that's going to get us anywhere in terms of finding the solutions to the problems that are presented to us.

Being a minister for almost six years, no minister micromanages your department because it's just too much to do; nor would officials want you to micromanage because then you're overseeing them and sometimes overstepping your boundaries, if that's the case.

The minister had said strengthening oversight. That is important, and I know we'll get chances to ask the minister about that, what is his plan, I guess, for that, oversight plan, because it is important. That's important for him in terms of determining what direction they go in. Giving the right guidance, that is important as well.

He also talked about the pressures of supply. That is a pressure. The supply pressure and challenge is going to be a challenge to achieving what units you want to get built. He said accept the report and assure issues are never repeated again. That's a strong statement, I want to say, in terms of never happening again or never repeating again, and that's not to point fingers at anybody. But with the systemic problems that we have throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, then things never being repeated and never happening again is going to be a challenge for sure.

Just talking about some of the challenges, in terms of moving to how your plan will deliver what results you hope to deliver. That's the trades around all this, whether it's carpenters, electricians, plumbers, et cetera. I know we did when we were in government, but I think we can do more in terms of educating youth that are in Grades 10, 11, 12, that there's great opportunity in these trades and you don't need to be – I guess as we were taught growing up, you have to go to university in order to be successful. No, you don't. We all know that trades are very important to what the

minister is attempting to do here and to achieve.

The board of directors was referenced and yes, we all respect them. We all respect people that are under the umbrella of the minister for sure, and I just want to make note of that.

I spent 6½ years, I guess, selling real estate, buildings and houses, managing them – and I know when I used to encourage some of my friends who were contractors to get into the work of renovations and repairs to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units, they used to always say, not worth my time. The money is not there. I'm not going to be into renos. It's just not there. I'd rather be into the new housing.

I oversaw a lot of housing, but we still encouraged it because there was a need there. There's still a need. I guess enticements to the contractor that may rethink, oh, maybe I'll get into the renos – what the answer is for that, I'll leave that to the minister. But that falls under the challenge piece as well

Opportunities – I know I had a chance back a few years ago to be La Scie and to see these units that are being built in La Scie, four units that I think, at the time, was like \$200,000. It was four units; with kitchen units, washrooms; very attractive. I know the MHA from behind you, that's his district. So that's supporting rural Newfoundland, locals, because the product they had there was kind of like, wow, they didn't realize it was happening. So that may be a lever you can pull on in terms of satisfying the needs in the province.

Talking about those needs, I go to my district and I had a conversation with a gentleman, a Red Seal electrician, had a business 18 years in Nova Scotia, back in Newfoundland because he wanted to come back to Harbour Breton and live. Wasn't really going to be into the business but now he wants to be in the business. But there's a lot of road barriers in terms wanting to inspect his work and, I guess, the Minister

of Government Services, that will be under this department. So I say to both ministers that maybe that's something we can look at, because inspections for work to be done down on the South Coast has to come from Central Newfoundland. He's saying that is a deterrent to get work done.

So whether that's repairs or building new units, then let's open up the door for him and he says he has two young people who would like to come home from Alberta, if he could do this, open up the door for them. Whether that's a pilot project, it could be for down on the Coast of Bays region. I think that's another piece, another lever that you could pull on to help get this work done. It's been a roadblock for even unit repairs because I've worked on a lot of files where we have single moms, you have family with kids, nowhere else to go and they don't want to leave their home down there, but repairs need to be happening down there. You can't find the workers because nobody wants to do the renos.

So therein lies some of the challenges in terms of getting the work done, especially in the rural parts of the province, and that's just the reality of the system. That won't be no fault of you; it wasn't no fault of any former ministers. That's kind of the challenge of the system for sure.

We've said here before and my point here today is, Minister, look through the lens of rural Newfoundland in terms of the challenges that is going to lie ahead for housing needs in the province. The other thing that I've mentioned to the minister before – and I know there was some reference to Crown lands and I'm sure the minister of Crown Lands would be very receptive to open up lands that can be used and fast-track it so we can build these units or whatever the case may be.

