



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume LI

FIRST SESSION

Number 40

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

Monday

October 26, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

First of all, I want to welcome all Members back to our fall sitting and I certainly hope it will be a productive one. I'm sure it will.

In our public gallery today joining us we have several members of the Avalon Dragons breast cancer survivor dragon boat racing team, which is the subject of a Member's statement.

Welcome, everyone, to our gallery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I'd also like to welcome Linda Penney, Deputy Mayor of Arnold's Cove who is the subject of a Member's statement. Accompanying the Deputy Mayor are the Arnold's Cove town council and staff.

Welcome, everybody.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also joining us in our public gallery are Kelli Hodder and Camillia Rumbolt from Foster Families Newfoundland and Labrador, which is the subject of another Ministerial Statement today.

Welcome to you both.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I'd also like to, first of all, welcome back one of our Pages – not new – Karsen Best who will be serving with us for the next session.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I'd also like to welcome a new Page to the House of Assembly, Lauren Tucker.

Lauren is from Conception Bay South. She is in her third year of studying psychology at Memorial University. Again, please join me in welcoming Lauren.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The next thing I want to bring to Members' attention, you will find on your desk this little brochure, card, whatever you want to call it. I had our staff create these and have them here for all Members to reflect on from time to time.

On the very front of it, as it says, this hon. House is guided by the principle of respect. Respect for ourselves, respect for our colleagues, respect for staff, respect for the institution, respect for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Inside as well, we have our Code of Conduct for Members to view, as well as the Harassment-Free Workplace Policy as it applies to Members and there are QR codes on each of those. If anybody wanted to review it at any time, it's there.

On the very back – I'm going to read this as well – you may have noticed when you came into the Chambers on all four doors entering this Chamber, as well as in the hallways and upstairs everywhere, we have these posted and it says: The House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador is committed to a safe and respectful environment that welcomes and supports everyone. It's free from harassment, bullying and violence. It's everyone's responsibility to foster a healthy environment; to promote a culture of civility; to demonstrate respect; and to recognize every person's right to be protected and supported.

So, as I said, I would ask all Members to certainly put that in your desk drawer and, for us all, myself included, we're all going to have bad days and we may not be at our best and if we're feeling that way and if we're frustrated about something, before we

stand in this House of Assembly and say something that we probably ought not to, maybe we might want to haul this out and just reflect on why we're here.

I'm also going to start our session the same as I started our last one and ended our last one.

As we embark on this session of the 51st General Assembly, let us take a moment to reflect on the freedoms that we enjoy in this beautiful province and give thanks to the brave individuals in uniform who have valiantly served our province and country – many of whom returned from service permanently impacted physically and/or emotionally; many of whom paid the ultimate sacrifice.

May we also give thanks for those brave individuals who continue to serve either domestically or in foreign lands to keep us safe. It is greatly due to their efforts, their commitment and their sacrifice that we are able to gather here today in this hon. House to engage in free, democratic debate on behalf of the citizens who have given us the privilege to serve.

Let us never forget their sacrifice. Let us always honour, through our actions, what they stood for by treating this hon. House as a place of dignity and respect.

Finally, before we begin, I'd like to take a moment to recognize the passing of two women whose contribution to this Legislature can't be overstated: Elizabeth Gallagher and Elizabeth Murphy.

Elizabeth Gallagher served the House of Assembly as Sergeant-at-Arms for 14 years, from 1997 to her retirement in 2011. She was the first woman to hold that position in this province, the second to do so in Canada. At the time of her retirement, she was one of the longest serving female Sergeant-at-Arms in the Commonwealth.

Elizabeth served with a deep commitment to the security and order of the House of Assembly, and a respect for its history and traditions. In addition to her responsibilities as Sergeant-at-Arms, she would often provide tours of the House of Assembly precinct.

Elizabeth started her career in health care, working as an operating room nurse from 1959 to 1973. Following her retirement, Elizabeth moved to Toronto to be closer to her grandchildren, whose presence always filled her with joy.

Elizabeth passed on October 8 and will be laid to rest at Holy Sepulchre Cemetery on November 14.

Elizabeth Murphy served the Newfoundland and Labrador House of Assembly for more than 40 years, being appointed to the positions of Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees in 1980, both of which she held until her retirement in 2020. In that time she supported over 250 of our Members, 13 Speakers and four Clerks through 11 General Assemblies.

Prior to joining the Legislature, she earned a Bachelor of Arts with honours from Memorial University and a Bachelor of Law from Dalhousie University.

To say she was dedicated to her service to the Legislature and its Members is an understatement. Her commitment to non-partisanship was always evident.

Following news of her passing, House staff received messages of tribute and condolence from parliamentary support staff across Canada. Comments focused on her professionalism, dedication, wisdom and the wealth of knowledge she had, as well as her surprising wit.

Beyond the parliamentary world, Elizabeth was an accomplished amateur golfer. Over a 30-year career, she won 22 medals and 19 match play tournaments at Bally Haly

Golf Club, and represented the province 15 times at the national championships.

In both her professional and personal life, she was known for her willingness to serve as a mentor and leader. She provided support to legislative staff in provincial and territorial legislatures, in the House of Commons and the Senate, as well as legislatures in other Commonwealth jurisdictions, and she was a diligent advocate for the rights of women golfers at her club and beyond.

Elizabeth passed away on July 18 at her home at the age of 83 and was laid to rest on September 28 in Holy Sepulchre Cemetery.

On behalf of all Members of the House of Assembly, I extend sincere condolences to the families, friends and colleagues of Elizabeth Gallagher and Elizabeth Murphy.

I would now ask all Members to please stand and join me in a moment of silence.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: Thank you.

You may be seated.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Mount Scio, Windsor Lake, Placentia West - Bellevue, St. George's - Humber and St. John's Centre.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm delighted to celebrate the Avalon Dragons, a dragon boat racing team based in Paradise. The team is made up of breast cancer survivors, and what began as a connection for breast cancer survivors has transformed into a competitive racing team

and an important part of the Paradise community.

