

Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF

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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

Monday November 2, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today in our public gallery, I would like to welcome His Worship Mayor Rudy Norman, Mayor of Burlington.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Humber - Bay of Islands, Labrador West, Lake Melville, Lewisporte - Twillingate and Placentia - St. Mary's.

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, for the past 11 years, Gavin Butt, his family, his sidekick Peggy McAuley, many friends and many volunteers have organized the annual Smash Up For MS derby.

Close to 40 demolition derby drivers from all over the province participate in this daylong event with many repeat drivers and some having competed in all 11 derbies, all doing their part for this worthwhile cause.

The competitions are broken into divisions of small cars, big cars and truck heats and also includes a power wheel event for children ages five to nine who paint their rigs and try to pop balloons, which are fastened to the front and back. The last child with a balloon is the winner.

Not only is Gavin the organizer; he is also a driver having competed in many derbies and continues to compete.

From the nine derbies held in Gillams, and the past two years in Deer Lake, over $60,000 has been raised with $35,000 going to the MS Society and $25,000 going directly to patients who need it in this province and across Canada.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Gavin, his volunteers and many sponsors for their great work and wish them continued success in future events.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: Thank you, Speaker.

On September 6, 2026, Labrador West lost a legend, a friend and a colleague with the passing of James Aylward.

Jim was born and raised in St. Brendan's, Newfoundland. He met his wife, Marie, as a young man and spent 50 years making precious memories with her. His adventures led him to Labrador City where they raised their son, BJ, and began his career as a bush pilot.

Jim spent 30 years with Transport Canada and the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador as a water bomber pilot. Jim spent years flying the skies of Labrador protecting towns, homes and cottages over the years.

Jim found himself flying that water bomber in every corner of Canada and the United States. He has flown the skies of the South Pole, the Amazon, Colombia, Africa and Dubai.

During my career as fire chief, I had the opportunity twice to fly with Jim.

When Jim wasn't flying, him and his wife, Marie, continued their adventure on land on motorcycles. He kept making memories

right to his last day, truly living his life to the fullest.

Jim, thank you for your service to the people of our province. I know you're flying high.

Rest in peace, brudder.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

K. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I rise to recognize the extraordinary dedication of the educators, support staff and school bus drivers across the District of Lake Melville.

Our schools are more than places of learning, they are places where children find encouragement, belonging and opportunity. Behind every successful school is a community of people who care deeply about our children's futures.

Despite severe staffing shortages and mounting pressures, these dedicated individuals continue to show up, make sacrifices and give everything they can to ensure that no child is left behind.

I especially want to recognize our retired and former teachers who, after years of service, have answered the call once again when our schools needed them most, and they stepped forward without hesitation.

To the parents, families and community members who have rallied alongside our school staff, your determination and compassion embody the very best of Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, our children deserve every opportunity to succeed and the people who dedicate their lives to them deserve more than our gratitude, they deserve real action, meaningful solutions and the resources they need to succeed.

To everyone keeping our schools and children moving forward, we see you, we value you and we thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. BUTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the outstanding contributions of Ernie Watkins of Twillingate, a dedicated entrepreneur, community leader and philanthropist whose efforts have strengthened communities throughout Central Newfoundland.

After spending 18 years in Grande Prairie, Alberta, where he operated a successful construction company, Ernie and his partner Cathy returned home to Twillingate in 2013, with a vision to invest in the place they love. Since then, he has built and operated a business in tourism, accommodations, seafood processing and the fishery, creating employment opportunities and contributing to the local economy.

Ernie's passion for the fishery and outport Newfoundland and Labrador culture is evident in everything he does. Equally remarkable is his commitment to helping others. What began as a small effort to provide Christmas hampers to families in need, has grown to a major community initiative supporting individuals and families across Twillingate, New World Island, Lewisporte and surrounding areas. This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Twillingate - New World Island Christmas hamper project reflecting Ernie's generosity, compassion and dedication to customer service.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in thanking Ernie Watkins

for his leadership, community spirit and commitment to improving the lives of others throughout the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to recognize and congratulate the Town of St. Mary's as it celebrates a remarkable milestone – 60 years since its incorporation as a municipality.

For six decades, the people of St. Mary's have built a welcoming and vibrant community grounded in resilience, volunteerism, tradition and pride. St. Mary's is known for embracing visitors, welcoming tourists and supporting its neighbours. The town has also demonstrated a strong commitment to working collaboratively with neighbouring communities.

This summer, the community came together for a celebration to mark this important anniversary. It was a wonderful opportunity for residents, families and friends to celebrate St. Mary's rich history and the people who have helped shape its future.

I want to recognize the mayor and council, both past and present, for their dedicated service, as well as the many volunteers and community organizations whose contributions have strengthened St. Mary's over the years. The town has been fortunate to have a strong and committed volunteer council and residents who continue to give generously of their time.

Congratulations to everyone in St. Mary's on 60 years of community and shared memories. May the next 60 years bring continued growth and prosperity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, our government is committed to building stronger, safer and more resilient communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Over the last year, approximately $73 million has been invested by the provincial, federal and municipal governments in critical municipal infrastructure projects throughout the province, with the provincial share being 40 per cent. These investments are focused primarily on improving drinking water and wastewater systems that residents rely on every day.

Reliable water and wastewater infrastructure is essential to public health, environmental protection and sustainable community growth. These projects will help municipalities maintain and improve vital services, while also meeting the needs of future generations.

Speaker, this work is supported through the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund, a cost-shared initiative that addresses existing infrastructure needs while helping communities prepare for future housing development. Through this agreement, our province has been allocated $123 million over 10 years from the Government of Canada to support improvements to drinking water, wastewater, stormwater and solid waste systems.

These investments will preserve capacity, improve service reliability and help municipalities plan for growth. They also align with our government's commitment to a multi-year approach for roads, water and

sewer infrastructure while prioritizing support for municipalities working to strengthen local water supplies.

We are helping communities across Newfoundland and Labrador grow and thrive for generations to come. These projects are about more than pipes and systems; they are about people who depend on them, the communities they call home and the future we are building together for all of us.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

We recognize the importance of investing in municipal infrastructure. Reliable drinking water, wastewater systems and roads are essential services that our communities across Newfoundland and Labrador depend on every day.

During the election, the Conservatives promised a multi-year planning approach to municipal funding, yet municipalities are still waiting for the long-term certainty and predictable funding they were promised. In fact, they got the opposite. Fewer communities can avail of Multi-Year Capital Works and the seven remaining get less money with the usual three-year amount spread over four years instead.

Simply referencing a multi-year approach in a statement is not the same as delivering one. Municipalities need to be able to plan, budget and prioritize projects with confidence. They need a provincial partner that understands their financial realities and provides consistent support rather than leaving communities uncertain about what comes next.

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

Municipalities are always eager for more infrastructure funding. A news story on CBC today focused on this very challenge, citing the difficulties the LSD of Queen’s Cove is facing just to provide clean drinking water to its residents.

Water is a fundamental human right, and that is why I ask this government to make a long-term plan to address the $400-million backlog in maintenance and replacement of water systems across this province.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, I want to thank everyone who helped keep residents safe during the 2026 forest fire season.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: The co-operation and effort demonstrated during the many wildfires in Labrador were exceptional. I was pleased to hear from many on the ground that it was an extremely well-managed emergency response.

Speaker, we are on track for our commitment to ensure safer communities for all of us. This includes providing more than $7 million to improve firefighting and

emergency resources and returning the fifth water bomber back to the fleet.

Even though forest fire season is officially over, we shouldn't let our guard down.

Speaker, it's never too early to think about reducing wildfire risk around our homes. Simple practices, like stacking woodpiles away from structures, or cleaning leaves from gutters, can make a big difference.

Communities can apply for funding through the Community Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation Program to help them identify and reduce wildfire risk and plan for emergencies.

Speaker, applications are now open. The deadline has been extended until November 30 to give our communities plenty of time to apply.

I encourage all communities to visit the department's website or contact FireSmart@gov.nl.ca to avail of this excellent opportunity.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I join in thanking firefighters, emergency personnel, volunteers and local leaders who worked tirelessly to protect Labrador communities and all communities during this year's wildfire season.

Their dedication deserves our sincere recognition; however, gratitude alone isn't a wildfire strategy. Communities need certainty that funding, equipment and personnel will be available when emergencies arise, not just after a crisis makes headlines.

While the government highlights investments, many rural and remote communities continue to face challenges with emergency preparedness, recruitment and local capacity. As applications open, government must ensure communities have the resources and support needed to access these programs and strengthen wildfire resilience for the long term.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for a copy of the statement, and join him in thanking all those who keep our communities safe from fire.

Fire season is getting longer and more intense in our province as a result of climate change. We are pleased to see that the government is taking the threat of wildfire seriously. We, therefore, suggest that they consider hiring permanent wildfire prevention staff so these employees can use the ever-shortening off season to do the needed training and repairs.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

Speaker, in September, this House voted on the PC's non-binding deal on Churchill Falls. It was one document, one agreement. They are now expanding that into 17 final

binding agreements but refusing to bring them back to the House until after they're all signed.

Why does the Premier admit – quote – there is a tremendous amount of work to be done, but doesn't see the need for the elected Members who represent all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to vote on those deals before he locks us in for another 50 years?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me speak to the agreement and the deal that we reached.

Unlike the previous MOU that the Member opposite campaigned for and wanted Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to believe in, we have turned around and made significant improvements to the agreement. Our agreement is not about continuing. Their MOU basically was an intention to negotiate.

Well, our agreement actually has the negotiating done, and that's reflected in section 2.2 of that agreement, which clearly outlines the material terms of what this House of Assembly voted on. We have said continuously that we'll make sure that that's what comes back to the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I'm glad he has read the agreement because I have some very specific questions coming up.

On NTV's *Issues & Answers*, the Deputy Premier said – quote – we're going to bring the same agreement that was debated in September to the House. We had a vote so we're going to bring those same agreements back.

Is the Premier really planning on bringing the same non-binding agreement back to the House or will he correct his Deputy Premier and explain that the non-binding deal that did come to the House is not the same as 17 final agreements?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, once again, let me point out to the Member opposite that this agreement that we have negotiated, the material terms that are included, are not placeholders.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: They are the negotiated foundation of our agreement and they are reflected in section 2.2 and protected. We're going to make sure that the definitive agreement reflects the material terms that have already been outlined in the agreement that we voted on in the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: That's the problem. He says we are going to make sure. The problem is Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want to make sure and that's what our job is.

The good news is, finally, the Premier and Deputy Premier are on the same page. They both think that we voted on 17 agreements in the House, which, by the way, didn't exist at the time we were here.

So why does the Premier think this House approved the final Churchill Falls agreement when they weren't before the House because they didn't even exist yet?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I just said, we have the material terms of our agreement outlined in the agreement, section 2.2. The definitive agreements have to follow those terms and conditions and they will be brought back into the House. There will be a technical briefing and all Members opposite will have an opportunity to speak to them.

Let me also remind the Member opposite that our negotiating team and an Oversight Committee will be put in place so that Oversight Committee will also look at and make sure that those definitive agreements follow the exact intentions of the material terms of the agreement that has been presented before the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

On NTV, as well, the Deputy Premier said whether there's a vote or not that's irrelevant. Unbelievable. Of course, voting was relevant when they ran and they promised everyone a vote with the referendum, but voting only became irrelevant after they won the election.

So does the Premier agree with the Deputy Premier's characterization that voting in this House of Assembly is irrelevant?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, we put an Independent Review Committee in place to make sure that the deal that that Member opposite was out campaigning for – a deal that would have resulted in less value, less money, less jobs, less power for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. He said yes to less and voted no to more. That's the reality of what we have. We have a deal that brings more value to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and we're going to make sure we keep them informed as we move along.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: This is about his deal, Speaker, and we don't know why the Premier won't bring his final deal to the House before they're signed.

Is it because, Premier, you have such disdain for the House, as revealed by the Deputy Premier?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I find disdainful is that the Leader of the Opposition stood up and campaigned for an MOU, a deal that delivered less for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and voted yes to less.

We have turned around and said we have a much better deal in place and, surely, instead of voting for that, he voted no. Meanwhile, we know that the leader of the federal party, the prime minister, fully supports this deal and we support it, too, obviously.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I voted. I did my job, and if I was Premier, I would let everyone in this House vote on the final deal as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Speaker, Members of this House now know of several key pieces of information that the Premier hid during the debate on Churchill Falls.

Do the Premier's PC caucus Members know that the lead negotiator that the Premier said was the most qualified person to lead negotiations had told him he was going to leave and that – quote – the brilliant legal advisor had quit the night before the debate, or did he hide it from his caucus, too, just like he hides everything from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, the Member opposite wants to make it about people. We're talking about the people of the province – we're talking about the people of the province. He wants to talk about the people on the team, about personalities. This is about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who will see significant benefits from the deal.

If we had to allow their MOU to go ahead, we'd have less power, we'd have less transmission, we'd have less money, we'd have less jobs. That exactly is what the difference is and it's time for the Members opposite to join with other Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and let's move this province forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, it is about the people. It's about Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and we've heard from them and they have serious concerns with this PC agreement. They've lost trust with this Premier and his government.

Is the Premier afraid to bring the final agreements to the House before they're signed because he knows the public does not support his deal and bringing them back could lead to another Member leaving his caucus?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I do know is the people of Newfoundland and Labrador certainly didn't support his deal and they certainly were right to do so.

We put an Independent Review Committee in place, not the independent review that they had set up, but a truly Independent Review Committee that gave us a series of recommendations, Speaker, that we followed to make sure that, at the end of the day, we were able to get the deal that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve, that future generations of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve, and not a deal that would have left us with $30 billion owing on the Gull Island project.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: It's debatable whether they were followed, they were certainly blindly followed because the Premier doesn't know who gave the evidence to that committee.

Speaker, very simply, if the Premier honestly and truly believes – which he says that he's negotiated the best deal, what is the Premier afraid of? It doesn't make sense not to bring it to the House, talk about it and

tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians how great it is. What is he afraid of?

Last year, he promised the ultimate form of democratic engagement with a referendum and now a year later he's providing the least amount of democratic engagement imaginable by not even letting MHAs vote on this deal on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I ask: Premier, what are you afraid of?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Premier is not afraid of anything. I tell you what, I for one and everyone in this caucus, he has our full support.

Mr. Speaker, we have been open, we have been transparent. These folks brought a deal to this House that nobody knew was even in negotiations. The Independent Review Committee clearly said that they meddled in the deal that the previous premier had to do with that.

Mr. Speaker, this is about getting the best deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. He brought a deal to the House that he supported. Now there's a better deal and he doesn't support it. Fundamentally, there's only one reason for that and that's politics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: The minister once again misrepresented the facts. Everybody knew that Premier Furey was negotiating the deal with Premier Legault.

Now the Premier has said everything that has to be negotiated for the final agreements has already been negotiated in his DCIA.

Does the Premier stand by that statement that everything has been negotiated?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, for 10 years we sat in this House and we listened to the other side misrepresent the facts. They misrepresented the facts on pretty much everything they touched, whether it was giving contracts to their buddies, whether it was the previous MOU, whether it was all kinds of other things that the previous premier – 173 days, never even negotiated any of the definitive agreements. Not one. Never talked to Equinor, not once.

He wants to talk about misrepresenting facts, I suggest he stands in the mirror and asks himself who misrepresents facts more.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I must say, I spoke to Equinor. That's more than once that he's misrepresented the facts about me and it's not true, I did meet with Equinor.

Speaker, section 4 of his agreement talks about the sales to Hydro-Québec for prices set at the CHPE and NECEC price. His agreement says the allocated megawatts can be sold "at a capacity factor which will be agreed upon in the Definitive Agreements …." So it has not yet been agreed.

How can the Premier and the minister say that they've all been negotiated if the agreement itself says that's not the case?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While the former premier sits over there saying tell the truth, I'm telling the truth. The truth is this is a far better deal. It has better transmission, it has more power and it has the ability to bring power through Quebec. We have more jobs, yet they voted against it.

They brought a deal to this House that was far less and they voted for it. Now, they vote against it. Then, they twist everything around –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – to try and confuse the public about something that they ought to be supporting. They don't care about the public. They're anti-prosperity, they're anti-growth, they're anti-moving forward and they've proven it by voting against this agreement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I twist the facts while he misrepresents the truth about meetings that I had over and over again. Speaker, let's try another one. Annex L says: "A hiring protocol will be established."

How can the Premier or the minister say this issue was already before the House when his deal says it will be established, which by the way means it has not yet been established?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is coming from the same guy who came in here during the last MOU and tried to put the same thing across the line. When we questioned it, he said we were wrong.

The benefits agreement is in place from the Gull Island review. He knows that. We will hire at a minimum – not at a maximum – 85 per cent Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We will make sure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are the primary beneficiaries.

We will make sure that there is growth in Labrador through the Labrador Trough. We will make sure that the growth at the Goose Bay base goes ahead. We will make sure Labradorians are looked after and we will make sure that Newfoundlanders are there to help make it happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: We will make sure as we continue to negotiate things that have not yet been negotiated. The minister seems to be missing the point, which is not unusual.

Speaker, how can the Premier say there's nothing left to be negotiated when you look at Annex K which says: "The Parties agree that the dividend policies for the Project … will be agreed upon prior to the execution of the" final agreement.

Again, how can the Premier say there's nothing left to negotiate when, if he read his

own agreement, there are many, many things left to be negotiated?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I think it's become really clear to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker, why the previous government was such a failure. The reality of it is that they want to negotiate in public. They want to negotiate in public.