I know when I wore that hat, listen, if someone came and they needed Crown land or whatever for a project, we're not going to stall it. It needs to be fast-tracked for sure.

The other one that I'll end with is thresholds. Because in Harbour Breton we have cottages that some of these seniors would like to move into because it's no longer a two-story house. These units are slap-on-grade units where there is no basement, no stairs and they need it now because of their health and whatever challenges they face, but there are thresholds that need to be higher in terms of the income. If you could have two or three down in the rural parts of the province, that could make a big difference and then their house could possibly become an option for a housing unit. That's another lever.

I gave some challenges and I gave some levers. I'll end that by saying that, Minister, I wish you luck in what you're going to do. I believe there is certainly a sincere plan for it. In terms of constructing the units, there are challenges, but I believe a clear path forward from the minister's chair, the attitude is there, the willingness is there and the passion is there. Like I said, we'll support you over here and we support what you've put on the floor of the House of Assembly here today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CORMIER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm proud to stand here today and represent the District of St. George's - Humber, but not only just St. George's - Humber, I'm proud to stand today because this is Labrador Flag Day and I have a deep connection –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CORMIER: Some of the best times of my teenage life were in Labrador on Smokey Mountain representing Marble Mountain. It was great times in Labrador.

Speaker, the recent report from the Auditor General delivers a message that is both clear and sobering. It points to deep systematic gaps in planning, coordination and oversight. Gaps that have constrained our province's ability to respond to growing housing pressures. These findings are not abstract; they reflect the lived experiences and frustrations we hear from constituents who are struggling to find safe, affordable and appropriate housing.

The report makes it clear that oversight has not kept pace with the urgency of social housing crisis and its core is lack of long-term strategic planning.

Too often housing efforts have been reactive rather than proactive, fragmented rather than coordinated. Without clear targets, reliable data and consistent accountability, progress has fallen short. This aligns with what residents have been telling us. The system can feel slow, unresponsive and disconnected from realities they face, and acknowledging this is essential. Government has a responsibility, not only to act, but to plan effectively, track progress and ensure public resources are delivering meaningful results. Those needs differ significantly across the province.

In urban centres, rising costs, limited supply and increasing demand have created significant pressure. Families are facing long wait-lists, higher rents and fewer affordable options. Vulnerable groups, seniors, newcomers and those experiencing homelessness are bearing the brunt of these challenges. These are some of the same concerns we hear every day from residents who feel priced out and left behind.

In rural and remote communities, the challenges are different but equally serious. Aging housing stock, limited construction capacity, population shifts and infrastructure constraints all make it difficult to build and maintain adequate housing. Even where funding is available, logistical and economic barriers can delay or prevent progress. Community leaders and residents have

been clear, solutions designed for urban areas do not always work in rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ultimately, the Auditor General's findings reinforce what people across our province have been saying for years: The housing crisis is complex, the housing crisis is uneven, and it's deeply felt. It requires solutions that are tailored and coordinated and grounded in the lived experiences of communities we serve.

Looking at the clock, and my friend, I'll take my seat now, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being, if he speaks now, he will end the debate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I have to say I'm deeply honoured and pleased to be in this House today to bring forward this resolution and to hear all of my colleagues speak so eloquently and so well to this resolution.

To my colleague from Burin - Grand Bank, and a former Minister of Housing, I took many notes. I took many notes on each speaker. If you saw me looking down at my phone, people who were watching this online today, certainly, let – I want to share with the House of Assembly how pleased they were to watch this today and to see the importance as I started off from being above politics. That is important.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I started with that, the public saw that and it was evident here in the House today.

My colleague from Burin - Grand Bank spoke about individual issues that we are working on. He spoke to the need of adding

to the housing stock and the 14,000 individuals within the program. He also spoke to the changing demographic. We are very cognizant of that, not operating in silos. The minister responsible for Seniors and I have had many discussions on the need for seniors' housing throughout the province as well. That's also an important factor that we need, because the housing need has changed drastically over the last 20 years, as you stated. I couldn't agree more.