The Avalon Dragons are experienced racers winning Division A this summer at the Paddle in Paradise Festival and have recently returned from France where they finished in the top 20 per cent of 170 teams in the International Breast Cancer Paddlers' Commission dragon boat festival.

The Avalon Dragons hosted their first annual Paddle in Paradise Festival in 2009 and it has grown significantly. The Paddle in Paradise Dragon Boat Festival raises funds to support breast cancer survivors and to support cancer organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I also highly recommend the Paddle in Paradise Festival held every July on Octagon Pond. It's a great spirit-building and feel-good family day out, all for a very good cause.

I want to thank the Avalon Dragons, their organizers, paddlers, supporters, friends and family for having such a positive impact on breast cancer survivors and their families in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Windsor Lake.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to remember my great friend, Dr. Thomas Hall.

Tommy was a family physician in Torbay who was loved by his patients. Whether he was treating them at his clinic, taking their calls on nights and weekends or visiting seniors, he made people feel comfortable and cared for. His kindness, as much as his skill as a doctor, meant the world to his patients.

Outside of medicine, Tommy was absolutely one of a kind. All he wanted was to enjoy life, have a laugh and never take things too seriously. He was incredibly unique.

To his wife, Lindsay, and his children, Savanna, Arianna, Nevaeh and Jackson, know that the b'ys and I will always be here for you with love and support for whatever you need.

And from all the b'ys – Tommy's buddies who he loved so much – Wilson, Nang, Byrdo, Devo, Dick, Oryan, Dunph, Gravy, Jeffy, Buster, Harve, Kyle guy, Chan, Corno, Foran, Big Murph C and Johnny Fats, we love you and we miss you, brudder.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Very sorry for your loss.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Today, I rise in honour – and I truly mean honour – as I get to recognize 25 years of community service by Arnold's Cove own Deputy Mayor Linda Penney, who is joined today by her husband, two daughters and members of the community.

For 25 years she has proudly represented the people of Arnold's Cove. That's seven election wins. That's four different MHAs who all knew how strong of a voice Linda was going to be. Linda is a force to be reckoned with for her community.

A tireless advocate for her town, I am always amazed at her professionalism and passion for Arnold's Cove, as are the residents who have kept her in that public service position for 25 years. For the last seven years, her ears have had to listen to this voice on the other end of the line and I am extremely grateful for all she does for me and my office.

Linda, for 25 years, you have been there for your residents. You have shown us what it means to offer yourself to this service. Countless hours you have spent to make lives better and I can't thank you enough.

I rise today to honour you and let's all rise and honour Linda Penney and her 25 years of service.

Thank you, Deputy Mayor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

H. CORMIER: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize Reed Hamlyn, a remarkable 16-year-old enduro racer from Massey Drive, who is making our region and Newfoundland and Labrador proud.

Reed began cycling at a young age, competing in cross-country races and helping build and maintain local trails. For the past three summers, he has worked with the West Coast Cycling Association, contributing to our regional cycling network.

His accomplishments are exceptional. At the Long Range Enduro, Reed earned third place in the U19 division in 2022 before winning his category and the overall race in 2023, 2024, 2025 and 2026, achieving consecutive overall victories. He also won first place in the U19 Expert category at the St. John's Enduro for three consecutive years.

Reed's dedication reflects the popularity of mountain biking in our region. This year's Long Range Enduro welcomed a record 167 participants, attracting riders from across the province and beyond.

As a Level III student, Reed continues year-round training, preparing to compete in British Columbia, including a grueling five-stage event in May 2027.

Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Reed on his outstanding achievements and wishing him success representing our province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, Foray NL is a citizen science, volunteer-run, not-for-profit organization dedicated to understanding and promoting mushroom biodiversity across the province.

For over 20 years, during the annual weekend Foray, members collect and describe mushrooms and other fungi. The Foray has sampled in many different parts of the province, including the West Coast, Avalon, Bonavista, Central, Fogo Island and Labrador. Invited international fungal experts join Foray NL members for three days of hunting and identifying fungi.

Mushrooms are collected, identified, dried and placed in a collection at MUN's Grenfell Campus and are available to the public for study. Check out nlmushrooms.ca for the complete list.

With the help of experts, Foray NL members have documented over 1,500 species of fungi in the province and identified several new species of mushrooms such as the Newfoundland Chanterelle or *Cantharellus enelensis*.

Foray NL founders, Andrus and Maria Voitk, have three mushroom species named after them in recognition of their work and Andrus was invested into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2023. Past president, Michael Burzynski, also has a mushroom named after him. Current president, Helen Spencer, and her board

members from across the province continue the work.

Please join me in recognizing the citizen science work of Foray NL.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I rise today to recognize a tragedy that has deeply affected Canadians from coast to coast to coast.

On October 17, a devastating wildfire during a military training exercise at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright in Alberta claimed the lives of four members of the Canadian Armed Forces and left many others injured.

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people of our province, I extend our heartfelt condolences to the families, friends and fellow service members of those who lost their lives. We also offer our support and best wishes for a full recovery to those who were injured.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a proud and enduring military history and our connection to the Canadian Armed Forces runs deep. Generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, including at least two of my colleagues, have answered the call to serve our country and many military families continue to call our province home. We continue to recognize that a tragedy like this is felt throughout the military community, across our province and across the country.

We are grateful to the military personnel, first responders, health care professionals and community members who responded with courage and compassion during this difficult time.

As the House reflects on this tragedy, we stand alongside the people of Wainwright, all Albertans and Canadians, and the military community during this incredibly difficult time.

I ask all Members to join me in honouring those who lost their lives and keeping their loved ones in our thoughts and prayers through a moment of silence.

Thank you, Speaker.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: Thank you.

You may all be seated.

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I join the Deputy Premier in extending heartfelt condolences to the families, friends and fellow service members mourning the loss of loved ones following the tragic fire in Wainwright on October 17.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, like Canadians from coast to coast to coast, are incredibly proud of those who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces. We recognize their dedication, service and sacrifices every day. Here in our province, we know all too well the pain of losing one of our own and the importance of ensuring those who serve return home safely. We also extend our best wishes to those injured in this tragedy as they recover.