So that's probably why they couldn't Bay du Nord across the line, why they couldn't bring the Churchill Falls deal across the line. There's an obvious reason why. He's a lawyer; he should understand how negotiations are carried out. He should understand that definitive agreements take more information and ability to get there. This MOU or our DCIA clearly represents the framework in its totality. It outlines how we move forward.

The deal has been done. We know where we're going with this. As the 17 agreements get negotiated, we will bring (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Yes, I do know the difference, and that's why we didn't finalize the agreements before the target date of April. So I'm very concerned that the minister doesn't understand the difference between negotiating and final agreements which have been negotiated. It becomes clearer and clearer the more he speaks.

Section 8 of the agreement says there will be an Executive Construction Committee established in relation to Gull Island. It says that NLH will consult with Hydro-Québec in relation to the committee, but the scope of that consultation will be further defined in the definitive agreements.

Again, as the Premier said, there's a lot of work to do. So why does the Premier and why does the minister think everything has been negotiated when his agreement says there is lots left to do?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll remind the Member across the way that the last election was in October, just over a year ago. When we took over, there were no conversations happening with Quebec – none. So for him to stand over there and talk about the timelines and how we moved things forward is pretty rich.

He was the premier of this province for 173 days, and he did nothing. None of these talks moved forward, yet he's here trying to say that he would have met that deadline. Had he been elected in November, he was going to negotiate all of the definitive agreements between November and April. It's a little bit misleading, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Yet they're going to do it between August and December – crystal clear again.

Speaker, I will give the minister one more chance to explain why he thinks everything was negotiated in the DCIA, yet the DCIA says, on numerous occasions, there are

things still left to be negotiated. Minister, I will give you another opportunity to actually provide an answer to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

It says in Annex I, financial policies of Gull Island joint venture will be set out in the definitive agreements – again, to be negotiated. Why is the Premier and why is the minister telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that everything has been finalized, yet the very agreement they're talking about speaks on numerous occasions about numerous issues that still need to be negotiated?

We know that the Premier and this minister prefer to do it with a limited number of people, behind closed doors and in the dark so Newfoundlanders and Labradorians don't know what's going on.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the IRC clearly indicated that this former government meddled in the last negotiations, yet he was okay with it. I've never heard him once publicly speak about that.

Also, I will say that the former premier, the Member across the way from Windsor Lake, is a lawyer. He knows what material terms mean. The material terms in this contract are locked in. We have negotiated the material terms and we will move forward.

It bewilders me how an individual who sits in this House, who is also a lawyer, doesn't understand what the term "material terms" mean.

At the end of the day, we have negotiated a far better contract. This contract will bring more transmission, more power, more jobs, more money, more prosperity – a word that they don't like – to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and we stand by it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Thank you, Speaker.

Zero for 14 on Churchill Falls questions, lots of slogans, so let's change gears.

Speaker, $200,000 is being wasted every month on a health care facility in Deer Lake that isn't open yet. There's blame going around and finger pointing. Last week the Minister of TCAR, who is from Deer Lake, and the MHA, said he wanted everyone to work together.

Why can't you work with the Minister of Infrastructure and the Deer Lake mayor to find the solution to this problem?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm going to point out to the Member that I've spent a year working with the Town of Deer Lake, a full year, and there's a letter that I will table in the House after Question Period during the Tabling of Documents and it clearly outlines what we've done in the last year.

It came to me last week that the health care facility was being held as a bargaining chip and, in doing so, the people in Deer Lake and the surrounding region were being denied access to health care until this clinic is ready to open, which is very soon.

That was a non-starter for me. We've made arrangements. The health centre will get opened. We've created a right-in/right-out –

J. HOGAN: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Leader of the Official Opposition for your co-operation.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

B. PETTEN: We've turned the right-in/right-out on the Trans-Canada into that turn in. We will have health service in Deer Lake and the health centre will not be used as a bargaining chip. We're willing to talk about the other issues but the health centre is a non-starter. It will not be the bargaining chip of these discussions and we have to provide safe highways for the motoring public and that's exactly what I'm going to do as Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Why is the Minister of Municipal Affairs not able to work with the mayor on a solution? You said you've been meeting with him for the last year but rather than come up with solutions, he's calling the mayor shameful.

So why does the minister think he can find a solution with name-calling rather than trying to work out a solution with Mayor Ball?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Context matters. That's not what I said. I said it is shameful to be holding the people in that region ransom by denying them access to health care. Because by not allowing people to get to that health facility, that's exactly what you're doing. You're putting the health facility in the middle of a disagreement between the province and the town – something we can work on, something we're after offering many solutions for and we continue to offer it.

Calling the minister and the MHA for the region, me and him have worked together closely on this file and we will continue to do so. The health centre will not be in the middle of these negotiations. People have to have access to the health facility and they're going to get access to the health facility. The mayor won't talk to me, but the other developments are willing to talk but not about the health facility.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Speaker, a question for the TCAR Minister. In a social media post the Minister of TCAR is blaming the mayor of Deer Lake for this issue.

Why did the minister, when he was mayor of Deer Lake, approve a town plan rather than address the issue in a way that he thinks is appropriate?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: Speaker, I've been a long time wanting to stand here to tell the truth about that whole file. The Member opposite should know, as a former municipal councillor, you're allowed to sign an amendment, then there are other procedures that would have been given satisfactory from the province.

Now, you want to hear the truth about the mayor playing politics. My first month sitting in this House, he couldn't get a hold of me for two hours; Opposition Leader emails me, steps in. So a mayor going to an Opposition Leader over something that I was addressing and you want to talk about playing politics. Enough is enough, the truth is going to come out.

Let's go back to the former administration, prior to this one, same Liberal government that allowed an access to the highway, turned a blind eye and let this happen.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: All right, we want to talk about playing politics. Also, in this Facebook post, Speaker, I quote: This isn't about politics and I'm disappointed in the mayor that he chose to make it political and the reality is if you create a problem, which he did, the mayor did create this problem; also: did it on his own totally wrong; the last one: this is on the person that's crying foul.

Is this how the minister is working together, calling out Mayor Ball? Wouldn't it be better to work together versus continually taking shots at the current mayor?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: Again, Speaker, I'm so glad I get to stand here and talk about facts. The fact is there were a lot of things that were done in back rooms back then that got us to this point. Unfortunately, here's where we are.

I also have – if you want to keep bringing the mayor from Deer Lake up – a statement from him in communications says, I guess we'll just have to wait until the climate changes – meaning we'll go back to a government that didn't follow rules and here we are because of it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

The electoral boundaries are required to be redrawn by the end of the calendar year. When we asked about this months ago, the Government House Leader confirmed it would be done on time.

Is this still accurate?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

Our government recognizes the importance of the Electoral Districts Boundaries Commission and, of course, of the *Electoral Boundaries Act*. We understand and recognize the responsibilities established under the act. We understand the importance of ensuring an independent process, that it moves forward in a timely manner and with appropriate opportunities for public consultation across the province. This process involves both the chief justice

and the Speaker. We are committed to respecting that process. We are committed to providing a further update as soon as we are in a position to do so.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

So, obviously, nothing tangible to report to this House, which is a disappointment.

Six months ago, we asked the Minister of Justice when this would be completed, and she said government would act – I quote – very expeditiously.

Speaker, has a chairperson for the committee been appointed yet?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, our focus is on ensuring the voices of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians continue to be heard and that people have effective representation once that process is complete. There is more to be said on this topic and we will provide a further update as soon as we are able.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

The minister says that they want to hear the voices of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador, yet they cancelled the referendum which was promised in their blue book.

Speaker, the Justice Minister recently toured downtown St. John's, so maybe now she is finally aware of the serious public safety issues that exist, including used needles in the streets and sidewalks.

What is the minister's plan to alleviate these serious issues?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

Yes, I did take a tour with the mayor of the City of St. John's because of the concerns that we have in our government about ensuring safety and addressing issues with crime in that area.

I can also say, I'm very pleased, just this morning we had a very positive meeting with, not only the mayor of the City of St. John's, but also members of the Downtown Safety Coalition, as well as other organizations. We had a very productive meeting this morning here at the Confederation Building. We are all working together to ensure positive results and a good outcome. This is very important to us in this government.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, last week the Minister of Housing claimed that his government had 874 new homes built. In October 2023, we heard from a Liberal Housing minister and Finance

minister as they claimed that they had built 750 new homes, only to learn that the actual number was 11 and they were referring to housing options.

I ask the minister to clarify what he meant by 870 new homes built: their location, the number of not-for-profit versus private, whether the repair of the 250 rental units announced by the minister last week is included in that number and how many of these new builds are actually initiated by the current government?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I'm glad the Member opposite asked the question because fresh off the press today we have the September numbers as well.

So from January to September, Mr. Speaker, this government and this province have started 1,341 new builds – 1,341 new builds. We have over 857 completions – 857 housing completions done to date, Mr. Speaker. We set out a goal of 10,000 over our administration, over our term, Mr. Speaker, I'm confident that we can get there.

But make no mistake, Speaker, we're already up 22 per cent since last year's number. I couldn't be more proud of our team. We meet with home builders constantly to ensure that homes are getting built across this province.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the *National Housing Strategy Act* and the Federal Housing Advocate all recognize housing as a human right.

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

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: As I was finishing, Mr. Speaker, this government and this Premier recognize how important housing is for everybody across the province and we've taken real action with real investment to ensure that as many people get into homes in this administration as we possibly can. That's a 10,000 home goal, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to work towards that.

We've been meeting with home builders every other week to ensure that they're up on the standards, they know what they're doing, and we're meeting with them to ensure that we build efficient homes, Mr. Speaker, comfortable homes for families to raise their families in.

We're going to ensure that we continue on with our goal to get those 10,000 built, but these numbers right here, they speak for themselves and I couldn't be more proud of this government.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Remarkable. I received a similar non-answer from the minister of Housing in 2024. At the time, the Leader of the Official Opposition and current Premier said:

housing is absolutely a human right and needs to be dealt with in that way, and if the new Minister of Housing is not prepared to do that, then there's a problem right off the bat with the new Minister of Housing because fundamentally that's exactly what it should be.

Will the Premier live up to his words and enshrine housing as a human right in provincial legislation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you what this Premier and this government will do, and that's ensure that housing gets built across this province and in the Big Land.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: With our new and better deal in place, Mr. Speaker, we're going to need more housing, because with thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs coming to this prosperous province, we're going to need people to put homes into. A 22 per cent increase already; I think we're on a very, very good path.

We'll continue the path to get people in homes so they can raise their families. It's on our radar. I'm the Housing Minister. I'm going to make sure we continue to keep going the way we're going, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

To paraphrase the ending of *Animal Farm*, the people look from the PCs to the Liberals, from the Liberals to the PCs, and from the PCs to the Liberals again, but already it was impossible to say which was which – sad.

I ask the Premier: Why should the people of the province believe your promises any more than they trusted the promises of the previous government?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Mr. Speaker, this government is looking this way, not that way.

We're moving full-fledged ahead and, with a record amount of investments, we will do great for this province as we are preparing for the prosperity of a new Newfoundland and Labrador underneath this current deal. We'll continue to work with the people of this province to bring that prosperity.

I'm so proud of this Premier. I'm so proud of this government, Mr. Speaker, and we will get the job done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order, Standing Order 49.

During Question Period, the MHA for Windsor Lake twice used the word "lie" across the way, insinuating that lies were told and that lies should not be told. I expect that we will not only hear him retract that statement –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – but that he will apologize.

During that exchange, you looked directly at him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

J. HOGAN: I'll withdraw the language that I used, that was unparliamentary, but it is upsetting to continue to hear the minister say things about who I met with or who I didn't meet with. He said that on numerous occasions –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

You withdraw the language, that's fine.

Thank you.

J. HOGAN: – (inaudible) factually, I disagree.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: He withdrew.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

SPEAKER: I didn't hear it, by the way, but he did withdraw.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I wish to table the document I spoke of in Question Period. It's a letter to Mayor Ball and the Town of Deer Lake, which clearly explains the situation ongoing the last 12 or 13 months in Deer Lake. I think it's worth reading because people can see that we've been more than obliging in trying to work this out, unlike what we heard across the floor today. This will explain to everyone for all to see.

Thank you very much.

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

The Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I seek leave from the House to table a document in response to a petition I presented last week.

SPEAKER: Does the Member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave has been granted.

M. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to table this document, Route 480 projects from the year 2000 to 2026, listing all the projects. It does say here on Route 480 only in spending, previous former Progressive Conservative governments, just shy of over $1.85 million. The previous former Liberal government spent over $21.4 million.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Any further tabling of documents?

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Deputy Premier.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I wish now to also table a document, a response letter to the MHA for Burgeo - La Poile in response to his questions in the House of Assembly last week. I did get a

response, and I'd like to table it here for all to see so hopefully it will eliminate an opportunity next week to get up and say I never responded.

SPEAKER: Are there any further tabling of documents?

Seeing no further tabling of documents, Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

R. BALSOM: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice of the following private Member's resolution, which will be seconded by the Minister of Red Tape Reduction: Cutting Red Tape for Newfoundland and Labrador Businesses.

WHEREAS red tape is a hidden cost on businesses and residents of Newfoundland and Labrador that drives up the cost of doing business, slows investment and falls hardest on small businesses; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Federation of Independent Business awarded the province an F grade on its Red Tape Report Card in every year from 2021 onward under the former Liberal government; and

WHEREAS under the former Liberal government, Newfoundland and Labrador repeatedly finished at the bottom of the country on the Red Tape Report Card, including failing every category in a single year; and

WHEREAS the Canadian Federation of Independent Business found no concrete evidence that the former government applied any comprehensive measurement practice, set targets for red tape reduction or placed meaningful restraint on regulators; and

WHEREAS businesses told the former Liberal government directly that delays in application processing and approvals were holding them back, yet the former Liberal government failed to deliver meaningful action, leaving the province with failing grades year after year; and

WHEREAS 67 per cent of Canadian Federation of Independent Business members in Newfoundland and Labrador identify tax and regulatory costs as their top concern; and

WHEREAS the government appointed Newfoundland and Labrador's first dedicated Minister of Red Tape Reduction, a step the Atlantic Chamber of Commerce called significant and positive; and

WHEREAS *Budget 2026* started the first of three reductions to the small business tax rate, lowering it to 2 per cent in 2026, 1.5 per cent in 2027 and 1 per cent in 2028, supporting more than 6,000 small businesses; and

WHEREAS *Budget 2026* established a Red Tape Reduction Office to oversee policies, regulations and legislation across government and make it easier for businesses to navigate; and

WHEREAS the government has introduced legislation, the *Regulatory Improvement and Efficiency Act*, to demonstrate its commitment to red tape reduction; and

WHEREAS this government recently announced province-wide consultations, launching October 30, 2026, inviting businesses, communities, organizations and residents to help shape the next phase of Newfoundland and Labrador's red tape reduction agenda;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this House of Assembly support the

government's commitment, and applaud its efforts to date to reduce red tape, restore regulatory accountability and achieve an A grade on the Canadian Federation of Independent Business Red Tape Report Card.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This will be our PMR on Wednesday, November 4.

SPEAKER: Okay.

Further notices of motion?

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion, that in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 3, 2026.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion, that notwithstanding Standing Order 9 that this House not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, November 4, 2026, but shall continue to sit for the conduct of government business and, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion, that in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2026.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

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

THAT in accordance with Standing Order 65, the Public Accounts Committee shall be comprised of the Member for Mount Scio, the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, the Member for Labrador West, the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate, the Member for St. George's - Humber, the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi and the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville; and

THAT in accordance with Standing Order 65, the Privileges and Elections Committee shall be comprised of the Member for Cape St. Frances, the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, the Member for St. John's Centre and the Member for Terra Nova.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Evidence Act, Bill 34.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022, No. 2, Bill 31.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022, No. 3, Bill 32.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Cannabis Control Act, Bill 33.

SPEAKER: Are there 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.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm petitioning on the new school in Cartwright. These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

WHEREAS Henry Gordon Academy, the school in Cartwright, is a 56-year-old wooden structure with many deficiencies, including being antiquated, inaccessible and containing asbestos; and

WHEREAS the previous government approved a new school, the tender was awarded and work had commenced; and

WHEREAS a year has passed since the contract was awarded, construction had started and nearly $3 million spent before the project was cancelled.

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 take immediate steps to construct a new school in the community of Cartwright.

Speaker, I can hardly believe that I am standing here today petitioning for a new school in Cartwright, a school that we committed to in Budget 2023. There's a whole timeline. The project was identified and the money was announced in Budget 2023, so much effort to get to that point. The design RFP was issued, a lot of work there, Speaker. Then it came back and another design was done to have housing put into the school. In Budget 2024, the money was approved, Speaker. In February 2025, the tender was issued and in July 2025, the tender was awarded, the contractor was up there on site, Speaker.

It is absolutely unbelievable that the Conservatives came in to power October 14. In November, I wrote to say there's not much happening on the school. I got a reply back from the deputy minister toward the end of November saying there is something that requires a change order. This is par for the course. This is all good, we're proceeding.

In March, I was in Goose Bay at the Winter Games and the contractor started reaching out to me. I asked the Deputy Premier, here in the House at that time, the contractor is reaching out to me, should I be worried? Don't talk to him he said, he's crazy. I said, okay, so I won't talk to him.

