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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.

Good afternoon, everybody. This afternoon, I would like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery Jan Peters, partner of the late Chief Justice Leo Barry, as well as his daughter, Diana Barry. Chief Justice Barry is the subject of a Ministerial Statement today.

Welcome to our Chamber and please accept my sincere condolences on your loss.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Joining us in the public gallery today are Kim Winsor and Dave Hopley, co-owners of Johnny Ruth, an independent fashion and gift boutique located in downtown St. John's and the subject of a Member's statement today. They are joined by other members of their staff and management team.

Welcome to our gallery, everyone.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I would also like to welcome, Jennifer Jefford, Shannon Doyle, Mike Taylor and Lyndsay Taylor, organizers of this year's Cowan Heights Trunk or Treat event which is the subject of another Member's statement today.

Welcome to you all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also joining us in our public gallery is long-time volunteer Evelyn Butt, who is the subject of another Member's statement.

Welcome Evelyn.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: We also would like to welcome Mary, Chris, Karen, Susan, Brad and Candice Lester from Lester's Farm Market, which is also the subject of a Member's statement today.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Last but certainly not least, visiting our gallery today is Mary Ann Ryan, who is the subject of a Member's statement. She's accompanied by some members of her family and Special Olympic volunteers.

Welcome Mary Ann.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I also want to welcome our Pages to this session of the House.

First of all, I want to welcome back our returning Page, Rokiat Adewunmi.

Welcome back Rokiat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: As well, I'd like to welcome a new Page to the House of Assembly, Mofe Toru. Mofe is from Nigeria and is in her second year studying economics at Memorial University.

Please join me in welcoming, Mofe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, St. John's West, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, Waterford Valley and Mount Pearl North.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise to recognize the community stewardship of Johnny Ruth, an independent fashion and gift boutique on Water Street, the heart of historic downtown St. John's.

Co-owned by Kim Winsor and Dave Hopley, Johnny Ruth has been serving the community since 2025, offering locally made products alongside thoughtfully curated fashion, accessories, gifts, screen-printed T-shirts and cards.

In October 2024, they expanded with a second location at Terrace on the Square. In 2025, they opened their print shop as Sunrise Screen Printing, reaffirming their commitment to supporting local artists and makers.

Supporting local has always been central to Johnny Ruth. They host pop-ups featuring local authors, artists, makers and musicians, participate in arts festivals and recently introduced an artisan community program providing local creators with opportunities to showcase and sell their work.

Speaker, their community spirit extends beyond their stores. They demonstrate leadership in keeping downtown clean, support the Food Sharing Association, donate to organizations supporting mental and women's health and champion newcomers through their pursuit of the Atlantic Immigration Program designation. They are truly great ambassadors for St. John's and their neighborhood to visitors and newcomers.

Johnny Ruth embodies Newfoundland and Labrador's entrepreneurial spirit: Be yourself. Have fun. Give back. Inspire others.

Please, let's give a round of applause and acknowledge the great work of Johnny Ruth.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize Jennifer Jefford, Shannon Doyle, Mike Taylor and Lyndsay Taylor for organizing another incredible Cowan Heights Trunk or Treat on Sunday, October 18.

What began as a simple idea in 2019 became a community event in 2020, bringing joy to families during the COVID-19 pandemic while collecting donations for the food bank. From a dozen vehicles in its early days, the event has grown to include several dozen decorated vehicles and more than 300 excited children.

The organizers work tirelessly to create a safe, welcoming and fun environment where children can celebrate Halloween, enjoy time with friends and simply be kids. Their dedication extends well beyond the event itself, involving months of planning, volunteer coordination and safety arrangements. Equally important is their commitment to giving back. Families are encouraged to bring non-perishable food items, helping support individuals and families in need.

Cowan Heights Trunk or Treat is a wonderful example of how a small idea can grow into something special through the

dedication of volunteers and the generosity of community.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in thanking Jennifer, Shannon, Mike and Lyndsay for their outstanding volunteer efforts and community spirit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize an inspiring constituent, Mary Ann Ryan, and celebrate her long-standing involvement in her community.

For the past 20 years, Mary Ann has been a member of the Mount Pearl Special Olympics bowling program. Throughout those two decades, she has enjoyed the friendships, encouragement and sense of belonging that this program provides. Mary Ann values the connections she has developed with her fellow athletes, coaches and volunteers. These relationships are testaments to the importance of inclusive recreational opportunities and the positive impact that community programs can have.

Programs like the Special Olympics would not be possible without the dedication of the volunteers and coaches, caregivers and families that give of their time, talents and energy to support athletes and create environments where everyone can participate and thrive. I thank everyone involved for making this program such a meaningful part of Mary Ann's life.

Mary Ann also has a passion for politics, so I am especially pleased to welcome her to this hon. House.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in celebrating Mary Ann Ryan, her 20 years

with the Special Olympics and the friendships and community connections that mean so much to her.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm happy to stand here today and acknowledge the incredible success of Lester's Farm Market on Brookfield Road, agricultural leaders in our province. Addressing food insecurity issues is a concern in our province and across the nation underlining the importance of small farm operations like Lester's Farm Market. The ability to produce more food is something we all encourage and support.

For almost two centuries, Lester's Farm has been operating on Brookfield Road, offering things like eggs, poultry, fresh vegetables and small fruits. They have built an impressive operation featuring a garden centre, in-house bakery, ice creamery, Chinchéd meals and meats, the popular petting barn, and the seasonal Field of Fun, an annual tradition of my family and many others.

It all started with a small structure on the side of the road in 1994 with the simple idea of selling their products directly to customers, literally farm to table.

Honourable Members, please join me in congratulating Mary, John, Karen, Chris, Brad and Susan Lester, their families and the entire team at Lester's Farm Market on 32 years of growth. Here's to many more successful years ahead.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Speaker.

She inspires us every day. With more than 20 years of experience as a social worker and a mental health professional, Evelyn Butt has dedicated her career to supporting individuals and strengthening our community. Her service commitment extends far beyond her profession throughout her extensive volunteer work.

Evelyn has volunteered with the Mount Pearl Frosty Festival and in Mount Pearl for many years. That's where she first became involved with the Frosty Festival volunteer committee, which led her to the Mount Pearl Kinettes. Since then, she has become a true leader within our organization.

Evelyn was recognized as rookie of the year and served in executive roles, including registrar, social director, secretary and now vice-president. She also chaired the long-serving Ladies Night Out charity event.

Her passion for mental health advocacy has made a meaningful impact within the Kinettes and the broader community. Under her leadership, the group has supported major project benefits like the Salvation Army Centre of Hope and other initiatives.

She has also volunteered in hospitals, long-term care facilities and with the Association for New Canadians. A proud mother and now a new grandmother, Evelyn continues to give back while balancing family life.

Speaker, I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in thanking Evelyn for her volunteer service.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to the life and service of Justice Leo Barry, whose passing marks the loss of a distinguished public servant who contributed greatly to Newfoundland and Labrador through law, public service and politics.

Born in Red Island, Placentia Bay, Leo Barry built an extraordinary career dedicated to serving the people of our province. Before his appointment to the bench, he served in the House of Assembly as both a government Member and as Leader of the Opposition. Throughout his political career, he brought intelligence, conviction and principled leadership to public life.

As a Cabinet minister under Premiers Frank Moores and Brian Peckford, he served as Energy minister during a pivotal time for that industry in our province. He also served as Deputy Speaker of the House of Assembly, Chair of the Newfoundland and Labrador Labour Relations Board and a lecturer at Dalhousie law school.

Following his political career, he returned to the practice of law, before being appointed to the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador in 1989, and later to the Court of Appeal.

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, I extend sincere condolences to Justice Barry's family, friends and all who knew and respected him.

Flags at Confederation Building will fly at half-mast until Justice Barry is laid to rest in honour of his legacy of public service and dedication to this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, on behalf of the Official Opposition and the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, I join the Premier in extending sincere condolences to the family and friends and colleagues of Mr. Justice Leo Barry.

Justice Barry dedicated his life to serving the people of Newfoundland and Labrador as a judge, a Cabinet minister, an MHA and Leader of the Liberal Party of Newfoundland and Labrador. A thoughtful leader, a distinguished lawyer and a highly respected Supreme Court judge, Leo Barry made significant contributions to our province and played an important role in our history.

He was a proud Newfoundlander and Labradorian and that pride reflected in his life's work. His dedication to public service and commitment to justice earned him the respect and admiration of many.

Mr. Justice Barry will be remembered fondly by those who loved him, those who worked alongside him and those who had the opportunity to learn from him.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: I thank the Premier for an advance copy of the statement.

I want to start by offering my sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Justice Barry on behalf of the NDP caucus. His illustrious career in public service, whether in this House, in government or the Supreme Court, serves as a model of dedication for us all.

As elected Members, we should all take a moment to reflect on his career, learn from

his courage and conviction and find ways of applying it to the work we do every day.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Mr. Speaker, timely access to mental health and addiction services is essential to the well-being of every resident.

I am proud to rise in this hon. House today to share progress on our commitment to expand these services throughout our province.

Budget 2026 builds on that commitment, helping people get the supports they need when they need them.

Last month in Corner Brook, we announced four dedicated short-stay beds at the Humberwood treatment centre to strengthen community-based detox services, along with six additional beds to increase in-patient capacity.

Recruitment is under way for the expansion of the mobile crisis response teams in Burin, Carbonear, Clarenville and Sheshatshiu so more people can access the supports closer to home.

Our government has invested \$3 million to hire more mental health professionals.

To ensure mental health supports for youth, Doorways is expanding in schools throughout our province. Choices for Youth is also expanding Integrated Youth Services Hubs.

We have invested in sober-living homes, increased funding for community partners such as the Eating Disorder Foundation and launched the Hope and Healing guide, which offers information and resources for survivors of suicide loss and the people who support them.

Mr. Speaker, our government will keep working to improve our mental health and addictions system and ensure timely access for all of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, this government is quick to announce investments but the real measure of success is whether people can actually access the care they need.

Across Newfoundland and Labrador concern remains about gaps in mental health and addictions services, from reduced emergency psychiatric consultation hours for children and adolescents to the serious challenges that communities in Labrador face accessing support.

Speaker, when people cannot access timely care, the consequences can be devastating. Addiction-related deaths remain a serious concern and the troubling issue of suicide, particularly in Labrador, underscores the importance of early intervention, accessible treatment and ongoing community support. We've lost far too many, Speaker, who did not want to leave; they just didn't know how to stay.