In the face of tragedy, Canadians came together to support our military personnel, community members, first responders and

health care professionals answered the call, providing care to those who dedicate their lives to protecting ours.

To all of those affected, we offer our deepest sympathies and stand with you during this difficult time.

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 and join him in extending condolences to the members of the Canadian Armed Forces base in Wainwright, Alberta.

It's devastating when a worker goes to work never to come home because of a tragedy on the job. It hits especially hard when those were people serving our country out of selfless dedication and to keep Canadians safe.

On behalf of the NDP caucus, I want to extend our condolences to the loved ones left behind, our thoughts are with you now, and I also wish the survivors a speedy recovery and a return to health and strength.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

October is Foster Families Month, a time to recognize and thank the foster parents and kinship carers across Newfoundland and Labrador who provide safe, caring and supportive homes for our children and youth.

Our government is committed to supporting these caregivers and increasing the number of foster homes across the province so more children and youth can experience the stability and belonging they deserve.

That is why we are investing \$8 million to strengthen financial supports for foster families and kinship carers, increasing compensation rates, enhancing training opportunities and improving the application process for prospective foster parents.

We have also established a dedicated province-wide team to actively process applications and support recruitment efforts.

As we recognize Foster Families Month, we are also in the midst of our fall Foster a Future campaign. Over the coming weeks, residents will continue to see and hear messages highlighting the need for more foster families and encouraging people to learn more about fostering. It's extremely important.

Today, more than 900 children and youth in Newfoundland and Labrador are in care and unable to live with their families. If you're ever considering fostering, I encourage you to visit the Foster a Future website and learn more. One decision to open your home can make a lasting difference in a child's life.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Foster Families Month is an opportunity for us to recognize and thank foster parents and kinship carers who provide care, stability and support for children and youth across our province.

I've seen first-hand the difference these caregivers make in the lives of children who need it most. Through their compassion, sacrifice and dedication, they help build brighter futures and provide children with an opportunity they may not otherwise have had.

With all of this, the caregivers deserve support in return. I welcome the continued investment and initiatives and strengthening supports for foster families and recognize the importance of building a clear path forward to increasing the number of foster homes across our province.

On behalf of myself and my colleagues, I extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to the Newfoundland and Labrador Foster Families Association and all foster parents and kinship carers for their dedication and the important work they do each and every day.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

While we recognize the work that this government is doing to make fostering more accessible, we would be remiss if we didn't touch on the subject of group homes. Although foster families reduce the need for

these expensive private facilities, we cannot find decent homes for all these children and youth overnight.

In the meantime, this government must also double down on supporting these facilities and ensuring careful and regular monitoring of these group homes and intervening swiftly and effectively when abuses and inadequacies are identified.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Premier's legal advisor on his Churchill Falls deal, Bern Coffey, left his role on the eve of the special debate in this House of Assembly. He left on a Sunday, the day before the debate started on Monday.

My first question: Was the Premier aware of this resignation during the course of the debate?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, Mr. Coffey was brought in in an advisory role to the negotiating committee. He advised the negotiating committee with the IRC in preparing a negotiating strategy. When his work was complete, he moved on. He decided to move on.

Everyone was aware of it. It was much to do about nothing. I have something I will table during the proper time to show just that.

From our perspective, Mr. Coffey came in an advisory role, offered legal advice and he's moved on. We wish him well. That's as much as there is to it. I know they're trying to create a narrative but that's all there is, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Of course, from their perspective everything is okay. Unfortunately, the 550,000 Newfoundlanders don't feel that way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: How can the public trust the Premier and the Deputy Premier on their Churchill Falls deal, when they didn't disclose the important resignation, regardless of why or when it happened?

If we had known, this certainly would have come up during the debate and, who knows, maybe would have led to a revelation that would have stopped the deal, or who knows, maybe another PC Member would have left caucus.

What else is the Premier hiding and why does he keep hiding things specifically related to his Churchill Falls deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, again, this is part of their narrative. We're not hiding nothing. Mr. Coffey did his work and he moved on. There's no more to it than that.

We don't put out a news release every time someone leaves government, who comes in and offers advice and then moves on. We're not putting out news releases every day for

stuff like that, nor are we putting it out for this one.

Mr. Coffey has got a great reputation, he got a busy practice and we wish him well. It's as simple as that. There's no other smoking gun there. It's not like when Mr. Wilson left. It's totally different. He was not on the negotiating committee. He did his job and he moved on. We thank him for his service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Mr. Coffey and Mr. Jerome Kennedy were secretly hired at the same time last January. Mr. Kennedy is still in this role, but Mr. Coffey isn't. So maybe the Deputy Premier can tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians why people were hired at the same time to do the same job, one left because his role ended and the other role continues.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Because there are two different jobs. Mr. Kennedy was hired to be on the negotiating committee, which he's still on the negotiating committee and he's working towards definitive agreements.

Mr. Coffey was hired as an advisor to that committee, more so to do with the IRC and weeding through that. Mr. Coffey is a brilliant mind and we appreciate it. He helped us with the 2024 MOU and he offered great advice to the negotiating committee, but his work was done. He moved on. He had bigger things to do and more important things to do and we thank him again. Once again, we thank him for his service. He's moved on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: There's no smoking gun there. He's moved on and we wish him well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Bigger things to do – a man who's spoken about Churchill Falls, Mr. Coffey, for decades in this province as the most important thing in this province but somehow, all of a sudden, he has bigger things to do than Churchill Falls. I would love to know what is bigger and more important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians than Churchill Falls.

The Deputy Premier called Mr. Coffey a brilliant lawyer and the Premier actually agreed but last week the Premier told media that he didn't have any direct dealings with Mr. Coffey. This has nothing to do with his resignation.