Anyway, I continued to ask the rest of the spring sitting. I need an update on the Cartwright school. Why are things not moving on the Cartwright school? The little children in that Indigenous community waited for years. He kept saying I'm going to get you an update, I'm going to get you an update.

The House closed. We went into a House Management meeting; I tried to catch him

going down the hall to say where's the update on the Cartwright school? The House closed and the next day a press release came out. Now we've learned last night, through allNewfoundlandLabrador, that that contractor is suing government for $65 million, Speaker. I mean, the cost of cancelling, they thought it was too much; it's absolutely ridiculous.

I'll be on my feet every single day. The Deputy Premier has not even yet met with that community, so disrespectful, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: There's a lot packed into that, Speaker. They make it very personal. We have a job to do. We were entrusted with a – I hate to say it, but we had quite the mess of an infrastructure list. I said it last week about the hospital, I'll say it again about the school and other infrastructure projects, the monies attached to those were nowhere near the cost to complete them. The estimates were way lower than what the actual figures were going to be.

At the end of the day, that school was in the vicinity, roughly estimating to become upwards of $60 million for 55 children. We debated it. I struggled with it. We talked about it. There were many, many meetings.

Any time that I did say we were checking into something, I was checking into it because I did find that, believe it or not – the Member opposite can get personal and make comments across the way and that's fine, that's their prerogative – I struggled with that decision. I kid you not. Anyone on this side of the House can tell you, I did not take great joy in doing what I did.

At the end of the day, I was faced with a situation, we could not go forward and I finally had to make a decision that we could not proceed. I did not feel good about that. I didn't take joy in that, contrary to what the Member opposite and many might think, I did not take pleasure in that. I didn't take pleasure in cancelling anything.

As a politician, you want to announce good things, happy things. I didn't want to announce we were closing down the school.

The bottom line was it was way over budget. We've got to rescope it. When we get it rescoped, we're working on details within the department now and at such a time we'll make that happen. But we couldn't proceed with a $60-million budget of a budget that's $1.2 billion in debt.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition is pertaining to safer communities.

WHEREAS all residents of our province deserve to live in a safe environment without fear of becoming a victim of crime in their own neighbourhood; and

WHEREAS everyone has the right to raise families and earn a living in homes and communities which are safe; and

WHEREAS the government pledged in their campaign to take meaningful and decisive action to combat rising crime rates and protect the safety and well-being of all residents; and

WHEREAS it was outlined in the 2025 PC campaign platform that they would "work with federal lawmakers, police, and court

system to end the practice of ‘catch and release’ where police officers arrest the same person repeatedly only to have them released back into society;” and

WHEREAS the current government committed to work with the federal government towards community-based bail enforcement and monitoring to better track compliance.

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 turn its commitments into concrete actions that will make meaningful and measurable differences in our communities, including stronger legislation, increased policing and tougher sentencing for serious and repeat offenders.

I think we can all say, we hear it day after day in the news about the attacks, the violent attacks that are happening in communities across the entire province. I’ll speak about Harbour Grace and my district, the district I represent, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, I get calls frequently to my office that residents no longer feel safe to even walk to and from work, given the violent crimes and the criminal activity that is taking place there.

Nothing to date. Residents are calling on all levels of government. There were some really big, heavy promises made by the PCs on the campaign trail that they’re going to make safer communities for all of us. We have yet to see any tangible action. I also meet with the CBN Joint Council and, again, it’s always a top agenda item, a number one priority about combatting crime and doing more things to make communities safer, as they promised.

I’ll also reflect back to no funding or support for sheriff’s officers. We do know they’re an essential part of the justice system. We know that proceedings cannot happen without them. We do know that big, major cases have had to be delayed. Murder cases, I will say, have had to be delayed because of lack of personnel and people to run these proceedings the way they ought to be according to the law.

So I’m calling on this minister. She called on a lot of things when she was standing right here in Opposition, going back as far as GPS ankle monitoring to make things safer for intimate partner violence, but, again, safer communities for everybody. I also hear from business owners in Harbour Grace, how when they call the police, the police can’t respond if it’s a theft of $100 or under that.

That’s just simply not good enough. This Member made big promises and I call on her and the support of her Cabinet to make that happen for all of us here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety for a response to that petition.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, thank you.

First of all, I’d like to say to the Member opposite, we’ll tell you what taking action looks like. Taking action looks like historic investments, significant investments that we haven’t seen in years: policing, $9 million for 21 RNC and 25 RCMP officers; $1.4 million annually –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – for RNC 12 special constables; 25 RCMP auxiliaries, $50,000. We have the highest number of sworn officers in the province’s history in our RNC right now.

The courts, Speaker, we've seen $8.3 million in our judges; seven new Provincial Court judges, 51 court staff. We've seen, in Crown attorneys, $1.2 million. That will help better manage the complex criminal cases that we see. We see sheriff's officers. Recruitment has been focused and we have 20 new sheriff's officers hired since April to October.

Speaker, that's what tangible action looks like. That's action based on supporting and strengthening a justice system that was ignored – ignored – for so many years by this former government. So that's what we're doing. We are focused on action. That's the evidence. Those are the facts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition pertains to bringing the final Churchill River agreements back to the House of Assembly prior to signing. These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

WHEREAS the provincial government is in the process of negotiating a deal with Hydro-Québec to develop the Churchill River; and

WHEREAS the end result of any deal will likely be in place for 50 years – five decades – with implications for current and future generations; and

WHEREAS any deal would contribute billions and billions of dollars to provincial coffers; and

WHEREAS despite a campaign promise by the PC Party that would allow all residents to have a final say on any final deal in a referendum, but that is not happening; and

WHEREAS what was voted on by MHAs in the House of Assembly in September was not in any way the final 17 contracts that will be the actual final agreements;

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 bring the final agreements back to the House of Assembly for a vote before the agreements are signed.

Mr. Speaker, there are many issues facing people in Newfoundland and Labrador and I would agree with Members opposite that there are issues related to health care. Members on this side, as well, hear it from their constituents, affordability, transportation issues but, bar none, the Churchill Falls agreement, something that we are getting ready to lock into for 50 years, is by far the most important thing that we will deal with.

To hear the Premier, last week, at his news conference say that we've already voted on final agreements that don't even exist and we heard examples of that in Question Period today when the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Liberal Party, pointed six or seven cases from the current DCIA where there are still things to be worked out. We did not vote on any final agreements because they do not exist.

The 17 contracts that will come will be far different from the 70-odd page DCIA that was looked at and reviewed, and we did ask some questions but there was no debate. People in the public in my district, which is why I decided to do this petition over the weekend, were flabbergasted to hear the Premier of the province say that we had already voted on something that doesn't exist.

I don't understand it. I honestly can't understand the logic, if it's even politically – it's not accurate. It's mindboggling how they could think that we've already voted on

something that we haven't seen yet, these final agreements.

We won't get the referendum. That promise was broken by the Premier. He said it over and over again during the campaign and it wasn't until August, 10 months after they were elected, that he arbitrarily just said, we're not going to do it. We're going to have a debate, which didn't even turn into a debate. He has never explained it clearly to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador why something he vehemently promised, they're not going to get.

We're calling on the government and the Members opposite to have a change of heart. Bring this back. Let us vote on it before the final agreements are signed and it's too late and that becomes the Premier's legacy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, are you responding to the petition or are you calling Orders of the Day?

L. PARROTT: Respond.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines for a response to the petition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Everything that the Member just talked about, whether it's health care, roads, education, whether it's new industry, our ability to do expansion in Labrador with regard to mining or even housing in Labrador West or Goose Bay, whether it's the $8.5-billion upgrades at in Goose Bay, none of these things happen without this agreement.

Now, the previous MOU, the same Member stood up and talked about how transformational it was, yet it was very miniscule in comparison to what we've brought forward and he voted no to it. Now he wants to bring this back into the House for him to vote on something he's already got his mind made up on.

By their own admission last week, they clearly said –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – that they weren't voting on a deal. They were voting on a motion and that motion was to move forward with this agreement and negotiate deals, and they still voted no for that. They have no interest in voting for this. They have no interest in voting for this because they couldn't get it done and they couldn't bring a deal forward that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador would support.

This is a good deal, Mr. Speaker. This Member keeps and continues going around picking out pieces, misleading the government, misleading the people of the province and as long as that happens, people buy into that tone. I would urge everyone to listen to what the Minister of Finance had to say last week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I would urge that they go online and listen to it because it clearly outlines where we are.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further petitions?

Are you were standing on –?

F. HUTTON: Point of privilege, section 49.

AN HON. MEMBER: Point of order.

F. HUTTON: Point of order, I'm sorry.

SPEAKER: Point of order, the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

F. HUTTON: The Member for Terra Nova, the Minister of Energy and Mines says I'm continually going around the province and misleading the government and misleading the people. It's a bit rich for somebody who campaigned on a promise of a referendum and to say that I'm misleading people, I'm asking him to withdraw it. It's unparliamentary.

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

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll remind you that when a Member stands in this House, they should know what they're talking about. If he wanted to stand on a point of order, section 49, he should have said that. He said point of privilege. This has nothing to do with a point of privilege and continuing to that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – when he stands and talks –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member did say point of privilege but I believe he said after, a point of order.

L. PARROTT: After someone said it, yes.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, the reality of it is, as he stands over there and continually defames people's character and tries to make people look like something they're not, and then stands up and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – is upset by the word "mislead," which is actually what has been happening, very clearly, I don't know if that's a point of order.

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to speak to the point of order. In Question Period, you did not hear my colleague who said something off the record but he was man enough to stand up and say I withdraw.

I cannot believe that every day we come in this House and the government can speak mistruths. We saw a Member ejected last week because she couldn't understand how somebody can tell a lie in this House, but we're not allowed to say they're telling a lie.

My colleague just simply said: Stop misleading the people by saying I'm doing something I'm not doing and withdraw. Instead of him withdrawing, you've doubled down.

Speaker, I'm going to ask you if you'll look at this and make a ruling because it's very inappropriate with the rules of this House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Okay.

The Member can take a seat. I've heard enough on this.

L. PARROTT: I'm standing on a different point.

SPEAKER: Okay, well, I'm going to get to this point first.

On this point, I'm going to take back the matter and consider it and I will rule at a later time.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand on a point of privilege and a point of order. Mr. Speaker, this House deserves the respect from both sides. Now, whether someone –

L. STOYLES: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask for your co-operation, the Member for Mount Pearl North.

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, when someone stands in this House and they say something, they are standing to represent either themselves or the individuals that surround them.

For the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair to stand and question me as a man, I think is extremely out of character. I think that it is very inappropriate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: By the fact that she says, was man enough, insinuates directly that I am not man enough to do or say something.

I would say that the Member should apologize to myself and the House. That type of language is not acceptable in this House. When you're questioning an individual and their manhood or their sexuality in this House, it is beyond reprehensible.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I said nothing about the Member across the way. Unlike how they like to think, we're not constantly preoccupied with them. I said my colleague was man enough today to stand and withdraw. It had nothing to do with the other side, but it's not uncommon in this House for people to try and put words in our mouth. That's why it's important that we follow the rules set out in the *Standing Orders* every day, Speaker.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The Speaker finds there is no point of order or privilege in that disagreement amongst Members.

Are there any further petitions?

L. PARROTT: No, we're good.

Orders of the Day.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, Order 4, Bill 22.

I call from the Order Paper a bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3, Bill 22.

SPEAKER: Second reading of Bill 22.

I believe the Member for Mount Scio has some time left on the clock, if we can set the clock accordingly.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Just for anyone who's watching, last week we started talking about Bill 22. As the first Member of the Opposition to respond, I get an hour. I used part of that time, so now I have 21 minutes left. I'm going to revisit that quickly to make sure that anyone who is watching, and might have missed last week, understands what we're talking about in terms of the gas tax bill and change.

The government is implementing reducing the gas tax, which we fully support – fully support removing the gas tax. We note that the government can afford it with all the extra revenue they're getting from the price of a barrel of oil.

I think they're overcomplicating with the change that they're making. What they are doing is they're essentially making a threshold and a formula, and the threshold is to be in regulations, so if the price of a barrel of oil – we don't know exactly how it's going to work yet because we don't see the regulations, but something around $89 US a barrel will trigger whether or not to charge this provincial gas tax or not to charge the gas tax.

That threshold will be in regulations. So that will still give the government power to change the threshold whenever they need to. So the government is still going to control whether or not gas tax is charged or not. That will be based on a 20-day trading day rolling average before the end of the quarter.

This is going to be looked at quarterly, Speaker. They're kind of overcomplicating it. The government are talking about red tape – and we have a PMR, I'm looking forward to talking to the PMR, hopefully, on Wednesday about red tape – but essentially the government are adding red tape with this extra complicated change they are making around gas prices.

I do want to note that the CFIB is against this model in Alberta. They have a similar model. The CFIB is against Alberta's model and referred to it as a backward looking average where the government should just remove the tax so the small retailers don't have to worry every quarter: Do I have to put tax on or not? What's that going to be? Is the government going to change the threshold?

People are going to be trying to work this out. Gas prices are already very complicated, and I welcome the government, kudos to you if you can find a way of streamlining gas pricing. Gas pricing in Newfoundland and Labrador is extremely complicated and they're making it further complicated by adding this additional taxation formula with a mix of legislation and regulation, based on these criteria that is transparent and some of which is public facing, some of which is not as public facing. They're further increasing the complexity of gas pricing in Newfoundland and Labrador.

In my remarks last week, I highlighted additional concerns that we had with how the government were approaching the gas tax changes. I do fully support and we fully support removing the gas tax for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The government is intending this to take effect December 1 of this year. We think it should be sooner. We think it should take place as soon as it gets third reading. I guess the retailers need a few days notice, but after that – certainly not December 1, 2026, Speaker.

Then the other exciting nuance of this debate, for anyone who was watching – and I couldn't believe it, Speaker, I was in someone's house yesterday, a constituent, talking to them about a government matter and they said, oh, it was some exciting on Thursday. I wasn't sure exactly what they were talking about. So I said, what do you mean? They said, oh, when you were up and the Minister of Finance got leave for everyone to debate the Churchill Falls.

It was the first time, I guess, I've ever been with someone, one of my constituents, who was actively watching, not just Question Period, but later in the day. They were very up-to-date on everything that was said in the Legislature.

I do now want to talk about the very important Churchill Falls agreements and the set of definitive agreements that the government are currently still negotiating. I'd like to pivot to that because the Minister of Finance, when he was giving his address, asked for leave, for relevance, to talk about affordability, and unanimous leave of the House was granted. He talked about affordability but then talked about a range of things to do with Churchill Falls. He talked about the Churchill Falls agreements, financial arrangements, Churchill Falls economics, impact on the Treasury – very important – general affordability, electricity pricing, Gull Island, definitive agreements, different individuals involved in the negotiating.

So, Speaker, I'm going to take full advantage of this opportunity because we really haven't had a wholesome debate on Churchill Falls. We haven't had a back-and-forth. We haven't had an opportunity where I can speak. I haven't heard many of the Members on the government side, how they feel about Churchill Falls. Hopefully, this will give them an opportunity as well to speak about the Churchill Falls agreements. So I'm looking forward to that. There are some elements to the Churchill Falls agreement that I haven't had the opportunity to raise in this House yet, which I look forward to doing now.

The most important part of the original Churchill Falls deal that I really liked, that I felt very passionate about, which we heard the CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro say many times, was Schedule F for fairness. That resonated with me and it resonated with my constituents, the fact that fairness would be built into the definitive agreements between Hydro-Québec and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro.

As we learned through this information session, and previously with Power Advisory, Power Advisory were tasked with coming up with what does fairness look like in a set of definitive agreements of this nature and this magnitude. It was Power Advisory that recommended the approach for Schedule F – Schedule F for fairness – and we heard that again, reiterated, during the information session we had earlier this fall. They recommended the pricing mechanisms – they took Schedule F, and we heard this from Mr. Chee-Aloy who was here, and they further recommended how that mechanism could be implemented.

We also heard, during the information session – and we heard this from numerous places – the government choose not to move ahead with the element of Schedule F for fairness in the current DCIA agreements, as they move forward from the DCIA where they are now into the 17-plus legal agreements we're going to be working on.

We don't know where that ended up. We do know also that the Power Advisory told us that previously they were at the negotiating table. In 2024, Power Advisory was part of the core negotiating team. We found out earlier this fall that Power Advisory are no longer in that kind of close relationship. They are advising on some electricity pricing, which they told us about in September, but they didn't know why the government abandoned these Schedule F for fairness concept and the concept that the better Quebec does, the better Newfoundland and Labrador does, which I believe is fundamental to what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want out of a Churchill Falls agreement.

We cannot completely foresee every significant material impact that could happen with our economy, that could happen with electricity prices over the next 50 years. So I believe it is fundamental and

so did the experts who sat here numerous times before, they also believed that it would be useful to have this idea built into the definitive agreements to make sure that Newfoundland and Labrador's interests were protected barring unforeseen circumstances that we cannot predict that would happen in the future.

We also heard from the negotiating team, from various experts who were here that the government chose to pivot from that negotiating tactic in terms of Schedule F for fairness. We didn't exactly know why. Some told us it was too difficult; some didn't know, didn't have that background. There was definitely a point where government pivoted away from using that idea in part of the negotiating with Hydro-Québec.

We believe it's because that is not in Hydro-Québec's best interest to have it that Newfoundland and Labrador gets that element of fairness in Churchill Falls agreements, which I absolutely will stand here every day of the week and vote no for a 50-year deal where Newfoundland and Labrador's interests are not protected against future material changes to the economy, to electricity prices, to how people get energy. I will vote no to that every day of the week.