Expanding services must mean more than announcements; it must mean ensuring people can get help before they reach a crisis point. Whether they are struggling with addiction, experiencing a mental health crisis or simply trying to find support for themselves and their loved ones,

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve a system that delivers timely, accessible care and meaningful results for individuals, families and communities across our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

While these announcements are welcome news, so many who need mental health and addictions care continue to fall through the cracks. We end up with a revolving door system, because so many of the supports offered are short term when so many people will actually require some form of help for the rest of their lives.

I, therefore, ask everyone in this House to reconsider how we view mental health and addictions treatment and, as a result, the services that we offer.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, when asked about Bern Coffey, the Deputy Premier kept saying there was no smoking gun but, as is typical with the PCs, there was a flip-flop and this one was quick. Minutes later, he actually tabled the smoking gun.

The Deputy Premier claimed Mr. Coffey – quote – his work was complete; however, Mr. Coffey's resignation letter, which was tabled, says I am terminating my contract.

These two things are not the same, so I ask the Premier: Why did the Deputy Premier state in this House that Mr. Coffey's contract had ended when, in fact, it had not and Mr. Coffey decided to terminate his contract?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, with a little bit of indulgence, I want to first say to the Leader of the Opposition, I wasn't here yesterday, I was in Ottawa when you gave your Member's statement about Dr. Tommy Hall. I just want to say to you and to his family, our prayers and thoughts are with you.

In terms of the question, Speaker, I want to say that Mr. Coffey was hired to provide legal advice. Mr. Coffey provided legal advice. Mr. Coffey concluded his contract and we thanked him for the work that he has done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I ask the Premier: Is his position that the contract was ended? Is that why he says it was concluded or was it terminated as Mr. Coffey says? The Deputy Premier was very clear that the contract had ended.

Premier, I'll give you an opportunity, do you agree with the Deputy Premier or do you agree with the statements in the words of the email from Mr. Coffey himself? There is only one choice.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, I will say that Mr. Coffey was hired to provide legal advice. He provided that legal advice.

He concluded his contract and I thanked him for his work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Weakest leadership this province has ever seen when he can't answer a simple question and we're getting different answers from the Premier and from the Deputy Premier. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve better than this, Speaker.

In May, the Energy Minister, when asked how much Mr. Coffey was paid to advise the Premier on his Churchill Falls deal, said he couldn't answer the question because there was a non-disclosure agreement in place. Yesterday, the Deputy Premier said Mr. Coffey had no non-disclosure agreement in place. Now the PCs are flip-flopping amongst themselves.

I ask the Premier: Which one of your ministers was being accurate to the public about the situation? Again, it's one or the other.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, I'll reiterate what I just said, Mr. Coffey was hired to provide legal advice. He provided that legal advice. He concluded his contract. He did a great job and we thanked him for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Again, no answers, weak leadership.

When the Premier was asked by the media last May about the Energy Minister's claim in the House that a non-disclosure agreement prevented the PCs from disclosing the terms of Mr. Coffey's role, the Premier continued to claim he wasn't able to say anything about it.

Why did the Premier think there was an NDA in place, yet the Deputy Premier says there wasn't? Why did the Premier rely on it when the Deputy Premier says it didn't exist?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Here we go again, they're creating a new narrative. Every day is a new story. There's no story here. Mr. Coffey did his work; he decided to move on.

Really, in a hypothetical situation, had Mr. Coffey wanted to stay for the full debate, we were fine with that. But most of his work was completed. He decided he wanted to move on and we wished him well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I want to hear the minister. I don't want to hear anybody else. We had a good day yesterday. I can guarantee you we're going to have a good day today, one way or the other.

The hon. the Deputy Premier.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Coffey done a great job and there are no qualms with the man. We've moved on. Whether there's an NDA or not, I said yesterday there's no NDA and I'll repeat it again today, there's no NDA. There's no narrative here to try to create. I know he's

trying really hard to do it, but he'll continue to try, we'll continue to tell him the same answer. Mr. Coffey done a great job and we wished him well and I hope he's doing well today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I'm not trying really hard. I'm getting a different answer from the Energy Minister than the answer that I get from the Deputy Premier. I'm getting a different answer from the Premier than I'm getting from the Deputy Premier. There is a story here because someone on that side of the House is not telling the same stories as other Members on that side of the House and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve the answers. This is on those Members, those leaders, those ministers and that Premier to be honest with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and they're not doing it. That's why I'll continue to ask the questions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: So I'll give you an opportunity again, Deputy Premier: Why does he say that there was no non-disclosure agreement, why does the Energy Minister say there is a non-disclosure agreement and why does the Premier say there is a non-disclosure agreement?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

To the average person out there, the NDA don't mean no more than what – the words don't mean nothing to them. The bottom line is you have client-solicitor privilege and you had a lawyer that was hired by the

government as their client. We were his client. He done the work for us and he's moved on. No matter if there's an NDA or not, there's a client-solicitor privilege. There's no NDA, but the bottom line is there's nothing to see here because there's client-solicitor privilege anyhow. It doesn't matter who he does work for.

So what you're trying to imply here is you're trying to attack people's character. That's not happening, Mr. Speaker. There was no NDA; there's client-solicitor privilege –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: – and Mr. Coffey has moved on and we, once again, thank him for the great work he done and wish him well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Just for the record, and people can go back and check, I haven't said one thing about the ability of Mr. Coffey providing legal advice. I haven't said one thing about his reputation or his ability as a lawyer. I know him and I know he's a good lawyer. In fact, I agree with the Premier when he said he was a brilliant lawyer. I don't understand why we're getting different answers from ministers and people responsible and the Premier on this file.

But I'll raise an issue that the Deputy Premier just said, because while we don't know if there's an NDA or not because we're getting different answers from that side of the House, it's clear that Mr. Coffey was covered by solicitor-client privilege.

So will the Premier agree to waive that privilege so maybe we can get real answers from Mr. Coffey who can speak on his views about why he terminated the contract before, in the Deputy Premier's word, only

most of his work but not all of his work was complete?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: There's a lot of discussion about Mr. Coffey and what he did. He did a good job for us but let me tell you what he was working on at the time. He was helping work on and providing advice for an historic new Churchill Falls deal; a deal that has delivered more power, more value, more transmission, more money, more jobs – a deal that the Leader of the Opposition said yes to less and no to more.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I say yes to answers and yes to honesty and yes to transparency and yes to accountability. We're not getting any of that in the House of Assembly here.

The Premier and his ministers are failing to acknowledge why this is important. First, they hid this resignation from the public; second, different stories about whether there was an NDA or not; and third, different stories about whether he resigned or whether it expired. The public want to know.

So did Mr. Coffey resign because he disagreed with the Premier's deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

Do you know what the public wants to know about? Better health care, lower taxes, safer communities, the list goes on; affordability measures – do you want me to keep going?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune for your co-operation. If I have to start continuing on, I will name people and people will lose their speaking privileges.

Now, I'm going to reset the clock and the Deputy Premier can answer the question.

B. PETTEN: Thanks for your protection.

People in this province care about better health care, safer communities, lower taxes and affordability measures.

We had a negotiating committee come into this House and all the other officials that were around this better deal that we've negotiated. This bit about what they're getting down the road now about one of our advisers – government has got advisers everywhere. This former administration had advisers everywhere.

They're trying to create a narrative, Speaker, and they're trying to rain down on a good, qualified lawyer that's done great work for this province. It's shameful what they're doing there, actually, shameful.

They make a habit of doing that in the House of Assembly. We won't stand by that. We have a great deal. We have great leadership over here and we're going to bring the best deal for this province and for future generations.

It's not about the next vote or the next election; it's about future generations.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: The shame is, ministers, the Deputy Premier, the Premier and the Energy Minister, giving different answers on

the same question. You want to talk about shame? You can't even get all on the same page which means someone's story is not the accurate story. It's as simple as that. That is the shame and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can see through what they're doing.

When you want to talk about better health care, ask Jerry Earle how he feels about better health care under this government.

So I'll get back to my question about Mr. Coffey because if they waive solicitor-client privilege maybe we'll get this answer, but I'll ask: Did he resign because the Premier wasn't taking his advice on his Churchill Falls deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, Mr. Coffey moved on because he had other projects to do. These lawyers, they have other files to deal with. He felt his time advising us was no longer needed and he moved on. There's nothing simpler than that.

We have a great relationship with Mr. Coffey. There's no bad blood; there's nothing to see here. I repeat: there's no narrative here.

As hard as he's going to try – and he can try every day this week and next week and the week after – he's going to get the same response. There was no NDA. There's no narrative here. We wish Mr. Coffey well and thank him for his service. End of story.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Interesting now, I'd like to know this, because the Premier has said he never dealt with Mr. Coffey; he didn't know

anything about it. That was for the clerk to deal with.

The Deputy Premier seems to have had conversations with Mr. Coffey about what he planned to do after he terminated his contract. So maybe the Deputy Premier can tell the House and Newfoundlanders and Labradorians about when he had conversations with Mr. Coffey after Mr. Coffey terminated his contract, because it certainly sounds like he knows a lot about what Mr. Coffey's future plans were.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We can talk about shameful, Mr. Speaker. I'll give you what shameful was. The lead of their negotiating team in the first MOU left without any notice when he didn't get the support in this House that he requested. The lead that interfered with the previous MOU, that didn't listen to his advisers, the former premier.

This guy took over as the Premier and he didn't even talk to anyone. So if he wants to talk about shame and how files progressed and announcement about public officials or people that were working for government leaving weren't made, he should have a look at his own record and bring that back into the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: This guy will always tell the truth to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Everyone knows the PCs have been backtracking on their election promises, the most significant one being the referendum, but there are many more.

During the campaign launch, the now Premier said and I quote: "We will never balance the province's books without first helping families balance their own." They've clearly backtracked on this one as well, planning to give only 20 per cent of the unexpected oil windfall to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who so desperately need help.

Why won't the Premier fill this campaign promise and balance families' budgets first, especially with the record oil windfall revenue that they have?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition has stated twice in this Chamber during Question Period that he was envisioning the weakest leadership ever in the province. I think it might have been an insinuation that it was over on this side.

I was given the portfolio in Finance which had an astronomical amount of debt to it. But in order to go and service that debt, we had to have a debt management plan which we will roll out during the fiscal update.

The Premier had stated that we're going to help Newfoundlanders along the way, which we are continuing to do; \$279 million and counting of people's money we're putting out to help with affordability. I'd say promise made, promise kept.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I wasn't insinuating about weak leadership; I was stating it, for the record, that there's weak leadership.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: I will say, you want to talk about debt, 30 per cent of the public debt is due to Muskrat Falls. By the way, someone who worked on that file said Muskrat Falls would pay for itself, who was an adviser – Jerome Kennedy – on the Churchill Falls deal. So I think you let the wrong adviser go when you kept him and made Mr. Coffey leave.