Why wasn't the Premier dealing directly with someone he hired to give him legal advice? It makes one wonder if the Premier is involved in the Churchill Falls deal at all.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, unlike the former administration, whether we started with the Premier and the clerk and you name it, we didn't interfere with negotiations. He was already recommended. The negotiating committee wanted his expertise. They brought him in. They got the expertise from him. A very respected man – and I'd never want to tarnish his image because I've got a lot of respect for the man, but he's done his job and he's moved on. We really do thank him for that.

There's no smoking gun. There was not a bleep on the radar. He moved on and we said that's great. Thanks for your service. End of story. The narrative they're trying to

create is not there and I wish them well with that, too. There's no story here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: That probably is the smoking gun because the Premier admitted that he didn't have any details regarding Mr. Coffey's contract. The Premier of the province had no details about a contract of a lawyer he hired to give him advice. How can that be true? Is the Premier really telling the public that either the Premier doesn't approve contracts related to Churchill Falls, or is he saying his office is approving contracts without the Premier's approval? Frankly, I don't know which one is worse.

So I ask the Deputy Premier, which is it? Is the Premier not paying attention to contracts being signed or is he not in charge of his own office?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I think the Premier is doing a brilliant job of running this province, leading his caucus and leading us to a better, brighter future. That's what I think the Premier is at.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: I'm not going down the road that the Leader of the Opposition is trying to go down constantly, attacking the man's credibility. He's an upstanding person, he's done a great job and he'll prove to the people of this province just the work he's doing in the years to come. His prosperity will hit this province, because we're on the cusp of something big. They should jump on and join us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: When asked about Mr. Coffey's contract, the Premier referred the media to the clerk. Now we know the clerk is in charge of the Churchill Falls deal, to which the Premier admitted, of course, he had no knowledge. What other responsibilities has the Premier downloaded to the clerk?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Again, Speaker, they're going down a road that we're not going down. It's too foolish. The Premier has a job to do and he's doing it well. That's our main concern. We will lead this province – we're not operating on the next election or the next vote. We're operating for the next generation, and that takes courage and that takes guts. This man, this Premier our province got, we're following him happily.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: If the Premier is doing his job, why doesn't he know what the mandate of Bern Coffey was? Why doesn't he know what contracts were signed? Why doesn't he have information and why didn't he talk to Mr. Coffey when the negotiations were taking place with Churchill Falls?

As I also noted, the Premier actually directed the media to talk to the clerk. So is the Deputy Premier going to make her available to the media to answer the questions that the Premier can't or won't answer?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, unlike the current Opposition, former Liberal government, we trust people around us. The clerk of the Executive Council is a very qualified individual who does her work. The Premier and all of us let her do her work. She doesn't have to get in front of a camera. She released a statement of what happened and, once again, we've moved on.

They don't want to move on because they've got nothing to hang their hat on. Their federal cousins in Ottawa think this is all a wonderful deal. They think it's great.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: I ask them, how come your provincial cousins don't join in? They don't have an answer.

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

J. HOGAN: Let's talk about his federal cousins who said that they should hold up to their promises and have a referendum, but they don't want to talk about that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Can the Deputy Premier confirm whether Mr. Coffey had a non-disclosure agreement or not?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Mr. Coffey operates under client-solicitor privilege. To our knowledge there was no non-disclosure agreement, no.

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

J. HOGAN: If it's to their knowledge, they do not know, whose knowledge? You were the only people that would know whether he has –

SPEAKER: Address the Chair, please.

J. HOGAN: – a non-disclosure agreement with Mr. Coffey. The Deputy Premier doesn't know, to his knowledge, the Premier doesn't know what the contract is. He won't let us talk to the clerk.

I ask the Deputy Premier: Who should we ask questions to on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I guess I'm trying to be too honest. No, there was no non-disclosure agreement.

I've been in this world long enough to know that someone could surprise me, so I try to be more discreet. No, there was no non-disclosure agreement. Is that good enough for you? No.

SPEAKER: Address the Chair, please.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I don't even know where to go with that. I'm trying to be too honest with giving the non-answer and then he stands up and says I'll be a less honest and give the right answer.

This is what we're dealing with in Question Period, Speaker. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can see through it. They're only questions on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and they deserve the answers.

The Premier said he thinks his affordability measures are impressive – his quotes – but Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not impressed. They can go on social media, those who haven't turned their comments on, and they'll know that's true.

Speaker, \$30 a household on electricity that doesn't start for a few months; eight cents off gas but only in a few months time and only for a few months.

Does the Premier not realize that families' costs have risen significantly over the past year and this is not enough to help them?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: It's a good question, Mr. Speaker.

We're very conscious of the time we live in. Where affordability is front and foremost, we want to address it and help address it.

We said there are going to be a multitude of levers that we would present to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think the Leader of the Opposition is well aware that we're still presenting other affordability measures that will be subsequent and coming.

We spent \$279 million of the residents' money going back to the residents, since we came into power. Since Thursday of last week, \$79 million of the residents' money going back. That's considerable.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: It will be going. Again, I remind the Finance Minister that nothing has kicked in yet. They want to wait until next year for some reason.

The cost of living has increased significantly and the PC government's revenue has as well, with half a billion dollars of unexpected money from oil revenue.

Why does the Finance Minister think he should only give 20 per cent back to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians when they clearly need much more help?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Correction, Speaker. We're not waiting until next year, December 1 is when it rolls out, not next year. Just for clarity for the record, it's December 1 that we roll out with the measures.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: I only want to hear the minister, nobody else.

C. PARDY: Speaker, the question comes from the previous premier of the province that left us with \$1.2-billion service charge on the debt. His government doubled the debt before we came in. Now he's asking, let's give more.

We know what \$1.2 billion can provide in affordability, and maybe if I get a chance to stand again, I'd like to be able to share with residents what we could do.

SPEAKER: The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the PCs have finally done what we've been calling for and it's remove the remainder of the gas tax, but as always with them, there's a catch. It's not yet and it's not for long.

They're refusing to give any relief now. As the Finance Minister said, wait until December. They're making people wait and wait and wait.