I feel very strongly about that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

So there are a few different things I'd like to chat about. I was speaking with someone from Newfoundland Hydro and they were telling me how in 2024, the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro team were intimately involved in the negotiation. They were involved in the MOU. They were involved in all the day-to-day pieces in terms of what became, I guess, an MOU that was signed. At many levels with Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, those staff were involved in everything to do with that document.

But in this case, my understanding is, Speaker, that the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro staff were not involved. I'm not saying no one was involved, but the layers below the top layer, my understanding, were not involved in this deal. After we had the four-day information session, my understanding is the following week, Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro staff had a briefing to inform them about what was in the government's DCIA.

So that gives me great concern, Speaker, that the Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro staff were not involved in the creation and the crafting of the government's DCIA documents, and they were briefed on what was in the DCIA after our information session. That gives me significant concern that the experts at Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro were not intimately involved, and I welcome the government to comment on that, to prove me wrong.

But that is my understanding, Speaker, that the staff of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro – obviously, I'm sure, the CEO was involved but in general. My understanding was previously, all Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, the entity, was involved comprehensively in negotiating in the work that happened previously.

There was a very big change between the previous engagement and now the new engagement where Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro was not involved at all. Other than at the highest, highest level, the staff of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro were not involved in the current DCIA development, which gives me great concern, Speaker.

I know that we have a lot of smart Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working at Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. They get paid well. They have good benefits. It worries me that they were not involved in the development of the DCIA and that, in fact, they were briefed on it after our

information session. So that gives me great concern, Speaker, about the current DCIA.

I have been also reflecting. The Muskrat Falls inquiry kind of happened before my time. I have a copy of all of the books that came with the inquiry and I've been reading them to refresh myself to figure out where some of the LeBlanc recommendations, where they were going, what kind of concerns LeBlanc had.

I know, at least when I was part of the Cabinet process of developing the MOU, and I imagine the government has undertaken a similar process, there are certain things that everyone has to keep in mind, all the Members of Cabinet have to keep an eye on, because that is their fiduciary duty, Speaker, as elected representatives and Members of Cabinet. That's why you swear; you have to say this big, long thing. That is incredibly important.

So I've been refreshing myself on the Muskrat Falls inquiry. I still have more to do. I'm kind of cross-checking and cross-referencing as I learn more about the DCIA when more information becomes publicly available, but there are a few issues that kind of give me pause that I'm going to speak about.

In the Muskrat Falls inquiry, one of the key findings was that there was too much reliance on the reputation of the lead negotiator and that reliance cannot substitute for examining the agreement and the assumptions.

That has given me, I guess, this pause to ask the Members of the government. I haven't been in those rooms, but Members of the government and Members of the Cabinet, I just challenge the Members of the government to reflect on whether or not the reputation of the lead negotiator, who is no longer the lead negotiator, if that led the government to making any incorrect assumptions, to lying on laurels, any of those. Given the importance and the magnitude and the gravity of this agreement, I would encourage all the Members of the government to reflect on the outcomes and the learning of the Muskrat Falls inquiry, and reflect on whether or not those could be applied to the situation.

I haven't been in the Cabinet room with this government but those Members over there, I ask you, take the Muskrat Falls inquiry recommendations and think about how they apply to the situation. I believe the Members over there, they do want a good deal, absolutely, but they cannot rest on someone telling you that this is the right thing. I cannot stress enough that all the Members on the government side, they have to challenge this at every point and make sure that it's thoroughly challenged.

We did, and I did in the rooms that I was in. I challenged the government Members, and I implore them that they have to do the same.

I know that LeBlanc, in the Muskrat Falls inquiry, also found, for example, the Public Utilities Board review was not a sufficient and satisfactory review in terms of Commissioner LeBlanc's – there was some back and forth. Again, I don't understand all the nuances. I'm still diving into the Muskrat Falls side and the learnings we can apply to Churchill Falls previously and then now, but previously there was kind of a misunderstanding between the negotiator and the Public Utilities Board. The Public Utilities Board wanted the government to stop. The Public Utilities Board wanted the government to slow down. They wanted to get extra information and the government said no, we're going to move forward and this was all in the inquiry report.

I just challenge the government; I know that they're talking about having the Public Utilities Board involved, so I hope now that considering the learnings from the Muskrat Falls inquiry and LeBlanc, that they take those learnings and apply them

satisfactorily to the Churchill Falls project and all these 17-plus agreements.

If they're going to involve the Public Utilities Board, they have to listen to everything that the Public Utilities Board says. Now, I don't always agree with the Public Utilities Board, but Justice LeBlanc thought that they were very important in this context and I do believe the Public Utilities Board will engage the right stakeholders and the right experts to ensure that they give the government the right advice.

There are a few other areas I wanted to go through with my five minutes that are left.

We've heard this week, and I know a lot of Question Period was focused on this today, of whether or not this House of Assembly has debated all the elements of the Churchill Falls definitive agreements. There are so many areas left to negotiate. I understand that the Premier has also said that it's all done, it's all been negotiated, when, in fact, I truly believe that is not the case. One example, which I mentioned last week, which I think is worth raising again, is the relationship and the involvement of the Government of Canada.

Yes, it is absolutely good for the Government of Canada to subsidize, to pay, to invest. The more Newfoundland and Labrador can get from the Government of Canada, 100 per cent, sign me up any day of the week, but during the DCIA briefings that we had, I specifically asked Mr. Kennedy: Are there any agreements as part of this with the Government of Canada? I was definitely told, no, there are no agreements with the Government of Canada.

The government's new release last week, it did specifically say agreements with the Government of Canada. They were working on agreements with the Government of Canada. That is one significant area of differentiation from the point of our information session that we had, where we did not have all the information that was in the definitive agreements. We had the DCIA. We had many things we didn't get answers to. I'd welcome one of the government Members to tell us about the agreements with the Government of Canada, which agreements with the Government of Canada.

We know that the wind part, it says in the DCIA that they need to do a feasibility study. Okay, well, tell us, I'd like to hear more about the feasibility study. When is that happening? Who's involved? Who's doing it? Who's paying for the feasibility study? What are the agreements with the Government of Canada? We don't have any of that information that is clearly aligned in the government's news release last week that that will be worked on.

Yet, in the briefings that we had, it was a very clear answer that no, there were no agreements with the Government of Canada in the DCIA. So that is a definitive departure, Speaker, from where we were two months ago, to the government's language now. So there are obviously a lot of things that are still being negotiated.

We know that the price is set for the CHPE and the NECEC price, and the DCIA says the allocated megawatts can be sold at a capacity factor which will be agreed upon in the definitive agreements. So there are so many pieces that have not yet been – well, they might have been negotiated already, but they're not publicly available. No, I don't think we should negotiate in public, but we want the government to commit to bringing the definitive agreements back to this Legislature for a vote before they are signed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Which we had assured the public that we would have done prior to signing of any agreements.

We know that in Annex L, it talks about hiring protocol. The Minister of Energy responded today by saying, oh, that's all been taken care of. Okay, well, let's see. Tell us. Provide all the hiring protocols for the 17 definitive agreements because we haven't seen them yet. The House hasn't seen them yet. The DCIA does not contain them. It says they are still to be established.

Annex K, the Governance Principles, the parties agree that the dividend policies for the project entities will be agreed upon prior to the execution of the definitive agreements. So what are the dividend policies? I welcome the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Energy to talk us through what are those dividend policies for the entities that they're going to be agreed upon. Okay, great, we don't have them yet; maybe the government has them.

The point of all of this is we believe that there is fundamental democratic importance to bring the agreements back to this Legislature for a vote before they are signed by the government, and that saying things like, oh, everything has already been negotiated is obviously not true because the DCIA itself, as I'm explaining, lists many items, plus the Government of Canada's involvement that has not yet been negotiated.

So other examples, the Executive Construction Committee, in terms of what they're going to consult on, that is supposed to be defined in the definitive agreements. The financing policies for the post-PPA period will be set out in the definitive agreements. I mean, the financing policies are hugely important, so these are all things that we, the public, needs information on from the government. It doesn't need to be now, but before they sign. So to say that everything has been agreed on or everything has been agreed by this House, I certainly don't believe that, Speaker.

In conclusion, we are looking forward to having a fulsome debate with this bill and the value of the gift the Minister of Finance has given to us. We're going to have a lot to say about Churchill Falls and, as well, the gas tax.

I do commend the good job by the government for removing the gas tax, but it is too complicated a measure. We think they should just remove the gas tax completely in legislation.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd, first of all, be remiss if I didn't thank the Minister of Finance for providing me with the opportunity to stand on my feet, not just this time, but probably 15, 20, 30 times again. It's a perfect opportunity for us to get the debate that they were refusing to give us.

I will take my time to go through because I do have a lot of it; 20 minutes right now but multiple times I'll have an opportunity to get up and speak again. I am going to take my time to talk about exactly the piece of legislation that the Minister of Finance wished he was a little bit more relevant to at the time on Thursday.

Mr. Speaker, I do thank the government for listening to us over the past five or six months saying that this gas tax should be removed. We've been saying it for a very long time. I remember having this very discussion with the Finance Minister in the budget debate in the spring in multiple exchanges, talking about whether it be the Future Fund or others, talking about the fact that he liked the idea of making something very permanent and I would tend to agree with him.

I find it a little bit surprising that this piece of legislation talks about a mechanism that, as

my colleague before me had said, CFIB and other organizations tend to say it increases the red tape. I look forward to hearing from the Minister of Red Tape Reduction on how he's going to fight really hard to remove this extra red tape for businesses as well in this province.

I think it's really, really important for us to say that during the media availability that I think the Premier and the Minister of Finance had earlier last week talking about this very issue, I think the Premier said that this was ready in August. It sort of perked my ears right up when they said it was ready in August. I said, well, that's funny because we're into October and now into November and we're bringing it forward. So that two months would be quite significant to the people I represent in my district.

That two months would have saved people per litre as this piece of legislation – a regular passenger vehicle, say, 40 litres, would save them about $3.45 per fill-up. I know the hon. the Minister of Fisheries had said in the debate, the previous year, talked about his big truck. That's not going to do much for him savings on this –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. DAVIS: He's got a new vehicle now maybe, which is great. Thank you, but I think he did talk about the fact that it's not going to be much savings.

That $3.45 per fill-up on a regular passenger vehicle – I know a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians like to drive their trucks and bigger SUVs because of the winter and the weather and all those things associated with it. So I'm just taking the lowest common denominator here of about a 40-litre vehicle and a 40-litre vehicle would be a savings of about $3.45. I ask the Minister of Finance to stand on his feet when he gets the opportunity to correct that if that's incorrect. That's what I ran some numbers on.

If that's extrapolated to a full year – which, with all due respect to the Minister of Finance, he was very clear and I'm happy that he's very clear. He's one of the few that is very clear. Most times he speaks, he's very clear on what he's saying and I thank him for that. He said this is going to start on December 1 – great. So we know a start date.

He was also very clear that it's going to end on March 31. For me, if it was a full year, we're talking under $180 savings for a resident in my district in a typical passenger vehicle that anyone would be driving on any given day.

I think we've got a cost-of-living measure that, yes, we called for. We want it to be permanent, not start a month from now and end three months or four months after that. I think when we debated the budget, we called this right back in the spring. I know myself and the MHA for Mount Scio talked about the windfall that was coming because we could all see this coming.

I think the Minister of Finance saw it coming as well but was willing to wait. I think his words were we've got to wait and see what happens. Well, we've seen what has happened. There's been a windfall for the provincial Treasury of in excess of, they're saying $500 million to $600 million. I think that if this continues, by the end of the fiscal year, it could be as high as $800 million or $900 million – $800 million for sure if this continues, this trend.

The provincial government through one hand is grading great success for helping balance a budget. But I will take one thing that I think the Premier said, which I thought was really interesting. He said he's not going to balance the books on the backs of the constituents or the people. I'm saying constituents because we all represent these individuals that he's talking about.

It seems to me that having a rule, as the Finance Minister said, sort of their notional

rule, seems to be a real factual rule as well, that 80 per cent of any windfall is going to go in to pay down debt. There's nobody on this side of the House – nobody – without question, believes that there should not be a debt repayment plan. There's nobody. Everybody believes that's the case.

We're not the ones who are saying we're not going to balance the budget on the backs of constituents, that Premier did. What he's achieved right now is a 20 per cent share of that windfall to go towards a variety of individuals. A sort of hodgepodge of response – and I'm not suggesting that that's bad; I'm just suggesting it's nowhere near enough.

The people are hurting. Every one of our constituents, I know everyone on that side of the House and I know everyone this side of the House have received those calls from constituents, almost every day, if not multiple times a day who are struggling. This is one opportunity that a government can do more and should do more.

At the very minimum, they should take their own words as advice. They should make things permanent so people can plan, not give us a tax relief that starts a month or two from now and ends two or three months or four months after that.

I'm trying to be as factual as I possibly can because I'm sure that the ministers on the other side will call relevance. It's going to be very hard to call relevance on this side, Deputy Speaker, because it was opened up fairly wide by our Finance Minister.

I do thank him for that. I think he understands how thankful we are on this side of the aisle for giving us the opportunity that the Premier wouldn't give us. I will say that I do thank him for that because the Premier didn't afford us that same opportunity, but I do thank my friend and my colleague from Bonavista, the MHA for Bonavista, for helping us make sure the words get out there to the people and the questions that need to be asked.

One of the things about this piece of legislation that I think is interesting and needs to be discussed a little further – and we're going to get lots of opportunity to discuss this announcement versus the legislation that's coming through. One thing we have noticed though is that all the announcements are not necessarily giving all the details at the time of the announcement.

When they're doing the photo op, as we say or as they used to say, they come out and they say, we're removing the 15 per cent off electricity bills and that's where it stops. Then, in the backgrounder that comes out after the announcement that the media gets – what the general public don't always hear – up to 2,000 kilowatts.

I think it really is incumbent upon all of us to ensure that's said right at the announcement. We're going to take 15 per cent off the first 2,000 – that was not said. Go back and listen to it. I listened to it a half-dozen times to make sure – I was going to say it here in this House – it was true. At the end of the day, the public needs to know.

So when a constituent phones me and says they're removing 15 per cent. Yeah, 15 per cent over a four-month period where all of your electricity for the most part – most people that live in my constituency or a lot of other constituencies in downtown St. John's, as an example, with older homes that are a little bigger, probably not as airtight as they should be, as new builds would be, and they use electricity as their primary source of heat, like virtually most of my district, they're going to far exceed 2,000 kilowatts during the time period that the minister has given.

Now, he has said that he hopes that would continue, provided everyone gets on board and signs on to the Churchill Falls

agreement, and everyone that's talking bad about it now comes over and says this is an excellent deal, those sort of do-nothings that people have talked about. Those individuals are just divergent views. That doesn't mean they don't agree with the principle, like we do, of having a deal done. There's not one person on this side of the House – not one I think – that believes that a good deal should not be done.

There are a lot of people on this side of the House posed questions about it; there are a lot of people on this side of the House have individual problems. I know not every Member is going to feel the same impacts as the Member for Lake Melville, and I agree with that. That's challenging. I've been there and I've seen some of the stuff that's happening in his community, based on these projects moving forward.

There has to be discussions. There has to be supports. There has to be additional opportunities to ensure the individuals that are on the doorsteps of development are not impacted by it as bad as some have been in the past. We've seen those mistakes. We have to fix them. If you're not willing to have those conversations, they can't be fixed.

It's so important that we all work together, as the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Arts has said many times, or at least in the last couple of days when he spoke, we should all work together. I agree. If that was done, they'd still have 21 Members on that side of the House.

My disappointment comes from the fact that there's a significant amount of opportunity that needs to be told to the people of this province. I used one example about the 2,000 kilowatts as not continuing the sentence. We're going to give you 15 per cent off but it's going to be capped. It's going to be capped on the most expensive time and the most high-use times in the year.

The Finance Minister – and it's not his fault, I know it's not his fault. His officials put together a backgrounder, and in the backgrounder, it says, the average monthly use is about 1,350 kilowatt hours –

C. PARDY: It's 1,450.

B. DAVIS: Yes, 1,450. He'll correct me because it's around 1,400 or 1,500 kilowatt hours for the year, but that's factoring in the summer months, that drags it down.

If you're going to do this entire 15 per cent for the full year, that's accurate, but it's not accurate if you're picking the three or four months in the biggest time of the winter when it's the coldest, when you're using the most energy and most kilowatt hours.

The more accurate statement in the backgrounder would have been what the average consumption during those four months is, which is quite significantly higher than 2,000. It's not 1,400 when you add in June, July and August. That just stands to reason. Those are the months that we do not use as much energy as we would in the winter months. I think everyone can agree on that fact.

In this case, we've got a piece of legislation that says that if, in this case, Brent crude goes lower than $89 a barrel, then the entirety of the tax break comes off; not a little bit, not a sliding scale, the entirety. So 7.5 cents is gone and gas goes up, the very next day, within 20 of the previous days, the very next month – it will go up for the next quarter I should say, sorry. I don't want to say something wrong. It will be in the next quarter.

I said that creates red tape for one, but I think it's also sort of like a blunt instrument. I think if you're going to put a cap, then a cap should be sliding, if that's what you're planning to do. But I just think the tax break should be permanent. You can always revisit permanency.