With and old population of seniors, roughly 25 per cent, some of the houses that are in the stock, people are certainly over-housed. It's been said several times here today, larger families now have one or two people living in them with three, four or five bedrooms. I'd sooner see someone over-housed than not housed at all; however, that does present a true issue that we deal with because we see the need of smaller units for smaller families. That is first and foremost.

He spoke about the need for the increased supply for labour, for the Housing Corporation to meet the demand. I couldn't agree more. We simply do not have enough and that puts significant pressures on affordable housing.

So we are looking at all corners of the province, I tell my hon. colleague and, in the AG's words of it being an ad hoc basis for new builds, we are certainly looking at the areas of the province that have the statistics of people who require housing and that's where we're focusing. So when I'm saying working with the 40 districts, I'm working with the 40 districts that need it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: He spoke about modular builds. We've had many discussions about modular builds and, of course, we have applications pertaining to those. Those are all being evaluated; some are higher, some are lower. It all depends on each application. We're looking at everything when it comes to that.

He also spoke about working with municipalities providing land, 100 per cent correct. Once we have those meetings and conversations with municipalities, they're part of the solution as well. So, again, not operating with silos. I had conversations with my colleague, the Minister of Crown Lands, as he knows the importance as well about opening up those properties.

He spoke about something very important and that came to accessible units, Mr. Speaker, accessible units and inclusive design. Now, I don't want to be like my colleague from Bonavista, but I take great pride in emulating him because he speaks of his district and constituents. Well, I know that Sandra in Torbay is listening, and she had – I was sworn in October 29, if it wasn't the next day, it was the day after that, she wanted to meet with me to discuss inclusive design and the importance of it within Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units. So that is first and foremost in every conversation that I had with respect to our units and that inclusive design.

He did speak about the Canada Housing Benefit and, I've said this before and I want to say it here in the House, that is so important to people to remain in their own homes, the Canada Housing Benefit. The issue is that I'm not able to give one out because there's not one to give. I came into the department on October 29 and, at that time, all Canada Housing Benefits were disbursed.

We do have benefits, I'll say to my hon. colleagues, with respect to women trying to flee gender or partner violence and domestic violence, that is there for a benefit, but with respect to the Canada Housing Benefit, that's the strain we find ourselves under. That benefit is so important to the people of the province when it comes to keeping them in their own homes and not being in a shelter or not being on the street, so that is something we're working towards, to increase that because we see the importance of it. I thank my hon. colleague for his comments.

To the Member for St. John's Centre, when he spoke about the failure under the former administration for affordable housing, I understand and recognize his passion here today. He spoke about shelter use, tent encampments and the social rental housing that's slow to come to fruition. I hear it and understand it.

We spoke about the property sales without a forecast of future demand. We are having those discussions now. With respect to all areas of the province, we look at the forecast of demand and the units that have gone into disrepair. I've had great conversations with the members of CUPE within NLHC, and I realize their importance to part of the solution. So those conversations are going to continue, and I can certainly say that it's noted with respect to the CUPE members within housing.

He also spoke about Livingstone Street. The hon. Member and I had many conversations since I came into this office about housing in general and Livingstone. I've met with the board at Centreville Neighbourhood Association, met with the new board. I see and completely understand the importance of their work in that area and I'll continue to work with them to provide solutions for that area of his district, and that's not fallen on me or my department.

He mentioned about his concerns falling on deaf ears. All I can say is, not now. That is shown here today with the support that is given for this. So I can understand and I'll honestly tell him that. He spoke about 106 Airport Road and the expensive lease option that was there. When we sat in Opposition, we understood that frustration. I understand where he's coming from with respect to his frustration over the last four years with respect to all of that and including affordable housing. I do appreciate the Member for St. John's Centre and his comments today.

To the Premier, he started off by thanking the CEO, Mike Tizzard. I know I'm not allowed to use names, Speaker, but I'll say that and the board.

SPEAKER: That's fine as long as it's not in a disparaging way.

J. WALL: Thank you.

With respect to the CEO and the board members, I thank the Premier for starting off his comments today with that, because that means a lot to the CEO and to the board members. I just like to be able to say that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Not about laying blame is very important as well. He spoke on the reflection of a system that was shaped over the last years and the action that's required to fix it going forward. We, as the government, and I know with the help from this House, that we will certainly fix that and I want to thank the Premier for his kind words.