As we know, the PC blue book said they'd help family balance their books and not the province's first. Does the Finance Minister really believe 30 bucks on electricity bills and a few cents off gas for just a few months will help families deal with the rising costs every day that they are facing?

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, the past premier of the province, now the Leader of the Official Opposition, ought to know that the Muskrat Falls debt is not on the debt we're dealing with now. That would be with Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. While it's all part and parcel, and them being part of the bigger government picture, it's not the debt that we're referring to because the Muskrat Falls debt is separate.

I would like to thank the Leader of the Opposition because he was asked in a scrum yesterday which affordability measure he would like the best and what he would like the Finance Minister to state. His answer was: You have to choose more than one. Each and every little bit does help.

It's what we're doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: He mentioned collaboration; we're finally seeing it.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I did say each and every little bit helps but, the problem is, that's all they've done is a little bit. They need to do more.

The Finance Minister is clearly more focused on his own record balancing the books than the books for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians; because, yesterday, the Finance Minister said, while he's using 20 per cent of the windfall for affordability measures, he can drop that number to as low as 16 per cent if the windfall continues.

So let's get this straight, the more money they make, the more they're keeping and not giving back to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I ask the Finance Minister: Why did he feel the need to get in on the PC flip-flopping action and change his 80-20 plan?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, question asked, here's the answer: Number one, the 16 per cent knows that if the oil revenues continue, the 20 per cent that we've allocated thus far might only amount to 16 per cent. Do the math, because we might then have 4 per cent or 5 per cent more – many more

millions – that the Premier is going to say we want to roll out to affordability measures for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

So 16 per cent may be the end result. He professes to be the one that knows where the oil market is going, and that's quite a strength because that was the first question a reporter asked yesterday, if we knew where the oil market was going, we knew what affordability measures to be able to put out there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: If the public listened to that answer today, when I asked the Finance Minister how he is going to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians pay for gas, pay for groceries, pay for their kids and help them with their day-to-day living, and that's the answer that he gives and he really thinks that that's going to comfort Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, we're in a much more difficult spot than we thought. People are hurting, Minister. They need help –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

That goes for both sides of the House.

J. HOGAN: They don't need to hear numbers about how if this happens and if that happens. They want to know how you are going to help them. You promised to help them last year and you haven't delivered on that promise.

Finance Minister, drop the numbers; drop the shtick; tell people how you're going to help them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, the leader hasn't been tuned in very well. I say that with as much respect as what I can levy that he hasn't been tuned in too well. He agreed with what we were doing, putting a certain amount out at a period of time, but the culmination of everything we put out, it's a lot of millions that we're putting into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I want to go back to the 16 per cent, which was the question he asked. I want to repeat that if we are to fall short of what the allocation of 20 per cent is, because the oil revenues continue, we're going to put more money out to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: More money, good leadership.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Yesterday, the Deputy Premier had the nerve to brag that "the first thing I done last January was I cancelled the \$14-billion Taj Mahal in Kenmount Crossing that they were planning to build."

First of all, Speaker, the report said it would be about half that, \$8.4 billion. The Deputy Premier seems to make up numbers and throw them around every time he talks about it but, more importantly, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are disgusted that the Deputy Premier would call a new modern provincial hospital a Taj Mahal. It's something that is desperately needed.

Will the Deputy Premier apologize to patients and health care professionals who

were looking forward to this necessary facility instead of making a joke about it?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I will double down, that was a \$14-billion Taj Mahal on the Kenmount Crossing. I make no apologies for keeping the fiscal framework of this government intact.

We took over a government that had a fiscal outlook for a \$14-billion hospital. Guess how much they had in the fiscal forecast? Zero. They had schools with zero. I had an infrastructure list with a load of zeros. There was no fiscal framework. They were announcements. They were all announcements and they were photo ops, no different than Kenmount Crossing.

I care about the health and well-being of the people of this province. We've got an RFP out now to redo St. Clare's hospital, we're going to build an urgent care centre in CBS and we're doing a lot more improvements to health care that will improve the health care of this province, and we're not worried about (inaudible) –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, we're certainly not seeing any of the improvements yet more than one year in.

Yesterday, the Health Minister said he has met with other groups – 48 other groups – but admitted he had not tried to meet with NAPE. NAPE represents 12,000 health care

workers. NAPE represents 55 per cent of health care workers.

How did he miss 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 did not meet with Mr. Jerry Earle and I did not miss him. I met with 48 groups, as was stated. Mr. Earle didn't reach out. But Mr. Earle has spoken with members of my executive team. I'm happy to speak with Mr. Earle and we will certainly do that in the next coming weeks to have that conversation. We value all the NAPE members that are in health care, we certainly do, and for the work that they do day in and day out.

I'm happy to have that conversation, Mr. Speaker. He was not missed, as the Member opposite says. I'm happy to have a conversation with Mr. Earle or any person in this province or any union leader if it's going to benefit the workers in our health care system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, the wait-list for hip and knee replacement in the province has ballooned under this PC government to 2,800 people. Orthopedic surgeons say it's still climbing. It could reach 6,100 by 2030. This means years of waiting in pain for a necessary surgery.

What is the minister's plan to drastically reduce the wait-list instead of continuing to watch it increase?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I thank the Member opposite for the question. It's a very important one. It affects all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, including those in my District of Cape St. Francis, and right across the province.

Mr. Speaker, we are certainly committed to improving the access to better health care for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and we're working closely with NL Health Services to ensure that we do that.

Right now, we have travelling surgeon programs at St. Anthony and Carbonear. We have same-day replacements at Western Memorial Regional Hospital in Corner Brook. We have our short-stay surgery at James Paton Memorial and we're also having the surgeries done within St. Anthony and Carbonear. Last year, we had 240 done in St. Anthony. This year, we had 400 done in Carbonear.

Mr. Speaker, we are working on it. We have this in mind for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and we'll do the best we possibly can.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, the media reported last week that the Premier hasn't even bothered to read the health care Core Staffing Review, even though he had it for weeks.

So I would ask: Has the Health Minister read it yet?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, my team and I have gone through the recommendations in the core report. We are working through them and we'll work with all agencies and groups and partners to ensure that all recommendations are fulfilled.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, last week the media reported that CUPE had serious concern for its member with the *Core Staffing Review*.

How does the Minister of Health plan to address the concerns from CUPE about the *Core Staffing Review*?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That's an important question. The President of CUPE did say that in the media last week and I addressed that in the scrum yesterday when I was asked questions by the media.

The *Core Staffing Review* is not downloading any additional work to health care workers across any occupation that was recognized. We are looking at maximizing how we can certainly maximize the work that the different practices do – not to download extra work. That is the farthest from the truth.

So just to share with the Member opposite, every Member of this House and people of the public, there will be no extra work put onto those four occupations that were

stated. We're looking at maximizing them and supporting them with proper numbers of staff.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Speaker, there is no doctor and there is no nurse practitioner in St. Lawrence. Grand Bank is also lacking full staff. During the election, full staffing was promised for St. Lawrence and Grand Bank.

I ask the Minister of Health: Why did the PCs break their promise and why aren't they delivering proper health care to the people in my District of Burin - Grand Bank?

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.

Our government is committed to ensuring that we have access for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to health care. I have had conversations with the Member opposite. We are working through what's needed in his district, for sure. I know that it is a hot topic in the Member's district on the social media with respect to doctors and clinicians not being there. We are working with NLHS to ensure that we do maximize our clinicians, our physicians, our nurse practitioners and our nurses right across the province.

We'll do the same with respect to the Member opposite and his District of Burin - Grand Bank.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our former government recognized the need for more long-term care beds in my district and committed to a 10-bed extension to the Connaigre Peninsula Health Centre in Harbour Breton for this purpose. The extension also would have addressed issues with acute care, which is very important. The last minister of Health wouldn't make that same commitment.

I ask the new Minister of Health: Will he publicly commit to these long-term care and acute-care beds that are needed in my district in rural Newfoundland and Labrador?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

This goes back to a meeting that the Member and I had with the officials in my department with respect to long-term care in his district. We realize the impacts that our acute-care beds being filled are having on our long-term care facilities. I will certainly work with the members of my team with the members of Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services to ensure that we have the right numbers right across our province, including Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Speaker, I was glad to meet with the Minister of Health last week discussing the revolving door and gaps in mental health and addictions care in our province. We need supervised and supportive residential options for people whose illnesses make

independent living unrealistic. We need public long-term strategies designed around the reality of severe and persistent mental illness, not around the hope that another apartment and an occasional visit will somehow produce a different result.

I ask the minister, does he agree?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do thank the Member opposite for the question. We had a great conversation that day with the Member and officials from my executive team and I with respect to mental health and addictions services and what's needed as we go forward.

We do have many services available. If individuals are requiring mental health and addictions, they can certainly call 811, the Doorways walk-in clinics are available, visit Bridge the gapp, but we're also looking at our Assertive Community Treatment Team and our Flexible Assertive Community Treatment Teams here in the province and the good work that they do. We realize that in order for people to be supported properly, they do need these wraparound supports. We had that good discussion, as well, as we moved forward.

Mr. Speaker, we will ensure that we can do what we can for the people of the province with our community partners and with our teams that we have available.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, our mental health system must stop measuring success by how quickly someone can be discharged from hospital and start focusing on quality of

life, dignity and the long-term supports people need.

This week we heard about a person living with developmental disability who has graduated from an NLHS program that helped him live successfully despite needing ongoing support. While I'm certainly glad to see that decision reversed, this case raises concerns for many others who depend on long-term support and deserve stability and the opportunity to thrive.

I ask the minister: Will he develop an alternative long-term care model that gives people living with mental illness the support they need to live with dignity?

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.

Like the Member opposite, I enjoyed my career very much for 30 years working in this field. I certainly, certainly advocate for respect and dignity for all individuals who are suffering mental health and addictions or mental illness.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to work with NLHS to make sure that we have the proper supports going forward. We can certainly have a look at doing things differently as we move forward because, Mr. Speaker, we don't have all the answers immediately but we'll certainly work with our community partners, with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services and, of course, any Member of this House who wants to be part of that, with respect to providing proper supports for those in need.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, techNL's CEO was in the media last week suggesting that AI data centres could bring environmental benefits, but there's no evidence to support that claim. There is, however, scientific evidence that shows AI data centres consume enormous amounts of water and electricity, generate significant waste heat and greatly contribute to greenhouse gas emissions. These impacts put pressure on local ecosystems, wildlife and the communities nearby.

