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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.

I would like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery today the 2026 Janeway Children's Miracle Network Champion, Karlee MacDonald, who is the subject of a Member's statement. Karlee is accompanied by her –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: You were a bit fast – I know you're an enthusiastic bunch here today.

Karlee is accompanied by her mother Jennifer Taylor, her father John MacDonald and some of her extended family. She is also accompanied by Rebecca Dutton, President and CEO of the Janeway Foundation.

Welcome, everybody, to our gallery, especially Karlee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: There you go; now you got clapped for twice, and you deserve it.

Statements by Members

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

The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the upcoming Walk to End ALS taking place in Corner Brook on June 7.

ALS is a progressive neurological disease that affects thousands of Canadians and

their families. While there is still no cure, events like Walk to End ALS provide hope by raising awareness, supporting families and funding critical research and community services.

In 1988, family and friends of George Buckle, my grandfather, formed an ALS support group that went on to become the ALS Society of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2005.

Each year the society raises funds to provide services and support people and their families living with ALS in our province. The Walk to End ALS has become a powerful symbol of compassion and community. In Corner Brook, participants will once again lace up their shoes and stand together in solidarity, demonstrating the strength and generosity that our region is known for.

To everyone taking part, in the Walk to End ALS on June 7, thank you for your commitment, your compassion and your determination to help create a future free of ALS.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the success of the Horizons Leadership Conference recently held at Phoenix Academy in Carmanville. This one-day regional event, hosted in partnership with the Canadian Student Leadership Association and Student Leadership NL, brought together students from Grade 7 to Grade 12 for a truly inspiring experience.

With the theme All Aboard the Leader Ship, the conference focuses on building leadership skills, fostering self-development and strengthening friendships and collaboration among youth. Students participated in engaging workshops, school-spirit activities and heard from dynamic keynote speakers, Jeff Martin and Jeff Gerber.

It was a pleasure to attend alongside Mayor Marilyn Tulk and to see first-hand the incredible energy and enthusiasm demonstrated by the students. Their willingness to step up, lead and support one another speaks volumes about the bright future of our communities.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to Ms. Laite, the organizers, volunteers and all those who made this event possible. Conferences like Horizons play a vital role in empowering young people to become confident, engaged leaders in their schools and beyond.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Speaker, today I recognize and thank an individual whose dedication to community service has touched countless lives across the Coast of Bays region and throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, and that is Steve Crewe.

Steve has always been the kind of person who steps forward when something needs to be done. Whether serving his town, supporting regional initiatives or helping build stronger services for families, he did so with commitment, integrity and genuine care for people.

He served 25 years on council for the Town of Hermitage-Sandyville, 15 years as mayor, 24 years on the fire department and

eight years of service to the Lions Club, continuing his life-long commitment to volunteerism.

He served on the NAIA board and was a strong voice for the aquaculture industry. He also served as a trustee on the health board; sat on the Community Advisory Committee of the Coast of Bays; co-chaired the creation of the family health care team for Central Newfoundland; and chaired the Joint Mayors Committee for 12 years.

Steve has been a friend, supporter and someone who has always been willing to lend a hand or offer encouragement when it was needed most. Although now living in Alberta, he is not far away.

Join me in saying thank you to Steve Crewe.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Speaker, I rise to recognize an exceptional individual, Brenda Paul, executive director with the Boys and Girls Club in Gander, and her recent achievement of being awarded the Boys and Girls Club of Canada Service Excellence Award.

Brenda is more than a leader. She is a safe place, a supporter, a cheerleader and someone who gives her whole heart to the children, youth, families and communities in and around my district every day.

Whether she is helping a member through a difficult time, supporting a family navigate an issue, encouraging staff, contributing to programming or simply making someone feel seen and valued, Brenda does it all with kindness and her special way of making a connection with others.

This national award is especially meaningful, given that Brenda was only one of two people recognized from across Canada within the Boys and Girls Club movement. She is an incredible asset to the area and many lives are better because of the care and commitment she gives.

On behalf of everyone you have served, past and present, over your 31 years with the Boys and Girls Club, thank you and congratulations Brenda on your national Service Excellence Award.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise to recognize the outstanding achievements of the many students from Newfoundland and Labrador who participated in the 2026 Volleyball Canada Youth Nationals recently held throughout different provinces across the country.

I specifically wish to acknowledge the young athletes that travelled from the District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. Those who went to Calgary: Julia White, Joshua Burke, Michael Butt, Kyle Morgan, Catherine Sembi, Eila Power, Maren Hicks, Sophie Whelan, Abilynn Noseworthy, Jade Bennett, Zoe Whelan, Ava Oliver, Lydia Rowe and Sophie Barnes.

Those who went to Mississauga: Oliver Ralph and Jaxon Gosse. Those who travelled to Moncton: Cara Middleton, Makayla Mousseau, Raelyn Green, McKinley Bussey-Clarke, Makayla Hayward, Taylor Smith, Violet Smith and Avery Reid.

These athletes travelled to compete on the national stage against some of the strongest youth teams from across Canada.

The level of competition at volleyball nationals is extremely high and their

success reflects the strength of the local athletic development and the unwavering support of coaches, families and community members who invest their time and energy in helping young athletes reach their full potential.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating these athletes and their teammates on their outstanding performances and for representing their communities with excellence, sportsmanship and pride.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I have a request here from the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, Member for Harbour Main, asking for leave of the House to do a very special Member's statement, I might add.

Does the Member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave has been granted.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker and thank you House of Assembly.

Today I rise to recognize an extraordinary young constituent of mine, Karlee MacDonald of North River in the District of Harbour Main.

At just 23 days old, Karlee was diagnosed with two major heart defects and only days later underwent lifesaving, open heart surgery.

Through her strength, the support of her family and the outstanding care she received at the Janeway, Karlee has grown

into a happy, healthy and inspiring 10-year-old girl.

Despite her young age, Karlee has dedicated herself to helping other children receiving care at the Janeway. Her compassion and generosity led to her being named the 2026 Children's Miracle Network Janeway Champion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Karlee has attended the Janeway Telethon since she was one year old and has helped to raise \$17,903 in support of children's healthcare in our province.

On June 6 and 7, Karlee will once again participate in the 2026 Janeway Telethon where I know she will continue to inspire others and support the great work of the Janeway.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to rise and join me in thanking Karlee for her courage, kindness and dedication to helping children and families across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Karlee, you rock.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Well done.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education and Skills.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Last week was an outstanding week and I rise today to congratulate all post-secondary graduates this year in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This year approximately 3,000 students are graduating from Memorial University campuses in St. John's, Corner Brook and Labrador.

At the College of the North Atlantic, close to 2,000 people are graduating this year from 17 campuses throughout the province.

As well, over 1,300 students are graduating from private training institutes such as Keyin College and Academy Canada.

Speaker, we recognize the importance of investing in post-secondary education. That is why *Budget 2026* includes significant post-secondary investments and a tuition freeze at Memorial University and the College of the North Atlantic to help keep education accessible.

Work will begin this year on a new graduate tuition refund program so graduates who stay, work and live in Newfoundland and Labrador will receive a tuition refund.

Speaker, we continue to work with our institutions and partners to strengthen opportunities for learners throughout our province.

To the supporters of our students, thank you for your encouragement of our graduates.

To all graduates, congratulations on our accomplishments. Today, we celebrate your hard work and the potential you bring to Newfoundland and Labrador.

On behalf of all Members, I wish graduates the best of luck and every success.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I'm pleased to join all Members in celebrating the accomplishments of this year's post-secondary graduates. This is an exciting moment for more than 3,000 students at Memorial University, nearly 2,000 graduates at the College of the North Atlantic and over 1,300 learners completing programs at private training institutions across our province. Their accomplishments and determination have brought them to this milestone, reflecting the strength and potential for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador's workforce.

Behind every graduate stands a network of supporters who encourage them through long nights, challenging courses and moments of doubt. I want to acknowledge the families, friends, instructors and mentors who helped guide these students along the way.

To every graduate, your hard work has brought you here and your future is bright. I wish you the greatest success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We also extend our congratulations to all this year's graduates and look forward to them taking up leadership roles in our economy and in our society.

While we're happy that government is showing concern for the financial well-being of students, one way to do that is to invest long-term, better funding to our publicly owned post-secondary institutions. By

making investments in MUN and CNA, we help keep tuition low while improving the quality of education our students receive.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Former Premier Danny Williams once celebrated Newfoundland and Labrador becoming a have province. While it's a nice title, it means Newfoundland and Labrador does not get the fair share of equalization payments that we deserve. Provinces like New Brunswick at \$3.3 billion, and Quebec at almost \$14 billion, received this money to help pay for services in their provinces.

Why is the Premier giving up on an issue that could mean so much for our province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition outlined, there is nothing equal about the equalization program. We all recognize that, but this has been ongoing for a number of years.

The former Liberal government decided to go to court. We've turned around and had our legal opinions review the file. They recommended that we not proceed with the court action, so we have cancelled that action.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, at a time when a separatist party could soon form the government in Quebec and Alberta is holding a referendum on separating from Canada, there are talks about opening up our Constitution, which would include talks on the equalization formula.

Why wouldn't the Premier use the court action as leverage in these discussions? Why isn't he fighting to get more for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, that's exactly what we've been doing since we got elected. It started with getting an independent review done of the MOU agreement, which we are now fighting for more power, more transmission and more value from that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: When it comes to equalization, we will, with the rest of the premiers of this country and the prime minister, argue that we should be getting our fair share because, as I said previously, there is nothing equal about equalization.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Mr. Speaker it is fitting he brought up the review panel because the public heard about dropping of the equalization case, not through the government, through the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. Again, more secrecy and no transparency.

So why didn't the government and the Premier tell the public about this decision?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I see nothing secret about going into court to say that you're not going to pursue a court case, but let me tell you about a little bit of transparency. Let me read from page 27 of the independent report.

"Third, in the latter stages of negotiations, after the Churchill Falls part of the deal has largely been completed, the government required that revenues for the new development projects escalate by 2% per annum. This requirement departs from established utility pricing models. To achieve a fixed 2% annual increase, prices for Gull Island power had to be artificially reduced below true costs for 45 years, which resulted in more costly financing and deferred repayments to debt and equity holders."

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you for enlightening us, Premier.

I wonder if you could tell us who provided that information to get it into the report.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: I'll gladly read the next line.

"Both the negotiating team and its expert advisors advised the government not to require a 2% price escalation."

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: The legacy of secrecy on this Churchill Falls deal will be his, Speaker.

The Premier likes to talk about securing more defence contracts from Ottawa. In fact, his entire deal with Equinor is based on this, but he has nothing to show for it yet and the biggest security conference in Canada was just held in Ottawa, and the Premier and none of his ministers were there.

Why is the Premier letting provinces like New Brunswick and Ontario, who are fully represented by elected officials, gain an advantage in this industry?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I said long before in this House of Assembly, we don't simply come in here to make announcements. We came in here to get deals done, and when there's something to be announced, we will announce it.

Right now, we are working diligently on the defence file. I've met with the prime minister on several occasions; I met with the minister of National Defence; met with the minister of Finance and we'll meet with him again tomorrow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: That's great, but all the other ministers from across the country have had that meeting. So we're already behind just by not showing up at the most important conference in the defence sector.

Speaker, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure said he didn't know how many people applied for the chief pilot position at Air Services. Well, the answer is zero.

Now we hear he's doing a \$20,000 market adjustment to fill this position, so why didn't he do this sooner and before the chief pilot resigned?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's good to know that the Leader of the Opposition has all the inside track. I guess that probably forms a bit of the problem we're dealing with within the department.

We are well aware of this issue. We are dealing with it. We know we need a chief pilot. We will get the right individual in place, and whatever we have to do to make it work – there may be more than market adjustments. There may be support staff as well.

We need a chief pilot. I'm committed to doing that, and I will go about it in my way and not the way others want me to do it. I will make sure we have a chief pilot in place for the upcoming fire season this summer.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I know they like to blame a lot of problems on us. But when someone resigns during the course of their tenure and we're still getting blamed, that's a head-scratcher.

Speaker, we've heard that the pilots with Government Air Services have requested a

meeting with the minister. They are in a crisis situation.

Will the minister commit today to sit down with the water bomber pilots to discuss these serious HR and operational issues?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Yes, of course, I'd meet with them any time. I got an anonymous letter, Speaker. It was just from a group. No one signed off on it. I don't know where it came from. I've asked my officials and we've instructed them to find out what their issues are. We don't know what their issues are.

Other than that, they've got concerns, but we don't know what those concerns are. We can't fix the problem until we're told what the problem is. We're working on that. We're talking to them.

If they want to meet, come in and disclose whatever concerns they've got, absolutely. It is a better process than giving me anonymous letters but, absolutely, any time they want to meet, we're available to meet with them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: We all saw the anonymous report. It was called the MOU review.

Speaker, the blue book committed to maintaining a fully operational and staffed water bomber fleet. Here we are, the start of the wildfire season, no chief pilot, no new applicants, making market adjustments and readvertising. The repaired water bomber is

leaking, and there's a real possibility of losing the operational certificate from Transport Canada.

The minister does not seem to understand the gravity of this situation. It's not fully staffed and it may not be operational.

What are you going to do about it?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, it's counterproductive to be in the House of Assembly, getting fed information and asking questions that we're trying to resolve. I'd rather do them in a board room or in a proper environment. This is not the place to deal with those issues. We know there's an issue out there, but the Leader of the Opposition is getting information – not all accurate, but it's some information.

As for the leaks with the water bomber, there was a leak. That was fixed early in the game. That happens when you go through these major repairs. That's been dealt with.

This is inside information trying to taint the process. I'm committed to resolving this process and I will find a resolution. We're working on it as recently as an hour ago. We'll get this resolved, but this is not productive to solving the problem; this is playing politics with a very important issue, and I refuse to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

M. KING: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the minister, the purpose of our job is to ask questions on behalf of the people of the province, and we will continue to do that until we get answers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. KING: So let's start with some more questions to try to get some more answers. We learned last week that the Premier paid his deputy chief of staff, Steve Outhouse, secretly through a corporation from funds not appropriate for partisan political staff. The Premier has had all weekend to come up with an answer.

Why did he agree to this scheme?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, I think they're getting low on questions. Now they're starting to repeat the questions that they were asking last week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: The answer that was provided last week, that we're in a net positive position, that is the way we operate. We're spending smarter, we're planning efficiently and that will be the bottom line.

The Leader of the Opposition stated on Friday, post-budget: We're Liberals for a reason and they're Conservatives for a reason, so we're not going to agree very often on fiscal approaches to the budget. I agree.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We are not Liberals.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

M. KING: Thank you to the minister for pointing out the very obvious because I can

tell you one thing, we would not be paying an advisor in the Premier's office \$275,000 plus a bonus through MCP. We would not be paying a former deputy chief of staff to his consulting company through professional services in the Cabinet Secretariat. We would not be doing that.

So this is a very simple question for the Premier: Why can he not answer these questions? What are they hiding?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We are not hiding a thing, Speaker. It's called good fiscal management, and if you don't want to take our word for it while I address the question today –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: – let me reference the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. The Leader of the Opposition –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'll ask the Member for a second.