I've always said this House of Assembly is like a time machine, not a hot tub time machine like the MHA for Terra Nova says all the time, but it's a time machine. If the legislation that you create today needs to be updated tomorrow – we will see lots of pieces of legislation, I think we heard six pieces or something that the Government House Leader gave notice on today. Some of those are existing pieces of legislation. They're not all new. So they can be updated.

So I will ask the hon. Finance Minister to consider that. I think this could be updated, if you wanted to do it as a permanent tax benefit. Everyone will understand that if oil goes down to $27 a barrel, like it was when we took office in early 2015, it was very low when we first came in, but it's very high right now.

I think bringing the tax to zero is an important piece, but I think the public should understand that it doesn't come in until the 1st of December and then it's for a short period of time, and it depends solely upon whether the price of oil is going to stay at $89 a barrel.

I do have a little bit of time left. We've talked about the affordability measures for the 15 per cent Churchill Falls electricity rebate. We're very different on the viewpoints on that when we were campaigning. I think when the New Democratic Party were campaigning, they said we're going to take 15 per cent off, no question. I think the NDP actually said all fuel or all electricity or energy products, but we committed to 15 per cent, not 15 per cent with a stipulation of 2,000 kilowatts per month, just 15 per cent, which I think is an important point.

I think I've got a few minutes left to take a second to delve into some of what the Finance Minister talked about in his speech to start this piece of legislation. We talked about the oversight. We've talked a lot about the oversight of the project, who's going to be looking at it and the independence of that oversight.

So what we have, we've got a three-person Oversight Committee that was hand-picked by the Premier, his office, no viewpoint from anybody else. I would hazard to guess that probably his Cabinet wasn't involved. They were involved in the ratification probably, but not the picking of the three names that came forward.

I'm not challenging these people's credibility at all. I'm going to have people standing up after and say I am; I'm not. They deserve the independence as well. They deserve to be able to be picked in an independent fashion so no one ever questions their independence. I'm sure they would have preferred that process.

We've heard multiple changes to the process. We've had a Premier, on day one of the campaign, set out – his first announcement, I think I remember seeing it on NTV news – there will not be a Churchill Falls deal without a referendum of the people of this province. That was his words, not mine.

Whether you agree with a referendum or don't agree with a referendum, that was a promise. It wasn't a promise like I'm going to make health care better, which is one of their slogans because that's relative to a person's opinion. The Minister of Health may think health care is improved; I may think it hasn't. There's a qualification about that.

But when you make a promise of something that's simple for people to understand: You are going to get a say in this monumental, historic, life-changing deal for, not just everyone in this House, not just the 540,000 people that live in this province today, but for every man, woman, child, everyone that's going to come after here for the next 50 years. This is a fantastic opportunity to be open, transparent, bring it back to the

House of Assembly where we can all have an opportunity and a say.

We're going to get an opportunity to have a say over the next little bit on this piece of legislation. Thank you to the Finance Minister for giving us that opportunity. I look forward to all of my colleagues – and do you know what? I hope all of the 11 that never spoke at all in the information session will get up and speak in this case as well. I'd love to hear what they've got to say. I'm looking forward to hearing what they've got to say because I want to hear their viewpoints. I want to hear what their constituents are saying to them and what each of those constituents are saying to us, because maybe there are 20 on that side that all their constituents are saying is this is an excellent deal. Everyone in their areas wants this deal to move forward.

I know that's not what I'm hearing in my district. I know there is opportunity and I'll get more opportunity–

SPEAKER: The Member's time is expired.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Speaker.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

We're debating the *Revenue Administration Act*, which I understand we can pretty well talk about anything now. Thank you to the Finance Minister. I appreciate that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: But, in the spirit, I think it was done out of a sense of goodwill. So I'm going to take that opportunity.

With regard to Churchill Falls, the one thing we've been consistent about from the get-go, Speaker, is about ascertaining whether it was the 2025 deal or this one, if it makes good economic sense, pure and simple, and trying to leave the partisan politics out of it. It's been getting cloudier and cloudier.

I will say this, since the debate and just leading up to it, I've heard more people come up to me in the public and asking what do you think about this deal. I'm trying to explain a complicated deal in five minutes or less. It's obviously a lot of people actually are coming up, you have to vote; this is ridiculous. They're angry, they're frustrated and so on and so forth.

What we've been consistent about this from the get-go, as the NDP, we put forth the need for an independent oversight that's truly independent, whether it was with the previous deal or this one, the need to bring it back to the House of Assembly to be voted on before it's signed, otherwise, once it's agreed to, what are we voting on. The last condition has to do with the support of the Innu for this deal.

Those are the three conditions we set forth and we remain hopeful, but I can tell you there's an increasing amount of frustration out there. The minister in this *Revenue Administration Act* speaks about real savings every time someone fills up. There was a time in my life when gas prices went through the roof, way back when, on Thursday, you'd get the announcement and you'd go out to the pumps the night before because the price was going to shoot upward. Or when Costco came along, you'd drive in there and get your gas there. After a while, you'd start to realize, man, I'm going to be waiting in lineup for several hours to save, what, $4 or $5 on a fill-up or whatever else. After a while, I stopped that long ago; it balances out.

I think, in many ways, when we're looking at addressing the issues of affordability, is we've got to stop picking around the edges and it's got to be part definitely of a broader affordability plan. Removing the tax directly affects anyone, I guess, if a person has a car or can afford to drive their car, that's for sure. Especially if you go to the gas pumps

now, you see more people filling up, putting $5 in, $10 in, whatever else. It tells you that even with the gas tax, they're still not saving a whole lot because, overall, the price is still quite significant.

Seniors on fixed incomes, maybe not. People who do not drive are not going to directly benefit from this. Yes, maybe in the transportation cost for food and other things.

People who rely on public transit – well, I think in many ways if we want to start addressing the issues of affordability, a lot of people no longer drive. They can't afford the insurance. They can't afford the maintenance on the car. They can't afford the payments on the car. If you look at public transit, that would give people freedom to live where they wish. Maybe in areas where the rent is cheaper and housing is more affordable, this would be significant for them. That would have a greater impact on affordability.

How about the fact of electrification, of making sure that people can convert their homes to electric, to solar panels, to the use of wind turbines? I can tell you China is – I hate bringing up China because they're not doing it necessarily for any environmental reason, but they're already moving ahead to become the leader in renewable energy and building the infrastructure. Think about the jobs that will go along with that. Think about how you could actually save money for people. I brought that up here in the House here as well.

Thursday last, October 29, I, and a number of other MHAs here, we attended the community breakfast for the Community Food Sharing Association. Lesley Burgess, Bridges to Hope, noted – and here's to put it in context – that if rent is increased by $150, where is that money coming from? It's going to come from food. It's going to come from medication. It's going to come from just heating their homes. They simply cannot make the money stretch.

Hugh Segal, the Progressive Conservative Senator, said the main reason why poverty exists is because of lack of money. People who have less money have less money to spend. It is as simple as that.

But think about $150 a month. That sounds outrageous but that's exactly what some people are facing right now. They're facing rent raises anywhere from $50 up to $150 per month. That's a significant challenge. Even the people who are evicted from 91 Brazil Street have watched the rent where they're going go from $850 up to $1,200. That's a chunk of change.

Lesley Burgess went on to say that families face impossible choices when you see the increase in food that they should not have to be faced with. When I was with a food bank myself, we watched people who came and never been there before who were working families. That's 20 per cent of the people, she said she noticed, that people accessing food banks are employed. One-third of users are children. Children who go to our schools. Children are going to be struggling to learn because they are on an empty stomach.

Essentials have risen out of reach. For anyone who is income secure, well, you might grumble about the price for groceries, but you're still going to buy the products. If you're on the margins, you're already pushed to the point where you now have a choice of whether you eat every day or not.

This is a significant point that she made, and this is what this comes down to because that's what we really have to address here: the pressure of inadequate income is transferred to food banks. When people cannot afford those necessities, they turn to food banks.

I've found, when I was volunteering years ago, that that's basically where government departments would send people – have you tried your local food bank? A food bank is the choice of last resort. We do not have the

funds. It's based on donations. So think about that, inadequate income means that food banks are picking up the pressure. Food banks are not a solution to poverty; they are a life preserver or life jacket, whatever it is, to help people get through that rough time, but, increasingly, it went from that emergency measure to becoming part of people's monthly budget.

Household pressures and increased costs of essentials are basically driving it. We talk about Newfoundland and Labrador outcomes, we look at the social housing wait-list, food insecurity and we have the highest rate of unemployment. I think the question she asked was, are income support measures adequate?

We need to work towards more adequate income, hence why we put forward a motion, not once, but twice, to establish a guaranteed basic income committee. We know that there are some targeted measures that have worked. We would like to see, Speaker, again, let's look at this pilot program, with the federal government, and see just how it works, because I do believe that it's going to save people money.

So let's take a look at when it comes to some of the other challenges here. It's interesting if you ever read about Dunn House and an article, "Canada can end homelessness. Cities in the U.S. are showing it can be done." This is by Dr. Andrew Boozary. He talks about, if you want to talk about affordability, how an investment in public housing, it's returned: the public housing dividend.

He talks about here, the people I treat are not sick due to a shortage of willpower. Illness is imposed on them only through a shortage of social housing supply. Homelessness is not a social inconvenience that happens to carry health consequences. It is a pathology of poverty, and one that we hold the prescription and yet keep declining.

If you look at the number of people who visit emergency room departments in Toronto, more than 524,000 – over a half a million people, I guess a little bit less than the population of Newfoundland and Labrador – hospital bed days avoided and roughly 156,000 fewer emergency department visits as a result of decent affordable housing. So every dollar invested in public housing returns $2.80.

I can think of St. Clare's hospital. I was contacted by doctors. I know that for people that were living across in the shelter, the shelter was not funded as a 24-7 shelter. People had to leave the shelter at 10 a.m. every day and couldn't return until 3 o'clock with nowhere to go. In the dead of winter, where did they go? Well, the hospital is next door. In some cases, they would be admitted.

Now, I will give credit to either the current minister or to the former minister in that the shelter is going to be funded on the 24-7 model and that means that, for those people, they will not have to be pushed out into the cold and they will not be having to go across to the hospital. That's going to be, not only a relief for the people trying to work there and dealing with the issues, but it's going to save the system money.

Dunn House, it's basically associated with the University Health Network. That's what they set up. It's basically a social medicine housing initiative, and they noticed that it had a significant reduction in the use of – in its first year, the 51 tenants at Dunn House saw a 52 per cent reduction in emergency department visits and a 79 per cent drop in time at hospitals.

Now think about what that means. Put an amount to that, what does that mean, because there are going to be dividends and there are going to be savings to the issue.

So we can remove the gas tax, we can chip around the edges. We can give $500 for

seniors, but if we really want to address it, then we start looking at ways where we can have a maximum impact.

American cities were doing better in reducing homelessness. We can do it here as well.

What are some lessons that Dr. Boozary notes? We have to house people first and shift investment toward social and supportive housing, not checking on them once a week, but make sure that they have the supports they need.

Think about this, a lot of people we've helped here in my office, they carry their life in their backpacks. Think about that – everything. You have to take that with you, whether that's your chemo drugs, whether that's your prescriptions. Each day you have to worry about, when do I call the housing line to have a place to stay. Not one of us in this House here, not one of us, have to worry about where we're going to sleep tonight – not one.

We can't treat Diabetes or cancer in encampments.

Second, coordinate a system of compassion and sound evidence, acknowledge homelessness as the generational health crisis that it is. Basically, let's call it what it is, the social determinants of health. If you want to increase health, which is why I asked the question I've asked of the previous administration, I asked it today, Speaker: Will government acknowledge that housing is a basic human right, enshrine it in legislation and go from there? Take that step and I'm going to see some clear proof, regardless of who's in power, that there's a clear will to treat the whole issue of homelessness and housing seriously.

There's evidence after evidence. Now, a lot of the ideas I've brought up, they're not mine. I'm going tomorrow up to Winnipeg for the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness conference. I'm going to, hopefully, bring back ideas that we can have here.

We don't need to reinvent the wheel. They're being done in other parts of the country, in other parts of the world. We just have to have the political will to do it, it's as simple as that.

I will tell you the lady I met at one of the apartment building years ago, she had blankets up on every door and she had heat on in one room. The rest of the place was going moldy because she didn't keep the heat on, until we realized she could get some money back through the heating rebates. So she got some financial help, but the fact is that's the struggle.

We've talked about rent and vacancy control and putting limits on it so people don't face exorbitant rent increases; so we don't see rents going from – and this is a true case here, admitted to by a landlord this time. They increased the rent on one of their properties, one of their houses, from $1,100 to $2,500. That was at the time of the encampment and he had the nerve to say to me that they didn't see that there was a housing emergency or a housing crisis, but he had to jack the rent up on his property because there were so many people, as he said, chasing after it. That's predatory.

The new owners of 91 Brazil are now the second largest rental property owner in the province. They are a numbered company from Ontario, made up of investors from Ontario. Now, think about that. REITS, Real Estate Income Trusts, again, owned from outside, so that's Newfoundland money, taxpayer money in many cases, going straight out of the province.

We can do better, but we need to start looking at bringing in rent and vacancy controls so that predatory landlords do not profit. I'm not saying not to increase rents, there's a good reason for that, but not these predatory amounts.

A livable minimum wage, let's start with that. One of my constituents, sharing a house with his grandson, his grandson had a full-time minimum wage job, but the two of them together was the only way they could afford the house.

The oil rebate, I think it's up to a maximum of $1,000, but here's the thing. This gentleman who called me, the oil company said it's going to cost at least $7,200 to heat his home for a year, at least. He had already put $1,100 into the tank, but he could receive the maximum of $1,000; whereas, if he goes higher than that, he would save a lot more if the HST was removed from all forms of home heating, including oil, not just $1,000. That $1,000 will depend on if he has the income that will qualify him for that.

I understand the budget and I understand the deficit, but let's not, in our attempt to solve the fiscal reality for the problem, increase the fiscal suffering of people on very small incomes, fixed incomes, just trying to put food on the table, heat their homes, pay for their medications, maybe buy their grandchildren a gift every now and again.

We will be putting forward a private Member's resolution on publicly owned grocery stores and striking a committee on this and look at how we can achieve it because we've got a clear example of this. One of my constituents sent me a picture – I think it was in one of the supermarkets here, and I won't say what it is right now. Two loaves of bread, the same loaf of bread – one was just bread, the other was bread for stuffing. The bread for stuffing was twice the price for the bread that was just bread. It's all bread. There's something wrong with that.

So we will be having that discussion here and we hope we'll get the support of all Members. The other thing we will be doing, because when it comes to rent and vacancy control, we will be bringing in ACORN.

ACORN is a national organization that, basically, fights for the rights of tenants. It's very effective in what it does about organizing tenants into tenant unions to challenge the power of financialized landlords and about advocating for government to make change.

We will be doing that at the end of this month because we're at the stage, I guess, where it's time for tenants and people who rent and people who are precariously housed to start organizing to become a political force and to make government, regardless of political stripe, listen.

To get back to my last 26 seconds, I'm not saying that any little bit is unwelcome, but I think we need to go well beyond that. We're well past it. In 2019, when I took office, very few people, if any, on the street. Now it's become an epidemic. There's something wrong with people living in the rough in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I appreciate the opportunity, as always, to stand and represent the residents of Conception Bay East - Bell Island. I want to begin by thanking the Minister of Finance for allowing us the latitude to talk about Churchill Falls when we discuss this gas tax and the implications that Churchill Falls and other issues in this province can have on affordability and other aspects of life in Newfoundland and Labrador and the impacts that it's going to have on the residents, not just in my district, but everywhere. The praise will end there after I thank him for the latitude, to an extent.

I want to pick up on something the Finance Minister said on Thursday and it related to

the media coverage that he heard Thursday morning while he was driving in – a VOCM report. It talked about the lack of market-based pricing that I talked about for Churchill Falls and the lack of an escalator clause for Gull Island.

In describing it, I don't think he did this intentionally, but I think he had the two flipped. I read through *Hansard* and tried to figure it out, and it wasn't entirely clear to me at the time so I did go back and check. I don't think he did any of that intentionally. It was just talking openly in the House without prepared notes and he referenced it. But the market-based pricing is related, what I have been talking about is related to Churchill Falls and the escalator clause is related to Gull Island.

Nevertheless, he was taking exception to the fact that he was concerned about the Opposition Members, like myself, saying things that he thought were incorrect when, in fact, we believe them to be correct. There are philosophical differences with this and with other things and there are things we agree on. But he also said words, and I did get from *Hansard* that he said this: "… if you repeat something that is not factual enough times, people start to believe it.

Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the Finance Minister is exactly correct. A perfect example would be his Premier's promise of a referendum.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: It was something that the Premier said over and over and over again during the campaign, including the night he launched his campaign, in between and the day he won the election campaign in his victory speech, leading people to believe by saying it over and over again that they would actually have a say on any final agreements with Churchill Falls before they are signed.

But the Premier broke that promise and he broke his word, he broke his contract with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. He said on the night he launched his campaign, as I said, that no final agreements would be signed with Hydro-Québec unless all people in Newfoundland of voting age, obviously, would have their say on that agreement.

The Premier repeated it multiple times. He repeated that pledge, that promise to the people of the province on the night he won the election, as I said. Everyone, myself included, assumed that after hearing the Premier say this so many times, that it was true. We believed it. We bought into it because, just as the Finance Minister said last week, if you say things over and over and over, people will believe it. It wasn't just a one-off; it was repeated.