I ask the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change: Does she agree with the available scientific evidence around AI data centres and environmental impacts or the claims being made?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this government has the province's, the country's and the world's environment very close to their heart and it's very important to us. So is economic development and our stance on data centres are very clear. We have not been approached. We have not made plans to build. We are open to the discussion. We are very open to the expansion of any industry that brings prosperity to this province, makes Newfoundlanders and Labradorians the primary beneficiaries and does not hurt our environment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, the United Nations has made it clear that climate change is an urgent global crisis and the goal of limiting

warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels is now out of reach.

The Premier's commitment to eliminating the emissions cap and accepting a 14-year-old environmental study on Gull Island only adds to the concerns about this province's climate future.

I ask the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change: What work has been done to develop the province's climate action plan and when can people of Newfoundland and Labrador expect to see it?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member for the question. It's a great question.

Creating a new climate change action plan to reduce emissions and keep communities safe is a priority for this government. Coming very soon, you're going to hear an announcement – maybe within the next 24 hours – on action that I've been working on with the department.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice of the following resolution:

WHEREAS section 7 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* prescribes that upon nomination by the House of Assembly, the Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel shall be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council by commission under the Great Seal.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by this hon. House that Ian Tucker be nominated for appointment as Law Clerk and Parliamentary Counsel.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons and the background for this petition:

WHEREAS every child deserves the opportunity to grow up in a safe, stable, loving and permanent home environment; and

WHEREAS children in foster care may experience uncertainty about their futures, particularly when they remain in care for extended periods; and

WHEREAS timely adoption services, when adoption is in the best interest of the child, can provide children with stability, security

and a sense of belonging that comes with having a permanent family; and

WHEREAS sufficient staffing, resources and support services are essential to ensuring that children who are eligible for adoption can be matched with permanent families without unnecessary delays; and

WHEREAS prospective adoptive families and foster parents require appropriate guidance, training and ongoing support to provide children with successful and lasting family placements;

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 dedicate additional resources to adoption services including dedicated staffing, improved case processing and enhanced supports for prospective adoptive families with the goal of reducing unnecessary delays in adoption and helping more children in foster care find safe, loving, permanent forever families.

Mr. Speaker, it is Foster Families Month, and according to Foster Families Newfoundland and Labrador, there are approximately 900 children in foster care and another 700 in kinship care. Many of these children are trying to be adopted by their foster families. Speculation is that our already taxed team of social workers are focused on urgent safety needs, meaning important long-term projects like adoption take a back seat.

In the Budget Speech, government committed to double the rate of adoptions processed and decrease the length of the adoption process. It also committed to hiring four additional social workers to exclusively tackle adoptions. Perhaps the minister could give the House an update on the government's progress.

Children in care deserve long-term stability and assurance that a forever family

provides. Let's bear down and get this work done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being for a response to the petition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the petition because it's extremely important.

After 12 years of inaction, underneath this government and this Premier, we are investing \$5 million for the first time in 12 years into adoption.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: This is Foster a Future month, so we're trying to get the word out there, as this government is looking to double the number of adoptions this year. As we move forward, we're enhancing provincial regional coordination efforts, we're putting in more money to the families that are doing the adoptions, that are taking on the adoptions to foster these children.

I just want everybody out there to know, if you would like to, you can come onto our website if you want some more information about fostering a child. Sit down, give that child some time, give them the homework that they need, give them the meals that they need, give them the guidance that they need, Mr. Speaker.

That's exactly what this government is doing by investing \$5 million into the future of this province, which is our children.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition as follows:

WHEREAS the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has recently made significant changes to the Multi-Year Capital Works Program, including reducing the number of eligible municipalities from 22 to seven and extending the funding cycle from three years to four years; and

WHEREAS municipalities and stakeholders, including Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, have raised concerns about the lack of consultation surrounding these changes and the impact they will have on municipal infrastructure planning and project delivery; and

WHEREAS the City of Mount Pearl is projected to lose more than \$845,000 in funding annually over the next four years as a result of these changes, impacting the city's ability to invest in roads, water and sewer upgrades, recreation facilities and other essential municipal infrastructure programs; and

WHEREAS municipal infrastructure funding is essential to supporting community growth, economic development, public safety and the quality of life for residents throughout Newfoundland and Labrador;

Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reinstate the three-year Multi-Year Capital Works funding cycle, begin the next intake process this year and reinstate Mount Pearl to its previous funding amount to ensure it receives the funding they need for the infrastructure and growth within the city.

Speaker, we know the minister was in the district and announced some capital works

funding there a couple of weeks ago, but what we need is long-term funding so that we can plan for the years ahead. When I served on council, we needed the funding. We knew what we had the next three to four years so we could plan ahead for the city.

I urge the government to take action on this.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Member opposite is right. I was in Mount Pearl actually twice last week. The first time I went in there, we announced almost \$6 million for housing infrastructure funding for the City of Mount Pearl to develop a new area of Holden Street that's going to create housing for up to 1,400 units. It was a good announcement. It's well received and, as you can tell, our commitment to the City of Mount Pearl is stronger than ever.

I went in there Friday and announced the opening of Team Gushue Highway which was cost-shared with the federal government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, \$105 million and the major beneficiary of that, that never cost them a dime, was the City of Mount Pearl and, of course, the City of St. John's. I think that, once again, we're being very kind and very fair with the City of Mount Pearl.

As for the Multi-Year Capital Works funding, there was only ever supposed to be seven municipalities; it ballooned to 22. It was out of control. We brought it back to seven.

For me to do what the Member opposite is asking would create an unfair balance that I fixed. It's done on per capita ratio now; you fall in line with your population. So whatever amount of funding they're getting today is the funding they should have got in all the years past.

The funding you got in previous years was an inflated amount. We've fixed that. I've had meetings with the City of Mount Pearl on numerous occasions and explained the situation. It wasn't intentional, but it needed to be done. I think, overall, they agree with the process. We'll move forward to next year and years after when we look after the City of Mount Pearl.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

M. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

The rising cost of living continues to place significant financial pressures on households throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. Electricity and home heating fuel are necessities not luxuries, particularly in a province with a harsh climate. Removing the PST helps households manage high winter expenditures without having to choose between heating their home or food and rent. Removing the PST from electricity bills and home heating would provide meaningful and immediate financial relief for families, seniors and others on fixed incomes.

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 remove the provincial sales tax from residential electricity bills and home heating

to assist households with the financial burden of the rising cost of living.

Speaker, I'll note I have signatures here from communities of Port aux Basques, Margaree, Isle aux Morts and even so much as Mount Pearl. This continues to be an issue for residents across the province.

As we are heading into those colder months of the year where, last year, especially, during this time, I heard from many residents throughout Newfoundland and Labrador about the doubling and, in some cases, tripling of their power bills, which is extremely costly to folks to heat their home, when we know the affordability pressures that are on here now with groceries, gas and electricity as well.

This is a more permanent action that can be seen taken by the government. We do realize the electricity rebate is coming, but it is the 15 per cent on the first 2,000 kilowatts for the months of January to March, which is when the electricity rates for residents are at their highest. So I would say that it is a small, small bit to help the people of this province. The signatories of this petition, and others that I have from people across this province, want to see that permanent action so they can see that relief all year round to address the affordability pressures that are on people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I will continue to bring this petition forward, Mr. Speaker, as long as it comes to me. I appreciate the government's attention to this matter.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I sincerely thank the Member for Burgeo - La Poile and the petition from

the residents of his district on the cost of living and affordability.

We all know that the whole province, the whole world, is struggling with it and mostly because of the high price of energy and fuel that we would have, as being one of the biggest contributors of inflaming it.

The Member had stated that the 15 per cent would apply from January to March. It's December 1 until the end of March. I know December is included in that, but January would be when they'll get their bill for December, Speaker. I understand there might be some confusion but it's December 1 until the end.

Some would say, why not give more? All 40 Members of the House would like to give more. There is no secret with that. All 40 Members in this House of Assembly would like to give more. We've had questions from the Opposition on health care, put more money into health care. That is what the request is from the opposite side. Yesterday, I think, from the Third Party, was education.

All I would say to you, we've got limited resources because we pay \$1.2 billion on interest on our debt. We've got to address our debt so we can give more to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SPEAKER: The hon. 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: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition: The government must use real artists over AI for projects.

Artists in Newfoundland and Labrador are experiencing job losses and fewer

opportunities for employment because corporations and governments use AI to cut costs and avoid paying workers in the creative industries. Graphics and images made through AI have the potential to manipulate public opinion because users can create false and misleading materials.

AI uses data, images, videos, texts and other materials created by others who receive no compensation to generate works that have monetary value.

Therefore, we the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commit to using real artists for all government physical media, contracted ad work, marketing and communications conducted by all employees, contractors, consultants, partners, students, volunteers, vendors, agents and third parties.

This petition, I table on behalf of members of my district. In the District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, we know that the A1C district is per capita the district of the highest population across our country of creators and it is important that they are part of the labour force.

I humbly offer this on their behalf.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I call Motion 3, first reading of Bill 24.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands, for leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act Respecting Resource Enforcement Officers and, further, I move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Resource Enforcement Officers," carried. (Bill 24)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act Respecting Resource Enforcement Officers. (Bill 24)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 24 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion 4, first reading of Bill 25.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, to introduce a bill entitled An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act, Bill 25, and I further move that this said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act, now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act," carried. (Bill 25)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act. (Bill 25)

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

When shall this bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Now, with leave.

SPEAKER: Does the minister have leave?

I'll ask the Official Opposition does the Member have leave to do second reading of the bill?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Okay.

Independent Members?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Okay.

On motion, Bill 25 read a first time, ordered read a second time presently, by leave.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Members opposite for leave.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to introduce a bill, Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act. Our government is committed to continuous improvement as we work toward delivering better health care for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Social workers play a very important role in these efforts by providing critical services to some of our most vulnerable residents. Many of the challenges we face in our province are rooted in the social determinants of health. Social workers are the front-line staff who deliver many of the supports and services that people need to live healthy and vibrant lives.

We all know how important it is for health care providers, including our social workers, to deliver the best possible care to the people throughout our province. That's why my department has been working closely with the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers to make some amendments to the *Social Workers Act*.

These amendments will strengthen public safety and further protect people who need these services by ensuring that social workers who work in private practice are fully qualified and can provide the best possible care, advice and guidance.