Why is the Finance Minister making people wait when costs have gone up significantly over the last year and people need that help now, not in December?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, we realize that affordability needs to go out. We also want to make sure that we have the plan and the measure and the amount of which we need to roll out. When I say the amount, I want to know that we have that money coming into our coffers.

We can do it quickly, and I think we're doing it now quickly. If the price of oil stays up, we'll continue on with those affordability measures that we've got. It all depends on the oil.

The previous government spent money before they received it. We'd like to be able to give more on the affordability, but they left us with a \$1.2-billion interest charge on the debt. That is significant.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: The Finance Minister knows he already has \$500 million to spend. That money is there to spend now and it will continue to go up but he refuses to do

anything and has refused to do anything since he's been the Finance Minister.

The PCs have kept the Liberal gas tax cut over the last year and claim they made it permanent and criticized the Liberal cut as being temporary, but now, unbelievably, they are doing a temporary cut to the gas tax.

Why have the PCs flip-flopped yet again and not made this tax cut permanent?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, when we look at the gas tax and we made it permanent — I came into the Finance Department, I can tell you there was no forecast for this fiscal for the gas tax, the 8 per cent to remain off from people paying. There was no indicator that the previous government were going to maintain that.

That's why we say we took it off and made sure that it was permanent. We have it forecasted for next year and the year after in our out years. It's forecasted.

He could have pulled the lever last year to take gas off. He was the premier of the province; he could have exercised that lever to make it permanent and to bring it to zero.

SPEAKER: The hon. Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Can't make it up. While he said it was a permanent gas tax cut, he says he's changing it next week to a temporary one. It's unbelievable.

The Premier said the partial 15 per cent rebate on electricity was ready in August, over two months ago, yet only announced it last week and further said he won't do that until January. Ready in August; announced last week; we'll do it next year.

Does the Premier acknowledge Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have electricity and heat bills in October and November and December and need help now, not in January?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Pretty animated and forceful questions for a person who left the province with such debt.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: The only thing I would say is we committed that we need to arrest and stop our borrowing – 80 per cent. We need to – we need to. We've got to do it.

We said we will carve out 20 per cent for affordability measures. That's what we've done. We'd like to be able to say we're going to take 100 per cent of that oil revenue and we're going to give it to affordability, but we can't because the debt that this province has faced – 50 per cent on the past government they've increased and added to the debt.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I'm certainly not ashamed of my record of being transparent and accountable and honest when we were (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: The Premier claims this 15 per cent rebate but it's only on the first 2,000 kilowatt hours of energy in a household. Many homes, especially older homes that are less energy efficient, use much more than that. So it's not actually 15 per cent at all, despite what the Finance Minister says.

Will he commit to stop calling it a 15 per cent rebate because everybody knows that's not what it is?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, the average home in Newfoundland and Labrador, between 1,400 and 1,500 kilowatts is what they burn per month. Let me repeat that: The average home, between 1,400 and 1,500 kilowatts per month.

We have ours at 2,000 and why it's at 2,000 is that we want to stay within our 20 per cent envelope because, again, of the debt that the province is in.

We know – to repeat for the third time – the previous government doubled that debt. We, as a government, will address it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, NAPE President Jerry Earle noted that the government claims it's delivering on its promise of better health care, but Mr. Earle says that doesn't reflect what workers are facing. Health care professionals are saying that instead of better health care, it has actually gotten worse since the PCs were elected last year.

Why should Newfoundlanders and Labradorians believe the Premier's version of our health care system over the people that are actually working on the front lines?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I do thank the Member opposite for the question. It is an important one.

Since I've come into this role as Minister of Health and Community Services, I have engaged with front-line workers regularly. I have met with over 48 groups, individuals and Opposition MHAs. Mr. Speaker, I'm listening. We are working towards better health care for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We're listening to our front-line workers. We are engaged with the unions, and will continue to do that. We'll continue to work with NLHS who I have a good working relationship with to ensure that we have proper health care, accessible health care for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I'm excited about that work. I'm going to continue that work with all groups involved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, my question was, did he agree that it's actually gotten worse in the past year?

At the Carbonear General Hospital lab employees are – and I quote – worried about the health and safety of our staff and our patients. They are supposed to have between 11 and 12 positions. They are currently working with five, trying to cover off all three shifts.

When will the minister have these positions filled for the safety of patients and staff?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

The health of our workers, our staff and our patients is paramount. We'll certainly work with that group to ensure that we do have proper coverage. It is important that we reach all departments that they have proper coverage.

We'll certainly reach out, have that conversation and work with NLHS who are responsible. I'll certainly have those conversations with the team and report back.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, the government is announcing new investments, including an MRI for Central Newfoundland and the proposed health care clinic in Conception Bay South, while workers are raising concerns about staffing at existing facilities.

Why is the government announcing new services without first addressing the staffing challenges that are affecting our system today?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, a record of \$5.4 billion was in *Budget 2026* for health care and community services. We realize that there are issues.

We realize and we are working through those, Mr. Speaker. But we do understand that we have many challenges.

We can certainly work with all of our groups to support better health care and to work with our groups to ensure that we have safe working environments, and we'll work for all people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I didn't hear any attempt to answer that question. The Urgent Care Clinic in the capital city's west end remains empty while the government talks about expanding health care services elsewhere.

Why hasn't the government made better use of the facilities and the resources that it already has?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to go back to the Member opposite's point about an urgent care centre in CBS. The people of CBS deserve an urgent care centre. They have no public transit. There is almost 30,000 people. They've long fought for it and I've long fought on their behalf to have an urgent care centre opened. We're going to continue on with that plan.

As for the urgent care centre that's empty in the west end of St. John's that the Liberal government put there, maybe they should ask themselves why they put it there because, obviously, it wasn't planned properly.

We're putting one in CBS and we're going to plan for staffing and we're going to have it operational as soon as possible. The people

in CBS deserve no other, and it will take pressure off our acute-care hospitals here in the city.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: I'll remind the Deputy Premier that half the province's population lives here on the Avalon and he is completely dismissing the urgent care centre in the St. John's west end that remains empty. Now what's the point in putting up more facilities when they don't have staff for the existing ones?