We now know it's not true because there will be no referendum despite that promise, despite the fact that the Premier said it so many times. So naturally people feel a little betrayed. They feel let down. Especially in light of the fact that there's been no real explanation from the Premier as to why he won't live up to his promise. He has not explained it adequately to the people. I spent the last couple of months talking about this with people and a lot over the weekend when I was gathering names for the petition that I presented to the House earlier.

Mr. Speaker, the Members opposite of the PC Party, including the Premier, Minister of Energy and Mines, the Minister of Finance, all the others need not take my word for it. Take a couple of minutes and go on Facebook and look at the commentary under any post that the Premier has put up since August, since the announcement.

I will say to the Members opposite who campaigned on and broke the same promise, some of whom can no longer keep their comment section open, they need to talk to their Premier and hear what people

are saying there. It can't possibly be that the folks in my district and the others that I've encountered from around the province who I've known for many years, who are contacting me, they have to be hearing the same thing, that there's a level of disappointment. Long-time PC members in my district are saying that to me.

As I said last week, people are angry. People are angry that the Premier broke his word. People say he can't be trusted. People are calling for that referendum and, as a matter of fact, many people are saying he should no longer be in the job because he broke that promise.

I've spent a lot of time over the last couple of weeks talking to people, as I mentioned, and reading the commentary that's there. Not just the comments, but I opened the people who are putting them up. Like it or not, this where a lot of the feedback in our world now comes from, on Facebook.

I wanted to see who was saying this, was it bots, was it people with no friends and just spouting off at Liberals. No, they're real people. I spent a couple of hours over the weekend and I screen grabbed and put in a Google Doc, 285 pages. I had to stop. There were about four or five comments on each page, 95 per cent of it is negative, that they don't think we should go into a 50-year deal without knowing exactly what we're going into. The majority of it, though, is about the referendum and the fact that one was promised.

Whether or not you like the idea of a referendum, one was promised and people bought into it. As the Finance Minister said, say things over and over enough, people will believe it, and they believed they were getting their referendum.

Mr. Speaker, it's my belief that the Premier never intended to have a referendum. It was an empty campaign promise he thought he'd never have to deliver. Well, let me tell you the people of Newfoundland and Labrador feel let down. They do feel deceived because this was no small promise. This was about a huge 50-year agreement.

I ran into somebody yesterday at Dr. Bill Montevecchi's celebration of life. A man who is almost 90 years old and he said he didn't like either deal, To be fair, he said I didn't like your deal, didn't like the Liberal deal, don't like the PC deal. But what I don't like about this is the way it's being handled now.

He lived through the entire 1969 agreement and he couldn't believe we were about to do this again without the possibility of at least a vote. He didn't agree with the referendum either. He didn't think it was a good idea, unless there was going to be a much better education campaign than there is right now because this so-called deal that can sell itself, that we're still spending hundreds of thousands of dollars in the media, on buses, on TVs, on radio, online, using the threat of tariffs trying to scare people. People don't understand exactly what is going on.

I spent most of yesterday talking to people about this when I was going around my district. We have to remember that only 44 per cent of the people in this province voted for this government. They've got a slim majority. They lost one of their Members already. They're at 20 seats and people are very, very concerned that so few people are having the final say on this. Now, we're not even going to be given the opportunity to vote on it.

Just before I spoke, the Page came around and passed me Bill 27, An Act Respecting Civil Forfeiture of Property. The minister, earlier, was talking about things that we're going to be doing in this week and voting on acts about evidence, workplace health and safety, *Cannabis Control Act*. I haven't read any of it. Why don't we just vote on it now, if this is the way it's going to be treated? If the Members opposite can say, we already voted on something.

As I mentioned in my petition earlier, I think the Leader of the Opposition pointed out there are still six or seven things – and we only picked a few because we had a limited amount of time in Question Period –that are not worked out yet. So we have not voted on the final agreements because they don't exist yet, or if they do exist, we haven't seen them. A select group of people have seen those documents.

No, we shouldn't negotiate this in public, obviously, but the story changes from day to day. When people are in, when people are out, sometimes it's convenient for the PCs to hold a news conference to say somebody is in as the new chief negotiator but when they're out – do you think that people in this province are naïve enough to think that it wouldn't be important, leading to the most important so-called debate on a 50-year project, that we would want to know that the chief negotiator was not going to continue?

I mean, when Michael Wilson resigned from the committee, when they were in Opposition and we were in government, they went ballistic over this and it was the biggest travesty. He was all out in the media talking about everything that was so bad about the 2024 agreement. Now we've got people who are leaving and hired secretly last year and we knew nothing about any of this.

One minister opposite said we hire people all the time. Sure, you hire people who are front-line staff or clerks, there's a lot of turnover in government; a lot of people work here. But when you're hiring executives, there's always a full email that goes out to everybody to say we've hired a new assistant deputy minister or executive. You can't believe that it's handled this way so badly and they can't get it back on the rails, which is the main problem here.

We're not finding out about these things when we should find out about it, because we would have asked questions. Maybe some of the Members opposite would have asked questions about the chief negotiator leaving, about the legal counsel stepping down the night before the information session.

The Finance Minister also said something else that caught my interest last week, but I should mention, as well, the reminder about the urgency of this. There was no urgency when the Premier was the Opposition Leader. We've got lots of time. We've got until 2041. We're not going to rush this. We're on nobody's timeline. Then, all of a sudden, mid-August, we got to get this done by December 31. Okay, what changed there?

Yes, the deal was different because the federal government was fully involved. They had been involved prior to the loss in the election and then it had advanced, but in a matter of a couple of months they've managed to figure out, what they call now, the final agreements. We've heard the Energy and Mines Minister say today, the deal is done. That's frightening.

The Minister of Finance said during his speech last week, when he questioned our approach during the special session that was held in September, one that 11 of the 20 Members opposite did not partake in with the exception of closing statements. They never asked one question to any of the experts who were brought in here. People who have spent lifetimes working in this industry, never asked one question; never even got anyone to hand them some questions that they could ask; didn't stand up – 11 of the 20.

The Minister of Finance said last week, you have to ask the right questions. He was talking about us and our approach to the special session. You have to ask the right questions, and he went on to say, unless you're afraid of the answers.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

F. HUTTON: Yes, exactly and that's why the Premier is not asking the question in the referendum, because he's afraid of the answer. He knows, and I'm sure that his communications people and his team around him are telling him, this is not going the way we had planned. They are not picking him up and carrying him around the province and saying, yes, Premier, thank you.

They are questioning the approach. They are questioning the process. They are questioning all the things that are happening –

AN HON. MEMBER: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

F. HUTTON: – the things that we're asking questions about.

As I mentioned a couple of minutes ago, the Premier has said that this is a deal that's selling itself. It's not. They're spending all this money on this continued advertising campaign, we're under attack from the United States, to try to scare people about what's happening with Trump – not to diminish what is happening with the tariffs and this complete level of disrespect from the United States towards its neighbour and partner for hundreds of years, and then, all of a sudden, we're dealing with this. This is a short period of time for that guy in power, so to try to scare people into thinking that we've got to do this deal now because Donald Trump is going to fool it all up or having something to with it.

The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure said multiple times last week about Bern Coffey and his departure, that there's nothing to see here. Mr. Speaker, if there's nothing to see, if somebody is telling you that, there's probably something to see. There's no smoking gun, but we don't need a smoking gun, we've got the facts.

We have the facts that someone the Premier touted as a brilliant lawyer, brought in to help deal with this and advise on Churchill Falls, left the night before with a terse, little one-line sentence saying: I'm gone. Then the Premier is expecting us to believe that this person, who was secretly hired back in January – we didn't find out about it until May when we asked questions about it – the fact that he was leaving, the Premier said he never had anything to do with it or any direct dealings with this adviser. There are too few people involved in this circle of people who are making the final decisions for us to believe that that's not the case, that the Premier had absolutely nothing to do with it.

By the way, it was the same lawyer – and this has nothing to do with Mr. Coffey's credibility or I'm not taking a personal attack on him, as the Minister of Mines and Energy says I'm attacking people's character. I'm not. What I'm talking about is the process.

Bern Coffey was brought in, in 2024, and paid by the PC Party, by the taxpayers through the PC Party, to advise them. They brought him back in to do it now. So why, all of a sudden, is he out? Why isn't he talking? If it's such a good deal, put out one line saying it's a good deal and I support it. Maybe then what the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure is saying, we might take it at face value or believe him, but right now we don't. It's just the continuation of an erosion of trust that's the problem here, in this Premier and in the process and how the story continually changes.

When I was talking to people yesterday about this and I started talking about Jerome Kennedy and I started talking about Bern Coffey and then Gary Smith and now we're talking about Barry Perry, I mean, they're not following it. The average person is not following this to the same level. They want, at the very least, if they're not going to get a vote, for us, who are in here actually working on this day to day and talking about

it, to understand it. We're not going to be given an opportunity to do that.

The Premier said during the special session that Mr. Perry was going to be continuing on when he knew he wasn't. We now know that he was told that he wasn't going to be doing that. Why did the Premier say that? They won't answer to it. So that, again, erodes the trust in this whole process.

They held a news conference last Wednesday when we were getting ready to bring in our PMR and, you know, I went to that news conference and, as usual, the Premier gave some vague answers, didn't really get specific. That's when we found out we weren't going to get to vote on the final agreement. That we had already done that, even though the DCIA and the 17 separate contracts are going to be completely different and, obviously, the final agreements, there will be much more content in there. Weak, weak answers.

Then I watched a panel online from CBC. The answers that were given by the Premier last week were commented on by one of the reporters who said it was embarrassing when referring to the answers the Premier gave. That reporter's words, not mine.

For the record, what we voted on back in September was a DCIA, about 70 pages. What we will not get to vote on, 17 contracts, which will be likely hundreds and hundreds of pages; complicated, complex, legal documents. Nobody is going to get to see them except four or five people, and maybe a couple of the Members of Cabinet, I don't know. What matter does it make? The Minister of Mines and Energy has already said the deal is done.

So for the Premier to say that the deal is done is, for me, ridiculous. It's insulting because we haven't voted on what the final deal is. The trust, as I mentioned, is the key here. I go back to the gentleman who was almost 90 years old, talking about how he didn't trust dealing with Quebec as well but understood that we have to deal with Quebec because of the geography of the project and where everything is. There has to be trust as we move forward and, right now, I don't think there is.

There is a way, though, for the Premier to redeem himself here, at this point, if he wants to. If you're not going to give the people of Newfoundland and Labrador what you promised, what he said over and over and over again, if he's not going to give them the opportunity to have their voice, to have their final say on the final agreements before they're signed, at least give the Members of this House who represent all those people their opportunity to have a final say, to make a decision based on the facts of what we can look at and after we've read it over. Because signing it and bringing it back after the fact, it's going to be too late. We've done that before, and that will be this Premier's legacy.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It seems like some of my colleagues are anxious to get up and have a say, so I'm sure we'll all get an opportunity to speak.

I did want to thank the Minister of Finance for opening up the conversation as we speak about Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3.

Of course, dealing with the whole concept of affordability is something that I know every Member of this House is very tuned into. As I stand, of course, it is always my privilege to stand on behalf of the residents of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi District, and the province at large, to speak to these issues.

We know that affordability is something that the NDP have been pushing for, advocating for, cost-saving measures for a very, very long time. So we're pleased to see some sort of a measure of relief coming forward with the gas tax relief for a portion of time. However, I'd like to talk a little bit on a larger scale of the ways that this government and the Members who are advocating can push for a more fulsome look at affordability for the people of our province.

We've talked a lot about collaboration. I know myself and my colleague, we've reached out on many occasions to ministers in various portfolios to try to have conversations to bring forward ideas. I think it's extremely important to have these ongoing conversations with government.

I know, recently, I had a great conversation and a meeting with the Minister of TCAR, talking about some of the issues, especially in the St. John's East - Quidi Vidi District, which are so prominent for arts and culture, recreation, tourism. These are all huge issues, and I do appreciate the minister taking the time so that we can collaborate and talk about ways that we can move things forward for the people. The same goes, certainly, for the Minister of Health.

I'm very, very honoured to be able to have an opportunity to collaborate, to speak about issues, in particular, in my critic area for mental health and addictions – something that is very near and dear to my heart. I think that there are ways that we can incorporate health services and affordability all into one, because they are all interrelated. There's no doubt about it.

So I'll just back up for just a moment here now and, of course, I'm going to reiterate some of the verse that my colleague, MHA Dinn, has already spoken to, because these are things from our NDP platform, and also just referring back to the Churchill Falls MOU. I just want to reference that because that, obviously, is a gateway for us in terms of possible resource affordability. There has been, and will continue to be, a lot of conversation and debate about the MOU, despite the fact that there has been no referendum.

For the NDP, we put forward three conditions that we would love to see this government enact, which would be the need for the independent oversight, which we have still continued to question; the need to bring it back for a debate, the final deal, because we know it's not going to be the same as what is in the MOU, there are going to be changes that will come and, of course, the importance of having that fulsome, democratic debate in the House of Assembly on behalf of the people of this province, it is crucial.

For me, as a critic for Indigenous Affairs, as well, the consultation and true engagement and approval of the Innu leaders of our province, who, really, at this point in time, have been dismissed on a regular basis with the history of beyond 300 years of existence, which is really, in my mind, off the mark altogether, and the lack of meaningful engagement for our first peoples. I think it's really crucial that that component be respected, to be honoured, the people of the land.

These are the three conditions that the NDP have set forward for the province. Again, I would like to thank the Minister of Finance for opening up this discussion about affordability. I know we all have different ways of approaching it, but it's really important in this time that we truly do collaborate, we listen to each other's ideas, we can learn, because the bottom line is we just want to make sure that people can thrive in this province.

Some of the things in that collaborative approach that we've been putting forward with the NDP is rent control. Rent control is one avenue where we can see people actually afford to stay in their homes, in their apartments. When we see REITs raise money with very little notice, especially with

people, seniors on fixed incomes. As I've mentioned many times before in this House of Assembly, one of the first things that came to my attention were a group of seniors who were suddenly getting a rent increase. Of course, their income hasn't changed, so what are they going to do? Are they going to lose their home? They have to try to find a new way of making money somehow.

Rent control is something that has been looked at and has been successful in many other areas. It is a way to regulate – and I know this government is big on regulations – and ensure that things don't get blown out, that the rent doesn't go sky high without proper oversight.

That is one thing that continues to be something that myself and my colleague, MHA Jim Dinn, are going to continue to push forward.

SPEAKER: I just remind the Member that we don't use names. We use positions and titles and districts.

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

Yes, I continue to learn and thank you for that. I appreciate that.

The second thing is the basic living income. In this House of Assembly, we certainly asked for the findings of a report – I don't know where it ended up. It got tabled almost by accident in this House of Assembly and, honestly, I feel that the public really should have the opportunity to have a fulsome understanding of guaranteed basic living income, which many, many people in our community have been pushing for, for quite some time.

We know there are models right across the world that are successful and many countries that implement this. We have our own religious coalition that have been making motions and advocating for quite some time. It is an ecumenical group of religious leaders who see the value in a basic living income to ensure that everybody can, not only survive, but also thrive in our community.

Not everybody has the same access. So guaranteed basic living income is something that is, I think, merited. We do have a report. We never got an opportunity to really look at that report or discuss that report, and I would certainly put that forward for this government to consider, a healthy discussion and debate on that report that was put forward that my colleague tabled.

One of the things, as well, when we're talking about food costs and we're talking about food banks, in my district, I know there are a few food banks that have been really on wheels. The extreme need and growing need for people to access food and healthy food, food to sustain themselves through food banks, it's a band-aid.

We talk a lot about shelters and the need for them and food banks. Yes, we do need them. But what a crime it is that we actually need them in this day and age. In a province with the resources that we have, with the kind of incredible opportunities that we have in this province, there should be nobody who should be availing of a food bank. We should all be able to afford to feed ourselves. That is one of the basic things of humanity, is that we can house ourselves and that we can feed ourselves.

We are seeing this escalation. Every time I turn around, there's another food bank doing an event, another: fill the boat. Memorial University Students' Union just recently did a fill the boat food bank because of the extreme need for food bank use on campus. We're talking about people who are academics in school. It's just skyrocketing.

It's not just a particular spot or a particular demographic. Food banks are in desperate need right across this province, but in my District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi,

Emmaus House, does fantastic work and has been doing incredible work for quite some time, availing of this service in community, and one that I hope eventually we will have absolutely no need for.

I know my colleague has already spoken to our PMR that will be coming forward in the coming weeks and that will, hopefully, encourage a good discussion about food costs and how we can make food more available for everyone, for all of us. So again, going to the social determinants of health, how we are all going to survive and thrive.

We do want to see the best possible deal; we want this Churchill Falls MOU – I know that there are still so many unknowns in this discussion. There are a lot of things that we will certainly be continuing to have a discussion about. But, for now, I would really like to talk a little bit about mental health and how it intersects with the economy and the kind of impacts that it has.

I received a letter, after some discussions and some public declarations there about mental health and addictions issues and I received an incredible response from a constituent. It wasn't a standard response or an email; it was from somebody who was dealing with mental health issues and was quite learned, a professional and it really details a different story than oftentimes we hear.

I'm going to read a little bit about this letter, just so it will draw some conclusions about the cost of not doing mental health correctly in our community, what we can do to improve it.

Dear MHA O'Leary,

There's something incredibly disheartening about having to leave a place you have called home for seven years, not because you wanted a change, but because remaining there was becoming financially unsustainable. That has recently been my reality.

