

Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume LI FIRST SESSION Number 47

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

Thursday November 5, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today, I would like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery, the hon. Vaughn Granter who served as MHA for the District of Humber West from 2011 to 2015.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: While I'm sure he appreciates the applause, we're not finished yet.

During his time in the provincial Legislature, he held several Cabinet positions, including minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture, minister of Environment and minister responsible for Labour Relations and Multi-Material Stewardship Board. He is accompanied by his wife, Michelle.

Welcome to you both.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I would also like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery, Order of Newfoundland and Labrador recipient Jim Burton who is accompanied by Rob and Amanda Burton and Thomas and Conor O'Brien. They are attending in relation to a Member's statement today.

Welcome to the Burton family.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Certainly on behalf of the House of Assembly, I'm so sorry for your loss. Please accept our condolences on the loss of your dad.

I would also like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery, Veteran Al Pardy who is representing the Royal Canadian Legion Provincial Command in relation to a Ministerial Statement today.

Welcome, Sir, and thank you for your service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Visiting our public gallery today is Moroti Adegboyega – I hope that was pretty close – who is the subject of a Ministerial Statement today. He's accompanied by his family.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: While not on my list, I do notice His Worship Mayor Tony Keats, the Mayor of –

AN HON. MEMBER: Dover.

SPEAKER: Dover. I should know that.

Welcome to our gallery, Sir.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we will hear statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Burgeo - La Poile, Burin - Grand Bank, Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, Cartwright – L'Anse au Clair and Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Speaker, I rise today to recognize an individual from my district who has gone above and beyond to support the youth of the Southwest Coast. He is not one for public recognition, but Chad Skinner of Margaree has shown up, supported and created an environment for kids to, not only succeed, but be true to who they are.

As head coach and founder of Trigon Jiu Jitsu & MMA Southwest Coast, a not-for-profit in Port aux Basques, Chad welcomes kids of all ages to not only participate in and

teach the practice of Brazilian Jiu Jitsu but also help develop life skills and habits that lead to long-term success.

Even when their space was unable to be used at the Bruce II arena, Chad turned to an online story time to stay connected and continue the support system he has developed with some of the kids in our area.

An avid mental health advocate, Chad also supports groups like the Gateway Status of Women and peaceful communities, teaching self-defence and speaking about the importance of supporting those dealing with mental health and addictions.

I ask all Members to join me in recognizing Chad Skinner for his incredible work in our community and for being – as we would say back home – right on.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the residents of Point May who bonded together on Sunday, October 25, when two pilot whales were stranded on a beach in their community.

This community effort saw residents from the town and neighboring communities using whatever means possible to save these whales, despite advice from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

So they went to work. Matt Lamkin, who discovered the whales, and his children got buckets and began to pour water over them, immediately noticing their reaction to this effort. By this time, there were many on the scene. The town mayor, Darren Harris, arrived with a water hose and pump, ensuring the whales were hydrated. Men, women and children worked together to free the whales.

Mayor Harris, operating an excavator, created a path for the whales, which were then towed to the waterline and then farther out by boat. There were huge cheers when they were free and began to swim in the ocean.

Although one of the mammals didn't survive, Mayor Harris, Councillor Lamkin and all who helped in the rescue efforts clearly demonstrated the kindness, resilience and strength of our rural communities in this great province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

R. BALSOM: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize an inspiring young entrepreneur from Turk's Cove in the District of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

At just 11 years old, Torry Kelly, owner of Kabob Confections, was recently named the recipient of the Youth Ventures Business of the Year/Stan Reid Memorial Award at the 2026 CBDC Business Distinction Awards.

Her journey began in May of this year when she received a Venture Box through the Youth Ventures program. After choosing the candy kabob kit, what started as a simple idea has quickly grown into a thriving business.

Throughout this, Torry is learning valuable lessons in creativity, responsibility and what it takes to operate a business. Today, she offers a wide variety of products, ranging from candy kabobs and bouquets to chocolate dipped treats, cotton candy waffle cones, snack boxes and even seasonal goodies.