If we want to lose speaking privileges again today, if we want to go for three in a row, I'm game for it. I want to hear the minister, I want to hear the questions, I want to hear the answers. I don't want to hear another sound.

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

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: And I'll reset the clock.

C. PARDY: Oh, fantastic.

So the Leader of the Opposition stands up and on Friday and states: it was a bad budget that didn't go far enough to address affordability. Well, again, don't take it from us, even the Leader of the Third Party gave us a C. The Leader of the Official Opposition gave us an F. The Canadian Taxpayers Federation gave us an A plus on affordability.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: An A plus on affordability, and I noticed this in the report that this "budget only slightly increased spending, but Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are still being punished by years of irresponsible borrowing"

We've got our fiscal house in order.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

M. KING: Mr. Speaker, I'm so glad he's celebrating a pat on the back from his Conservative friends at the Taxpayers Federation, but I have one for him.

In the VOCM question of the day: How would you grade the Minister of Finance's performance? Wait for it. The public of Newfoundland and Labrador speak, and they give you a grade of F. That's from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So by paying the former deputy chief of staff through his consulting company in Ontario, this means he would not pay taxes in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Why does the Premier think Steve Outhouse should pay less tax than the hard-

working Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who work for the provincial government?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, we've managed the budget quite well. We've increased the expenses by 1.1 per cent – 1.1 per cent more than we had anticipated to increase, but 1.1 per cent is less than the CPI. We've done well.

Look at the affordability measures that we put out, \$260 million out in people's pockets. The reporting, any reporting, we always take into account that judges our effort, but we like to look at the A plus and the affordability and the amount of money put back in people's pocket as being a very positive experience. We will manage the books on our watch, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

M. KING: Mr. Speaker, I would give him another grade of F for not answering a single question that we are asking here.

They are in government. They are responsible for the decisions that they are making. The Premier paid for his campaign manager Steve Outhouse's corporation. Once again, this is not how political staff should be paid.

Was this paying him back with taxpayers' dollars meant for non-partisan government work to reward him for his help in the election?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, I would say we will manage the economics of the province to the best of our ability, and I think we've done it well. We've done it well.

One thing that the people appreciate is that we've increased the basic personal amount to \$15,000, putting close to \$340 in every taxpayer's pocket. We've doubled the volunteer firefighter and search and rescue tax credits. We've increased the small business rate – we've decreased it, but we've increased the savings for the businesses, half a per cent this year, half next year, half the year after, and then we've increased the Seniors' Benefit –

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker, that was an excellent segue from the Finance Minister.

The Finance Minister believes in his budget, we've heard and, at best, the government's budget saves some people \$28 a month.

Why does the minister refuse to help people with the daily cost of living? When is he going to pull a lever that helps Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We're back to \$28 a month. While that is accurate \$340 a year, that's right. Now keep in mind, as I said before, we spent on the Opposition's amendment, we spent two days debating, that would have saved Newfoundlanders and Labradorians \$1.12 a month. The second thing is that anybody operating a propane

forklift would have had the big benefit. That is what we debated in the House of Assembly for two days on their amendment. Something wrong with that picture.

To complete my line before, we also increased the Seniors Benefit and added 3,000 more children to the Child Benefit.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I will not apologize for debating a bill that lowers gas tax, where the government voted to change gas from the same to the same. They did not lower gas tax at all, Speaker.

I do want to go back to the budget. We know the Finance Minister received a C grade on his efforts and an F from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Today, we released a draft bill that would remove the provincial taxes from food products and non-alcoholic beverages.

Will the Finance Minister commit to reviewing and adopting this bill so people can get the help they need at the grocery stores?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, next to *Ted Lasso*, we've talked a lot about levers in this House. There are numerous levers we can utilize in order to provide further relief at some point in time to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. There are many levers we can utilize.

The only thing we said we would do is we want to make sure it's targeted, it helps

those people who are in need the most and we will plan efficiently and make sure that what we select to provide more affordability measures to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians won't be a knee-jerk reaction but it will be well thought out and planned efficiently through consultation.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, the public has heard the troubling story about a family who was staying at the Janeway only to have their room ransacked in the ICU unit by three individuals.

Can the minister explain to the public how this was allowed to happen?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, it is troubling when patients are in hospital and they're exposed to that type of behaviour, especially when they don't feel safe. We're investing in security and we're going to be very vigilant to make sure that people who come into the hospital are there as patients or as people who are supporting patients.

At the end of the day, sometimes these things happen. The most important thing for me to do is to properly address it; find out how this happened, what was the root cause of people being able to come into the hospital and create this concern.

That's what we're looking at right now. We're going to address it. We are going to put things in place so people feel safe in the hospital, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, people that go to places like the Janeway go in their most vulnerable time. It's not a place where you expect to have to deal with somebody coming in and wrecking your room.

Many, many people have reached out on this. It's a place they want to feel safe, and they want to be assured that an incident like this never happens again.

So I ask the minister: Can she provide some more details around what they're going to do and when they're going to do it, given the volume of people that are paying attention to this file right now?

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Health and Community Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, what she's talking about is the incident that just happened. We have an active investigation, but we are dealing with the security company that is actually providing security for the hospitals. We are going to actually address this.

Speaker, I have friends and family and I know residents who go to the Janeway. Everybody needs to feel safe, and that's one thing that we are all working together on. We will address this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the government rolled out a new health care information system, yet we're hearing from front-line paramedics who say they were left without training or access.

How does the minister justify excluding the very people who are first on the scene and making life-saving decisions every day?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

If the points she's making are founded, it's very troubling. I was not made aware of it, my department was not made aware of it and, the Member, if she had access to that information, she should have approached us – and maybe she did. Over the weekend, I was up in Shesh dealing with something. If you did, we've only been recently notified but I have not received any information.

I will be looking into it because if what she's saying is founded, based in facts, it will be addressed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, I am hearing from front-line paramedics in my district who are raising serious patient safety concerns about being locked out of critical health care information.

Will the Minister of Health commit today to ensuring paramedics receive full access and training immediately?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, I will be following up with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services and Medavie. If paramedics don't have access to the information to do their jobs properly and safely and provide safety to our patients and do their job to the best of

their ability, that's concerning for me as Minister of Health and I will be addressing that. I will be taking that back to Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, the CEO, and Medavie, who are responsible for managing the paramedics, Speaker.

So we'll be looking into that. I thank the Member for raising it here in the House of Assembly. I would have liked to have some heads-up through email to us, to my department before, because I would have been able to respond earlier, Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Speaker, we heard in Estimates that funds have been set aside for the new electoral boundaries commission. The act says the commission should be established as soon as convenient after March 31.

It is now June, so when will the commission be established?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

That's part of our responsibility and discussions are ongoing. As soon as we're ready to announce it, we'll make that announcement very public.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

Will the minister confirm that the report on the new electoral boundaries will be finalized by the end of 2026, as is required by the legislation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Yes.

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

P. PIKE: Speaker, the Fortune Head Ecological Reserve is a site dedicated to the preservation and the protection of trace fossils from 541 million years ago. This site is also an environmental disaster, with garbage falling into the ocean at a rapid rate.

In an April 2025 report, it was recommended that the site be remediated. People of the area are wondering what will be happening to correct this situation.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I appreciate the question.

I mean, this is another disaster that has been going on for 20 years that this government has inherited. That doesn't disqualify the real impressions it has down in that area. I have talked to some people in the area. My department are well aware of it. My department is looking for solutions right now today that are economically feasible and a timely manner to help out the Member's district down there.

We get it. It is extremely important to us. There are other places across the province that are like this as well. Not so much to the extent of this one but, make no mistake, we are working on it, we are going to come up with solutions and, as soon as we do, I'll reach back out to the Member.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: St. John's West – good try.

SPEAKER: Oh, sorry.

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, the Michael Donovan library, located in my district, opened its doors in 1989. It's been a fixture in the city's west end for almost four decades – the sixth busiest library province wide.

It recently learned that it's lease would not be renewed. It will close its doors on Saturday, June 13. Library staff have long advocated to the library's board and the department for increased funding necessary to relocate to a larger, more accessible location.

Will the minister here, today, give his word that the Michael Donovan library will not close permanently on his watch and an alternate location in the city's west end be identified?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you for the question.

As I've said before, our libraries are very important. We have 94 throughout the

province and every one of them is being used and utilized. In fact, the Michael Donovan library is probably one the most-used libraries that we have.

They are working with us. They're working with the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure. We are working to find a location for them. They want to stay in the same end of town, and I agree with that.

Hopefully, in the near future, we will have location. I would love to have a location prior to them moving out, but we're working on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Poverty Report Card, published by Food Banks Canada, recommends Newfoundland and Labrador develop a Labrador-specific plan to reduce food insecurity by lowering freight costs, strengthening local food systems and improving access to fresh, affordable food.

NDP leader, Avi Lewis, promoted the idea of publicly owned grocery stores. Both New York and Toronto are launching pilot projects of government-operated grocery stores to fight food insecurity.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to establishing a pilot project of provincially owned grocery stores to ensure access to fresh, affordable food?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I say to the Leader of the Third Party, anything that reduces poverty in Newfoundland and Labrador, this government will consider. We have a

history, back in 2005 when it started, of a poverty reduction plan that led the country.

We're currently involved in redoing and rolling out a new poverty reduction plan that's going to take into account whatever measure that we possibly could deploy to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. All possibilities will be on the table.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The 2026 Poverty Report Card notes that while Newfoundland and Labrador has the highest disability assistance levels country wide, they are still below the poverty line. That while our province has some of the strongest income support reforms, their impact on poverty and affordability remains limited.

I didn't hear a commitment to a grocery store, but I heard talk about the poverty reduction plan, so I will ask the Premier: Will he commit to establishing an all-party Committee, similar to the Committee on Basic Income, to examine grocery prices and explore ways to keep them affordable while we're waiting for the poverty reduction plan?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I say to my hon. colleague, we will have the poverty reduction plan as soon as we possibly could. I know we have begun work in earnest on that. I know we've said numerous times here on affordability measures that it was important for us to do it.

We need to make sure that we've got a super meritorious plan in order to reduce

poverty. It will be a significant influence in our next budget, but I would hope that we've got a good direction well before budget time for our next fiscal.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Speaker, more experts, historians and community advocates are coming forward with thoughtful proposals for the future of the S.O. Steele Building next to the War Memorial in downtown St. John's. One proposal would see the province pursue UNESCO World Heritage recognition and transform the building into an interpretation centre, preserving an important piece of our history, while creating new opportunities for tourism, education and nearby businesses.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to meeting with these advocates and stakeholders to explore this proposal and begin a serious conversation about the building's future?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I spoke about this many times. I spoke to the Member as well. We're in the process now – we have an environmental assessment done on it. There's a report in. It's almost finalized now. I committed to releasing that publicly when it's done.

There are a lot of interested groups who want things done with that building. We don't know where we're going to right now. A lot depends on this report and what assessments we make and the costs that

come with it, but I'm willing to meet with any group out there, obviously.

It's just when we get the report finalized and we get it released publicly; we'll have further discussion. But I'd entertain meeting with anyone. A lot of people have reached out to me individually as well and my commitment to them is the same as my commitment here today – of course, we would.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for that, Minister.

Speaker, last week, Visual Artists Newfoundland and Labrador announced the winners of the Excellence in Visual Arts Awards, recognizing the incredible talent and contribution of artists across our province. Yet, despite the vital role artists play in our culture, communities and economy, this year's budget provided no increase in artist grants. The Finance Minister just declared government will help any people with the most need.

I ask the Minister of Tourism: What specific action will be taken to increase funding opportunities for artists and to ensure they have the support they need to create and thrive in the province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly an important question, and I do appreciate the question from the Member.

This year, in the budget for the PC government, \$3 million was allocated in the

budget that will support collaboration with partners on events, attractions and development and delivery of festivals here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Also, film, television and arts, another \$10-million investment.

So we're certainly doing our part to encourage all investment here in this province and to make sure that our tourism and arts and culture sectors are taken care of.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

M. KING: Speaker, I'd like to have leave to table a document that I referred to today in Question Period. The VOCM question of the day, how would you grade his performance, and the highest grade was F.

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

AN HON. MEMBER: No leave.

SPEAKER: Leave has been denied.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion:

WHEREAS subsection 16(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* requires the appointment of an independent committee, named the Members' Compensation Review Committee, to conduct an inquiry and prepare a report respecting salaries, allowances, severance and pensions to be paid to MHAs once every General Assembly; and

WHEREAS some matters contained in the MCRC 2024 report entitled *How We Value Democracy* were considered by the Management Commission, but matters required to be considered by the House of Assembly were not addressed before the end of the 50th General Assembly; and

WHEREAS in accordance with subsection 16(2) of the act, the Speaker has consulted with the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and the Third Party on the appointment to the said committee; and

WHEREAS the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and the Third Party have agreed with the introduction of this resolution; and

WHEREAS under subsection 16(4) of the act, a Members' Compensation Review Committee appointed under this resolution must report to the Speaker on its recommendations within 120 days of its appointment;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

(1) THAT Heather Jacobs, KC, is appointed to the Members' Compensation Review Committee with the appointment to be effective June 15, 2026; and

(2) THAT in accordance with section 16 of the act, the Members' Compensation Review Committee shall inquire into and

prepare a report respecting the salaries, allowances, severance and pensions to be paid to the Members of the House of Assembly; and

(3) THAT in particular, the committee shall: (a) recommend the annual salary for Members of the House of Assembly; (b) review and make recommendations regarding additional salary provisions for positions identified in subsection 12(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*; (c) recommend a formula or means for making annual salary adjustments for salary amounts referenced in clauses (a) and (b) above; and (d) review and make any recommendations regarding the current transitional allowance policy for Members of the House of Assembly; and

(4) THAT the MCRC report for the 50th General Assembly entitled *How We Value Democracy* shall form the basis of the MCRC report for the 51st General Assembly; and

(5) THAT the committee shall: (a) review, update, revise or replace any of its previous recommendations, where appropriate; and (b) ensure that consultation is completed which includes current Members of the House of Assembly, former Members of the House of Assembly and any other interested parties.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, I give notice of the following private Member's motion, which will be seconded by the Member for Mount Scio:

WHEREAS families across Newfoundland and Labrador continue to face significant

increases in the cost of groceries and other household necessities; and

WHEREAS residents in many rural and remote communities face higher food prices than those available elsewhere in the province; and

WHEREAS provinces across Canada are examining and implementing measures to improve grocery affordability;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House call upon the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to develop and publicly release a comprehensive food affordability plan for the province; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the plan include an examination of measures to improve competition in the grocery sector, particularly in rural and underserved communities; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the plan include a review of options to reduce the tax burden on food and non-alcoholic beverages and report publicly on those options to the House of Assembly.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

In accordance with Standing Order 63(3), the private Member's motion just referenced will be the private Member's motion to be debate tomorrow, Wednesday, June 3, 2026.

SPEAKER: It's not tomorrow, but okay.

Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair – she caught my eye first.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker. Maybe it's where I'm seated in the House.

I have a petition on Red Bay dock repairs and these are the reasons for and background of this petition:

WHEREAS in the District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, the World Heritage UNESCO site, Red Bay, continues to grow year after year; and

WHEREAS in 2028, Red Bay is poised to have a major, international event, as the nao *San Juan* – the replica – will be arriving there from Spain; and

WHEREAS the infrastructure is inadequate as we prepare for the arrival of the replica of the nao *San Juan* and is a huge safety concern;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly to give attention to this matter as 2028 is coming quickly and there needs to be focus on making the necessary repairs to the dock infrastructure in Red Bay.