As a teacher, I have dedicated my professional life to education, to supporting others and to contributing meaningfully to the community around me. I have worked hard to establish a career, maintain my independence and build a stable life on a single income. I never imagined that, despite those efforts, I find myself questioning whether something as fundamental as a safe, secure and affordable home would remain within my reach.

Leaving my home after seven years was more than a financial decision. It meant walking away from a place that had become familiar, comfortable and deeply connected to my sense of stability. A home is not simply four walls and a monthly payment. It is where we establish routines, find refuge from the demands of everyday life and create a sense of belonging.

Having to uproot that stability because of rising rental costs is an experience that changes how you understand the housing crisis. It is no longer something you read about or hear debated politically. It becomes something you live.

So my recent move has brought me into your district, my District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, and I have since begun following your work in the House of Assembly more closely. I have genuinely appreciated your contributions and perspectives and particularly your advocacy around mental health and affordable housing.

These are two issues I feel strongly about, both personally and professionally. I find it encouraging to hear someone acknowledge the broader social implications of housing insecurity, and the importance of addressing the conditions that affect people's overall well-being.

What makes the comments that I've put forward particularly meaningful to me is that these are not abstract policy discussions. They reflect the lived realities of people who are working, people who are contributing and doing everything reasonably expected of them, yet still struggling to achieve a basic sense of financial and residential security.

I have been a renter for seven years and, during that time I have watched the cost of housing increase at a rate that is becoming increasingly difficult to justify or sustain. In just six years, my monthly rent rose from $1,350 to $1,750; an increase of nearly 30 per cent. That represents an additional $4,800 annually, not toward building equity or securing a financial future, but simply toward maintaining a roof over my head.

I am an educated, established professional with a full-time career living independently on a single income. I have invested years in my education, worked hard, contributed to my community and endeavoured to maintain financial stability. Yet, I increasingly find myself confronting a troubling reality: Professional achievement and responsible financial management no longer necessarily translate to housing security.

This should concern all of us. We have created an economic environment in which housing costs are increasingly disconnected from the financial realities of the people who sustain our communities. The implicit expectation seems to be that individuals must continually absorb escalating housing costs regardless of whether their incomes increase proportionately.

For those of us living on a single income, there is no second salary to cushion these increases. Every additional dollar directed towards rent is a dollar unavailable for retirement savings, unexpected expenses, personal well-being or simply enjoying a reasonable quality of life. I am not seeking luxury or extravagance, I am seeking something considerably more fundamental: a safe, secure, well-maintained home, a sense of permanence, and the reassurance that my ability to remain housed will not be determined by the next substantial rent increase.

There is also a broader societal question that deserves serious consideration. At what point did housing cease to be understood primarily as a basic human necessity and become an increasingly lucrative financial asset with the security of the people living in these properties treated as secondary to investment returns?

I recognize that property ownership involves legitimate expenses and that responsible landlords deserve a reasonable return on their investments; however, there must be a meaningful distinction between a reasonable return and a system that permits housing insecurity to become an acceptable consequence of maximizing profit. The growing concentration of residential properties in the hands of large investment entities raises important questions about the balance between private economic interests and the public good.

Housing is not an ordinary commodity. Unlike discretionary purchases, it is not something that you can simply choose to do without when prices become unreasonable. This imbalance makes meaningful regulations and tenant protections essential.

Furthermore, increasing the housing supply, while necessary, cannot be the entirety of our response. Without effective safeguards, against excessive rent increases, stronger security of tenure and meaningful accountability, we risk expanding the housing market without actually improving housing security for people who depend on it.

Perhaps what troubles me most is what my own circumstances reveal about the larger problem. If an established, full-time professional can increasingly struggle to

reconcile housing costs with financial stability, what realistic prospects are we offering seniors on fixed incomes, single parents, individuals with disabilities and those earning considerably less?

A society should not measure its prosperity solely by the value of its real estate or the profitability of its investments. It should also measure prosperity by whether the people who educate its children care for its vulnerable, provide its essential services and contribute to its communities and can afford to live with them.

Housing insecurity does not begin with homelessness. It begins much earlier when people lose the ability to plan for their futures, when financial decisions become governed by the fear of displacement and when the place that should provide the greatest sense of safety become a source of persistent uncertainty.

I will go on now and just finish up. A home should offer more than shelter. It should provide stability, autonomy, belonging and peace of mind. These are not unreasonable expectations nor should they be privileges contingent upon wealth, marital status or access to a second household income.

Deputy Speaker, I want to say thank you. This is not simply a debate about rent control, it is a conversation about what kind of province we want to be, whose interests our public policies are designed to protect our people, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm very pleased to speak today, again. The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi was very good to bring up the cost-of-living issues and affordability. In this debate now, we can talk about pretty much anything we want. I think there are a number of important things, but I'm actually going to stick with the topic at hand first, and that's the gas tax.

First of all, I want to say that I'm in favour of helping with the gas tax and bringing it down. It's a good move. There is nothing wrong with that, absolutely.

We have to remember, of course, that the provincial gas tax accounts for 7.5 cents per litre, but the province also collects 10 per cent of the HST on gas. Today, in Corner Brook, the maximum price of gas is $2.02 per litre. Of that litre, of course, the province gets its 7.5 cents, and it gets 20 cents from HST. So it's a significant amount from HST.

The mechanisms that we're looking at for determining the price of gas, after March 31, is more my concern right now.

The federal government recently suspended the federal gas tax, temporarily. They said they would do it temporarily, and then they announced that there would be a gradual return. Starting in February, they'd bring it back by half, I think, and then, again, full by March. This was announced back in September. It gave people a lot of predictability in how they could operate and what the price of gas would be with regard to that tax.

The minister has mentioned, of course, that he can't make a permanent cut to the gas tax because he can't predict the price of oil, but we seem to have a little more predictability when it comes to our other topic today, which has been Churchill Falls.

The bill on the gas tax links the price of oil to the price of gas. I understand the logic in this in terms of the affordability for government, but by not linking it to the price of gas, it doesn't link it to the affordability for customers. So whether or not the gas tax will be on or not depends on the price of oil. Initially, I understand this price to be $89,

and that price will be set by regulation in Cabinet. So I'm assuming it will be updated over the months as the price of oil changes significantly.

I did hear that it was picked at that price because that's $1 cheaper than the Alberta price, but we've got an education as well, of course. Their trigger is set to West Texas Intermediate, whereas ours is set to Brent crude.

Again, the minister mentioned that he doesn't like to play politics with this. He wants to set a price and set a mechanism and leave the mechanism to handle it instead of just judgment. But that explanation seems to be counter to an empirically derived price. I would assume the amount that we're making off oil royalties will somehow justify the offset on the gas tax that we're going to lose as a government. This seems really arbitrary and possibly easily manipulated by Cabinet when they set that trigger price in the future.

But as my colleague from Mount Scio said when she started her response to this debate, I want to use some of the time to talk about the gift that we've gotten from the Finance Minister to broaden our topic to talk about Churchill Falls.

Today in Question Period, the Premier said there was nothing left for us to debate, but even a layman could read the DCIA and see that there's a lot left to be worked out – a lot. The Member for Windsor Lake asked just a handful of quick things that if you just did a search on definitive agreements in the DCIA you'd find things that have to be worked out in the 17 detailed agreements that have to be created.

We haven't had a lot of time, and I know that's been a theme, we haven't had the opportunity to ask questions about the DCIA as we would have liked back in September, but this will afford us some opportunity. I'm really looking forward to Committee of the Whole on this bill.

We can get into some really detailed questions because there are things that were asked in that information session to the panel that we didn't get answers on. It was somewhat frustrating quite frankly.

I'm going to recap some of what the Finance Minister said in his speech to open debate on this. He said, "… I know that the Official Leader of the Opposition is saying we don't ask lots of times, or we ask questions and we're not getting answers about Churchill Falls economics of it. I would agree that we haven't had a whole lot of conversation with it." That's right.

You weren't able to answer our questions, for the most part, mostly because of the restriction of the debate. I won't say you couldn't answer them but we didn't have the opportunity and I'm sure you would have liked to. Clearly, I think we've broadened this debate because I'm sure you felt some frustration at not being able to answer questions that we had about the deal.

The next section, "Well, Barry Perry, who we class as an expert, far more superior than anyone we've got in this House with 40 Members …."

Now I'm sure Mr. Perry is a fine person and again very smart. I don't know about superior. It's really too bad he stepped aside before – well he said he would step aside before the information session and didn't tell us. The minister continues, "… Annex D tells you what we're getting. We don't need to negotiate in a definitive agreement like the market-based formula that they tried 10 months. This, Speaker, is what comes from Churchill Falls."

Again, it was good to confirm that the other side admits that we were getting market-based pricing and now we're not getting market-based pricing.

"No one has asked a question in this House of Assembly on what are the finances of this

deal. Annex D, if you haven't seen it, look that up."

I asked a lot of questions about the finances of this deal. We had J.P. Morgan in here and we asked a lot of questions. We didn't get a lot of answers sometimes, unfortunately. We've all read the DCIA, looked at the Annex D, we can see what's laid out there in black and white for many, many years to come. I'm fully aware that if you repeat something that is not factual enough times, people start to believe it, and that scares me and I share that with the minister.

This is a problem. But I'll say this – better health care, safer communities, lower taxes, more power, more transmission, more value; yes to less, no to more; better health care, safer communities, lower taxes and so on. When you do say things many, many times, there is a worry that people will believe it. But I think people are smarter than government often considers.

The next section, he said: "So here's the way Gull Island works. The Opposition states we're losing market-based pricing, even though our experts say we've got market-based pricing." I think maybe he misspoke but there's no market-based pricing with Gull Island. That's a cost of service model.

"Our experts said it was too complicated; therefore, their recommendation was quit it and have something that would be an escalator, like we're talking about, that would give a definitive increase on Churchill Falls power. We've got that."

Yes, we have a payment schedule that will not be affected by the market for electricity. So, in terms of an escalator like that, there is no such thing. There is an inflation adjustment, but that will only kick in if there is inflation significantly higher over the 2 per cent for multiple, multiple years. There's no escalation with regard to market-based pricing. So, if prices go way up, our payment schedule will stay exactly the same.

"Gull Island: $30 billion. We've got equity in that because Quebec is giving us $3.5 billion for our equity share of this $30 billion. I assume everyone is aware of that. Then they're going to give us equity on that, which will be millions of dollars earned over the life of a project – 8.5 per cent of equity on $3.5 billion."

I don't know if we're aware of how much return on equity we're going to get over the 60 years we're talking about, because we're not starting this project or seeing it starting until 10 years, really, by the time it's built. Then it's going on for 50 years.

By my calculation and according to our briefing from Hydro, we're getting about $3 billion net present value over that 50-year period. Because the $7 billion I think, that's cited in the government's propaganda, includes that $3.5 billion equity again –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'll ask the Member to address the Chair.

J. PARSONS: Okay, absolutely.

Thank you, Speaker.

Yes, that $3.5 billion equity is already included in that number, but we don't actually get that equity of course, that stays with the project.

The Member across the way would say, well, look at graphic of Gull Island and the price is decreasing. That's what the cost of service model does. Again, we've heard that the cost of service model is the recommended way to do this, to build Gull Island, to do the upgrades, and that's right when you're developing power for yourself. It's for the cheapest, fairest way to get customers power. The problem is, the customer here is predominantly Quebec, not Newfoundland and Labrador.

Again, look at projects that are ongoing in the province, including Bay d'Espoir, that's being built that way too. This is not a merchant plant. This is being built, again, for the customer. The customer is right, they're paying for it. Absolutely, but it's the best way to get Quebecers power.

Then we come to transmission. They're going to build, from Gull Island to Quebec. They're going to build from Gull Island to Churchill Falls – they, being Quebec. We don't pay. They're doing that.

We know that the society Baie-James is, in fact, going to build the power lines but, according to the DCIA, the NL Transmission Assets will be owned and financed through a subsidiary of NLH.

"NLH may use all or a portion of the $3.5 billion NPV to meet its equity contribution obligations for the NL Transmission Assets, provided that NLH shall remain at all times responsible to meet its equity contribution obligations in respect of the Gull Island Project …."

So the $3.5 billion can't be used twice, obviously. Predominantly, it's there as equity for our 60 per cent equity stake. It says, in the meantime until we need it, you can use it if you want when you're building your power lines, absolutely, but you got to make sure that it's back in kitty when it's time to be needed. We're paying for the power lines in Labrador. If someone wants to correct me on that, feel free, but it seems pretty clear to me that we are paying for that.

The Churchill Falls upgrades – Barry Perry says he wonders about the Churchill Falls upgrades, whether we can afford it now. Churchill Falls upgrades are done – CF(L)Co. We own 65 per cent of CF(L)Co, so someone would say, aha, 65 per cent, we're looking after that debt. But if Quebec is taking most of the power, the off-takers are paying for the upgrades that we do.

We'll get 150 per cent, what he referred to as the premium tranche.

There's a few things here I just want to clarify. Again I'd love to see a response on some of these.

I understand the cost of service model, the customer is paying for the factory to be built basically. Regardless, we're not getting 150 per cent of anything related to the upgrades. First of all, this is being done like Gull Island, which is a cost of service. The capacity or the energy, we don't know how this thing is going to be priced yet. That revenue gets plowed back into the debt and equity until it's paid off. Secondly, the DCIA says the premium tranche applies to CF entitlements only, not the upgrade power. Our 22 per cent of the capacity, we can't sell that at 150 per cent of the price.

Speaker, just to conclude, I would – sorry, this is a quote; this is not me addressing the Speaker. The Chair is in the Chair, not the Speaker, the Deputy Speaker. This is the quote from the Finance Minister: "Speaker, just to conclude, I would say, ask the right questions – ask the right questions in the House of Assembly."

Amen, brother. We wondered if someone would cross the floor over the decision by the Premier not to debate the final agreements of the House, but I didn't expect it to be the Finance Minister. We're glad you're finally seeing the light. I know you're always listening to everything we say, so I'm glad you finally agree that we have to ask the questions.

When the Premier says we're no longer going to debate this in the House because there's no point, we're not going to take a vote, that's not good enough. It's a done deal. I think that there are others on the other side – I hope so – that have some disappointment who would like to speak to this deal to learn more when we get the 17 definitive agreements – not just the DCIA, the 17 definitive agreements, hear about

some of the questions – we saw a smattering in Question Period of things that are to be worked out after the DCIA in the 17.

This is what we need to do. As representatives for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we have an obligation. That obligation is there despite a promise to have a referendum. I really think that we need to have some brave soul stand up and insist that we have this debate in the House.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I'm pleased to be able to stand here today on behalf of my constituents of Burin - Grand Bank. They're expecting me to certainly ask questions regarding this deal and we hope that we'll get an opportunity to do so at some point.

Today, I'm going to speak a little about the Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3. This is a removal of tax on certain grades of gasoline until March 31, 2027, and removes tax on grades of gasoline any calendar quarter, with condition.

Everyone that's listening today– listen, we're finally getting zero provincial tax on gas and diesel, thanks to both sides to this House. This bill will at least temporarily eliminate tax on gasoline – something that everyone on this side of the House supports. No problem with that.

However, it's only temporary and does not provide our residents with any consistency. When we did this, the PC government was very critical when we took off 7.5 cents. You were very critical, very critical of us because we did not make it permanent. Now we see the same thing.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this legislation results from calls from the Liberal Opposition in March of 2026 for further reductions in provincial gas and diesel prices. This additional relief should have happened sooner, given the impact it has had on goods and services. We all know that has transferred into the cost of food and the cost for families to put food on the table.

Why have we waited? Why did we wait? Why didn't we do it when the price of gasoline went through the roof? Why didn't we do it then? We had 7.5 cents off, why not do the rest? Now we know it's temporary, after which it depends on international oil pricing. Consumers may have to face the reinstatement of fuel taxes again. That's not going to be a good thing during our harsh winters with other costs rising, mainly heat. It's not going to be a good thing. We should not have an exemption based on Brent crude pricing but, rather, on the retail price of gas in our province. It makes more sense.

Other costs, like refining costs and transportation exchange rates, we need to be cognizant of those costs as well. We also have to realize that people who live in rural Newfoundland like I do, and where I'll continue to live, we have to realize that our gas prices are higher anyways. We pay higher rates.

If I leave my home and drive to St. John's, when I get in here, I can buy cheaper gas. It shouldn't be; it should be the same price all over the province. Take an average. This is something that I think we should look at in the future.

This exemption provides savings based on fuel consumption, not on financial need. It will be beneficial; however, financial circumstances may limit this benefit.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance talked about affordability and how every little bit helps, and he's right. Every little bit does help. This government fell into a windfall of extra cash that wasn't included in the budget. It was a windfall. I wish it had happened during my term as an MHA and as a minister in the previous government. I wish it had happened then. We could go then to our constituents and say we're going to do this, this and this for you.

I'd liken it to reaching in your pocket of a jacket you haven't worn for a while and finding a $20 bill in your pocket. That's what it's like. Now, I can do one of two things with that $20. I can put it in my piggy bank and save it, or I can spend it immediately because I'm feeling hungry. At the end of the day, I'm going to say I'm going to take care of myself. Either way, at the end of the day, I won't miss something I didn't have.

I think that's true for the windfall that we're getting from gas prices, the increase in gas prices. We didn't have it; we won't miss it. Let's spend it on the people who need it the most now and all of it. This windfall should go directly to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, all of it. Not all of us, but all of that. People are hurting. Let's be immediate in our response. This relief is great. It builds upon what we as Liberals had started. For example, like the MOU.