Speaker, Torry and Kabob Confections are wonderful reminders that ambition has no age limit and, with a little encouragement, our youth can achieve remarkable things.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Torry Kelly on her success with Kabob Confections and wishing her continued success in all her future endeavours.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

During a September wildfire, the community of Port Hope Simpson faced an extraordinary threat, as flames advanced within metres of the town's two main gas stations. In the face of an out-of-control blaze and limited resources, disaster was averted through remarkable unity, resilience and sheer bravery. We owe our deepest gratitude to the heroic local and volunteer fire departments in Port Hope Simpson and neighbouring communities of Mary's Harbour and Charlottetown.

In coordination with provincial firefighters who worked around the clock for several days, they were able to protect structures along Country Road, securing critical infrastructure and the community. Combined with waterbombers and helicopters, their efforts helped contain the out-of-control wildfire.

The real story, Speaker, was the strength and resilience of the community and how the region united to support them. Neighbours stood together, accommodated evacuees, protected local animals and conserved water to ensure responders had the resources needed. I also acknowledge the strong support of the municipal leadership and the partnership with NunatuKavut Community Council.

The co-operation and coordination persevered in the face of a great challenge, proving that no fire is stronger than the spirit in Southern Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a truly great Newfoundlander and Labradorian, Mr. Vincent Burton, who passed last month at the age of 92.

Mr. Burton spent his life promoting Newfoundland and Labrador. A native of Glovertown, Vince lived a remarkable life. He started his career as a schoolteacher, moving to accounting and, ultimately, aviation and tourism.

It was aviation that led him to become part owner of Labrador Airways and introduced him to the pristine salmon rivers of the Big Land. Operating Flowers River Lodge, Eagle's Nest Lodge and Igloo Lake Lodge, Vince and his wife, Dorothy, would be familiar to anglers from not only this province, but from around the world. Many of whom he brought here.

Passionate about fishing, Vince was equally concerned with conservation. Vince was a lifetime member of the Kinsmen Club and honourary member of the Rotary Club of St. John's Northwest and, most importantly, a devoted husband, father and grandfather.

On a personal note, I knew Mr. Burton for more than 40 years, not only as a constituent, but somebody I considered a good friend. I was deeply honoured and proud to present Mr. Burton with the

Confederation 75th Anniversary Medal just a couple of years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to rise and join me in paying tribute to Vincent Burton, a man who gave so much of himself to the place and the people he loved so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as Remembrance Day approaches, I rise in this hon. House to pay tribute to the men and women who have served and continue to serve our country. Newfoundland and Labrador has a proud and enduring military tradition.

For generations, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have answered the call to serve in defence of our province, our country and the values we hold dear. Many made the ultimate sacrifice, while others returned home carrying the lasting effects of their service.

On November 11, we pause to honour their courage, dedication and selflessness. We remember those who never came home, those who served in uniform and the families who stood beside them through times of uncertainty and loss.

As we gather at war memorials throughout our province, we are reminded that remembrance is not only about reflecting on the past. It is also about recognizing those who serve today and renewing our commitment to the freedoms secured through the sacrifices of those who came before us.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in remembering those who served and those who made the ultimate sacrifice.

At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them. Lest we forget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker, and I'd like to thank the Premier for the advance copy of his statement.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to take this opportunity to recognize the women and men from Newfoundland and Labrador who have served and are serving our province and our country.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a long and proud military history. We remember, of course, the First World War and the Battle of Beaumont-Hamel, as well as the many conflicts and peace-keeping missions that have followed. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have always answered the call.

We remember those who never returned and those who came home carrying the physical and emotional scars of their service, as well as the families and loved ones who now share in those sacrifices.

We extend our deepest appreciation to the brave service members who continue to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces today and the veterans who have given so much for our country.

As we approach November 11, we honour the sacrifices of those who served and offer our sincere thanks to all who have served and continue to serve.

Lest we forget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I ask that everyone use the opportunity coming up on the 11th to reflect on the monumental history of this day. We are so grateful to service members past and present for their hard work and sacrifice in defending this land, as well as their families.

In a more uncertain world where aggression runs unchecked, we also call on all our elected officials to work for peace and justice for all.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise to acknowledge an important day of remembrance in Canada.

November 8 is Indigenous Veterans Day, and it is my honour to rise in respect and acknowledgement of their courage, contributions and sacrifices in service of our country.

For generations, Indigenous people have answered the call to step forward in times of peace, and in times of conflict. With tremendous determination, Indigenous people have faced and overcome a variety of challenges in order to heed that call.