Speaker, I just want to share with this House what an incredible, incredible weekend it has been in Red Bay, Labrador. The signatures for this petition came over the weekend while I was there, but we had a delegation in Red Bay this weekend from Spain, from the Basque country, from Washington DC, from Ottawa and a huge team there from Parks Canada.

Speaker, something huge is happening in Canada in 2028. It's going to happen in our province and it's going to happen on a little piece of land in Red Bay, Labrador. The first ever in our North American history, the Trans-Atlantic shipment took place between Red Bay and the Basque in Spain. That's

incredible to think about those men came over to harvest the whales and the oil lit the homes in Europe. The oil warmed the homes in Europe. It's an unbelievable story.

So, Speaker, just like when we went with a delegation in 2024 and we toured the replica, which Master Shipbuilder Shabbi was also with the crew in Red Bay – this is actually his fifth trip as plans are getting well under way – we wanted the province to be ready, all eyes of the world are going to be on Red Bay.

When we were there, many people remarked on the dock that is totally falling down now on both sides. We have a report that's been done by Harbourside consulting that says it's a very serious incident waiting to happen. I've spoken to the minister a number of times. It was brought up to me everywhere I turn in Red Bay over the weekend. I'm asking the minister to send in some of his officials, to have a look and see what can be done to maintain the integrity, to keep it safe as we prepare for the arrival of the replica of the nao *San Juan*.

Many decisions yet to be made, Speaker. There were a lot of stakeholders there from right across the province, actually from government departments as well this weekend. They want Red Bay to be the first port. Who is going to be next? Is it going to be Montreal? How long will she be here?

I'll continue to raise this issue, Speaker, because it is really pressing and timely one.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

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

WHEREAS residents in rural Newfoundland and Labrador often have to travel long

distances to access specialized acute medical treatment; and

WHEREAS being away from home to receive care can cost patients additional anxiety and hardship; and

WHEREAS family members provide essential physical and emotional support to patients recovering from acute care; and

WHEREAS the Medical Transportation Assistance Program currently does not cover costs for family members travelling to provide emotional support and it does not cover costs for family members where the patient is transferred by medivac or road ambulance; and

WHEREAS patients receiving family support while in care have fewer complications, shorter stays and reduced anxiety and pain;

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 expand the MTAP non-medical escort policy to allow a family member to travel and provide support for their loved ones, regardless of the patient's need and regardless of how the patient has travelled.

Speaker, I have a constituent whose wife was recently sent by air ambulance to St. John's for emergency care. He travelled to be with his wife while she was in hospital. Her doctor provided a note stating she was unable to make medical decisions for herself, so her husband was required to be with her. He was denied any MTAP claim because he was told the travel was unnecessary. They said they could have called him by telephone if they needed his approval for medical treatment. This gentleman was not about to leave his wife alone in a disoriented and strange environment.

Speaker, if you live outside the Avalon, you've had a loved one require travel here

for treatment. Family members provide important physical and emotional support; bedside that enhances patient safety and error prevention; causes better symptom resolution and reduce pain; causes faster discharge and lower readmissions; and it provides psychological and well-being.

So I request that the government consider increasing the support for non-medical escorts for MTAP patients.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition is from St. Kevin's Junior High serving Goulds and Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove from Grade 6 to 8, with a population of 250 students.

The gymnasium is in terrible state of disrepair resulting in structural issues, frequent leaks. This has led to serious health and safety issues for the students, teachers and staff at the school.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately address the structural issues at St. Kevin's Junior High.

Speaker, I had a chance to chat with some of the residents. There was a fire there in the early 2000s and parts of the school was rebuilt. One of the interior walls is now an exterior wall. They say it's been leaking for decades and has water damage. They fear there is likely air quality issues. Putting out buckets when it rains. As I said, this is a long-standing issue. I know the MHA for Ferryland is aware of this and has been working on it but the residents at this point feel frustrated.

They've been told it will be a couple of years before it can be looked at, but I've been told from residents that they've been told that for a couple of years already. So I just encourage the Member for Ferryland and the Minister of TI to look into this. The residents would like to have a school where it doesn't leak and somewhere they can safely participate in gym activities.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to respond to the petition.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I just wanted to respond quickly. There was a report apparently commissioned back in 2024 by the former administration on the school. We're just putting the pieces together. There are issues with the floor. There are some other issues. I'm not sure what extent we're looking at. It depends how far you dig into it, but I spoke to officials this morning.

We're just trying to, more or less, connect the dots on this one because it wasn't an issue that we were well aware of. We knew that someone wanted to fundraise to replace the floor. We can't do that. We committed to whatever repairs are needed, obviously, and if the floor needs to be done, we'll look after that too.

Right now, we're just trying to connect the dots on a lot of things. There seems to be a bit of disconnect as people may realize that a lot of the NL schools division of the facilities came in TI a few years ago, so there's a lot of crossovers still.

We're working on it and we're aware of the issue, and I'll tell the Member opposite that whatever is needed to be done, we'll get done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise to table a petition of removing the provincial portion of the HST on children's products.

To the House of Assembly: Parents of young children already face tough economic pressure. The government should not be taxing parents for items that are a necessity.

The current cost-of-living crisis has made a challenging situation dire for low-income families and single parents.

The Provinces of Ontario, Nova Scotia and PEI provide a point-of-sale rebate on children's goods such as children's car seats, children's clothing, children's diapers and children's footwear.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to remove the provincial portion of the HST from children's car seats, children's clothing, children's diapers and children's footwear.

Speaker, just a few notes here, obviously, as we welcome champions like Karlee into the House of Assembly, we know that children's issues, care of our children is crucial. Of course, we're also welcoming in advocacy on behalf of issues for children's issues in the House of Assembly as well, seeing the transition occur.

We are talking about affordability. This government has hung its hat on the issue of affordability. This is an opportunity for us to ensure that children and the residents who are petitioning here can see relief for children and family in these areas of necessities.

I so table.

Thank you so much.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I call Motion 4.

SPEAKER: Motion 4.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis, that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, June 1.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do not adjourn today, Monday, June 1 at 5:30 p.m.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 3.

SPEAKER: Motion 3.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being:

WHEREAS section 4 of the *Child and Youth Advocate Act* provides that on resolution of the House of Assembly, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council shall appoint a Child and Youth Advocate;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Wilma MacInnis be appointed as the Child and Youth Advocate effective June 15, 2026.

Speaker, I'm just going to speak very, very quickly. I know the minister wants to have a few words. I met with both Ms. MacInnis and Ms. Gray before we came in here today and, first thing, I think we'd be very remiss if we didn't thank Mrs. Gray for the service that she's provided to all the youth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I think it's easy to overlook sometimes how difficult these jobs can be, so hats off to you for what you've provided to the youth of the province and certainly to the government and supports you've provided to everyone.

Secondarily, I'd like to welcome Ms. MacInnis into the new role effective June 15. Again, she's worked in the department for quite a long time, so she understands what she's getting herself into. I'll leave it at that and I'll say hats off to you taking on the responsibility where you know the enormity of it, you know the weight you bear on your shoulders and how much an effect that this department has on the youth of this province.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to thank the Government House Leader for calling Motion 3 from the Order Paper. It is very important that there be no lapses in things when we have an outgoing Advocate and an incoming Advocate.

I, too, certainly want to thank Karen Gray who has led the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, as the House Leader had said, with a strong focus on children's rights, child welfare reform and improving outcomes for children and youth in care. So, on this side as well, we certainly want to say thank you.

Under her leadership, the office launched a review of permanency planning to examine delays in adoption and long-term placements for children in care. We know that Ms. Gray has highlighted the impact that delays in achieving permanency can have on a child's well-being, development and future outcomes. Throughout her tenure, the office has continued to provide independent oversight, advocacy, investigations and recommendations to strengthen services and protection of children and youth.

Speaker, I also want to say a couple of words around Ms. Wilma MacInnis. A quick look through her résumé certainly shows that she is experienced and qualified. There is every indication that she would do well in this position.

She is a senior leader within the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, currently serving as the director of Strategic Services and Outreach, a role that Ms. MacInnis has held since 2018. She brings extensive experience in the public service with a career in social work spanning more than 25 years, all here in our province, including both front-line and senior management roles.

Her professional background includes leadership in areas such as Victim Services, Family Justice, Court Services and Policy Program Development, giving her that

important, broad understanding of a child and family-serving system.

There are a whole lot of things that I can say about MacInnis, but I look back to my time in, I think it was 2017, 2018 and 2019 as the minister for CSSD at the time, and Child Welfare fell in that department. It is a very heavy department. At the time I was there, more than 1,000 children in care; half which we knew were never going home; a long foster list.

Periodically, the Child and Youth Advocate, doing their job, they will write a report and they will submit it to government, as my colleague would know now. We always embraced the recommendations of the Child and Youth Advocate, Speaker. They provide both individual and systemic advocacy; helping children and families navigate government systems while identifying broader issues.

We are at a time in our society, I think, like never before and it's essential that we have offices like the Child and Youth Advocate to ensure that the voices of children and youth are heard in the decisions that affect their everyday lives, particularly those who rely on government services and supports.

I know that everyone in this House, on all sides, will agree that a strong and independent Child and Youth Advocate is essential to ensuring that the best interest of children and youth remain at the centre of any government when it comes to decision-making.

Again, I want to thank Ms. Gray and I want to welcome Ms. MacInnis. I want to wish you both very well – you in, perhaps, your retirement if that's it, and Ms. MacInnis with the work incoming. We certainly appreciate and value that office.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

As part of the New Democratic caucus, we want to thank you for your service, Ms. Gray, and welcome aboard Ms. MacInnis. I guess one of the main qualifications, I would assume, is to like children. Certainly, that's clear from talking to these two people outside, leading up to this. Ms. Gray is looking forward to spending some extra time with her grandchildren and I think she was talking about chewing the cheeks off one of them. So I know that.

Ms. MacInnis, a few times now I've met her, she reminded me at the Roots of Empathy – the last one was on Wednesday and I think the term that was used was the tiny teachers. So it's nothing like being in a room full of children and it seems to be growing, in the crawling stage, sitting stage, whatever else, and they have no sense of priority. They don't mind going up and touching speakers and so on and so forth.

It's a real pleasure to see that. As a grandfather myself, I know how important they are in my life. I do want to thank you because that's one message I took from meeting you earlier today.

I will say this; it takes a village to raise a child. It's not just parents and it's not just the siblings but it's the community, it's government, it's schools and it's the income support. It can be justice. So there are many organizations that could be involved in the life of a child, depending on the services that they need, which is why then it's good to have an organization that speaks on behalf of children.

I would say that right now, from what I can see, the Child and Youth Advocate was in good hands before and it will be in equally good hands going forward, so thank you.

Enjoy your retirement, Ms. Gray, and welcome aboard, Ms. MacInnis.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am certainly pleased to rise today in addition to both my colleagues, the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and St. John's Centre – I appreciate your kind words – and to speak in support of this resolution, to appoint Ms. Wilma MacInnis as the Child and Youth Advocate for Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to begin first by offering my sincere congratulations to her on her appointment. Mr. Speaker, this is a very important role. It carries real responsibility and it also has the power to make a lasting difference in the lives of children and youth and families right across our province.

Ms. MacInnis brings more than 30 years of experience as a registered social worker. She has worked on the front lines, supporting individuals and families and she's also played a key role in program design, policy development, quality assurance and senior leadership within government.

Mr. Speaker, that breadth of experience matters. It means she understands the system from different angles. She understands the realities faced by children and youth, the pressures on front-line social workers and the importance of strong policy and accountability.

She also knows this role quite well. Through her time as director with the Office of Child and Youth Advocate, she has already

contributed to its important work. Her previous experience within our department also gives her insight into how supports and services are delivered and, just as important, is who she is as a person. Ms. MacInnis is known for being thoughtful, compassionate and deeply committed to the well-being of others. She listens carefully, reflects and approaches her work with integrity. I am confident she will serve the children and youth of Newfoundland and Labrador with dedication and professionalism.

Mr. Speaker, the Child and Youth Advocate plays a vital role in our province. At its heart, this role is about making sure the voices of children and youth are heard, especially those who may be otherwise overlooked. It is about upholding their rights, protecting their best interests and ensuring the systems meant to support them are working as they should. This work is not always easy. It often involves examining difficult situations, asking hard questions and identifying where improvements are needed, but that is exactly why this role is so important.

The Office of the Child and Youth Advocate provides independent oversight. It strengthens accountability and gives us a clearer picture of how programs and services are working in practice. I want to say clearly that I and all members of my department value the work of this office.

The reports prepared by the Advocate and their team help us learn and improve – something that every government should always strive to do. They challenge us to reflect, identify gaps and strengthen how we support our children and youth in our province. That is something that we welcome. Because, ultimately, we all share the same goal: to ensure children and youth in our province are safe, supported and able to reach their full potential.

Mr. Speaker, the child protection system is one of the most complex areas of

responsibility within our government. It involves difficult decisions and careful judgment. It requires balancing safety, stability and long-term well-being and it brings together many systems: Health, Education, Justice and, of course, Social Supports. Because of this complexity, there is always more to learn.

The Child and Youth Advocate plays an important role in that process through their independent review and oversight, particularly in the child protection system. Their work helps us understand not only what has happened in individual cases, but also what broader changes may need to occur.

This strengthens the system. It helps us do better. As our Premier has said many times, we must do better. As a department, we are committed to listening and to responding. We have built a strong and respectful working relationship with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate over the years – one grounded in openness, transparency and a shared commitment to achieving better outcomes.

My department is in regular contact with that office and this ongoing communication helps us respond meaningfully to recommendations and work toward real solutions. It also helps ensure that the work of the Advocate leads to improvements in programs and services – the kind of improvements that directly impact the lives of our children and youth.

As Ms. MacInnis takes on this role, I want to assure her that she will have our full co-operation. We want her to feel supported in carrying out her duties. We respect the independence of the role and we recognize how important it is.

At the same time, Mr. Speaker, we look forward to continuing a constructive working relationship focused on improving the outcomes of children and youth across Newfoundland and Labrador. I am confident

Ms. MacInnis will build on that important work and of those who come before her. Each Advocate brings their own perspective and strengths and each helps shape the office and its ongoing work, and I have no doubt that she will do the same.

Speaker, I would like to also recognize Ms. Karen Gray who served as the acting Child and Youth Advocate during this transition. She has brought significant experience to the role through her work within the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate and her years of service within government. Her leadership helped ensure continuity during this period and I thank her sincerely for her contribution.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, what brings us here into this House of Assembly is a shared responsibility. No matter our roles, we are all committed to the well-being of children and youth in our province. We want them to feel safe; we want them to feel supported and we want them to have every opportunity to grow and succeed.

This work is ongoing and it evolves as needs change and we continue to learn with those changes. It requires collaboration across government, across communities and with partners throughout our province, and it requires strong, independent voices that advocate for children and youth and help guide us towards better outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, the Child and Youth Advocate is one of those strong voices. Today, we are appointing someone who brings experience, sound judgment and compassion to that role, and I certainly look forward to working with Ms. MacInnis as she takes on this important responsibility.