I spoke in this House a while ago and one of the things I talked about was the fact that we certainly have teed up many PC announcements. We were the ones, for example, that brokered this deal with the Liberal government.

So I use the words teed up. My good friend on the opposite side, the Member for Labrador West, told me I didn't know anything about golf. But I'm going to say to him is, listen, you guys on the other side, never use your putter on the fairway. Look in your bag and see what other clubs you'll have because your putter will get you nowhere. This deal that heavily favours Quebec and leaves Newfoundlanders with another bad agreement for 50 years, wrong club.

Sure our economy will see short-term growth – sure it will. But our children, our grandchildren and great-grandchildren may not see it that way. They may also have to live with a deal like we currently have now.

Transparency, openness and honesty have been the key areas of concern for people in the province and in my district. We live in a province where our people's word is their bond and when someone tells you they are going to do something and you give them your support, in this case a vote, and then when you get what you wanted, which is elected, and then you renege on that commitment, that doesn't go well with the people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and they're justifiably upset and angry.

We promised, on the Burin Peninsula, we were going to staff the hospitals, no trouble. We'll have them all staffed in no time – knock, knock, knock. Don't worry about your hospital. Don't worry about getting referrals. Don't worry about getting blood work done.

We're going to keep your communities safe. Oh, yes, we are. We're going to put an RCMP detachment on the Burin Peninsula right away. We're going to put an RCMP detachment – good thing. That would mean that we're going to put them all over the Island. Because if you're putting one somewhere, you have to put them everywhere. Safe communities – I thought it was a wonderful idea. I was questioning myself.

Helping seniors – by the way, great announcement today, Minister of Finance. Good job on the announcement today for seniors.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: We all support that on this side of the House. We certainly do – good job. Lots more work to do though and we'll get at it.

The cost of living – people in my district are concerned about the cost of living. Mostly seniors – and, again, help came by their way today, which is fantastic. Our roads – I don't think I got an inch of road done this year – not an inch. People out in my district are upset about that because there were a lot of projects that we had in the hopper to get done. They didn't get done. The same with brush cutting. We didn't get our brush cutting in the areas that we listed as needing to be done. Breakwaters – big thing in my district. Again, not many done, if any.

The irony is in all of this is when in Opposition, the Premier was known for stating "I will not be guided by any artificial deadlines." How many times did we hear that? Emphasizing that Newfoundland and Labrador held the power because Quebec needed the power and the leverage did not expire. Now he's rushing towards these deadlines. This doesn't rest well with the people in this province. In addition, his openness is a review by people of his choosing and not an independent review. Not sitting well at all.

If you take it further, we now have a government largely comprised of people who could not take a stand during the 2024 debate and walked out of the House without offering a rationale for their stance and the people of the province deserve to know why you took the action you did.

When the new deal got presented here in the House of Assembly, 11 of the government's Members – over half, including Cabinet Members who represent the integral departments of the government on the DCIA – didn't even ask the question for the group, for the people that were here presenting on the DCIA.

Last week, it was reported in the media that a former leader and a former premier expressed their concerns in a letter to the Premier but got no reply. I think the media said 143 days have passed and no reply.

AN HON. MEMBER: What?

P. PIKE: That's what I said. What's that all about?

SPEAKER: Address the Chair, please.

P. PIKE: Our last day in the House, we heard from the Minister of Finance and he talked about the amount of debt that our province is facing now and that that was inherited by them and they got to try to fix it. Well, Speaker, many governments of the past have been left with debt. Our government was teetering on bankruptcy when they took power in 2015.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in 2015, the budget was harsh. It was harsh. People have to realize as well that in today's dollars, we have to look at the fact that we're trying to get as much funding out there for projects and for individuals and so on as we can.

Speaker, the Muskrat Falls deal put our government in an awkward position.

AN HON. MEMBER: Our province.

P. PIKE: Put our province, sorry, in an awful position. Realizing the cost of heating homes with electricity would be very expensive, our team decided to go to Ottawa to look for some relief for the people of our province. We needed help. Our people needed help.

We came back and we're able to help fix the problem with providing $500 million per year to help with those costs, to fix the rates, to keep the rates from increasing, to keep people in their homes – imagine. Currently this figure and this funding will only be until 2030. That makes a lot of people nervous. Our rates are going to double in 2030. This worries, dare I say, all of us. It certainly does.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, we are speaking, technically, to Bill 22. As we all know, the Finance Minister got up and got leave or whatnot, and so it makes this, ultimately, a money bill, which we can discuss all matters that are important to our constituents and, of course, to all of our districts across Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm going to pick where my colleague just left off, the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, and talk about the debt. When the Finance Minister gets up to stand in this House, when he's answering questions – legitimate, real questions that are concerning the people of our province – the Finance Minister has often got up and talked about the debt that was left, but what he fails to say is the debt that was left by a previous PC administration by Muskrat Falls.

We're talking about electricity bills. We're talking about power bills. I know that every Member in this House – every Member in this House – hears from their constituents about costly things such as their electricity bills. That's just one item, and it's something that we all need to live; unless you've successfully created your home on the grid where you're no longer reliant on the hydro. Obviously, we know that's not the case for most or the majority of residents in Newfoundland and Labrador.

What he forgets to say and state for the record, which is fact, is that it's Muskrat Falls debt that was put in place by a PC government; that was put in place because the premier of the day, the government of the day took Quebec to court to reopen the 1969 deal, because we all know it's a bad deal for this province. It's a bad deal and, of course, the Supreme Court ruled that, no, you don't have a case. Quebec does not have to renegotiate that deal. So, too bad, so sad, Newfoundland and Labrador, you don't get to open this deal.

So what did that premier and that government of the day do? They went ahead and they brought in Bill 39, I believe it was, which blocked access to information. Of course, those of us who worked in news rooms at the time would remember that bill all too well, where it blocked access to information by the Official Opposition of the day and by members of the public.

AN HON. MEMBER: Bill 29.

P. PARSONS: Bill 29, I correct it there.

Thank you.

Bill 29, it was, and that blocked the access to information. Lo and behold, that legislation was then passed. It was then passed in this House of Assembly by the majority PC government at the time, and they went ahead and they built Muskrat Falls.

It was a project to go around Quebec. As we all know, unfortunately, Nova Scotia got the best of that deal and, this province, we still need to borrow – not borrow, rather we still receive a half a billion dollars annually. Half a billion dollars annually has to come to the people of this province to offset power bills.

Now a lot of people don't realize this, members of the public. I take the time to have informed conversations with my constituents or when this topic comes up, no matter where it is, and what a lot of people don't realize is that we receive a half a billion dollars from Ottawa. I will say, not from a Stephen Harper government, a Conservative government, but it was a Liberal government that negotiated that and granted that to the Province of

Newfoundland and Labrador, that gives us a half billion dollars to offset our power bills.

Imagine if we didn't have that rate mitigation. Imagine what the people would be feeling then. People wouldn't be able to afford to heat their homes. They just wouldn't be able to do it, if we did not have that rate mitigation, and that's a fact. That's a very real fact. It's scary. It's actually very scary.

With the rising cost of living on everything, we know what's happening with gasoline and it's a shame to see. We've been calling for this since the summer, I think the Opposition has, and the early fall to have some relief with gasoline. Gasoline is another necessity that people cannot go without.

The geographic structure of this province, there's not a lot of public transit for people to rely on. With the exception in the metro centres, the greater part of the province pertains to our population. That's not available in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. It's not available in many rural districts across the province, using public transit, so people have to fill up. People have to put gas in their cars.

But let me tell you, people are starting to make decisions differently. People are starting to opt out of doing things that they used to do, because of the cost of living, because of the price of gas.

We know what we're seeing with our neighbours in the South, the catastrophe that we see with a right-winged Conservative government down there. It's very clear to see that those ways are trickling across North America and they're happening here as well.

Again, as many speakers before me have said, we certainly do support some relief at the pumps. We wish it would have come earlier and it's still not going to start until, I think, December 1, is that right, colleagues?

AN HON. MEMBER: December 1.

P. PARSONS: It's still not starting right away. But why not start it now? With a windfall of abundance from the war in Iraq and what's happening with oil prices, based on what we're seeing in the United States, with that windfall that's come to the Treasury of Newfoundland and Labrador, do it now. I think we can all agree on that. I think everybody in this House would vote to make that happen now, so we'd have the support of everybody on this side of the House.

I'd say if any of the Members on this side would get up – we know we're not seeing that. We're not seeing any of the backbench get up to speak on behalf of their constituents. Of course, I can go and I can ask each of my colleagues, are their constituents wanting to see a relief at the pumps now? I'm sure they're hearing that feedback now. I'm sure they're hearing that feedback.

But we don't hear them because they're not standing up on their feet to say.

SPEAKER: Address the Chair, please.

P. PARSONS: They're not giving that feedback based on what their constituents have said. The Members across don't like what I'm saying now, but it's a fact.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Address the Chair.

P. PARSONS: We do live and operate in a democracy, Speaker. That's what we're supposed to be operating here in Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada: a democracy. This is the place where we bring those concerns to the floor on behalf of all the constituents of Newfoundland and Labrador. I certainly do it on behalf of my constituents in Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

It would be great to see the Members on the other side get up and actually speak. because when they go to events in their districts, I'm sure they're hearing and I'm sure as you are, Speaker. You're hearing the feedback.

On that note now, I'm actually going to read into the record some direct feedback that we received actually from NL Have Your Say based on Churchill Falls and based on the current activity and the progress to date on this. I won't identify, of course, the constituents who have taken the time to give some feedback.

Here's what one says – and, again, I'm reading this quote into the record. What do you think is the question at NL Have Your Say. I honestly believe this deal will be a catastrophe for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We've already lived through a bad deal. Isn't it time to learn the lesson and not make the same mistake? This is what this persons says.

Another person here says – again, the question is what do you think: I disagree with the deal but then again it doesn't surprise me. Premier Wakeham, I feel, was lying to the people right from the start.

L. PARROTT: Point of order, Speaker.

You're not supposed to be calling names and the Member knows that.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. PARSONS: I'm reading quotes. I'll remind that Member I'm actually quoting. I'm quoting a constituent here, which is very legitimate, and that's what I'm elected to do.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. PARSONS: Thank you. You'll have your time to speak. I'm going to have my time to speak.

SPEAKER: Address the Chair, please.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll start again, as I was rudely interrupted: I disagree with the deal, but then again, it doesn't surprise me. Premier Wakeham, I feel, was lying to the people right from the start of his campaign.

L. PARROTT: Point of order.

P. PARSONS: More broken promises than anything I've ever seen.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Point of order, Standing Order 49. We're not to name Members in this House under any circumstance. This has been ruled on by the Speaker during this sitting. Mr. Speaker, we do not name Members that sit in this House under any circumstance, whether it's a quote or not.

P. PARSONS: Making my point, I'll continue. I feel the Premier of the day was lying. More broken promises than anything I've ever seen.

Again, a quote from a voter: This man is only looking to fill his own pockets. He don't care for our province and its people. He should be ashamed of himself. Shame on you, Premier. Again, not my words. It is the words of the voting people in our democratic society here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Here's another submission: I think it's an extremely bad deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. One thing, we are giving away way too much of our resource. This does nothing to help reduce significantly our electricity costs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. It's longer but I'll leave it there. You get the point.

Another one I will read into the record: Horrible long-term deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. We need a referendum as was promised. That's a quote.

The last one I will read here for the record: I seriously think we should have an independent investigation into Churchill Falls and Gull Island MOU too. There is not a lot available for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Let the residents have their say. Have the referendum. Listen to the people.

So these are just some of the opinions from the people of our province. Again, we opened it up, we saw what we came here to do in the special sitting back in September. It wasn't a debate – it wasn't because it was a very controlled, limited debate where ministers weren't even allowed to speak. Again, the experts that were put there, they gave the information. There was a lot of deference, though, that they couldn't answer.

What was also very mind blowing is that the lead negotiator, who the Premier is so proud of and boasted of his credibility, was leaving and the Premier knew before it started. Why wasn't that information disclosed at the time? Let's reverse the roles. I mean, if that had happened here and they were standing here in Opposition, I think it's safe to say, based on what we've seen in the past and how they advocated while they were in Opposition, it wouldn't be acceptable. It's just like a revolving door. Again, it's not an independent review, privately hand-picked, secretly hand-picked by people from the Premier's office is not an independent review.

The minister of the day back in the time of Bill 29, which was actually draconian regulation, back when information was blocked, it was the minister of Natural Resources who gave us Muskrat Falls, who was quoted in this House time and time again, that that project will pay for itself, is the among the same lead negotiating team that's negotiating now. Isn't that ironic?

As a former colleague would say, you can't make it up. You can't make this stuff up. It is just mind blowing. It's a disgrace on behalf of the people of the province to come in here and just to see decorum in the House of Assembly, the lack of answering any questions that are put forth to the Premier, to his front line, the A-team in the front bench when it comes to Churchill Falls. It's just not good enough.

The people see it, though, because one thing is for certain, the feedback that MHAs receive is immediate, whether you're in the grocery store, whether you're at home and you get calls to your landline, whether it's your own constituency office to all 40 districts, this feedback is immediate and people are very disappointed in their performance thus far.

It's been said here time and time again. It's been said by media speculation. It's been said here in this House about how the reason the government is the government is because of the promise of a referendum, of the fear that surrounded the Churchill Falls and the new deal and the promises that were made. We can't ignore that.

This is a Premier who got up and said I won't be rushed by artificial timelines. As a matter of fact, I would even argue that that Premier even put the former premier down for supporting the deal and saying we're not going to be rushed, we're not going to be bullied. But now it's a different story and, I mean, the people can see that.

It's worth noting that the federal government's participation in this deal, which is different from the first MOU, and to now, again, the prime minister's priority is to get a good deal for Canada. I think there's not one province that you'll visit, or territory, in our great country that would say yes, this is a wonderful deal for the country. But, of course, it's the Premier's responsibility to make sure that its residents are served and get the best fair deal that they can for the province.

We watched closely what happens in Quebec given our relations with Quebec as

it pertains to Churchill and to our resources. We know that the now party in Quebec, in the Government of Quebec, had openly come out and said we wouldn't support this deal, the first MOU. They wouldn't support it. They said that loud on record. Now with the second MOU in play, the heavy contribution from the federal government, they're not saying a word, which leads us all to believe that it's a very, very good deal for Quebec.

That's fine. Every province and every resident in any deal that's done should get a good deal. But we deserve a better deal and removing the fair market price, which is ultimately fair market value, removing it from this deal is what makes it as paralyzing as the '69 deal. Every deal comes with billions of dollars, jobs and money at the time. The premier of the day, Premier Smallwood, also brought money and jobs to the province when he done that deal in '69. But it was the future, the five decades going forward –

SPEAKER: Don't forget to address the Chair.

P. PARSONS: Yes, Speaker.

The five decades going forward is where the loophole is. We all know and we can all agree that that's not in the best interest of the people of this province. Not in the best interest for the people of the present day and certainly the future generations. That's what's very, very concerning.

I challenge the Members opposite because this is something that should this go ahead, it is your legacy. It will be etched forever in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador what you did and what you brought for the people of this province.

When there are opportunities to vote – we discussed the first MOU here – we all stood in this House and we voted, but we do know the government of the day didn't take a stand but instead exited; left the Legislature; did not vote. So every constituent in those districts did not have a voice that day and now what we're seeing, the scandalous debate-style process that was brought in here in September is a farce. It was a joke, especially with the lead negotiator, he gave the notice that he was no longer going to be present. He wasn't going to be leading the negotiations anymore and that was known by the Premier and by that team and it was not disclosed here. Not only was it not fair and dishonest to the people here in the Legislature, but the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Unfortunately, there's just too much that's not open, that's not brought to light. It's not good enough. They know it, they hear it in their constituencies as well. The people deserve better. That's what I will say.

Again, the promises made to lower taxes, to make communities safer; we know we're not seeing that.

What I say is there's still time for this Premier to bring that deal back, bring it back to the House of Assembly. Go and get a better deal with the new government that has taken over in Quebec now; go and renegotiate these facts.

We do know that the federal government wants the deal to go ahead because it's a good deal for Canada. We know what we're building in Canada and how we need to become more efficient and less reliant on our neighbours in the United States, based on what we're seeing in the geopolitics, but take this opportunity with this new government in Quebec and go and negotiate a better deal.

Stand up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SPEAKER: Address the Chair.

P. PARSONS: The Members are chirping saying we did but I know each and everyone of them, they're not standing on

their feet. So I challenge them to get up and do their democratic duty and stand up and represent their constituents rather than be muzzled in the back row and chirp at Members when we're up here speaking on this side.

That said, again, we support any relief in taxes, but there is more than can be done. It can be taken further. It can be made permanent and more can be done to help with electricity bills.

I will take my seat now again, Speaker, but I look forward to the debate. What I will say is there's still time, go and renegotiate a better deal for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and for our future generations, for the next 50 years here in this province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER (Lane): The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Ferryland, that debate now be adjourned.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that the debate now be adjourned.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province, Bill 29, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province," carried. (Bill 29)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province. (Bill 29)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 29 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Registered Professional Planners in the Province, Bill 30, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act Respecting Registered Professional Planners in the Province, Bill 30, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting Registered Professional Planners in the Province," carried. (Bill 30)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Registered Professional Planners in the Province. (Bill 30)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 30 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: I move, seconded by Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that this House do now adjourn.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, being Tuesday, November 3, at 1:30 p.m.

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