The *Social Workers Act* refers to social work as the assessment, remediation and prevention of psycho-social problems. The

act also includes the enhancement of the social, psycho-social functioning and well-being of individuals, families, groups and communities by using social work knowledge, theory and skills to provide direct counselling and therapy to a client. It develops, implements, manages or delivers human service programs; contributes to the development and advancement of health and social policy; and conducts research and science, technique and practice of social work.

Mr. Speaker, for the person to practise as a social worker or use the title of registered social worker, RSW, they must be licensed and registered with the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers.

The *Social Workers Act* also requires the college to regulate social workers in public interest. Current social worker registration requirements include a minimum educational standard of a bachelor's degree in social work obtained from an accredited university or an equivalent international qualification.

My department received a request from the college to amend the act to allow them to establish additional categories of registration for social workers and to introduce other amendments to clarify and modernize some of the language within the act.

My officials and I agree that these amendments are appropriate and will help serve to enhance public protection.

Mr. Speaker, the college has asked for these changes because there is a rising number of social workers in Newfoundland and Labrador who are engaged in clinical practice within the private setting. The college considers clinical practice to include intervention, therapy, counselling, clinical consultation and clinical supervision.

A primary feature of this bill is that it will permit the college to introduce a new

category of registration for social workers in the private practice, which is titled Registered Clinical Social Worker or the acronym RCSW. This new designation, along with the requirements, terms and conditions and restrictions that will apply to this registration category are all outlined in amendments to the Social Workers Regulations.

My department will continue to work with the College of Social Workers to develop amendments to those regulations that will establish clear, consistent safety standards for clinical care and support the overall safety of people seeking the service of private social workers.

We recognize that there are social workers in private practice who do not currently meet the proposed requirements of the new designation. For that, a transition plan has been developed in collaboration with the college to ensure that they can continue to provide service to their clients.

What the college has proposed are enhanced requirements for registered clinical social workers, which will be brought into effect when the new regulations are developed. Mr. Speaker, these will include a minimum educational requirement of a Master of Social Work degree, at least two years of post-graduate clinical experience and successful completion of the Association of Social Work Boards examination.

Mr. Speaker, only social workers in private practice will be required to meet these requirements of the new Registered Clinical Social Worker category of registration. This new clinical registration category will include social workers who work in private practice on a full-time or part-time basis, those who are self-employed, employed in a partnership or in a group practice and those employed as an independent contractor.

These amendments will not directly affect social workers within the public system who

are currently working in the public system now and that includes the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, Indigenous governments and community agencies.

It's also important to note that the college has developed a transition plan to ensure that current, private social work professionals can continue to provide services, even if they do not meet all of the RCSW criteria.

This plan will also give social workers, who are seeking to establish a private practice, an opportunity to do so before the regulations come into effect.

These changes will ensure only properly qualified social workers can provide clinical services within the private practice. This is another important step to building better health care for all of us.

The bill also includes other amendments to the act including adding language to clarify that social worker students are not required to be registered with the college during a field placement; deleting a provision respecting board authority to issue bylaws on an honorary membership, which is no longer required; clarifying that the board is responsible for appointing an auditor; modernizing language to permit people to attend meetings of the college or the board by using audiovisual technology, which details are to be provided within the board bylaws; adding a new regulation-making authority to define a word or phrase not defined within the act; and incorporating gender-neutral language.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has been prepared following close collaboration with the college. The Department of Social Supports and Well-Being and Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services have also been consulted on this bill. The college has had independent consultations with its

registrants, including social workers currently within private practice.

I am pleased to support this important bill and I ask all hon. Members of this House to join me in supporting these amendments.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm happy to stand and make a few remarks on Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act. I want to thank the minister for the briefing that we had with your staff. We had a great briefing over in Health, I believe it was Monday morning.

I have a few prepared remarks, but as I was listening to the minister, it was taking me back to my time in Children, Seniors and Social Development. I believe there were 350 social workers housed there at the time. I'm not sure how many are there now. You know, those ministers have been on that side long enough that they probably will appreciate what I'm going to say. In your boardroom every day you get a briefing from your executive, but once you get out and about, that's where the real learning takes place.

So, for me, the first time I would have gone to places like Gander, Corner Brook, in particular going to Sheshatshiu, Natuashish – we went in for four hours and I think we were there three days, the weather came down and the winds came up – and all of those experiences were so, so valuable. Going up to isolated communities on Labrador's North Coast and different places around the province.

I think what really stands out for me was the median age of those social workers. A lot of them were doing really heavy lifts, heavy

work, and they were so, so young. It just spoke volumes to me about the supports, how essential it is that we have supports in place for those young social workers to do the jobs that they're doing.

Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act. As I talked about at my opening, social workers play an essential role in our communities, often supporting people during some of the most difficult and vulnerable periods of their lives. Sometimes now when we've got people who have been airlifted in, air ambulated in from Labrador, in particular in my constituency – and depending on the diagnosis and things, and they don't have family – I will say, ask to see a social worker. You have to meet with a social worker.

We know, Speaker, that when we think about social workers, their work across our health care system, it spans a broad spectrum. It could be in child protection, which is where I spent some time. It could be in mental health and addictions. We were talking about earlier today, family supports, senior services and many other areas.

Social workers work with individuals and families experiencing grief and trauma, poverty, mental health challenges, addiction, family violence and other very difficult circumstances – not an easy job.

I got to participate in what I believe was the 50th anniversary of the School of Social Work at MUN a few years ago. Again, as I stood there to speak and looked out over that audience, your heart just had to be filled with gratitude that we still do have young people who are choosing these difficult areas and then going to school and then going into often remote and isolated communities where there are very few of them to provide that peer support that they need after dealing with heavy files during the day.

Their work, Speaker, is not always visible to the public, but I can tell you as somebody myself who's been representing for a long time small communities, their impact is felt throughout our villages.

As the Official Opposition for Health and Community Services, I believe it is important that we recognize the value of this profession and ensure social workers have the support, have the resources and the professional framework really, Speaker, that they need to do their jobs effectively.

This bill, Bill 25, that's on the floor of the House right now in second reading provides an opportunity to consider some changes to the legislation governing the profession while also reflecting on the broader importance of social work in our province.

As the minister outlined when he opened up this debate, Speaker, for second reading, Bill 25 proposes a number of amendments to the *Social Workers Act*. I believe six or seven, somewhere around there. They include modernizing language, incorporating gender-neutral terminology, clarifying provisions relating to students completing supervised field placements and allowing members to participate in college meetings using audio-visual technology.

We had a little bit of a discussion in our briefing around that, how life had really changed. There were many things, in particular, when you live in an area or work in an area far from places, often the seat of government, in the surrounding area where many of those meetings happened, it meant sometimes days away from your family.

There were many negative things that came out of COVID, but one of the positive things, as we advance with technology and during that unprecedented time, we realized that we could make better use of audiovisual, and it continues. You buy a phone now, a smart phone, and, in two years time, it's obsolete because there's a smarter one. So it was wonderful to know that we're going to

advance, and for some of those meetings and things that are going to take place, I think that's a big amendment. Some of what is happening; this is going to kind of solidify and enshrine in the legislation that the audiovisual technology is fine to use.

While these changes may not fundamentally transform the profession, the changes that we are talking about here, updating legislation, is important to ensuring that the framework governing a regulated profession remains appropriate and it remains functional.

We also recognize, Speaker, that the college, itself, has requested key amendments, and I'm pleased to see that the minister listened to those recommendations that the college, itself, brought forward. I really am a firm believer, across all sectors, that when we have a professional regulatory body identifying changes that it needs to better carry out its responsibilities, those requests deserve careful consideration. We certainly, on this side of the House today, support the general direction of these amendments.

One of the more substantive changes in this bill is the authority for the college, with ministerial approval, to establish different categories of registration and set the requirements and conditions associated with each category. We did have a number of questions that we asked and were answered in the briefing around that whole piece. I think that's very important and I think that's positive that we're going to see some clarity there.

The college has indicated that it needs a better way to identify where and how its members are practising, so it seems to me that the amendments here are responding to that piece. For example, the bill could support a registration category for social workers in private practice, something that the college already tracks informally, but this would enshrine that and make it a more formal process.

The college has also been working with government representatives on legislative changes relating to a clinical social worker designation. Different areas of social work practice can involve different responsibilities, scopes of practice and professional requirement. It could be that young social worker who is in Nain and working in partnership with groups that we had supported like Family Connections.

It could be that young social worker that I met with recently in St. Anthony who is providing assessments and support around long-term care and helping to keep people in their own homes. It could be that social worker that's coming into a hospital room after someone had a terrible diagnosis. There may be financial concerns.

So there's a whole gamut of scopes and areas that those social workers work. The different areas of practice can involve and do involve different responsibilities, scopes of practice and professional requirements. Therefore, it is important that the regulatory framework appropriately reflect those distinctions while, Speaker, still maintaining strong standards for public protection.

At some point in my different ministerial positions, Adult Protection fell under my responsibility at the time, and that's a very, very important one and people who can't always advocate for themselves. So it's important that government have clear framework around how to address some of these really challenging scenarios that come up.

I also want to use this opportunity to speak about the broader challenges facing social workers throughout our province, across Newfoundland and Labrador. Social workers are often at the intersection of our health care system, as I've referenced, and our social support system. They work with patients who need support beyond medical treatment; families who are navigating difficult circumstances; and individuals who

may be struggling to access the services they need.

Their work can be critical, and I have seen so many examples of this and continue to this day. When people leave just a small riding that I represent in Southern Labrador, some end up in St. Anthony; it could be Corner Brook, Happy Valley-Goose Bay or it could be here in St. John's and some without family if no one else was allowed to go on the flight. I've seen many examples where the work of social workers can be critical to helping people navigate complex systems, connect with available supports and develop plans for their care and well-being.

Yet, I'd be remiss if I didn't go in this direction as well, Speaker. We must ask whether we are doing enough to support these professionals. When social workers are stretched too thin, the consequences can extend beyond the profession itself. We've seen some of these examples, just meeting with some of the MRI technologists, the CT techs and the MRI techs, of what can happen when people who've trained to do a certain job are stretched too thin and burnout moves in and people go off work and the handful that's left continue to carry on with a bigger load.

Individuals may have to wait longer for support, families may struggle to navigate services and other professionals may find themselves working without the benefit of the social work expertise that patients and clients need. We cannot expect social workers to compensate for gaps elsewhere in the system without ensuring that they have the resources and the support to do their jobs.