I am confident that, together, we will continue to strengthen supports and services for children and youth across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you both.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are Members ready for the question?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion has been carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: In that regard, I just want to say that normally when we have visitors to the gallery, as Speaker, I recognize those visitors. I intentionally did not recognize these two ladies this afternoon because, quite frankly, even though I figured I knew the way this was going to go, as Speaker, I cannot presume the will of the House. So it would not have been appropriate for me to recognize Ms. MacInnis as the new Child and Youth Advocate, but I do just want to congratulate you and look forward to working with you.

I want to also acknowledge the work of Karen Gray who not only did she do a great job in her role, but she's also a fellow Mount Pearl, a community volunteer and a wonderful person. I hope you have a great retirement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: With that said, the hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, Order 8, Bill 2.

SPEAKER: Order 8.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 2, An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate, now be read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate." (Bill 2)

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

It is my pleasure to stand in this hon. House today to introduce an important bill, An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate. It was passed right here in the Legislature on December 14, 2016, establishing the legislative foundation for an independent office dedicated to identifying and addressing systemic issues affecting seniors.

The act created the Office of the Seniors' Advocate as an independent statutory office reporting directly to the House of Assembly and set out the mandate, powers and responsibilities of the Advocate, including analyzing seniors' services and making recommendations for improvements.

The legislation came into force on July 5, 2017. Following the proclamation, the province appointed its inaugural Seniors' Advocate, Dr. Suzanne Brake, on November 7, 2017, formalizing the operational launch of the office.

The Advocate's role includes engaging with seniors and service providers; reviewing systemic issues in areas such as health care, housing, transportation and financial supports; and advising government on policy improvements. Over time, Speaker, the office has continued to expand its advocacy work including research, public engagement and monitoring of key issues

affecting seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Today, we will introduce a bill to repeal this original *Seniors' Advocate Act* and enact the *Seniors' Advocate Act, 2026*. The bill will incorporate the provisions of the original *Seniors' Advocate Act* and much the same as the Disability Advocate, or the same as the Disability Advocate, enhance the powers of the Seniors' Advocate to conduct an investigation under this act.

The creation of an independent, dedicated advocate for persons with disabilities was an important campaign promise of our government, and I am pleased to see the important initiative introduced in our very first session in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: While working on the act, we realized it was an opportune time to review *the Seniors' Advocate Act*.

Speaker, as we debate this bill today, June 1, 2026, it is important to step back and remind ourselves why this work matters. Newfoundland and Labrador is a province built by the dedication, resilience and generosity of its seniors. Nearly one-quarter of our population today are seniors.

Their contributions are not just part of our history; they continue to shape our present and our future. They've raised families, built businesses, sustained communities, protected our culture and given so much of themselves to ensure this province is a place where people can thrive.

They are master craftspeople, bearers of tradition, storytellers, volunteers, caregivers and, as we know quite well, in rural Newfoundland, community leaders. They have lived through economic transformations, cultural shifts and periods of profound change and, in every era, they have been the backbone of our society.

As a government, it is our responsibility to ensure that older adults in Newfoundland and Labrador can age with dignity, security and respect, surrounded by the supports they need to live meaningful, connected lives.

Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity today to highlight some of the important changes we are making to the powers of the Seniors' Advocate. These changes will have a positive impact on Newfoundland and Labrador's seniors. But before I do, Speaker, I'd like to offer the hon. Members of this House some background information on the Office of the Seniors' Advocate and the former Advocate, Ms. Susan Walsh, who had just recently retired.

Over the past 8½ years, Ms. Walsh led the office, ensuring it remained a trusted, respected resource for seniors across our province. Her work has been thoughtful, principled and grounded in a deep respect for the people she served. Under her leadership, the office produced numerous reports, submissions and recommendations on topics, including aging in place, housing, financial security and public policy frameworks that affect seniors.

Her efforts helped ensure that seniors' concerns were not only heard but carefully analyzed, documented and placed squarely before government and the public. Her legacy will continue long after her tenure ends, and this bill will strengthen that the powers and reach of the Advocate's role is part of that legacy. We thank her for her unwavering commitment and wish her every happiness in her well-earned retirement.

Mr. Speaker, the Seniors' Advocate currently has the power to identify, review and analyze systemic issues; work collaboratively with seniors' organizations, service providers and others to identify and address systemic issues; and, thirdly, to make recommendations to government and

government agencies respecting changes to improve services to and for seniors.

As an example, a systemic issue could be pertained to trends in housing and how they affect seniors; issues like availability, affordability and appropriateness of housing for seniors throughout the province or in a region. In this example, the Office of the Seniors' Advocate could review the situation in the housing market and how it affects seniors, work with community stakeholders to mitigate and bring solutions, and make formal recommendations to government to mitigate and to effect positive change.

The Seniors' Advocate has stated her desire to have investigative powers. She made that request and we, as government, think that it is a solid request. In fact, the 2023 final report of the *Structural Review of the Statutory Offices of the House of Assembly* recommends that the Seniors' Advocate be given full investigatory powers for both systemic and the difference here is individual advocacy.

The expanded investigatory powers, including the ability to review individual cases, advocate directly, request personal information with consent and mediate or support seniors navigating complex systems ensures that the Advocate can respond effectively to real situations affecting real people.

I'm pleased to say that this bill before us, Bill 2, gives the Seniors' Advocate those powers. The bill is not a legislative update, not solely. It is a statement of values and it clearly states that seniors deserve a strong, independent voice that can advocate for them and investigate issues that affect their lives. Seniors deserve respect, recognition and equitable treatment. They deserve a system of services that supports their independence, well-being and dignity. Seniors deserve to be heard, not only when problems arise, but in shaping the policies that impact them.

What is different about this *Seniors' Advocate Act, 2026*? It will allow the Advocate to review matters related to seniors and to advocate, mediate or use another dispute resolution process; investigate matters related to seniors' services provided by a department, agency of government or a service provider; initiate or participate in, or assist seniors to initiate and participate in, case conferences, administrative reviews, mediations about seniors' services; meet with seniors and conduct research, including interviews and surveys; request information, including personal information and personal health information with consent; make recommendations about legislation, policies and practices respecting seniors' services or the rights and interests of seniors; and inform the public about the Advocate and promote awareness of the issues.

We're going to have lots of questions in our debate, Speaker.

Again, our seniors have spent their lives contributing to Newfoundland and Labrador. It is now our responsibility to ensure the systems that support them are strong, responsive and fair. We thank those who have served in this role, especially Ms. Susan Walsh, and we look forward to building on their legacy. We believe we have struck the proper balance to allow for robust, investigatory and advocacy functions with appropriate protection for personal information and the public good.

Again, to repeat, the provisions that we debated in the *Disability Advocate Act* are carried forward to the *Seniors' Advocate Act, 2026*. A lot of the things, intricacies that we debated in that bill, have carried over to this particular bill.

I look forward to comments from the House of Assembly colleagues in debate as we discuss this important legislation.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of the people of the great District of Burin - Grand Bank. Thank you for the opportunity to speak as we consider the appointment of the Seniors' Advocate and the Seniors' Advocate role.

As we know, the Seniors' Advocate performs an important role in our society – a very important role. As a matter of fact, back in 2016, the Liberal government brought in the position of the Seniors' Advocate and, since then, it certainly evolved into a position that is of great importance and great value to the seniors of our province.

The Seniors' Advocate identifies, reviews and analyzes issues related to seniors, which are so important, and a lot of those issues are important to the seniors and other members of our society. Working collaboratively with seniors' organizations and service providers – and we have some great organizations in this province. For example, we have the 50-plus clubs, which now are 7,000 strong. We had an opportunity to meet with the seniors' 50-plus club organization, their executive, last week and to talk about their plans and so on for the future.

One of the things we talked about are the resolutions that they brought forward at their AGM last year and how well we were doing in trying to meet the obligations that we have in getting these resolutions through. As well, I'd like to point out that the seniors' 50+ Club informed us they're having their AGM in the beautiful Town of Marystown this year. It's something that we should all strive and make an effort to get out to that because it is a great opportunity to meet and talk with seniors from right across the province.

Making recommendations for changes, improving seniors' services – and that's something that this group does a lot. As you know, our province right now has 24.6 per cent of the population 65 years or older. That's just amazing when you think about it.

We were the first province in Canada, by the way, to reach that figure. If there's a place that requires a statutory office dedicated to the people who have built the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, this is indeed the one, for sure.

In government, we often talk about big ideas like priorities, mandates and strategic plans, but the heart of it all, as we know, is our people, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. For anyone who knows me, you know it's the people in my district that I care about the most and it is the people of the province that I care about most.

One of the groups I especially love working with are our seniors. I love going to their events. Just as all my colleagues here in this hon. House, when we go out on weekends or when we go out during the summer or whatever, we get invited to all kinds of seniors' events. It's not only fun; it's so enlightening. It's so great to be able to talk to people who come from all walks of life. It's so interesting, lots of great stories, lots of good entertainment. That's what I like about our seniors' groups and attending their functions.

I'm very fortunate to have some of the most vibrant and engaged seniors' groups in the province. Of course, they certainly energize me to keep working to ensure that we can build on every support that they need and deserve. They certainly put the pressure on all of us when we visit our seniors. They don't mind telling you that the club needs this or the club needs that. We need a new this, or we need a new that, but they do. As a collective group here, we help. We all do.

No group has contributed more to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

than our seniors. The seniors in my district and all over Newfoundland and Labrador need our support. Assisting and championing our seniors is not only a moral responsibility, but a core function of good governance.

Seniors have built our province in every aspect of life. Our economy, our society, our culture are the results of tireless efforts of our seniors. They've built the schools, places of recreation, places of leisure and they have been the voices of stability that have guided our province through the changes we have experienced, no doubt about it.

When I go to visit seniors, and you can look at the experience around the table, you've got retired teachers, retired nurses, retired fish plant workers, retired fishermen. There are so many. They come from so many backgrounds and they're always there, too. When you're looking for volunteers, who do you see? You see our seniors.

Their tireless volunteerism, caring and mentorship has been a steady hand that has guided this province for years. When we, as a government, invest in our seniors, it's investing in people that have already invested a lifetime in this great province.

Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned, Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the oldest populations in the country. This reality requires solid and well-thought-out legislation. More than ever, many of our seniors are finding it difficult to afford the very basics of life. Their needs reach out to nearly every government department. You've got Health, Housing, Transportation, Justice, Community Services and more. When seniors lack access to supports, the pressure shifts from other areas such as emergency rooms, long-term care facilities, as well as to immediate and extended families who are already stretched to the limit.

Most of us hon. Members in this House, we have older parents or we have older family members who we take time to be with and spend time with – usually a game of crib.

Mr. Speaker, when seniors lack supports, there's a cost to government. It is simple, and I want to make that point again. I brought this up in the House before. I talked to a senior a while ago. I was out visiting seniors when I was minister responsible for Seniors and one of the presidents of the club was telling us that with the high costs and so on now of everything that it cost \$30 for her to get a taxi to a seniors' event – \$30 out and \$30 back. I brought it up in the House a while ago. That's very expensive for seniors. That's why I'm hoping that this government, as well, will look at transportation for our seniors, the busing transportation. Seniors' groups, towns and so on get together and purchase vehicles in order to bring seniors to various events and so on.

The Seniors' Advocate provides government with clear, evidence-based information into insight into the lived experience of older adults. The Seniors' Advocate can identify gaps in the system, as well as ensuring that the providers remain in touch with and continue to provide appropriate services. Government can only benefit from this strong advocacy, leading to better programs, better outcomes, better use of public resources and, most importantly, improving the lives and experiences of our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, as we know, many seniors struggle to address their everyday needs. When specific issues arise, the Advocate's office can help with navigating primary care, home support, community-based services and, hopefully, ensure more issues received are resolved sooner than later.

Our seniors deserve our support. In addition to presenting a challenge as the senior population grows, it presents an opportunity for us to be innovative and find measures

that enhances the lives of this very important group.

Times have changed, Mr. Speaker. We need to create age-friendly communities. A lot of our communities are age-friendly and we boast age-friendly projects in our communities each and every year. The grants that government gives out to our age-friendly communities helps seniors to become more fully engaged in their communities and it also brings forward the actual dialogue between seniors and the younger members of our community.

We need to focus on preventative health strategies for our seniors; increase the ability for seniors to age well at home, with appropriate supports; and improve the quality of the lives of our seniors.

Mr. Speaker, government has the tools, the reach and the responsibility to ensure seniors are supported with dignity and respect.

In closing, we know that seniors deserve a system that works for them – one that's accessible and responsive, and rooted and based in respect. When government supports seniors effectively, it strengthens the province for many generations that come after them.

I'd like to also congratulate Ms. Susan Walsh and wish her all the best in her retirement. I'd also like to wish Pamela Dawe well while we are filling this position.

Thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll talk a little bit about seniors, people I've had the chance to meet, and some of the

issues I've dealt with since I've been elected, but then a little bit about the act.

I would say for many seniors, certainly the ones who've come to my office, the ones I've met in social events, maybe the most important thing is to feel useful, that they still contribute to society.

One of the very first groups, I guess, I met way back in 2019 – there were two. One group were looking at the whole question when it came to work. There are seniors who work because they have to. I can think of the gentleman who was over 65 and he was working 80 hours a week as a personal home care attendant. At that time, he was hoping to retire by age 70 and make enough money to bury himself, is what his comment was. He was fortunate; he was in good health.

Then there are people who work and really are just too ill to work, but they have to because they have to put food on the table, pay the rent and so on and so forth. We have the other contingent, I guess, of seniors who wanted to work but felt that there was a certain amount of agism that they were discriminated against because they were in the senior category. Although I would say if you go to many places, you'll find an awful lot more seniors working.

So that whole ability of feeling useful, of being able to work. We had another group early on and they were looking at the ratios in long-term care facilities. If I remember correctly, they call it Lillian's Law or ratio. They were looking for a 3-1 ratio at the time, which is for people in long-term care facilities.

I've had family and friends who've talked about caring for their loved one, their elderly loved one, in long-term care. They've talked about the fact if they weren't there, then there is no way that their loved one would get the care that they deserve. Not because of the lack of care and concern of the staff but because the ratios are not where they

should be, especially if you've got a person who has mobility issues, has trouble getting dressed and so on and so forth. Or if they have conditions that impair their judgment or their control over their bowels or their bladder and so on and so forth. The fact is that what people are looking for is that dignity that comes with it.

One of the things that they're looking at was having ratios that would allow that more one-on-one caring for the people who are in homes and who might be need that extra help being fed, being independent so that they're not just kept in bed all day long, that they have the ability to lead active lives. Certainly, one of the organizations – I look at Connections for Seniors here and what they're exploring in terms of how affordability and I'll get to that in a minute.

The executive director, Mohamed Abdallah, recently visited Finland where they have dementia villages. It's not about institutionalizing them but they have villages set up that are enclosed. The people at the various stores, the shops and so on and so forth are more health professionals and are able to help the people create these familiar surroundings as opposed to either chemical or physical restraints.

I do remember, at the time, many years ago when I went with my mother to visit a neighbour and the first time that I was on a protected custody ward. It was unnerving. I have to say that because when you walk through it, the exit door or the entrance door was part of a mural. There was no way you could tell at first glance where the door was. It was designed that way and we were told to be careful because some of the patients will try to get out.