He spoke about the report not being new to us. We did sit for many years over in the Opposition and he spoke about the issues at that time. We do know that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve better, in serving the people we have and the system that we have to rely on.

The AG report did give us a foundation to act, and that's why we're here today. That's how I started off my comments. I know now, after the conversation today, that the foundation is solid and will certainly have that support going forward.

He spoke about repairs and maintenance and the wait-list and about daily lives. That comes back to my original comment with respect to the personal aspect, the human touch, when it comes to working with individuals within the Housing Corporation who we are responsible for and it's important – and I want to highlight it from the Premier right on down, we see that. It's respected and we will certainly focus our results about the people because people are first. On a personal note, I thank the Premier for putting his trust in me to have me in this department.

To my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands, he spoke about the smaller families and the smaller units that are needed – absolutely. Our new builds now are focused on one- and two-bedroom builds. We've had micro-units announced on Army Street here in St. John's. He spoke about Crestview Avenue in Corner Brook and the 20-home apartment building. I'm very happy that's under way, in addition to the six units prior to that.

He spoke passionately about the Corner Brook hotel, and that is certainly one that requires a lot of attention. We are working towards possible solutions in the area. It's not easy. Many colleagues said today it's not easy and they're 100 per cent right. But we are working on that.

I had the opportunity while in Corner Brook to view the build site, to meet with the Housing Corporation staff, and I saw the wonderful attitudes and determination and commitment that they have for the people of the province from that office in Corner Brook. I'd just like to give them a shout-out because, as in my colleague's words, they are so helpful. They want to help, they want to provide solutions and fix the problem. So I just want to reiterate that.

I did have a good conversation with the Member for Corner Brook. I know he didn't speak today, not a problem, but we did have a conversation with respect to the need in his district and the applications that are coming in. We're certainly looking at all that, all 40 districts. I just want to highlight the conversation we had yesterday to the Member for Corner Brook.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands also said about the policy update. We are certainly working on that now, Speaker, working on providing a dedicated staff to look at the policies that need to be updated within the Housing Corporation. That's already started. I'm happy to say that. He also spoke about the staff needed for repairs and maintenance, and we certainly have a plan to address that because we know the people of the province deserve better and the staff of the Housing

Corporation do need more staff to do the work in that area.

So when I look at the West Coast, I look at Humber - Bay of Islands, I look at Corner Brook, I look at St. George's - Humber, I look at Burgeo - La Poile, I look at St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, I look at Humber - Gros Morne – I hope I haven't left anybody out. However, I'll work with and meet with whomever to discuss housing in their districts and the needs of it. I just want to put that on record.

To my colleague from Lake Melville, I think he said it best. He said: Housing is not optional. Everyone needs a place to call home. I couldn't agree more with my colleague from Lake Melville. He spoke about the need of repairs for units and, as an MHA, he experiences the frustration that the families are experiencing. I had the opportunity to see that and to see his dedication and his commitment to the Members of his district when I was there in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

My colleague, the Minister of Health, joined me and we went to Happy Valley-Goose Bay, in his words, boots on the ground, and it was such a learning experience and opportunity. I know several other Members said it here today, when they travelled around, it certainly puts things in perspective.

He spoke about being fact based and void of politics in this AG report, and that's important to remember, as I started my discussion today. I can say while we were in his district, we listened, we learned and we have takeaways. That is something that I'm focused on, with respect to being Labrador specific. It's very, very, very important. I can certainly tell you I'm looking forward to restoring the faith, as he had mentioned.

To my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi who was cognizant of all the housing challenges related to her municipal experience. I've said so many times, the people in this House – and I look around the House, we have many people who were involved with municipal politics. What they

bring to the House of Assembly, that experience, is certainly so important.

Our work with municipalities going forward is important, because they see the need, their boots are on the ground, first and foremost, and it's important for everyone to have a home. I can certainly say that she also spoke about the crisis that we are looking at now, the change in the demographic, the units built for larger families at the time and focus now on smaller units.