Can the minister explain how the government plans to staff its proposed new services when existing hospitals are struggling to maintain adequate staffing levels?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, the first thing I done last January was I cancelled a \$14-billion Taj Mahal in Kenmount Crossing that they were planning to build. They fought and argued with me for the last year. They had planned to build a \$14-billion hospital in Kenmount Crossing. How were they going to staff that one?

I mean, this is what you're dealing with. I'm getting criticized for redoing St. Clare's, which is the smartest, wisest decision for our funding, and we're going to have an urgent care centre in CBS. It will be staffed and the people in CBS will appreciate it when they get it there, and the surrounding areas, and it will provide better health care for all of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, the Deputy Premier goes from saying I have to be honest to throwing around figures that are not honest. It's not true, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: Has the minister met with NAPE to discuss these concerns and what specific commitments has the government made to address them?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I have not met with NAPE. NAPE did not request to meet with me. I have met with many unions here in the province, the Nurses' Union, first and foremost, but I have not met with NAPE. The president of NAPE has discussed or has talked with officials in the department, but he has not requested to meet or to speak with me, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, that's a little bit concerning when you think about the members NAPE represents around this province.

I would ask the minister, when he became aware that there was concerns, why did he not pick up the phone and call Jerry Earle?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

As I said, I've met with over 48 groups and representatives around the province. As minister responsible for Health and Community Services, I did not reach out to NAPE directly. I would not reach out to a particular group, one over the other, to show preferential treatment.

I have not received any word from the president of NAPE. If he so chooses to call or to reach out to me, I'd be happy to meet with them, just like I met with many people, not only in this House, but across the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

Many people are wondering why is the government celebrating its health care announcements when front-line workers are warning the system is struggling to deliver even the basic services and things have actually gotten worse over the last year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

We have worked with NLHS and there have been great improvements made.

Mr. Speaker, I will share with you in October of '22, we had 695 vacancies in nursing. As of July of this year, we have 269. That's amazing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: As of July 1 of this year, Mr. Speaker, NLHS has recruited over 1,200 new registered nurses for our province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: – including 95 per cent of the graduating class from the Bachelor of Science nursing class this year.

Mr. Speaker, we are doing our part. It will take time, no doubt, but I can certainly tell you that in addition to that we have approximately 85 recruited doctors in 2026.

SPEAKER: The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, at the beginning of the school year, the Minister of Education stated all schools have the appropriate number of positions in place and are ready to roll. A month later into the school year, the principal of Peacock Primary resigned due to severe understaffing at the school.

I ask the minister: How did he get it so wrong? How did his department allow the situation to get so bad that it took a principal's resignation to draw their attention and take the issue seriously?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you to the Member.

He should know, with any school year, on a daily basis there is absenteeism in teachers. They could be off on maternity leave. They could be off on sick leave. They could be off

on personal leave. The situation in Labrador – and I was up there last week. I took it upon myself to go there, because it's a little different in terms of recruitment and retention.

We have a number of initiatives in place for Labrador. We have a \$5,000 signing bonus for hard-to-fill positions. We have housing subsidies. We have travel benefits ranging from \$17,000 to \$25,000. There's a Labrador Travel Allowance for up to \$45,000. There's a Coastal Labrador Supplement of \$5,000. There's Labrador isolation pay –

SPEAKER: The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, if all it took was ministers visiting schools to solve our problems. I will tell you this, this is not a temporary shortage; they're down six teachers.

The president of the NLTA concludes that education is at the bottom of this government's priority list. The current government response in Happy Valley-Goose Bay is a band-aid solution. Teachers were offended by public statements that there was a plan for the school reopening when obviously there wasn't one.

I ask the minister to detail his department's long-term plan to address the long-term problem of teacher recruitment and retention in Happy Valley-Goose Bay in Labrador – even across the province.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: I can't believe that a past president of the NLTA is saying there's no value in going up and visiting the teachers on the ground. I can't believe it. I can't believe I heard that.

The only way to hear from people on the ground is to go up and talk to them, face to face, to sit down.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: I sat down with the past principal; I had a great chat with her. I sat down with all the teachers. Do you know what they told me? They said, over the last decade, they've been neglected and disrespected. I wasn't there, but I got to fix that issue, and we're going to.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: The only value of a minister visiting a school is if he or she actually listens to the concerns and acts on them.

Speaker, this is not just a Happy Valley-Goose Bay problem, as the NLTA president says. A year ago, the Premier promised that a PC government will deliver real inclusive education, individualized supports, small group instruction and student assistants to every child who needs them – nice words.

So I ask the Premier: How does he plan to deliver on that promise when, a year into his mandate and over a month into the school year, he can't even properly staff schools?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you for that question.

On behalf of the Premier, we are working towards improving schools, improving a safe and caring environment. I can tell you right now, there are 5,217 teachers there; there are 267 itinerants; there are 1,371 regular substitute teachers; there are 698 retired teachers; we have substitutes.

In fact, this year, the number of hours allocated to student assistants in the schools has gone up. We're working on more. We actually have a workshop coming up in Labrador to help recruit those positions in the area that needs it.

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 Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling 11 Orders-in-Council relating to funding precommitments for the fiscal years 2027-28 to 2031-32.

SPEAKER: Pursuant to section 35 of the *House of Assembly Act*, Part II, Conflict of Interest, I'm tabling the report of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025, on conflict of interest.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, No 3, Bill 22.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Regulatory Improvement and Efficiency, Bill 23.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Resource Enforcement Officers, Bill 24.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act, Bill 25.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act, Bill 26.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Civil Forfeiture of Property, Bill 27.