I'm thinking at the time, there has to be better way in the so-called golden years as to how we go about treating our seniors. The people, as the Member for Burin said, that built our hospitals, built our schools. They built our province. I think that's a route we can go that offers a lot more dignity to

those who have to be in long-term care, and especially those who might be suffering from dementia.

The other part of things that I brought up here, very clearly, many of the people who call me, call in and there are seniors in apartment buildings where they're watching their rents go up. They're being slowly, sometimes more quickly, priced out of their home.

I think of Keane Place – I brought up last year – where the residents of that building, the tenants, many of whom were seniors, had to do without an elevator for almost 2½ years. For some, that meant being restricted not only to their floor, but to their apartment.

I think of the measures that that apartment was going to bring in that, from now on, the trash room or the garbage room was no longer going to be available, but they had to transport their garbage down the elevator or down the steps and up to the garbage bin at the far end of the parking lot. It is great if you're able-bodied, it may not be something you want to do; but if you have mobility issues, if you're a senior with a walker, it was almost impossible.

So it was not what you would call a very senior-friendly policy and ignores what the needs are of the people who live there and they're paying good rent. I think of some of the organizations that I visit in my district where you have mostly seniors, a lot of seniors, accessing the lunches. They're coming in, whether it's Ches Penney or other organizations, because it's a choice between food or heating their house, or struggling to do both.

I would say loneliness for many and, because of this, social isolation is probably overwhelming and crushing, especially the longer you live, the more you see your friends die. It's important then to find ways in which people maintain that social aspect of their lives.

I've heard from seniors with regard to their driver's licence, which not only allows them to drive but it's a symbol of independence. A lot of them will say it's interesting, at 75, they have to do a mandatory physical to keep their licence. There's nothing necessarily magical about 75, yet it seems that many would feel that it's an example of agism.

Yet, I think of Madeline Pearcey, whose birthday was back in December, 100 years old. Now she resides at the Residence at Littledale but I was at her birthday and she could move. She could cut a rug. She could tire me out on the floor, there's no doubt about it. I think, in many ways, if at 100 years old, I'm like that and I can still walk the rivers and go fishing, then that's the kind of senior's moment I want – that we all want – to be that active.

There's nothing holding her back. She's independent, engaged and I think that's what we hope for all of our seniors. So where does this come in, the Seniors' Advocate? As we have an increasingly aging population, it's about being prepared for the future, and there might some criticisms as to whether we are prepared or not. There will be a lot of seniors saying that we aren't.

I joked around – I don't know how many years ago it was; I think maybe 20 years ago when I started noticing that a lot of the funeral homes are already adding on. They're building extra rooms. They're expanding their spaces, building new areas. I'm thinking yeah, they're getting ready. They know the baby boomers are getting up there in age. They're getting ahead of the curve so what when the number of funerals increase, they're ready for it.

I often think, maybe that's the way we should be looking, when we're looking at services, anticipating where the population is going and figuring what are the services that we need. What are the services we need to keep seniors independent and living

in their homes? We know from the number of seniors who call that they aren't getting enough. The Seniors' Benefit and so on and so forth, the Aging Well at Home does not go far enough. But how do we maintain that good health? How do we make sure that there's an affordable place to live?

The changes here are to identify, review and analyze systemic issues; work collaboratively with seniors' organizations; and to make recommendations to government and agencies respecting changes to improve the services for seniors. So here, at least, with the Seniors' Advocate, there's the option or the hope that the Seniors' Advocate will be that voice for what we need to do to make sure that we have the appropriate services for those over 65.

It looks at systemic as well as individual complaints. I know in talking to Suzanne Brake, the first Seniors' Advocate I encountered, it was that frustration, that at the time it didn't have, necessarily, the ability to investigate individual cases.

However, there are two parts of the bill that seem to place limits on the investigative powers of the Advocate, and maybe we can get further clarification on this in the debate. Section 17(1)(a) prevents the Advocate from investigating decisions, recommendations, acts or omissions by the House, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council and Executive Council and their Committees, but many of the issues that seniors face are a direct result of decisions at the government level.

Those are the ones we have encountered but, at the same time, the act is going to be able to advise government. In many ways, I think placing limits on the power of the Advocate really does tie one hand behind the back, especially if, indeed, the main reason that seniors are experiencing difficulties has to do with policy, legislation and so on and so forth.

Section 18(1) gives the Minister of Justice and Public Safety the ability quash investigations deemed contrary to the public interest. The language seems pretty vague. I guess it comes down to what exactly is meant by the "contrary to the public interest." It really could be used broadly by government to shut down any investigation of a problem that may be too embarrassing or too costly to fix.

Maybe, when we get into Committee, we can understand what's going on there. I understand, even in dealing with the collective agreements, that sometimes, at individual pace, if it would look at removing the rights of a whole class of teachers, would be problematic. However, here, to have an Advocate to give the ability to make sure that seniors of this province are indeed given the supports they need and the resources they need to age in place, age independently, to age well, I think it would be important for the Advocate to have the powers to investigate all aspects of a legislation, conditions, anything that would impact the lives of our seniors.

For us, as the Third Party, as an NDP, this is something we will support. It's certainly expanding the powers and I think that's a positive thing. But I still think there are ways that we can go much further and give the Seniors' Advocate the power they need to do the work that's important to an ever-increasing population of seniors, and many of us are probably not far from that and hopefully – maybe the Speaker is not. Maybe the Speaker is far from it, but some of us have already transitioned into that already. It's important that seniors find a way to make sure that their role in this society is respected.

Thank you.

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

Thank you for this opportunity and certainly a privilege to stand here and speak on behalf of the seniors in my district. I think it's been talked about, the importance of it, by previous speakers but I think it can never be undervalued in terms of the importance of seniors in our province.

We certainly had recognition of a young lady today, involved with the Janeway, so we have the youth and now we're talking about the seniors in this province. I know my colleague for Burin - Grand Bank talked about what seniors have done for us over the years. I know everybody can reflect on what seniors have done, from your family to your community, in helping to structure you as an individual, as a human being. We've all got our individual stories of that.

As we mentioned before, this began back in 2016-2017 by the previous Liberal government, recognizing that this needed a start and it was the beginning of something good. Here we are now, nine years later, improving what the Seniors' Advocate can do in terms of investigative powers and other powers as well.

So a lot has happened in the last nine years, I say, and we faced a lot of challenges as well and so did seniors. We just think of COVID. COVID was a season of three years, really, and a lot of seniors were hit hard by that. We talk about loneliness and we talk about challenges in their community, but I think a lot of those challenges certainly speaks to the testament of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in terms of when they face their challenges, we're there to support them, and that's also important.

I know, in Question Period, the Minister of Seniors had said, in one of his answers, target those in need the most. Today, this is what we're talking about: those that are in need the most.

I want to thank the past, current and the future Advocate moving forward in their

duties. Because their duties are very, very important.

In talking about seniors, today is Vera Barbour's birthday. She's 99 years old. Happy Birthday, Vera.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: B'y, if she wasn't 99, I probably would put her name forward to be a Seniors' Advocate for her investigative powers because I know Jim – not supposed to say the name, but the MHA is certainly aware of the individual, many MHAs past and many premiers past know of her as an individual. She has a very sharp political mind and I've always been in contact with her. I will call her later on to let I know I did this and she'll be very proud to say that her name was mentioned in the House of Assembly and there was clapping for her.

The investigative powers, I believe, is very, very important, as the minister had alluded to. I won't take a lot of time; it is more important to have questions and seek clarity in the Committee stage. The minister had referenced reviewing systemic issues, trends in housing, availability, investigative powers and also individual advocacy, which I believe is the most important piece of all.

I reference a senior in my district – and I've said it before and the minister is aware of the situation – where they went to Alberta to visit family and did have heart failure while in Alberta and was recommended to go by air ambulance to Edmonton. He could go by car but, no, it was recommended by the health officials. He sought clarity then that I cannot afford – oh, no worries. This is all taken care of and you will be fine; only to come back to Newfoundland and Labrador and get a \$12,000 bill.

That hasn't been dealt with yet. I know the Minister of Finance, and Seniors is aware of it. He has looked into it, but in terms of that senior coming back and coming to me, I believe the appropriate course would be to

the Seniors' Advocate with the extended investigative powers. This senior could not pay and was troubled and worried and because of that, the stress, he ended up in Grand Falls-Windsor hospital with sicknesses. He contributes it to this.

So at least those investigative powers, and we'll seek clarity on what that really means, to ensure that this doesn't happen. That constituent that I had, that it doesn't happen, and the stress is on the senior because, most times, families really cannot afford even to help with the bill. Some can and some can't, and we talk about dignity at the end of life. You're a senior and you work so hard over your life, and when the time is required for help, then the help is not there. That's a sad state of affairs.

I know there was a press release today put out by the acting Seniors' Advocate that launches Seniors' Month. It's entitled Think again, which is a social media campaign – very important campaign. It said in the release as well, "Building on the success of previous years" That's important because there have been success and a lot of work done around seniors and helping seniors in this province in years past.

It also says – I made note of it – "Too often, aging is associated with loss – slowing down, losing skills or becoming less capable." That, in itself, is kind of a sad state of affairs when you're realize that you're getting older and these are the words that are associated with it.

This campaign targets seniors aged 65 and older. I would even go less than that because I'm 54 and feel like a senior now. So it's targeting them to show positive sides of aging. I think that's certainly a good campaign. As I said, it's building on the successes of previous years of investment into our seniors.

Deputy Speaker, I'll end off by talking about – and I guess we'll seek clarity during Committee. Like the Leader of the Third

Party, I also had it noted there in terms of the limits of the investigative powers, placing limits. I guess we'll ask that question and seek clarity when we have that opportunity.

I will conclude by saying, as I said from the beginning, that the start of this back in 2016-2017 was a good start. We're improving on it and we will do better. This is a good move and we certainly will support it 100 per cent in terms of improving what services we have and what the Seniors' Advocate can do for seniors in need in this province.

Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

It is my privilege to stand on behalf of the constituents of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi to speak to Bill 2, An Act to Amend the Seniors' Advocate Act. Our discussion here, today, as my colleague here has aptly spoken to, in the City of St. John's, both in St. John's Centre and, of course, in my district of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, we certainly have quite an astounding number of seniors living in diverse, kinds of, scenarios.

I just want to begin by saying that I was truly raised in an environment to convey my respect and dignity for seniors. My mother worked in a seniors' home and this I where I learned a lot of my life lessons. I did live with grandparents for a period of time, as well; however, it was truly through the dedication of nurses and health care workers in long-term care facilities that really taught me about compassion and care for our seniors from a very young age. I wanted to just begin with that.

In St. John's East - Quidi Vidi District itself, I have such an incredible privilege to represent individuals across the board, through very diverse circumstances. Alone in one small section of the district, we have Tiffany Village, in Kenny's Pond retirement homes. We have Glenbrook Lodge. We have Kenny's Park apartments. We have, like, a speed dial there to the residents of Kenny's Park apartments.

We have St. Patrick's Mercy Home, as I mentioned, and many other retirement homes, long-term care homes. These are facilities that are providing quality care for people who are aging. It really is diverse because we're looking at a very broad spectrum of socioeconomics when we look at some of these homes.

Of course, as I mentioned, we have been hearing from constituents, certainly Kenny's Park apartments and other areas of the district, who are really finding great trouble in regard to rental increases with fixed incomes. It really does take up a huge amount of our time and our effort is to try to find a way to support these individuals who may find themselves unhoused as a result of not being able to keep up with the cost of living.

These are some of the ongoing constituency issues that are happening within our seniors' community. Of course, the reason why a Seniors' Advocate is so crucial to this government is to provide all kinds of recommendations and support. As my colleague has mentioned, as well, we'll certainly discuss more as we go into the Committee about some of the concerns that we may have and some of the questions there once we get to that.

One of the things that I just wanted to reference, when looking at the Seniors' Advocate office, is *A Continuum of Care Approach* that was tabled last May in 2025. This all talks about the continuum of care, about having a separate department and minister of government focused on seniors,

and the new continuum of care legislation and accompanying operational standards must include provisions to address issues concerning rent and evictions.

Now, people know, in this House, I have mentioned rental issues for seniors on numerous occasions. Because the long-term care and personal care homes are not subject to the Residential Tenancies Act, meaning there's no protection for residents and families against excessive and/or frequent rate increases.

Further, while there are circumstances when a resident may be required to leave a home, there may be no safeguards in place to ensure that the person receives assistance to find a new home and that under no circumstance is that person rendered homeless.

That's a challenge. This is a challenge that we are facing if we are really looking at a continuum of care approach for our seniors who are in long-term care. I reference that because I know that rent control, which I've mentioned to the minister on several occasions and certainly continue to lobby for, is one of those protective policies that could help seniors stay adequately housed.

Now, of course, we have seniors who are in a very broad range of scenarios. The government and, certainly, as representatives, we're all trying very hard to ensure that seniors can adequately age in place as best as possible. That would be the dream for everybody but, of course, not everybody has the opportunity to do so. Also for social circumstances as well, I will say that there's something beautiful about seniors being able to move into long-term care homes where they have social activities, if they can avail of it.

As we know, the demographic of our society is getting very heavy on seniors. Families are not around to support people who are aging in the same kind of capacity, so this the reality of our lives right now. It's about

how we can safely house people right into their senior, golden years with good health.

The one thing I will mention that I have not heard yet today in the House is about seniors' mental health, and how crucial it is for us to provide all the necessities of life for our seniors, the elders who we respect and deserve the dignity. There are a lot of mental health issues that come along with aging, whether or not you're aging in place, whether or not you're aging in a long-term care home.

These are some of the things that I am very well aware of in my district itself. I think it's great that we're continuing to look at the identification, the review and the systems to improve upon the *Seniors' Advocate Act*. We want to work collaboratively with, obviously, the seniors' organizations. My colleague has mentioned Connections for Seniors NL, which I think is doing phenomenal work in community. They are really looking at progressive models around the country and around the world.

We see great work happening through Seniors NL and many, many, many other organizations. Let's be honest, there are so many great organizations that are doing good work and service providers who are helping to provide those social supports, but also to identify systemic issues related to seniors and who make recommendations to government and agencies regarding the improvement of services for seniors.

This particular act, when we amend this act, we're looking at the investigative powers but, again, with some concerns about the limiting of those investigative powers, preventing the Advocate from investigating decisions and recommendations in and around the direct result of omissions by the House. There are certain things in there. I'll get into those when we get into the Committee discussion.

I think, while this legislation is welcome, the government needs to think further ahead

and plan for the future to ensure that they adequately address the needs of seniors in the first place, so fewer feel the need to have an advocate intervene on their behalf.

We know that the Health Accord has recommended more supports for aging in place but, of course, that's going to cost. By doing so, it will take increased investment from the government. When we have specialized health care, this is something that takes time and far greater investments to ensure, ahead of time, that the services are there for the seniors when they need them, not to be calling in distress to the Seniors' Advocate after the fact.