As she was speaking, I made a note about the new build that we announced on Hoyles Avenue. I believe it's in the District of Mount Scio, with respect to a three-unit build in Mount Scio, on property that the Housing Corporation owned, but we saw the need in that area and how those three units in that area are going to make a difference. All these certainly make a difference, Speaker.

My colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi spoke about accountability and transparency first and foremost, with respect to the Housing Corporation. In her words: We have to work together, we have to give support, we have to provide dignity and we have to own it. I couldn't agree more.

She also spoke about the repairs and, just for the benefit of the House – I know some Members know – when the Housing Corporation looks at repairing units, they average 27 repairs a month. That's what's on average, 27 repairs a month; however, 34 units a month are returned for next repair so we can ever catch up on the repairs because we need more staff. We have a plan to address that.

To my colleague from Conception Bay East - Bell Island, I appreciate your kind words; as the kind words were said from everyone in the House today, I certainly do. Again, a former minister saw what work was being done here, and he spoke about the fundamental determinant of health. Absolutely, housing is a fundamental determinant of health. He spoke about the challenges that are there that he witnessed

at the time, and I can relate. Speaker, I can assure you, and the Members of this House, I have had more sleepless nights in five months than I had in 30 years in my previous career.

That is not looking for sympathy. That is just owning the responsibility. We see that, and I appreciate that he knows this side as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: This goes above politics, Speaker. I want to reiterate that.

He spoke about over-housing and renovations. We also look at our larger units and renovating them to smaller units; not always cost effective, but we look at every individual case to see if it can be because we realize the importance of smaller units in today's society.

To my colleague from Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, he spoke about the strain on the Housing Corporation is not at a critical point, and I agree. That is why we have this resolution on the floor of the House of Assembly today. I'm glad he spoke about the wildfire in his district, the CBN wildfire, and, again, both sides of the House, when dealing with the CBN wildfire. The Response and Recovery Committee – I'm also honoured to be a member of that. We're fully aware and working on solutions for his district with respect to housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: To my colleague from Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, I'm glad he spoke about the conversation he had with an electrician in his district, because the trades in our province are certainly critical to the solutions that we have here.

I'm very happy that you brought that up. Again, not operating silos, with my colleague from Crown Lands, my colleague from Jobs and Growth and Rural Development sees the importance of the trades in our province and how that can help the Housing Corporation. We had the discussion yesterday, and today, with

respect to ideas that he has that could help my department. So I can certainly say not operating in silos is certainly important.

He spoke about the barriers of housing in rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, the seriousness of the situation in his district and other parts and the difficulty of the task. You're 100 per cent right, that is all part of the solution with respect to knocking down those barriers.

We look at the supply pressures and the challenges we have with the renovations and the importance of inspectors, especially in rural parts of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm happy to take that away and have that discussion with him. If we could bring more people home to work here in Newfoundland and Labrador, that's always worth the conversation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I put an asterisk next to the next one, Speaker, to make sure we look at this through the lens of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. So I got that.

To my colleague from St. George's - Humber, he spoke about how the report is crystal clear: safe affordable housing and the need to be proactive. That's why we're here today. We are being proactive. We are working. I am working with the Housing Corporation, with the CEO and the board of directors to make sure that we can address the challenges that are in rural communities. He also spoke about the rural lens.

Mr. Speaker, I think I've talked enough today –

L. PARROTT: Me too.

J. WALL: – and the Government House Leader agrees.

I will take my seat, but on behalf of the CEO, the board of directors and all the staff at the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, I want to thank every Member in this House of Assembly today – every Member – for their attention, for their kind

words, for their support for this resolution and I look forward to the vote, Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are Members ready for the question?

All those in favour of the motion, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to request leave to table a document, if I may.

SPEAKER: Does the minister have leave?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave has been granted.

P. DINN: Thank you.

In accordance with section 7 of the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, I hereby table the 2026-2028 Activity Plan of the Private Training Corporation.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

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

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

This House do now stand adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, April 1, at 10 a.m.

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