SPEAKER: Let's try it one more time.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Status of Women and Gender Equality Advisory Council Act, Bill 28.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I give motion of the following private Members' motion, which will be seconded by the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

WHEREAS the Churchill Falls Definitive Cooperation and Implementation Agreement, the DCIA, is intended to form the basis for significant and long-term final agreements that will have lasting impacts for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador now and for generations to come; and

WHEREAS the final agreements would commit Newfoundland and Labrador to a 50-year deal, making it essential that the terms, risks and long-term benefits be fully understood by the public before any such final agreement is finalized and signed; and

WHEREAS the PC government broke its promise to hold a referendum before any such final agreement is finalized and signed; and

WHEREAS decisions of any government require transparency, meaningful legislative scrutiny and an opportunity for elected representatives to examine the terms of the final agreement before Newfoundland and Labrador is bound by its provisions; and

WHEREAS an extraordinary sitting of the House of Assembly was held regarding the DCIA, but the final agreements were not yet

negotiated and therefore not subject to questions or debate; and

WHEREAS significant negotiations remain before the final and binding agreements are finalized and signed; and

WHEREAS the Premier has failed to specify that the final agreements will be debated in the House of Assembly before they are finalized and signed;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House of Assembly calls on the PC government to bring any proposed final agreements related to the DCIA or the Churchill River to the House of Assembly for debate and a vote before they are signed and/or binding.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse aux Clair and Opposition House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 63(3), the private Member's motion referred to by the Member for Windsor Lake will be the private Member's motion to be debated this coming Wednesday, October 28, 2026.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

This petition pertains to roadwork in the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

WHEREAS the recently announced Roads Plan by the government features a decrease in funding by \$66 million from last year's roads plan, which is unfortunate; and

WHEREAS the deplorable road conditions that can be seen throughout the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave put a threat, of course, to safety issues. These include potholes, cracking and erosion in many areas such as the south side of Harbour Grace into Bryant's Cove, Dawe's Road in Port de Grave through Blow Me Down, as well as the road through Bishop's Cove;

THEREFORE we petition the 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 in these areas and throughout the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and all throughout the province to ensure safety is put first for the travellers of the roads.

What I can say is, of course, there is work needed, actually, on the Southside Road in Harbour Grace. I receive calls to my office. I'm certainly always advocating for roads throughout the entire district. Although, there is good roadwork through the district, there are areas, of course, that still need attention and need help for safety reasons, as well as Dawe's Road in Port de Grave and through Blow Me Down and Bishop's Cove.

Recently, of course, a new guardrail was in place, something that I've advocated for, for quite some time. That's finally there. Anybody familiar with this stretch of road knows it's a very, very steep drop to the ocean, so I certainly encourage the minister to ensure that all of these areas are taken into consideration for safety reasons, if nothing else.

So, again, the Southside Road in Harbour Grace into Bryant's Cove, Dawe's Road in Port de Grave through Blow Me Down, as well as Bishop's Cove road. I certainly encourage the minister to consider that, and anything I can do to help to support you or to work with you to get these resources in place would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Before I get to further petitions, I think there was a document that needs to be tabled that the Deputy Premier forgot to do.

The Deputy Premier.

B. PETTEN: To his point, he was correct. I missed it. My apologies, but I want to table this document I referred to in Question Period. It's Mr. Coffey's resignation. I want to table that to the House.

SPEAKER: Okay, thank you.

The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Speaker.

The petition I'm about to present is related to policing resources and public safety in Gander.

These are the reasons for and the background of this petition:

WHEREAS residents, businesses and community organizations have raised concerns about property, crime, theft, vandalism, trespassing, drug-related activity and safety in public spaces; and Gander, like many communities across Newfoundland and Labrador, is facing challenges related to addiction, mental health, housing insecurity and homelessness, placing additional demands on policing resources; and

WHEREAS the Town of Gander has invested in municipal enforcement officers and other public safety initiatives that relieve pressure on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police; and, additionally, municipal enforcement officers and military police at 9 Wing Gander provide valuable support within their mandates, but cannot investigate or enforce many Criminal Code offences; and

WHEREAS residents have identified a need for greater police visibility, enhanced enforcement capacity, timely responses to public safety concerns and continued investments in prevention and intervention programs, acknowledging that public confidence in community safety depends upon ensuring that policing resources remain aligned with current and emerging public safety needs while also supporting initiatives that address the root cause of crime; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador participates in a provincial police service agreement with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police through which policing priorities, service levels and resources are established in consultation with the provincial government;

THEREFORE, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned residents of Gander and surrounding communities, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to: (1) conduct a review of policing resources and service levels assigned to the Gander region; (2) determine whether additional front-line policing resources, investigative capacity, specialized supports or operational enhancements are required to meet current and future demands; (3) take appropriate action to address any identified gaps in policing resources or service delivery in the Gander region; (4) support and strengthen evidence-based prevention and intervention initiatives that address the root causes of crime including addiction, mental health challenges, food insecurity, housing insecurity and homelessness; and lastly, Mr. Speaker, (5) to work collaboratively with the municipality, community organizations, health authorities and law enforcement partners to improve public safety outcomes and community well-being.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the Member opposite for the petition. Of course, our government is committed to creating safer communities in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We have made historic investments in our entire criminal justice system in *Budget 2026*, in particular with respect to law enforcement. We have allocated the significant investment of approximately \$9 million that was announced in *Budget 2026* for 25 RCMP officers.

We have also invested with respect to the RCMP Auxiliary Program. That's a really important program that will see uniformed officers who will be assisting and supporting the RCMP so that the RCMP can focus more on core policing duties and allow there to be more visibility in our communities. I think that's a really important piece that we're going to see as a result of the RCMP auxiliaries as well.

I would say that we've invested. The initiative will have a budget of approximately, like I said, \$9 million. That was announced in 2026 and we're very excited about the impacts that will have through rural communities, in particular, in Gander.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

K. RUSSELL: It's an honour and privilege to stand in this House at any time, Mr. Speaker, and I'm here today to present a petition in support of Peacock Primary School.

The reason for this petition, Mr. Speaker, is:

Peacock Primary School in Happy Valley-Goose Bay is in the midst of a staffing crisis. This shortage is in correlation with many issues, as we all know, with housing as well, lack of support staff, especially student assistants.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to provide subsidized housing and more student assistant allocations for Peacock Primary School.