Again, it's a preventative medicine kind of approach. I think that this is good, as it is with several of the bills that we certainly have been discussing, it's about doing some cleaning up of the act. We know that seniors are so crucially important in our community because they carry all the knowledge. We hear about this all the time. They really, truly are the bricks and foundation of our community and they're the people that we learn from. They're the ones that are wise, that have had the experience. So it's crucial that we continue to support and give them all we need so that they can thrive in their golden years as I mentioned.

I just wanted to also make a couple of comments about a wonderful session that we went to – and the Minister of Finance had attended and my colleague as well – with Connections for Seniors NL. There was some really interesting, innovative things brought forward. Again, I think, for the Seniors' Advocate, these are certainly some of these tools that will help us in the long run – building an ecosystem that helps support and address the social determinants of health. Because you can't talk about seniors without talking about housing; you can't talk about seniors without talking about health. We're not all, like, boxing in different categories here. These are all interrelated kind of issues that impact everybody.

As my colleague has mentioned, dementia village concepts are very progressive scenarios where we can support seniors who are impacted by dementia or Alzheimer's in a humane fashion, where they can still continue to socialize without being under lock and key in the same kind of traditional methodology.

There are new ideas. There are ways that we can move forward with new ways to help people, but I will revert to my initial comments, that rent control for seniors is one of the biggest things that we hear about in my constituency office. It truly is something that people struggle with. We have constituents who call under complete duress who don't know whether not they're going to be kicked out of their existing situation because their rents are going up. Those are the result of REITs and other things that continue to escalate.

When I continue to task the minister about rent control, that is where it comes from. It comes from my deep compassion and care for seniors who deserve not to have that kind of stress in their lives, which impacts their mental health, their health and, of course, their viability in general.

Having said that, I will just wrap it up again. Under the guise that I have the privilege of representing a district that is very densely populated with people who have a high level of socioeconomic incomes but people who worked very hard their entire lives and deserve to have the respect of knowing that they have a place to lay their head at the end of the day.

My final note, I would say that the Office of the Seniors' Advocate is a crucial piece of business. It is so important. We're all going to keep a really strong eye on this. We'll have a great discussion in the Committee of the Whole.

I want to say a huge congratulations to Susan Walsh, and thank her and, of course, our acting, Pamela Dawe, coming into the

role. I'm looking forward to future discussions because we all know that this is one of the most hard-working areas within government here.

Thank you, Speaker. That's it for me.

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

The hon. the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

I thank my four hon. colleagues for weighing in and sharing the opinions on the bill that's before us. If I may be presumptuous, I think it was quite clear that we all agree with the bill, and I think in Committee we'll have those questions that would be answered.

When it comes to restrictions on the investigative nature, we'll discuss that in Committee, but the Minister of Justice and Public Safety will serve as the gatekeeper to make sure that initiatives do not cross over to impending court work that may be about to begin on a certain topic or issue. We'll discuss that further when we get to Committee.

June is Seniors' Month. I think we've all applauded the seniors that would be in our districts and in our province, and the significance and importance of them. I think this act being launched today, at the start of Seniors' Month, is a good thing. It's fitting for that.

It was mentioned here in the House about the continuum of care legislation. I'm proud to announce that it is our expectation that this fall the continuum of care legislation will be presented and brought before this House for debate. The operational standards for long-term and personal care homes, they're developed. A lot of collaboration between the Seniors' Advocate and various groups. We would expect that that will be fully implemented before we sit in the next sitting of the House of Assembly this fall. That will

be coming. I'm sure that we'll have much discussion on that as well.

Two birthday extensions – one that was already mentioned in the House. My hon. colleague and friend from across the way mentioned Vera Barbour. Vera is a good friend of my colleague across the way and their party. You may be very surprised that maybe on three or four occasions I've had the opportunity to speak with Vera and talk with her. I'm not sure if my hon. colleagues across the way got the invite, but I've already been invited to her 100th birthday next year, which I committed to. The connection goes back to good friends of mine in Elliston, Fred and Joan Cuff. I know them quite well, visit them frequently and I stated to them that we'll travel together to Vera Barbour's 100th birthday next year at that time.

One in my district, Winnie Skiffington, who resides in Musgravetown, has her 96 birthday today. Last year, I had the privilege with her and her family and sat and chatted. She's very vibrant; watches the House of Assembly; large family. She comes from a family of 14 children, born in Bonavista. I know that she's very active and just as vibrant this year as what she was last year. The only thing is I won't have the opportunity to visit her, but I'm sure, on behalf of all of us, I would like to say to Winnie and Vera, and for all those seniors who are celebrating, a very happy birthday today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: With that, Speaker, I will take my seat and I do look forward to Committee where we can have a more fulsome discussion on the *Seniors' Advocate Act, 2026* before the House.

Thank you very much.

SPEAKER (Lane): Are Members ready for the question?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion has been carried.

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate. (Bill 2)

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

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

L. PARROTT: Presently.

SPEAKER: Presently.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently. (Bill 2)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1, Bill 20.

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 Liquor Control Act, Bill 20, and I further move that this said bill now be read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 20 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.'

The motion has been carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act," carried. (Bill 20)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act. (Bill 20)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Now, with leave.

SPEAKER: Does the government have leave to do a second reading on Bill 20?

Leave granted by the Third Party as well?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Okay, leave has been granted.

On motion, Bill 20 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act, now be read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 20 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act." (Bill 20)

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

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise, again today, this time to speak to propose amendments to the *Liquor Control Act*. This has been a very productive spring sitting. Speaker, I think you can attest to that.

This legislation reflects continued progress within my portfolio and across jurisdictions to modernize how alcohol is bought and sold in Canada. This work also supports broader commitments made by First Ministers in March 2025 to strengthen productivity and competitiveness across the country.

In the fall of 2025, Newfoundland and Labrador signed a memorandum of understanding with provinces and territories to pursue DTC – direct-to-consumer sales – of alcoholic beverages. This builds on years of collaboration on their Canadian Free Trade Agreement, aimed at reducing interprovincial barriers while balancing social responsibility, fiscal impacts and trade considerations.

An operational agreement to support DTC sales has been under negotiation with active participation from Newfoundland and Labrador officials. Participation in this initiative positions Newfoundland and Labrador as a constructive and co-operative partner within the great Federation of Canada, at a time when governments are focused on delivering stronger economic outcomes through coordination.

To enable participation, amendments to the *Liquor Control Act* are required. These changes will allow: one, individuals to import alcohol into the province for personal consumption; two, out-of-province producers to ship directly to consumers; three, improved information sharing between jurisdictions, provincial jurisdictions and regulators; and finally, four, the

amendments will also allow local producers to use delivery services to reach consumers within our province.

Speaker, it is important to be clear about the scope of these changes. Direct-to-consumer sales will be limited to personal consumption only. It will not apply to retailers, bars or restaurants. Existing protections will remain in place, including no sales or delivery to minors, no delivery to dry communities.

Producers selling in Newfoundland and Labrador will be required to self-assess and remit all applicable fees, including markup and recycling fees. Producers will be required to comply with all provincial laws and requirements. The national objective is to move toward implementation of DTC sales, with key milestones anticipated this year.

Speaker, this bill provides Newfoundland and Labrador the legislative foundation required to implement direct-to-consumer system. It is important to emphasize, however, that these amendments do not commit Newfoundland and Labrador to signing any agreement. These amendments simply ensure the province has the flexibility to participate if and when it chooses.

It is also important to note that there are no anticipated direct financial impacts from these legislative changes. The Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation will continue to collect markups, helping to mitigate any potential revenue shifts and while additional administrative responsibilities are expected, no new budget or staffing requirements are required.

Health and Community Services will be working with the Newfoundland Liquor Corporation to monitor any health impacts. Indigenous governments are also being formally notified of the proposed changes and invited to provide input on any future agreements. Speaker, this reflects our

commitment to transparency and engagement.

In summary, these amendments will: establish necessary definitions and authorities; permit personal importation of alcohol; enable direct-to-consumer sales where reciprocal agreements exist; create an authorization framework for participating producers; support information sharing, compliance and enforcement; allow participation by local producers, including in-province delivery; finally, to establish clear conditions and consequences for non-compliance.

Speaker, these amendments represent one step towards reducing internal trade barriers. They do balance increased consumer choice, support for local industry and strong oversight and public safety. They also ensure Newfoundland and Labrador remains well positioned to participate in national initiatives that strengthen our economy.

I look forward to the discussion and to advancing this important work.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act, in terms of making alcohol available for purchase direct to consumer, we support that. My government, in August 2005, did sign the federal agreement on direct-to-consumer sales for personal consumption. I think that's a very important distinction from the wholesaler distribution model.

First, I think it's important to consider the volume. Direct-to-consumer alcohol sales to consumers, the volume in Newfoundland and Labrador would be relatively low.

Allowing individual consumers to buy and order alcohol from other provinces, from vineyards, from other alcohol distributors across Canada, I think we're talking about low volumes. Obviously, that would have to be shipped in. People are paying shipping costs. This is not a significantly large volume of products that this would apply to.

I guess, over the past few years, learning more about this particular issue, there are considerations and concerns for unions, for example, and distributors and wholesalers in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have breweries in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have craft breweries. We have Labatt and Molson breweries and they make a significant volume of product that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians consume, and they provide a valuable workforce. They're a valuable employer for many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Many people work in the craft and the distribution, bottling and production of Molson, Labatt, Quidi Vidi. We have Port Rexton. There's the Western Newfoundland Brewing Company, Iron Rock Brewing. These companies employ many people.

So I would encourage the government to seriously consider that it's a balance. It's, like, yes, on one hand, you do want to streamline things. You want to make things easier for people. You don't want to put barriers in place. But, on the other hand, this important industry do hire a lot of people. It's relevant to the tourism industry. There would be hundreds of people in Newfoundland and Labrador employed in this very important industry.

While that is kind of a balance, I'm glad that we're just talking about direct to consumers today, but it is a slippery slope. One that I think the government needs to take into careful consideration in making sure that any regulatory amendments that they make balance that and sure they want to reduce red tape, and that's great, but the government also has responsibility to

balance the business side and the employer side and all the jobs of all the people who work in Newfoundland and Labrador in this important industry.

I know the unions have strong opinions, as they should, protecting their members and employees across the province. I think that that is also a very important consideration that the government should make. While this, I understand, is specifically to direct to consumer, it is a slippery slope and I just would encourage the government to keep that very carefully in mind as I know, and rightfully so, the unions and the beer industry stakeholders will make sure that the government is aware of those things.

Again, we're talking about low volumes and we will be supporting the bill, but I would, again, caution the government to be mindful of the employers who employ hundreds of workers in Newfoundland and Labrador in this important industry.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I won't be long. We will be supporting the changes as well. Certainly, if nothing else, it's the economic opportunities for local industry to expand their markets as well.

One of the problems, I guess, the issues that we considered as well has to do with the impact on local breweries such as Labatt, Molson and the workforce they employ. As I understand it – and I stand to be corrected on this, but right now for beer or any alcohol to have pride of place, like convenience stores, it has to be produced here, manufactured locally.

Even with this, that's not changing those regulations. If you want to keep positions on a shelf, then it has to be something that's locally produced or manufactured right here.

I would assume that offers a significant amount of protection to the employers and to the industries that employ the unionized positions as well.

I remember years ago, you go through Halifax Airport and you'd have a section there called Liquid Assets, where you can buy everything from apple cider, wine, beer, spirits that are produced locally in Nova Scotia. I often thought what a neat way to promote the local craft industry.

At the time, in talking to some of the craft producers here, I think it was they were wondering why we didn't do something like that here for people leaving the province as well. At the same time, the people in the craft brewing industry were saying, well, it's because of the taxation. We don't have the money. I don't know if it was the manufacturers' retail tax – I forget which one it was, that if that could be lowered by even 1 per cent, it would be enough to allow them to expand their marketing and their production for outside the province, which was done in the previous government. We brought that forward and it was a measure that was brought in by the previous government.

When you look around the province, right now, the craft brewing industry is big here. The Bonavista Peninsula, you name it, Labrador City, they're everywhere. It's certainly a testament to the creativity and the entrepreneurial spirit of the province. The fact is we do tend to support our own.

While there is a threat from outside competition, I have a very funny feeling that Newfoundlanders being who we are, we will support our own regardless. This does give the option here to have some flexibility and it's a compromise and there should be discussions with our unionized workforce whether it's NAPE, the FFAW or Unifor on this. But what's being proposed here certainly does allow for that balanced approach at this point.

At least, were moving forward cautiously and that's a good thing.

Thank you.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll only take a couple of moments. Obviously, I think my colleague eloquently went through why I think we're going to support this bill. One of the things I will say is we will have some questions during Committee on some of the impacts that could come from this. We all see the impact that Amazon has had – some of my colleagues have chatted about that already before when we were talking about this bill initially, and how local businesses have closing hours and Amazon doesn't. That's an impact that you don't want to see happen in our province.

The Craft Brewers Association has seen a massive growth over the last decade or so, many regions that were highlighted by the hon. Member for Mount Scio. Those microbreweries and small brewery operations employ a significant amount of people in small communities across our province and do fantastic work. They're great little tourism hubs. They're great opportunities for people to travel across this province and visit. I've heard significant people say that that's a big benefit.

One of the big impacts that we've seen talked about before is the slippery side of the slope where we're going to be impacting the unionized jobs that are in this province, with respect to either Molson, Labatt and some of the other small or microbreweries. I don't think that's where we're going in this act, but I think there's an opportunity for us to have a few questions with the minister when we get to Committee, I think tomorrow, and to chat about that and make sure that we dot all our i's and cross all our t's with respect to that.

That's all I have to say, Mr. Speaker. I just wanted to lend support to the idea of where we're trying to go with this, but we do have some questions.

SPEAKER: Are there any further speakers?

Seeing no further speakers, if the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board speaks now, he will close the debate.

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

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank my hon. colleagues for weighing in on this bill. I look forward to Committee on the said bill.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready for the question?

All those in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, "An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act." (Bill 20)

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

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

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act," read a second time,

ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 20)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 2, Bill 21.

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 to Amend the Judicature Act, Bill 21, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act, 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.'

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Judicature Act," carried. (Bill 21)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act. (Bill 21)

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 hon. Government House Leader have leave of the House to do second reading of Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

On motion, Bill 21 read a first time, ordered read a second time presently, by leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act, now be read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Judicature Act." (Bill 21)

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I introduce, in this hon. House today, Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act, which will facilitate the expansion of the Supreme Court Family Division, which going forward I will refer to as the Family Division.

This bill represents an important legislative change. It represents legislative progress in the Department of Justice and Public Safety to address many of the challenges that exist in our court system, thereby increasing access to justice.

Through this bill, Members of this House are being asked to consider amendments to the *Judicature Act*. These changes are required to expand the Family Division to the whole Island portion of the province. To ensure there is a good understanding of what is

being considered today, I would like to provide some background for Members.

The Family Division hears cases in almost all family law matters where the Supreme Court has jurisdiction. These matters include divorce, property disputes between spouses or partners, spousal or partner support, child support, parenting, child protection and adoption. The geographic locations where the Family Division operates are set out in the legislation and in the regulations.

It's also important to note, with respect to this bill, geography is a key factor in determining how family law responsibilities are divided between the Family Division in Supreme Court and the Provincial Court. It's important to note that, currently, the Family Division has exclusive jurisdiction in St. John's to Holyrood, Bell Island and the West Coast from Port aux Basques to the Northern Peninsula. Also, it's important to note that there is shared jurisdiction between the Family Division and the Provincial Court from Holyrood to the Western Region and Labrador.