These questions, Speaker, are particularly important when I think about Labrador, which is what I'm so intimately familiar with. I have a familiarity, obviously, with the entire province, but I would say much more intimately with Labrador, which is where I

was born and raised and my home for almost six decades now.

As someone who represents Labrador also here in this House on this side, in the Opposition caucus here, I know that access to services can look very different depending on where someone lives. People in Labrador deserve the same access to appropriate services. It is essential, regardless of whether you live in Lab West, an industry town, generally – although they're trying to change the language. They no longer want to be referred to, rightfully so, as a mining town, but a town with a mine.

Whether it's kind of the hub of Labrador, in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, whether it's in Southern Labrador – we do have a road connection, but we have a diabetic nurse educator that travels, several hundred kilometres would be her region. Social work is the same thing. In Northern Labrador, you have the isolation. You have to jump from town to town by airplane or boat, perhaps, in the summer.

The services and how they're offered definitely looks a little bit differently, depending on whether you're in Bonavista, whether you're in Bay de Verde or Trepassay or wherever. In rural and remote communities accessing services can involve additional logistical challenges. Geography, transportation, the availability of local services and the ability to connect with appropriate professionals can all impact a person's experience.

Speaker, it's also very, very important that we recognize the importance of culturally appropriate services that respect the circumstances, experiences and needs of, I'll reference, Labrador's diverse population.

One of the things we did during my time in CSSD, in addition to and kind of a part of the new *Children, Youth and Families Act* – it was a last resort – was that when a child had to leave their community, it was

essential that that social worker had a cultural plan for that child that would keep them united and in touch with their culture back in their home and always with a goal to bring them back home, obviously, and be reunited with their family.

For Indigenous communities in Labrador, meaningful engagement and approaches grounded in cultural understanding are important considerations when designing and delivering services.

We should be asking whether our social work workforce is adequately distributed to meet the needs of communities throughout the province. We should also be considering whether recruitment and retention strategies adequately account for the realities of working in rural and remote areas. It is not enough to talk about access to services in general terms. We need to better understand where the gaps exist, what barriers people face and what the government is doing to address them.

Another important consideration when we look at An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act is the role of the college in maintaining professional standards and public confidence. Speaker, I just had an opportunity to have a real quick look at the college's 2025-2026 annual report, so just out. That annual report indicates that allegations received through its professional conduct review process reached their highest level in five years – '25-'26 within the last year, the professional conduct review process reached their highest level in five years.

Speaker, I would say kind of in response to that and what I was thinking about as I was reading that, the public must be able to have confidence that concerns about professional conduct can be reviewed appropriately and that established processes are followed. I would say that that is absolutely an essential part of the retention process. I know that we talk a lot about recruitment and retention, and it is

one thing to get the folks into the different professions, filling the different vacancies that are there, but we have to have a good, solid understanding of why so many leave.

When I was in the large social department, I wasn't there very long and I quickly realized that night after night after night I was signing staffing actions, new people coming in, new people coming in. One of the things I did was call the executive together in the boardroom and said, do we do an exit survey around here? Why do we have countless people – money and time involved every time there was turnover and the number was very, very high. Because maybe some of the reasons why people are leaving are reasons that are what my former colleague would call low-hanging fruit, and we could address those needs.

It's just coming to me here in real-time, when we sat down with the social workers in Gander, there was a very remote area that they would serve that didn't have cellular coverage. It's easy now; we have Starlink Minis. I know the Transportation workers in Labrador have them in order to do their work and I would hope that that's a little broader. I think for about \$130 a month now you can be in contact wherever you are. In the most remote parts of Labrador, I have my own – paying for my own, I'll say for the record – because I need it. I'm on the road all hours of the day.

When I asked that table of young social workers, what are some of the things that you would need, one young lady gave me an example. They had just gone down into – I won't say the community out of respect for the people there, because families go through challenging things. I'm not sharing this in a judgemental way. My heart goes out and I work to the nth degree to help some families that are struggling with different things, some visible, some not so visible.

One young lady said we'd gone down into this community, we had no option but to

remove a child and there was a grandpa that was quite, quite upset. He came out and he barred the vehicle, and he was hammering on the hood. I can imagine how that man was feeling; this was his grandchild. People in here have grandchildren. I know they love them dearly. I'm not there yet. I hope I am afforded the pleasure.

So I left that meeting and said we're going to get them sat phones. Now I'm dating all of this, and we did that. It just goes to show that sometimes little bits of support help social workers do their job. That was a really stressful situation. Knowing they could have contact no matter where they were could mean a difference in them leaving or staying when we think about retention.

At the same time, Speaker, social workers deserve a fair and transparent regulatory process. We should want to know whether the college has the resources it needs to manage its workload and whether the existing legislative framework remains appropriate as the profession evolves.

These are not questions that can necessarily be resolved through the housekeeping amendments that are on the floor today here with Bill 25, but I share them because they're very important considerations for the government and the college moving forward.

Just to conclude my few remarks here today, Speaker, Bill 25 contains a number of practical amendments to the *Social Workers Act*. Those of us on this side of the House, we certainly support updating the legislation and recognizing the work, tossing a bouquet to the work that the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers has undertaken to identify changes that would improve its regulatory framework.

The proposed changes to registration categories, they're particularly, in my mind, worth watching, given their potential to help the college better understand the practice of

its members. However, Speaker, we must also recognize that a strong regulatory framework is only one part of supporting the social work profession. We need to ensure that social workers have the resources, the staffing, the professional supports and working conditions necessary to meet the needs of people they serve.

We need to pay particular attention to access in rural and remote communities, including across Labrador, where geography and the availability of services can present additional challenges. We also need to ensure that the college has the tools and capacity to maintain professional standards and public confidence.

As we consider this legislation, I would encourage the government to continue working with the college and the profession to identify and address the challenges that are, today, facing social workers across our province. Ultimately, investing in the social work profession is an investment into the well-being of individuals, families and our communities.

With those considerations in mind, we certainly are happy to support Bill 25 and look forward to seeing the amendments implemented in a way that strengthens the profession and supports the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Just some housekeeping, Speaker. While we had leave to do second reading, I didn't introduce the bill, so I'd like to go back and fix that mistake.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 4, second reading of Bill 25. Seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CORMIER: It's always a great day, Speaker, when I get to rise and speak in this hon. House.

I have the opportunity to speak to An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act. Now, I'm sure all Members of this House recognize that the practice of social work requires a significant degree of knowledge and skill. That's really important because some of the most vulnerable people in our society depend on them for advice, support and guidance when they are facing some of life's most difficult challenges.

The new requirements for registered clinical social work designation will ensure that members of the public will receive services from private social workers who are highly qualified and competent, as determined by the board of the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers.

Increased requirements for registered social workers, including the minimum education requirement of a Master of Social Work degree and a minimum period of clinical experience following graduation, will ensure these practitioners are in the best position to meet their professional obligations in service to their clients.

Speaker, while public sector social workers would not be required to obtain the registered clinical social worker title for their work in public sector – that's a tongue twister – they would be required to obtain the designation if they also engaged in separate private practice. Many public sector social workers would also be eligible for the distinction based on their level of education and experience.

I'm also pleased to see that there will be a transition plan for social workers who are already providing these services but may

not meet the new requirements. That will be important for them and for their clients to maintain continuity of care.

I am pleased to support Bill 25, which will enhance protections for clients of social workers operating in the private sector.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

It's my honour to speak on behalf of the members that I represent for the St. John's East - Quidi Vidi District on Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act. Really, this is an act which helps to clarify and communicate more appropriately some of the practices and clarifying roles and duties. Of course, with the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers, it's a self-governing body that regulates the profession in this province and, of course, receives the authority through this *Social Workers Act*.

The legislation, of course, being dated back to 1992; however, the act came into force in 2010 and amended several times. Today, we are speaking on the amendment before us.

Really, this outlines a number of different components, and accessibility and language cleanup seem to be the dominant oversight here. One of the things, of course, with the audiovisual technology, we know that technology is continuing to advance all the time. So cleaning up the language around what can be used there and the authority for the college to participate in meetings with audiovisual technology – the college already has the power to do these things, but, again, because technology is shifting, we want to make sure that those things are amended.

It removes the authority of the board of the college to make bylaws regarding honorary memberships. Of course, it allows the board of the college to make regulations for different categories of registration. Again, clarification in the language, which is really important. It authorizes the board to appoint an auditor for the accounts of the college. All of these things help oversight and helps streamline some of the things that the college is doing and it clarifies that the act does not apply to social work students completing work placements.

On that note, of course, I understand that, but I would like to speak from the NDP caucus in regard to the decades of underfunding and lack of supports. We know social workers work so hard and they're so integral to our communities.

As was itemized by my hon. colleagues here in the House, the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being deals with children who are vulnerable, youth facing difficult circumstances, those circumstances impacted by abuse, these are really difficult situations and the social workers are the people who are the boots on the ground who are doing this work – very, very important labour in our communities; Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, with patients and seniors seeking home support and placement in long-term care – of course, we know our demographic of seniors, how many people are dependent upon social workers in these kind of scenarios; and, of course, the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation working with tenants to ensure that all their needs are fulfilled and optimal communication in that capacity.

So despite the importance of social workers across the public service and those already serving, they're overworked. We know that. We hear that regularly from the community, and there's a lot of burnout due to the large number of vacancies across the system. I do want to take this opportunity to speak to

that while we're doing the cleanup of this particular act.

The college has identified a trend of an increasing number of social workers, either engaging in private practice part-time to supplement their income, so moonlighting, or leaving the public system entirely for the private sector. That's not a direction that we would like to see people continue to move. We know that because of the decades of underfunding and lack of supports, it creates a downward spiral of people leaving those kinds of situations. We would like to continue to see the supports happen for the social workers.

We're seeing things like the MUN school of social work cutting the number of seats in its program from 100 to 80. Again, not a trend that we would like to see continue. The number had originally increased from 80 to 100 in 2022, but recent figures have put the number of vacancies in social work positions in SSWB alone between 85 and 105 with no signs of the trend improving. We're putting a lot of weight into the social workers in particular, and we want to continue to see the supports. That's certainly something that I would implore the government to continue to work towards. We all know the value of social workers; they're integral in so many different facets.

One of the things, of course, I would also just like to mention is that as a part of the NL NDP's 2025 election platform, we promised to bring in paid work terms for all education and social work students working in the public sector, valuing the contributions and helping them build careers right at home. Again, these are things that continue to incentivize people staying in the system, encouraging recruitment and retention in areas that we know are desperately needed.