Mr. Speaker, what we're seeing in Lake Melville is, within the last six months, things have got progressively worse from a community safety standpoint and that's finding its way into our schools. What we're seeing is a government here with a disconnect to the people. Since the 2013 amalgamation of the school boards, things have gone steadily downhill.

We get lots of ministers coming through town, and that's great for a photo op, but you have to meet with the front-line staff. We have some that have, I will say that much, Mr. Speaker.

When it comes to the student assistants, we have a dire need for that. We have multiple, multiple children being watched by the same individuals when some of these need one-on-one care, Mr. Speaker.

The people, the teachers, I have met with them as well, we're at a breaking point, same as with the hospital. She's about to blow. We want to know what's coming. We're not seeing any hope in sight.

We've got a level of danger now that's coming into the schools for both the staff and for the students because we have such a mix of cultures of people from all walks of life. When they don't have enough people to attend to them in school, it's very risky.

What we're seeing now is, unfortunately, it took the resignation of a principal in order to

bring this to the forefront. I would just say this, we have to do all we can. I'm ready to work with anybody that's willing to help with the issues in my district, but what we see is ministers come and go. I don't know their schedules; I'm not made aware of that. I'm willing to sit there and work with everybody as well.

Right now, I would just like to say, it's not only about the number of staff; it also extends into the housing, the benefits. It's part and parcel with the high levels of crime and violence in our district right now in Lake Melville. We're having a difficult time getting people in all verticals to come and want to live in our district when they hear about the stats on all that.

So what I'll say is, I'm here to work with anybody that wants to help enhance what services and supports are available for the teachers in Lake Melville. We've really got to do something. They feel as if they've got no one to turn to inside government and that all of their concerns are falling on deaf ears.

I would just like to say that we have to do all we can in order to help with the housing and help with the teachers in this situation for our children, our greatest asset.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for a response to the petition.

P. DINN: I thank the Member opposite for his petition, and I can't disagree with him there.

As I said earlier today, there are issues across our schools; some are doing very well, some not so much. My visit to Labrador last week, although, I was aware of some of the issues, it's certainly a huge value when you're able to sit and talk to those teachers and those administrators who are on the front line and get a much

better understanding of what they go through on a daily basis.

It's not lost on me that there are challenges outside of the school that we need to deal with. I've always said the school environment is the microcosm of the community it's in. We are working towards dealing with some of the issues within the school.

It won't happen overnight. Many of the teachers that I've met with are very much aware of that, but we're going to be open and work with any stakeholder, any Member to resolve these situations and ensure that, not only are our children in a safe and caring environment, but our teachers are in a safe environment as well.

We're going to work with all the stakeholders to address that and, hopefully, we'll see improvement. It may come slowly; it may come fast but we're going to work to see improvement.

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

K. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to present a petition on behalf of residents concerned about improperly discarded needles and other substance use-related waste in our communities.

The reason for this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS residents of St. John's have expressed concerns about improperly discarded needles and other substance use-related waste in public spaces including parks, trails, streets, schoolyards and playgrounds; and

WHEREAS improperly discarded needles present potential health and safety risks highlighting the importance of accessible disposal options, timely collection and community education; and

WHEREAS all community members deserve to feel safe, respected and supported in their communities; and

WHEREAS substance use is a complex health and social issue that requires compassionate, evidence-informed responses that prioritize public health, harm reduction and the dignity of individuals; and

WHEREAS the Progressive Conservative government campaigned on making communities safer for all of us;

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 work collaboratively with the City of St. John's, community organizations, harm reduction service providers and people with lived and living experiences of substance use to: strengthen coordination between provincial and municipal authorities to identify problem areas and ensure public spaces are regularly and safely inspected and cleaned; develop practical solutions to address discarded drug needles, improve safe disposal and cleanup efforts and ensure our public spaces remain safe and accessible for everyone; improve the availability and accessibility of safe needle disposal options, particularly in areas where discarded needles are a recurring concern; and explore longer term measures that improve community safety and personal responsibility. I truly recognize the complex challenges associated with substance use but wish to be clear that public spaces must be safe and accessible for everyone.

The government campaigned recently on making communities safer for all of us. This petition is an opportunity to turn that commitment into meaningful acts.

Mr. Speaker, thank you.

SPEAKER: Before we proceed any further, I'm going to now leave the Chair and the

Deputy Speaker will take the Chair to rule on a point of privilege and a point of order that was raised at our last sitting.

SPEAKER (Dwyer): I will now rule on the point of privilege and the point of order raised by the Government House Leader during the special sitting of the House of Assembly on Thursday, September 17, 2026.

The Government House Leader referred to comments made by the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island and a social media post made by the Official Opposition which he stated had been manipulated to mislead the public about a previous statement he had made in the House of Assembly.

Questions of parliamentary privilege are serious matters not to be taken lightly and, as such, they must be dealt with promptly, taking precedence over all other business of the House. Standing Order 34 requires a matter of privilege to be considered immediately. Given the importance of these matters, there is a procedure to be followed.

A Member raising a point of privilege must satisfy the Speaker that they are bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as possible after becoming aware of the situation. As noted in the *Members' Parliamentary Guide*, "If the matter occurs outside a daily sitting of the House or when the House is adjourned, the Speaker must be given notice of a point of privilege before it can be raised. This must be done at least one hour before the sitting time for the House on the day on which the matter is to be raised." This is necessary to allow the Speaker to deal with the issue in an informed and expeditious manner.

The Government House Leader did not state when the social media post first came to his attention but a video matching his description does appear to have been posted by the Opposition a few days before the point of privilege was raised. The matter

giving rise to the point of privilege occurred outside the House, but the required notice was not given.

For these reasons, I do not find a prima facie breach of privilege.

With respect to the Government House Leader's concurrent point of order, which was raised under Standing Order 49, I have considered the tone, manner and intention of the Member and I do not find the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island's comments were unparliamentary in this context, therefore there is no point of order.

Thank you.

SPEAKER (Lane): Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Ferryland, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

This House does now stand adjourned until tomorrow, being Tuesday, October 27, at 1:30 p.m.

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