Those distinctions are important to make because, essentially, this means that people currently have their family law matters dealt with differently. How so? It's different because it depends on where they live in the province and whether or not they're getting a divorce.

This bill, today, aims to change this for many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It's also important to note that the changes we are considering today are based on the Unified Family Court model. Essentially, what that model is about is it brings all family law matters together under a single specialized court. It brings all matters together, regardless of your marital status or whether matters fall under federal or provincial jurisdiction.

Why is this important? It's important because it will allow families to deal with

their legal issues in a single place and it will provide better access to support services. Overall, this model is more efficient and will better meet the needs of families and children in Newfoundland and Labrador. Why? Because it uses a more streamlined court process. So, by example, instead of having to file documents and navigate separate proceedings in both Provincial Court and Supreme Court, families can now resolve their issues in a single system, which is simpler, faster and less stressful.

I like to refer to it as the one-stop family justice system, one-stop family justice court. We know that family law issues are often very emotional, they're complex, they're costly and we know that these challenges are heightened when families must navigate multiple courts and overlapping jurisdictions. There's no doubt in my mind that has to be confusing and complicated.

We see under the current system – and I'll call it a fragmented system – matters such as divorce and property claims may proceed one route in Supreme Court. Well, then, you have parenting or child protection issues may be heard in Provincial Court. You can imagine that this division creates confusion and inefficiency and added stress for families. No doubt, it presents challenges for those individuals who are self-represented, who have little or no previous experience in the court process.

What the Unified Family Court model does is it provides a single point of entry. It also provides a dedicated judiciary with specialized expertise in family law. All related matters can be addressed in a much more coordinated and informed manner, leading to more consistent decision-making and better outcomes for families and to reflect the needs of families.

What else does this model provide? It will provide more opportunities for judges to collaborate on complex cases, which that as well will benefit the families involved.

Furthermore, the model improves efficiency by ensuring family matters are not delayed by competing criminal or civil cases, and that is good news because it will enable other courts to focus on their core mandates. It will allow courts, such as the Traffic Court or civil courts and criminal matters, to focus on their core mandates. This will also reduce duplication across the court system because matters will be heard in one place.

Many benefits, Speaker, and overall, the Unified Family Court model delivers clear benefits for families and for the justice system through improved access to justice, reduced complexity and more effective use of court resources.

We also believe that having the Supreme Court responsible for all family justice matters for the Island portion of the province should allow Provincial Court to more efficiently handle criminal justice matters and civil matters like I referenced, for example, small claims matters.

Also, just by way of background, hon. Members may recall from our debate on Bill 12, which aligned our provincial legislation with the federal *Divorce Act*, that family law is a shared jurisdiction between the provincial and federal governments. That is important, as well, to understand the division in terms of the jurisdiction.

Expanding the Family Division province wide will be done in a phased approach, that would extend the Family Division into the Central region and, for all intents and purposes, the whole Island of Newfoundland will fall under the exclusive jurisdiction of the Supreme Court. For now, Labrador will remain shared jurisdiction between the Supreme Court and the Provincial Court for family matters.

Again, with family law being shared jurisdiction, which means Justice Canada, they appoint Family Division judges. So to allow for this appointment in 2025, the

Composition of the Supreme Court Regulations were amended to increase the number of Supreme Court judges from 23 to 24 in Newfoundland and Labrador; however, this appointment has not yet been made because Justice Canada is waiting on this proposed legislation, the legislative changes before you today. Once the House approves these amendments, the provincial government will inform the federal government it is ready to go ahead with the Family Division expansion.

The Supreme Court is expanding the Family Division through a phased approach. Why? To ensure it can be done successfully. The expansion to Labrador will be Phase 3 of the Supreme Court's rollout plan. Once the expansion to the entire Island of Newfoundland is completed, then the Supreme Court will proceed to roll out the expansion in Labrador.

Before I conclude, I would like to provide a bit of explanation as to why the changes to the *Judicature Act* will not be proclaimed until April 1, 2027. The Supreme Court will be given the time to work with the Provincial Court. Why is that important? To ensure the transfer of jurisdiction to the entire Island portion of the province.

Speaker, in conclusion, I'm very pleased to be able to bring these important changes to this hon. House. The expansion of the Family Division will be a critical, positive step forward to improving access to justice for families in the province. It is so important for families to get access to a dedicated judiciary that specializes in family law, as well as all of the aforementioned benefits I have stated.

Speaker, I thank you for giving me the time to present this bill. I look forward to debate and to Committee and, hopefully, to the support from all hon. Members of this House of Assembly.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I also stand to speak to Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act.

This is a relatively straightforward bill, as the minister has just outlined, that makes administrative changes on how the judicial areas under the Family Division of the Supreme Court are established. The legislation removes references in the act to the judicial areas and expands service areas that were originally carried over by the former Unified Family Court framework. Those provisions have remained in legislation even though the *Unified Family Court Act* itself was repealed more than 15 years ago.

However, while the amendment itself is relatively simple, the practical implications deserve some careful consideration. During the departmental briefing, officials indicated that the intention is to expand the juridical area to the entire Island portion of the province, as we've just heard. That raised important questions about implementation.

We know that family law matters can be amongst the most challenging and stressful, as we can appreciate, legal proceedings that individuals and families experience and it doesn't just impact, the adults who are in the court, but obviously impacts the entire family unit.

Any change to the court jurisdictional filing requirements or access to services must certainly be carefully managed to ensure that people are not left confused about where to bring their applications. In some areas, residents currently have a choice between filing matters in Provincial Court or the Family Division because those courts exercise concurrent jurisdiction.

If these amendments pass, that choice will be eliminated. We need to understand what transition plans are being developed for matters that are already before the courts. Individuals currently involved in family law proceedings deserve certainty and, obviously, a routine.

Another consideration is court capacity. Over the last number of years, residents have experienced court closures, service disruptions and challenges accessing judicial services in some parts of our province. Before expanding the reach of the Family Division, government should ensure the necessary judicial administrative and legal resources are in place.

If additional regions are brought in within the Family Division's jurisdiction, will additional judges, court staff and support services also be provided? Will there be any impact on wait times? Will residents have to travel further to access services?

These are reasonable questions that deserve answers in the Committee stage. I also note that Labrador is not currently contemplated as part of these changes. Government has indicated there are no plans at this time to alter the existing arrangements for Labrador residents. Given the unique geographic realities and access challenges faced by Labrador communities, it would be helpful to understand the rationale behind that decision and whether future changes are being considered.

Finally, consultation is important whenever changes are made to the administration of justice. We look forward to hearing more about the discussions that took place with the judiciary, legal stakeholders, Legal Aid and others who work directly within our court system.

Speaker, this legislation appears to be largely a housekeeping amendment that updates the statutory framework governing family court judicial areas. The Opposition supports the objective of modernizing this

legislation and, at the same time, we believe government must provide greater clarity around implementation, resources, access to justice and the future scope of these changes.

With those comments, I will be supporting Bill 21 at second reading and look forward to further discussion, especially during the Committee stage.

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, Speaker.

I thank the minister for bringing forward An Act to Amend the Judicature Act. First off, the NDP caucus, we're going to be voting in support of this but, again, good to have the debate. We're not always in an adversarial position. I think that this is a very healthy transition process for the Family Division of the Supreme Court which exercises jurisdiction over almost all family law matters.

We know that there is an immense amount of work that goes through this court system. I mean, there are so many things that impact people. It really will make it more efficient, certainly for the Island portion of the province, make it more efficient and equitable, which is something that we can certainly get behind.

Currently, the family court, with its jurisdiction in the St. John's metro region and the other parts of the province, they have to share Family Court with the Provincial and Supreme Courts. So it certainly makes sense to tighten this up, and amending the act to move the judicial areas defined in the act into regulations in the future.

One of the things, again, giving more residents of the province access to specialized court dealings will be a benefit to a lot of people and families; there's no doubt about it. I'm sure that there are very few Members in this House that haven't experienced some level of contact within these court systems and our constituents.

Again, the question is making sure that government ensures it budgets appropriately for any new services that may be offered for any additional administrative responsibility. Again, this is what was discussed in the former bill, just making sure that we have the right resources when we make these decision, but it is something that obviously we would like to see happen, to make sure that people can avail. The court system, we want to make sure that the workers are not treated as an afterthought and backlogs in the system and all.

We have seen delays in recent times because of the shutdown within the legal system. We can't afford to have or create any more delays in the legal system, because of Jordan applications, et cetera. These are very important things. Justice delayed is justice denied, so let's clean it up. This bill, certainly, will be one way to try to tackle some of that. We will have some questions in Committee but very pleased to see this transition process.

The last comment that I will make is really about the timeline for Labrador down the road if that's in, I guess, a Phase 3 kind of stage. We can certainly have more discussions about that as we move forward, but thank you for the opportunity to speak to this bill. That's it for me.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers to the bill, if the Minister of Justice and Public Safety speaks now, she will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi for their comments and, of course, they do raise important questions that we will consider in debate. I look forward to that.

I also would like to say, with reference to the Member for St. John's East - Quidi referencing that this isn't always adversarial, it's really nice to see when we all work together like this. I see the support of both parties with us on this important initiative, which will improve access to justice for many people in the province.

I look forward to the questions that we will hear in Committee, and we'll do that very soon, I hope.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready for the question?

All those in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act. (Bill 21)

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 Judicature Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 21)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Order 8.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 2.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair, and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 2.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion has been carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 2, An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate.

A bill, "An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate." (Bill 2)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Chair.

Could we have clarification around the powers of investigation that have been introduced in this bill and how the department anticipates the Office of the Seniors' Advocate will approach the administration of that function?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: I thank my hon. Member for the question.

This act mirrors the *Disability Advocate Act* in its powers. Number one is that, as we understand, prior it was systemic, where the example used before was we look at housing and housing availability and, on that systemic nature, the Seniors' Advocate could make suggestions as to where the improvements would be through a report in the House of Assembly.

This particular amendment to the act gives the Seniors' Advocate office to act on an individual whom they deem to have been not treated justly by the system. That's the big difference. So same as the Disability Advocate, same as the Child and Youth Advocate, it gives them the ability to focus on individuals as opposed to not only systemic matters.

You asked about the resourcing of the Seniors' Advocate, well, the Seniors' Advocate office will need to be resourced similarly to the Disability Advocate office, to allow for these investigative natures and much the same as the Child and Youth

Advocate office. Your government has budgeted for such in this budget.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Why was it felt necessary to include the power of investigation in the new act? On what basis or evidence was that decision arrived at by the department and by the Office of the Seniors' Advocate?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: The statutory review in 2024 suggested it, the Seniors' Advocate suggested it and government saw merit in it occurring.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you.

What are the parameters around which the department uses the staffing of the Office of the Seniors' Advocate going forward under the *Seniors' Advocate Act, 2026*? Will staffing be decreased, maintained, increased? If so, by how much and what is this decision based?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: I say to the hon. Member that it is a statutory office that is independent of government and is governed by the House of Assembly. It will be the Management Commission and the House of Assembly under their infrastructure will determine the appropriate staffing for this statutory office in order to complete its mandate.

As to what's needed, what it is now, I can't tell you. The only thing that will be the House Management Commission which will be determining the rightful staffing complement.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you.

Does the minister see the powers and duties as outlined in this act as being sufficient going forward, or are there more perceived areas that may need to be addressed, especially with the demographic composition of our province going forward?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: The Seniors' Advocate office will have the powers they wish that deem to be warranted for their investigative actions going forward.

You, as a Member of the House of Assembly, can make suggestions. We can as government. Anybody can make suggestions as to what they think ought to be investigated but, ultimately, it will be determined by the Seniors' Advocate as to what they investigate and prioritization of their investigations.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Are we doing enough – do you feel anyways – to educate the public about the Office of the Seniors' Advocate?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: I think we can always do more. I know that in conversations with the seniors in my district, they are well aware of the Seniors' Advocate. I wish I could tell you how many calls they get from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians out there. That might be a good piece of data that would validate that.

If it's a high number, then obviously they are, but it's only through education like everything else. You and I know that. I think

we need to educate the public as to what this office does and how they can be of assistance to them, if indeed they feel that the system has let them down in some way.

I know we, as a government, welcome it. The office will present reports to the House of Assembly for the public to see and for all of us as law makers, but maybe, like everything, we can always make sure we do the best we can to educate the population as to what the office does.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Chair.

As we all know, there are a lot of issues related to seniors in the province and we talk about those a lot, especially in our districts and so on.

Do you think there is enough being done right now to promote the issues related to seniors? Do you think we're doing enough? Because there is a lot. I mean even if you look at the idea of loneliness or you look at the idea of seniors and affordability and things like that – just your comments on that would be helpful.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: I think we are making inroads; I really do. I spoke to your brother, Gordan, and he's very active in serving seniors. If you look at the numbers that they go and entertain for, that are grouped together at a lot of these in Placentia area, that's fantastic.

We have a seniors' 50-plus club started in the Member for Terra Nova's District. It's capped out at 145 and they have about 45 on the wait-list again because of capacity issues. So there are some positive signs out there, I say to my hon. colleague, that we are doing. In this particular budget, the Seniors' Benefit, I think we all agree with

that – the basic reduction amount. We look at the Provincial Home Repair Program, doubling the grant; the Home Modification Program, doubling.

We are making inroads but, through the efforts of the Seniors' Advocate and from this House of Assembly, that needs to be continuous and we need to make sure that we provide more.

You mentioned the call for transportation, for mobility, those seniors who can't move from point A to point B. There are jurisdictions that do better jobs than others. Some have better capacity than others. Again, there are differences in regions.

So we just have to make sure that we're able to take all the information and do what we can, possibly, to accommodate every senior in the province, not just those that would be in the areas where the population would state that they have an active club or a source of gathering or meeting.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party and the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

With regard to the investigative powers of the Seniors' Advocate, as I noted when I spoke to this, section 17(1)(a) prevents the Advocate from investigating decisions, recommendations, acts or omissions by the House, the Lieutenant-Governor and Council and the Executive Council and their Committees, but many of the issues for seniors that will arise actually come from the actions or the decisions of government.

I know it's ahead in section 17, but I'm looking, in particular, how would section 17(1)(a) affect the ability of the Advocate to exercise their powers as outlined in section 16?

I know the minister just said the Seniors' Advocate will have whatever power and

resources that he or she deems necessary, so I'm just curious here. This seems to be setting a limit or a restriction on that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: Thank you for the question.

This provision here is no different than in every other statutory office. I asked the question when I had the briefing and went through it, was there ever a case where the Advocate has been stymied in some capacity. The officials that I briefed, they were not aware of any situation where this occurred. This clause came from Justice.

What was explained in the lead up to the bill was the fact that it does not mean that the Advocate cannot investigate. They can surely investigate, but they can't compel information from Cabinet. They can't do that again because of the secrecy and the confidentiality of that.