I wanted to identify some of the areas, obviously, that we have concerns about with the NDP. While having said that, of course, we know that we're happy to support the

amendments for the *Social Workers Act* because, as I say regularly, communication is key, clarification is key. Making things more efficient and making sure that people know exactly the authority that they have is truly an important and ongoing process.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker, that's it for me. I think I've made my points there, but I will say that we are pleased to be able to support this amendment going forward and we'll continue to try to support and work with government, all our colleagues here, to support social workers who do incredible work in our community.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. BUTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I am pleased to offer my remarks in support of Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act. I'd like to echo what the minister said when he introduced his bill: We are committed to ensuring the people of our province receive the best possible care from the service providers who have the best possible qualifications.

Speaker, what's especially important is when you consider that social workers provide services to some of our province's most vulnerable: children, seniors, people with substance use, mental health or developmental challenges.

As a government, we want to make sure that everyone who provides service to vulnerable people in our province has the right education, experience and qualifications. This is not only the safety of their clients; it is also to ensure that people get the right services so they can live their best lives.

Introducing a registered clinical social workers registration category for private practice will also protect those residents by ensuring that social workers who work in private settings are qualified and competent to offer clinical services.

The Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers regulate social workers in the public interest. I know that they have the best interest of the people of this province at heart.

Speaker, I also want to note that the college's transition plan will also exist for private social workers to continue to work in a private practice. That recognizes a significant role that social workers play, particularly in rural areas of the province where they play a critical role in so many facets of health care.

The college can also provide appropriate guidelines and professional support to this group of independent practitioners where they register to become registered clinical social workers.

Speaker, while the main focus of these changes is to permit the addition of clinical registration category, the language being added by the bill will allow the board of the college to establish additional categories in the future. There is still some work that needs to be done here as well, as requirements, terms and conditions and restrictions for additional registration categories will be needed to outline in the regulations.

I have every confidence in that the minister and his department will continue to work with the college to develop these regulations, and I look forward to seeing them come into force.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I will take a page out of the Speaker's thing to say that I'll take a moment here to just go through this. I promise it will only be a moment.

Social workers, as we've all said – and thank you to all of my colleagues for understanding how important social workers are – the work they do to our communities is so very vital. I just want to take this opportunity to say thank you to them for the passion and commitment they do each and every day for the people they serve.

Any time we can give a piece of legislation a revamp or an opportunity to update the language to bring it more in line with the practices of today is a good thing. That's what we're doing here today for the most part. Any of the substantive changes were requested by the college, and I'm happy that there was consultation with the college. We've seen pieces of legislation come to the House in recent time that hasn't had as much consultation as I think this one has, and kudos to the minister for doing that work.

We think it's very important that clinical care needs to be addressed in this. It's important for the future success of the province. We want our social workers to act to the full scope of their practice. I know that my colleague from Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair mentioned many times that they can't just think we're supporting, they have to feel the support. So I think this hits that a little bit as well.

I think it's really good that we're aligning the act and the future regulations with the current practices of the college, which is an important piece. Use of technology and the ability to use audiovisual technology is an

important piece and something that we're seeing happen more and more often in the bills as we bring them forward. It's the perfect opportunity to bring gender-neutral knowledge in. It's the perfect opportunity to update the way we say things now versus the way we did 15, 20 or 30 years ago.

In some cases, pieces of legislation have been sitting for a very long period of time, so any time we get the opportunity to do that, it's nice to see. I think everyone on both sides of the House of Assembly are very supportive of those changes.

We will have some questions, of course, so I will give the minister a little bit of a heads up. I'm sure he expected that there would be a few questions. I don't think there's going to be anything there that's going to be more challenging, just things that we want to make sure we understand correctly.

I do want to say, any time with the consultation piece, with college of social workers in this case, or nurses in the future or doctors, it's very important to consult them. They know best how to regulate themselves. I think that's an important piece that government sometimes don't understand fully. Members in all governments try to do their best but when you're on the front lines, it's best to hear from the front-line staff about what recommendations can be made.

Sometimes we make changes with the best of intentions and sometimes those intentions have a knock-on effect that don't hit the same way that we would like it to. I think that's a good opportunity for us to continue that consultation.

Thank you to the minister for bringing this forward, and I look forward to further debate and questions that will come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers if the minister speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services; Mental Health and Addictions; and Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank all Members who spoke to this bill today. The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair who spoke, first of all, in support of Bill 25, we, as a government, appreciate that.

She spoke of the need of speaking with social workers across the province, that she did when she was in the ministry. Of course, as minister of this department and in my former role of Social Supports and Well-Being, I did exactly the same thing, spoke to social workers on the front lines. They told us clearly about the challenges that they are being faced with each and every day and those are what we take back to make sure that we have proper decisions.

Mr. Speaker, she spoke about the median age of social workers that are currently in the province. That's a great point to bring up because we do have a lot of young social workers in capacity here in the province, and the supports that are needed as we move forward with those social workers to make sure that they have the right opportunities to support the people that we are supporting.

She also spoke about the essential role that social workers play in people's lives. Absolutely, they have an integral part of not always the greatest times in their lives, so social workers do have an impact there.

She also spoke about the social worker graduation. I'm glad that she mentioned that

because I, too, had the opportunity to attend. When we look at our students here in the province who are going into social work, we need to support them as they move forward and offer them positions here in the province. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, we're certainly, as a government, very mindful of that.

When I came into the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being, just over a year ago, we had a 30 per cent vacancy rate for social workers. Today, it's at around 25 per cent. In NLHS, NL Health Services, we have 684 social workers and, in SSWB, we have 480 social workers currently. So that is a great number but, Mr. Speaker, we do have to support not only those that are working currently, but to support students coming out to make sure that we give them the opportunity for employment here with our province.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair also spoke about the importance of updating legislation, which is paramount, as far as I'm concerned, with any piece of legislation. She also spoke to the difference that it makes with respect to audiovisual technology. That is a huge piece, what we're operating with in today's standards with respect to audiovisual. So I'm glad that she mentioned that because it's also here as part of the amendments.

I was waiting for her to comment on Labrador, with respect to the geography and logistics of social workers who are operating in Labrador. I understand that, Mr. Speaker, we have to keep that in mind first and foremost with respect to supporting social workers who are geographically and logistically challenged at times. It's not always a financial incentive that makes that support. We do have to make sure that we have to have a good work-life balance. So that is what we are discussing.

She spoke of recruitment and retention. I spoke to that with respect to the importance of it and how we, as a government, should

support our students that are coming out of social work graduations to make sure that we have the proper numbers here in the province and give them every opportunity to work here.

Lastly, she spoke about supporting those who support the needs of the people we serve. I couldn't have said any better and I really appreciate the support on that one. Thank you to the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

Mr. Speaker, to the MHA for St. George's - Humber, he spoke about the knowledge and skill that social workers have to support our vulnerable population here in the province. I couldn't agree anymore than that. They are a special breed of people with respect to social workers here in our province.

I have Members across – my colleagues are nodding their heads in agreement. Absolutely, they certainly are. In my former role, in my 30 years as a group home counsellor before I came into this hon. House in 2021, I had the opportunity to work with many social workers over 30 years. I saw what they brought on a daily basis to support the work we were doing but, of course, to support the individuals we serve. I was very privileged to be in that role.

The MHA for St. George's - Humber also spoke about the legislation that's being provided, the updates for this legislation and the importance of it and how timely it is. He also spoke about the transition plan, and that's very important too, that the college recognize that with respect to social workers that are already in a private setting. It's very important.

Of course, the Member ended off by enhancing the protection of social workers through this particular piece of legislation. So I do thank the Member for St. George's - Humber for his words.

The MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi started off by saying happy to support the

bill, and we certainly appreciate that. She made a point of clarify and communicate with these amendments, and that's the reason why we're bringing it forth. The college wanted this brought forward, work with the department officials and here we are.

Mr. Speaker, she also spoke about the accessibility and language cleanup. Again, very important for when we're looking at updating the language of any piece of legislation. She spoke about the technology shift with audio visual as other Members have mentioned. Again, very important and very timely. That's certainly going to make a difference with social workers going forward in order to do their work.

She spoke about the vulnerable youth supported within the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being. Of course, very important with the work the social workers are doing there to support our youth and we do have to make sure that we offer them support as they do their work in that important work.

She also spoke about seniors and home support and long-term care. I've had many conversations with my colleague, the Minister Responsible for Seniors, on this and social workers do play a vital role there as well. People at a transition point in their lives, moving from home, possibly into long-term care or given the proper support to remain at home. Again, social workers play an important role there.

She also spoke about the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and the social workers important work when they're working with their tenants within the Housing Corporation. I certainly appreciate the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

The MHA for Lewisporte - Twillingate spoke about the commitment to the best possible care. That's what we're here for, Mr. Speaker. We want to ensure that we provide the best possible care to the people

of our province and we do that by supporting social workers that are doing that important work.

He spoke about the people dealing with challenges in their life and how social workers are helping them at these particular times and the work is not easy. The workload, I am sure, is heavy for social workers, but, again, I thank him for recognizing that.

He spoke about the social workers' experience and qualifications in order to do the work that they do. That's also important as well, as one of the Members said earlier with respect to a younger workforce, we need to make sure that we do guide them in the proper way that we possibly can.

He also spoke about the transition plan that the college is putting in place. Again, very important for the people practising currently and the work needed as we go forward with respect to the regulations that will be developed. So I thank the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville spoke about the vital work in community and the passion and commitment that social workers bring to their position. Absolutely. The passion and commitment that social workers bring.

He spoke about the importance of bringing the practices in line with, of course, today's age and the changes that were wanted by the college and brought forward. It's important that we work with all groups, community partners in the province. We did the same thing here with the social workers when we brought forward what they could see that was going to protect and promote the work they were doing.

The Member also spoke about the importance of clinical care and the need of working to the full scope of practice. Absolutely. We want to make sure that everyone working, not only in the field of

social work, but all health care, work to the full scope of practice.

He spoke about the importance of audio visual and gender-neutral language. He's very supportive of the changes and we appreciate that. He spoke about the consultation on the front lines.

Mr. Speaker, that is one thing that I can certainly and honestly say is with respect to the consultation with front-line staff. In the former Department of SSWB and the current Department of Health and Community Services, it is paramount and important for me to speak with our front-line workers. Their boots are on the ground every day. They are telling me and my team what they need and how we go forward and how we can best support our health care staff in addition to supporting our social workers.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the support for this bill. I will take my seat and we will certainly have questions in Committee; I look forward to those.

I thank each Member that has spoken today and interest from all Members and, of course, yourself, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 25 be now read a second time.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act. (Bill 25)

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

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

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole on tomorrow. (Bill 25)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 5, Bill 26.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act, Bill 26, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development shall have leave to introduce Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act," carried. (Bill 26)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act. (Bill 26)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Now, with leave.

SPEAKER: Does the Government House Leader have leave to introduce the bill a second time?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave has been granted.

On motion, Bill 26 read a first time, ordered read a second time presently, by leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 5, Bill 26, I move, seconded by the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, that Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act, now be read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 26 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act." (Bill 26)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, and Immigration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Thank you, Speaker.

I am pleased to rise in this hon. House to introduce a bill that proposes administrative changes to the *Fair Registration Practices Act*.

The *Fair Registration Practices Act* establishes requirements for regulatory bodies to ensure that registration practices are transparent, timely and fair. For individuals seeking to work in a regulated profession in our province, fair and efficient registration practices are an important part of getting qualified to work in our workforce. These amendments that I am introducing today are straightforward, yet very important.

Currently, the regulatory bodies subject to the requirements are identified through Schedules contained directly in the legislation. The act defines a regulatory body as prescribed in Schedule A or a person prescribed in Schedule B. The proposed amendments would move these Schedules from the act and provide the Lieutenant-Governor in Council with the authority to prescribe regulatory bodies through regulation.

This is an important change because it provides government with a more efficient mechanism to update the regulatory bodies that are subject to the act, and to ensure that there is continued alignment with provincial and national labour market priorities. Speaker, it is being more agile, efficient and effective towards our provincial regulatory bodies.

I will also highlight that these proposed amendments also support our government's commitment to reduce red tape and improved labour market mobility. By allowing the list of regulatory bodies covered by the act to be updated through regulations, these changes will streamline administration and help government

respond more quickly to changing workforce needs. That will be done in conjunction with those regulatory bodies, all while maintaining professional standards and protections for the public.

Speaker, our labour market is not static. Workforce needs change, occupation evolves and government needs to be able to respond accordingly. Moving the list of regulatory bodies from the act to the regulations will provide greater flexibility to extend the act's requirements to additional regulatory bodies as appropriate, without requiring a legislative amendment each time the list needs to be changed.

Importantly, this amendment does not change the fundamental purpose of the act. The legislation is about administrative registration practices. It does not remove the responsibility of regulatory bodies to determine whether applicants meet the requirements of their profession.

Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador needs a regulatory framework that protects the integrity of our regulated professions, while also ensuring that all qualified people, regardless of background, have a fair, transparent and timely path to enter our workforce. These amendments will provide government with a more responsive mechanism for determining which regulatory bodies are subject to the *Fair Registration Practices Act* while maintaining the heart of the legislation.

To conclude for now, Speaker, these amendments are a practical change that will help government respond more efficiently to the province's evolving workforce and labour market needs.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I'm happy to rise today to speak to Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act. I think it's an important initiative as it contributes to Newfoundland and Labrador's broader objective of attracting and retaining qualified professionals by streamlining the regulatory process. Hopefully resulting in faster processing times, lower administrative costs and, ultimately, increase the opportunities for qualified professionals to work, live and raise a family in this province.

Currently, the professional licensing process is subject to inefficiencies that cost us opportunities to fill critical vacancies across multiple sectors. Obviously, health care is a serious and ongoing concern. It's important that we also look forward to ensuring that the province is prepared for opportunities that lie ahead. With tremendous energy and mining projects on the horizon, increased efficiency and professional licensing and fluidity across provincial borders is paramount.

Chapter 7 of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement allows for increased interprovincial labour mobility. It is, as I said, paramount that Newfoundland and Labrador position itself to capitalize on those opportunities.

I think it is a little bit of a stretch that the minister said that this would be a red tape reduction initiative, but I think it's still positive. At the end of the day, I think it's a bit of a stretch, but I'll give him credit for bringing this forward. It is putting things in regulation that will make it a little faster for those that want to be regulatory bodies in this to make it happen.

I will tell them that, in the future, I probably will ask questions regarding that. But we're pleased to hear in this morning's briefing that the division is consulting with regulatory bodies beyond those that are included in the act already. We're happy that it's also

supporting Chapter 7 of the Free Trade Agreement from our federal counterparts.

We welcome the initiative and, as I said before, I won't belabour the point. I think this is moving in the right direction. We will have some questions. The professional licensing process is very important to what we're going to face in the future, and I look forward to asking a few questions after and chatting about red tape reduction.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. BUTT: Speaker, I'm pleased to rise today in support of these amendments to the *Fair Registration Practices Act*. This legislation is fundamentally about ensuring that people seeking to work in regulated professions in Newfoundland and Labrador experience registration practices that are transparent, timely and fair. For qualified professionals navigating the registration process it should not create unnecessary barriers to put their skills and experience to work.

The amendments before us will make the act more responsive by allowing regulatory bodies to be prescribed through regulation rather than require them to be listed directly in legislation. This is a practical change that will give government greater flexibility to respond as our workforce needs evolve, while maintaining important aspects of this act. It also respects the important role of professional regulatory bodies and the standards established for entry into regulated professions.

Speaker, removing unnecessary barriers to create fair and efficient pathways into our workforce benefits workers, employers and communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. This aligns with government's commitments to recognize professional

credentials across jurisdictions and fostering economic growth throughout our province.

I am pleased to support these amendments.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I'm pleased to speak just briefly on this. I think my colleagues certainly have covered much of the information here on the *Fair Registration Practices Act*.

Really, this is all about, again, making sure that we have efficiencies and reducing legislative burden, which will allow more professional bodies to be covered by the act with fewer hurdles. We, of the NL NDP caucus, would be very favourable towards this bill and we look forward to further questions in Committee.

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly an honour again to speak on this bill today. I do support those amendments.

Anything that we can do to streamline government to help efficiencies and move things along a lot quicker and a lot faster, I would, unlike the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, call it part of red tape reduction, any time you streamline those reductions. So it moves things along a lot faster and help with the government's movement.

Newfoundland and Labrador needs to continue attracting and retaining skilled workers required to support our economy and respond to current and emerging labour market needs. We've seen that. Of course, the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville did mention that. With the upcoming needs that we're going to have for employment, workforce that sort of stuff, it's good to acknowledge that and it's nice to see that stuff is happening.

We need to have those amendments in place so that we are ready for the time that this happens. We need the workers here and ready to go, because the workers in this province are skilled, efficient and able to do the work. We need all the help that we can give them to help them get movement on that work.

As our labour market continues to evolve, Speaker, we are investing in supports to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians develop new skills, upskill and reskill, while also attracting and retaining skilled professionals to help meet our workforce needs.

It is important to ensure that these qualified professionals have a fair and timely pathway to put their skills, education and experience to work right here in our province. Streamlining some of those amendments and getting them ready for that will help them to provide that. Helping our workforce and helping our projects certainly is a great attribute.

The *Fair Registration Practices Act* supports that objective by removing barriers for individuals seeking licensure recognition in applicable regulated professions. They can get their licensing regulations all done so they can proceed with the profession they need to get into as soon as possible.

These amendments will strengthen the framework by giving government a more efficient and responsive mechanism to bring regulatory bodies under the act as our

labour market and workforce priorities evolve.

This is a straightforward change but an important one. It strengthens our ability to respond to the workforce needs while helping highly skilled workers contribute to Newfoundland and Labrador's community and economy.

Speaker, these are sensible and practical amendments and I am pleased to support them.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Lane): Seeing no further speakers, if the minister speaks now, he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to thank all Members who have contributed to the debate and have signalled their support for this.

Just a quick around the Chamber here. First to the MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, he highlighted the importance of retaining professionals in our province and the impact on, particularly, health care if we don't retain them. I understand that because I had a cab driver a few months back that highlighted that he was a doctor from his home country. The importance of getting it right is important to all of us here in the province.

He also signalled the alignment with the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. That's important as well because what we are doing in this province also aligns to what other provinces are doing as well to make things easier for professionals.

I guess where there was some discussion for further debate is on red tape and I look forward to having that discussion about how we enunciate what red tape means.

To the MHA for Lewisporte - Twillingate, I agree with that as well, the importance with this legislation and the change that we are making, and that is not creating unnecessary barriers. We have an opportunity to get this right, to streamline it and make that act that is responsive to all the needs of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

To the MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, she reinforced the impact that this will have on future sessions of the House of Assembly in that it will reduce legislative burden.

To my colleague, the MHA from Exploits, he highlighted the importance of this change here and what we are trying to do with our government. That is being responsive to workforce planning for the evolving labour market that we have in our province and the major projects that are coming based on the efforts across a number of our departments and the importance of streamlining amendments so that this act will be agile to fit the future needs of our province.

So you see, Speaker, these changes will provide government with a more flexible and efficient way to respond to an evolving labour market and workforce priorities right across our province. Clearly, that is happening with what we see with megaprojects percolating across renewable, non-renewable, across mining projects and expanding traditional industries and even new industries now like what is happening with the spaceport in St. Lawrence, all while this legislation will further reinforce for the act to maintain the principles of transparency, timeliness and fair administrative registration practices.

In essence, and really to simplify it, this is a practical change that will help support a

responsive, regulatory framework that will strengthen pathways into Newfoundland and Labrador's workforce. That's ultimately what we are trying to do here in our government, is to grow our workforce.

I thank all Members who have spoke for the consideration of the bill. Thank you, again, Speaker, for this time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are the Members ready for the question?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act. (Bill 26)

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

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

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 26)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 1, Bill 22.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3, Bill 22, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 22 be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3," carried. (Bill 22)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3. (Bill 22)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 22 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion 2, Bill 23.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Regulatory Improvement and Efficiency, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 23 be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Government Services to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Regulatory Improvement and Efficiency," carried. (Bill 23)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Regulatory Improvement and Efficiency. (Bill 23)

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

When shall this bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 23 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 6, Bill 27.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Civil Forfeiture of Property, Bill 27, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

CLERK: The seconder is not here.

L. PARROTT: Seconded by the Deputy Premier.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 27 be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Civil Forfeiture of Property," carried. (Bill 27)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Civil Forfeiture of Property. (Bill 27)

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

When shall the said bill be a read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 27 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Motion 7, Bill 28.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Status of Women and Gender Equality Advisory Council Act, Bill 28, and I further move that said bill now be read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 28 be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Women and Gender Equality to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting the Status of Women and Gender Equality Advisory Council Act," carried. (Bill 28)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting the Status of Women and Gender Equality Advisory Council Act. (Bill 28)

SPEAKER: Bill 28 has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 28 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

This House do now stand adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, October 28, at 10 a.m.

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