But I took comfort in knowing that while it's there, Cabinet secrecy is one that we've heard lots about and to be maintained, but it's never ever interfered with the investigative ability of the Advocate in other areas that we would have, whether it be the Child and Youth or, obviously, I know the Disability or the Information and Privacy Commissioner.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: With that then, there's nothing that would stop them or drawing a conclusion that maybe there are certain policies that are affecting seniors. They can still make a judgment is what I'm asking, Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: That is correct. There is absolutely nothing ever to deter them from investigating.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Section 18 talks about contrary to the public interest; how is that defined in section 18?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: I would say to the hon. Member that this is consistent with all other statutory offices. There was no case ever presented that I asked that same question. The only thing as the rule of thumb would be that if ever that it did occur, that an Advocate was stopped from investigating for what they deemed to be something contrary to the public interest, then a report has to come to the House of Assembly and be reported on.

But I don't have any cases to pass on to you where that occurred.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Those are two of the main, but with regard to section 1, back to that –

C. PARDY: Which section?

J. DINN: Section 1, I guess, at the beginning of this.

I'm just wondering, did the department engage in any cross-jurisdictional scans once it was decided to amend the legislation, and what did you learn from that, if you did any cross-jurisdictional scans?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: We've done jurisdictional scans and I'm trying to think from my memory now, but I know that every province did not have a Seniors' Advocate. We have the jurisdictional scan from every jurisdiction that we could get that from. So basically, the only thing we were adding was investigative

powers, which not many had the investigative powers.

We've added them, but our template was often more to the Child and Youth Advocate, and once we got all the work done and it went through the House with the *Disability Advocate Act*, then we used that as well to make sure that we had mirrored the *Disability Advocate Act* once it went through the changes within the House of Assembly here.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Chair.

Just a couple of questions. Minister, what we're talking about here, or allowing to happen is certainly the empowerment of the Advocate. Do you feel that the seniors' voice is being empowered here?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: Yes, it's another avenue for a senior to reach out for assistance or when they feel that the system had failed them in some way. They obviously had the department that they can reach out to and they have their MHA that they can reach out to, but now you've got the Seniors' Advocate who certainly can act on their behalf.

So empowered, yes. Better served, yes. Just to know that they've got another avenue of which they can lead to and check out.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: I guess we don't have enough of a measuring stick yet, in terms of the empowerment of the office, if your statement hopefully will improve seniors' access and their voice will be heard on individual situations or circumstances.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: We do not have any data, but I think it wouldn't be a stretch of the imagination to know that you're putting in another avenue that will serve seniors and has a dedicated office to do investigative work, to make reports to the House of Assembly on their behalf. I would think that that would be beneficial for the seniors that you and I have, in our districts, and every one of us. It's an avenue. *Open Line* is another avenue, you might say simplistically.

But getting their story out there, this is another avenue for them to solicit some help.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: That forum of *Open Line*, the last time I was waiting to go on a call, there was a senior who was speaking directly to this – how will the government support seniors? Because they had a couple of instances where they came to the Department of Seniors but was forwarded to the Department of Health and then the Department of Health would forward them back to Seniors, so that was frustrating for them.

Minister, to the situation of the constituent, that senior that I've talked about as well, and you're familiar with it, do you believe that what we're doing here in terms of strengthening the empowerment of the advocacy office will help that situation and situations like that moving forward?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: Let me first state to your earlier comment when they call into the Seniors division and the Seniors refer them on to Health and Community Services or help them find an answer through Health and

Community Services, the Seniors has a mandate and the mandate is for policy and administration. That is what our department is.

The operationalizing of it, for Seniors, still rests with the Health and Community Services. You see that myself and Minister Evans will have to work closely together, which we have on several situations, so the crossover. Your situation is that your constituent, that rightfully you've passed along, then I would think that may certainly be one that the Advocate would say, well, we're going to do some investigative to see how many more and where the system provides or where it doesn't provide for this to occur.

So yes, it ought not to be the Seniors' Advocate, it ought to be on the officials and on the departments that rectify it and correct it. The Seniors' Advocate will certainly assist in making things public and presenting reports to the House of Assembly.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: I think in all that's being discussed here today, and even in your answer now, it certainly gives credit to the fact that a stand-alone department for seniors is not a bad thing, and it should be as far as I'm concerned because we see the challenges around seniors and where we need to be.

Minister, in section 16, it says, "educate and inform the public about the Office of the Seniors' Advocate and promote awareness of issues related to seniors." What forms of awareness are you referring to in there?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: This goes back to your colleague's question a short time ago about the education piece. This one here was based solely on the provisions of the

Disability Advocate and the Child and Youth Advocate to make sure that we all, every one of us in the House of Assembly, educate our constituents on what the office does and if they can help – if it's only passing along a phone number to call to see as to whether the office can provide assistance or some investigativeness on your constituent's matter.

I think that's probably contingent on all of us to make sure that we always educate the population well to make sure what's available for them if they feel that the system has failed them in any way.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: Minister, also in your comments, when you initially spoke on this in first reading, you talked about the differences. You mentioned case conferences, meet with seniors, personal information with consent, but you also said another dispute-resolution process. Do you feel that there's another layer of red tape?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: Absolutely not. I think if we look back on the Seniors' Advocate reports that came out, the question that we would all question since I've been in, in 2019, is where are we in relation to the recommendations? It's not whether the recommendation had merit or lacked merit. The question would be, where are we with the recommendations of the Seniors' Advocate?

That's what we do in the House of Assembly. I think wherever the benefit is, the follow-up questions would be, how many have you acted upon? How many have you commenced, actioned on? How many have not been actioned?

That's the power of the Seniors' Advocate report. They've been out there in the public.

I know then Seniors' Advocate Susan Walsh was quite frequent on *Open Line*, on the media, stating things that she thought that would better serve seniors.

I do feel strongly that it will assist seniors and that's what we, as a government, intended from the start, stating that we would like for them to have investigative powers, join in the effort, another office with the same common measure aim as all of us: to better serve.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just one last one, Minister. Section 33, it says, "Advocate not to be called as witness." Do you have any concerns about that?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: The only thing I would say here is that we've patterned ourselves off every other would-be statutory office that would exist here. Why they wouldn't be called or any Advocate wouldn't be called, I probably wouldn't be able to give you the legal, but I know that based on their report they would have, and I would think probably part of their mandate in the office is that they wouldn't be involved in any judicial proceedings. That may be part of the statutory office in and of itself, but I know that this is standard in all statutory offices.

A Member can certainly come in to report to the House of Assembly. They certainly can come in and present to the House of Assembly here. That's fully within their scope. But as far as to be called and have to go to court and have to do that in a statutory office, no, that's not in their terms of reference.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune.

E. LOVELESS: At first glance, when you say Advocate, an Advocate being such an important officer, not to be called as a witness, then it kind of leaves you with the impression that it may be unfair to the seniors because – well, it depends on the circumstance, I guess, because you reference in terms of striking balance, so it can be applied here.

That's not really a question, but a statement. But if you want to comment further, you can.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: No, I think I agree with my hon. colleague.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party and the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Earlier in the conversation, Minister, you talked about this is providing another avenue, one of many avenues that seniors can follow and approach. I think you mentioned, like, it could be an agency, a department, *Open Line*, even your MHA for that matter.

So I'm looking at section 23, and it says, "Before commencing an investigation, the advocate shall inform the following persons of the advocate's intention to conduct the investigation" I guess here is the thing; what if, in that, there's more than one agency investigating the same thing? Let's say the person has come to me; I'm looking at it as their MHA. They've gone to the Department of Seniors or disability, along those lines, so you've got multiple agencies investigating this same issue. Who takes priority?

Does it all go ahead, multiple reports or is – I guess, how do you coordinate? I'm trying to figure out how that would work. Because

if a senior came to me and I found out, oh, the Seniors' Advocate is following up on this, that person might very well have more powers than I would at that point as a Member of the Opposition. I'm just curious as to how would that proceed.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: Well, firstly, this section is modelled off the Child and Youth Advocate, as well the Disability Advocate. It sets the requirement that they would notify the service providers that would be involved with it.

I would assume that if you had contacted the Seniors' Advocate on a constituent, then I would think that once they do their investigation or they're going to embark upon the investigation, you would be certainly contacted to know that they are moving forward with an investigation of your constituent.

You would have been contacted when they proceed and go ahead to do an investigation on your constituent. Have I caught your question accurately?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: That might be the best way to look at it. Let's say, for example, that I'm contacting your department, the minister's department, and I find out the Seniors' Advocate is actually investigating this, I would assume then that we wait until the investigation of the Seniors' Advocate is done before we take any further action.

That's what I'm looking at. If the person has gone to the Seniors' Advocate, haven't heard anything and gone to the department, they haven't heard anything, Mr. Dinn, would you take us on now and I find out okay, actually, there is an investigation – will the Seniors' Advocate office have priority in the investigation, if that makes sense?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: If it's a matter that the government and, through its department, ought to be handling, then it's quite conceivable that they would be involved as well. But that wouldn't deter or negate the Seniors' Advocate to do a report on it.

One thing I like about the statutory office is that it's independent. It's only answerable to the House of Assembly, and I like that. When we talk about all of us, the report comes to all of us and then we've got it.

So I hope that addressed the question.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I have two other quick questions and I'll move on. But, really, that doesn't preclude us from carrying on with our own advocating ourselves, so it does matter. Multiple parties can be involved with this.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: Yeah.

J. DINN: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: I can't hear him.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: My apologies, Chair.

Section 29 says: "For the purposes of this act, the advocate may enter a premises occupied by a department, agency of the government or service provider in connection with an investigation within the advocate's jurisdiction."

In the briefing, it was mentioned that this section did not apply to private quarters in the long-term care or personal care home,

but the language in the bill doesn't seem to make this clear.

So where's the pertinent section in this bill or another that would assure us this, that it doesn't apply to private quarters in a long-term care or personal care home?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: This particular clause here, clause 29, it does enable the Seniors' Advocate to access any department of government, you're right. On the personal quarters, that would be in personal care homes, they would need consent. If they don't have consent, they have no right in order to enter the private accommodations of a senior or this person. I think that that's the basis of which the briefing would have indicated. Again, we can't assume consent; you need consent.

I also just want to clarify for the hon. Member before when I said that a constituent of yours may have approached the Seniors' Advocate, the Seniors' Advocate would contact back to let you know that an investigation has commenced. Now, they wouldn't be sharing any more information with you; you would just know that the investigation is commenced by the Seniors' Advocate.

I hope you didn't infer from what I had said there'd be information being shared. No? Okay, that's good.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: No, I was assuming that. I wouldn't expect that, but I also wouldn't be able to share anything with her unless I had been given permission. I just wanted to make sure who takes priority there.

One last question then. Section 30 says: "Where, after conducting a review of the seniors' services of a department, agency of the government or service provider, or an investigation, the advocate makes a recommendation, the advocate may request the department, agency of the government or service provider to whom the recommendation is made to notify the advocate" and may report the matter and may mention in report and so on and so forth.

I'm just wondering here, in section 30, did the department look at ways that the Advocate might compel compliance by the service provider? If so, what measures were considered and why weren't they included here?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: Now, again, this clause has been modelled off the other statutory offices. It requires the departments to respond to the Advocate's recommendations, when asked, and it does require the service providers, as well, to respond when asked.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I'll give a practical example, I guess, and I'm looking at Keane Place and the elevators are out. I mentioned this in the House about a year or so ago. At that time, it seemed that the St. John's Regional Fire Department was unable to compel or it didn't lack the power to compel the owners of the property to repair the elevator that had been out going on 2½ years, that the province had no jurisdiction – it seemed no one had jurisdiction and this is excessively long time for the seniors to have to be without it.

If, in this case, the Seniors' Advocate says this is basically a systemic disregard and maybe, in this case, a disregard by a

company, what powers would the Seniors' Advocate have to compel an organization, whether it's government, private or otherwise, you need to take steps to get this rectified immediately?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: I will say to my hon. Member, that would rest with government in their regulatory and in their legislation that it would have. Ought there be situations where someone is adversely affected by the situation that you've had, I would think that rests with the regulatory aspect of the department.

Without saying any more, I would think what strength the Seniors' Advocate would have would be reporting here to the House of Assembly and the House of Assembly would demand that changes would occur on the regulatory or the legislative. No direct enforcement, just that the House of Assembly will be in power to, I guess on government, with their regulations, to make sure that this doesn't occur.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: So to clarify then, if the Seniors' Advocate identifies that there's a problem here but there's nothing in regulations or legislation that would give the government the power, the recommendation might be you need to change this and bring in regulations or legislation that would allow government to take that action. That's what I understood it to mean.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: That is correct.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Chair.

Is the minister able to provide some clarity or an example where the power of the Minister of Justice and Public Safety may certify in writing to restrict an investigation?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: This is a clause 17 or 18 that would be in every statutory office that we've got. My understanding there were no cases ever that existed when that occurred, but it's there in the event that something would occur that may be jeopardizing the public interest.

So I can't give you any situation because, to my knowledge, I haven't been informed of either.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Thank you, Chair.

Are there any considerations around ensuring the ability of a senior to communicate with the Office of the Seniors' Advocate, to ensure that it is not encumbered in any way as the spirit of section 20 outlines? Can this ability to communicate be ensured or monitored?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: Any monitoring in a statutory office would be through the House of Assembly as what we wanted to frame up with that office. The only thing we know is that they will have investigative office, the terms of reference and all that comes from the power of the act. Any reporting comes to the House of Assembly.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: This is the last question.

The engagement that will be carried out in respect to the development of regulations to support the act is probably warranted. If you look at the introduction of the power of investigation under the act and the possible imposition of fines, what are your thoughts, Minister, around the imposition of legal penalties or consequences?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: If any service provider out there is in contravention of any regulation that we would have in this House of Assembly, then one would think that there ought to be consequences for breaking the law. I think that's the spirit of which we're in. We determine the regulations that would best serve. If we need amendments, then that's what, lots of times, the office will suggest; but, at the same time, I think we did it with my hon. colleague from Exploits, with Forestry. Penalties are part of when break the law and it has its place.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Chair, one final question.

Section 19(b) requires the Advocate to submit a report back to the LGIC, to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, for matters they refer to the Advocate. Why is there no requirement to make that public?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Seniors.

C. PARDY: This is totally consistent with the statutory offices of the other ones – no difference. It's the same one. My understanding would be is that any report or any action that's done by the Seniors' Advocate, a report will come to the House of Assembly. My understanding is that it's public.

P. PIKE: Okay, thank you.

Thank you, Chair, no more questions.

CHAIR: Seeing no further questions, shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 43 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 to 43 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 43 carried.

CHAIR: The Schedule.

CHAIR: Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

On motion, the Schedule carried.

CLERK: Be it enacted by the Lieutenant Governor and House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows.

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate. (Bill 2)

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 2 without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 2 without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Lane): The hon. Member for Placentia West - Bellevue and Chair of Committee of the Whole.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that the Committee recommends Bill 2 without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends Bill 2 be carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: Before I recognize the hon. Government House Leader, I'm assuming, to adjourn, I just want to recognize Riley, one of our Pages, and Riley will be finishing up. This is her last day and, unfortunately, she won't be returning in the fall, but I just want to thank you, Riley, for the great work you did. I hope you learned some things here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: We really appreciate you. There you go.

The other thing is I just want to give a reminder to the Members of the Management Commission that we will be having a Management Commission meeting upon the adjournment of the House.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue, that we do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House is now adjourned until tomorrow, being Tuesday, June 2, at 1:30 p.m.

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