For generations, Indigenous people have overcome obstacles in order to serve, often having to learn a new language, adapting to cultural differences and having to travel great distances from remote regions to enlist. Many had to travel by dog team over rough, cold terrain.

Not only did they overcome such challenges, they made exceptional contributions in the line of duty, and they continue to make those exceptional contributions today.

Speaker, in times of conflict, they stood out. In World War I, a high-ranking British officer referred to John Shiwak, an Inuk from Rigolet, as the top sniper in the British army.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Sadly, he was killed in battle. What impacted me while researching his history, I read about how the killing was impacting him and he had become depressed just before being killed himself.

The sacrifices made by all who served is great, Speaker.

Today I wish to thank the thousands of Indigenous individuals who served during the First and Second World Wars, the Korean conflict and modern peacekeeping efforts abroad.

On Indigenous Veterans Day, we wear the poppy, let us offer gratitude and carry their stories forward to ensure that the legacy of Indigenous veterans is woven tightly into the very fabric of our nation's history.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Speaker, taking part in the Trail of the Caribou pilgrimage with 10 other Indigenous students, for me, served as a lasting reminder of the many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who have answered the call to serve and the sacrifices made by so many along the way.

Among those stories are the contributions of Indigenous people from our province whose military service deserves to be remembered and recognized. Men like John Shiwak, an Inuk from Rigolet who served as a sniper with the Newfoundland and Labrador Regiment and Redrick Reida, another Inuit volunteer from Labrador.

They remind us of the important role Indigenous people have played in our military history. Their stories are just two examples of a much larger legacy of Indigenous military service spanning multiple generations and conflicts.

Speaker, as we approach Remembrance Day, we must ensure that Indigenous veterans are not overlooked in the history we tell and the sacrifices we remember.

I join the minister in honouring all Indigenous veterans, past and present, and thank them for their service and their sacrifice.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

In the face of overt racism and discrimination, Indigenous service members fought for Canada and defended this country. I acknowledge Newfoundland Regiment's John Shiwak, the Inuit sharpshooter from Labrador as well.

We owe them, their descendants and Indigenous members active in the service today a huge debt. That is why we call on all levels of government to strive harder for reconciliation, not just with platitudes, but with hard work and continuous engagement.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Before we proceed any further, I think in light of the last two Ministerial Statements, I think it would be very appropriate if we all stood just for a moment of silence to reflect on the statements, the sacrifices that have been made and the great work that continues to be done by our Armed Forces. Certainly, we're able to be here today in a free society and a democracy because of their sacrifice.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: We shall remember them.

Thank you.

Further Ministerial Statements?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I'm excited to rise today to recognize an outstanding accomplishment of Moroti Adegboyega.

Moroti, a Grade 12 student at St. Bonaventure's College, created an autonomous aquatic robot that removes plastic debris from the water while minimizing contact with marine life.

Earlier this year, Moroti represented Canada at the Stockholm Junior Water Prize in Sweden. Representatives from more than 40 countries competed in this event, which is considered a leading international water competition for young people.

I'm proud to say Moroti brought home the prize.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Speaker, I met Moroti and his family this summer and I was really impressed and inspired by what this outstanding young man has accomplished.

This past weekend, Moroti was in Ontario at the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health as a guest speaker, panelist and expert on youth innovation.

Moroti, we are extremely proud of what you have accomplished so far. Good luck in your future endeavours. The sky is the limit.

Newfoundland and Labrador will be right there to support you and we look forward to what you will accomplish next.

I just found out that Moroti has just been offered a job as a water resource researcher with the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: They've gotten ahead of me, but I ask all hon. colleagues to join me in celebrating Moroti.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Well done, young man.

The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Speaker, I thank the minister for advance copy of his statement.

The Liberal Opposition would also recognize the outstanding accomplishment of Moroti Adegboyega. His creation of an autonomous aquatic robot that removes plastic debris from water with minimal impact on aquatic life certainly reflects the ingenuity and promise of Moroti. It illustrates that young minds are needed and are, indeed, the greatest resource.

With youth like Moroti, our province is in great hands. The promise that Moroti has shown on local, national and international stages is certainly something to be commended and a tribute to him, as well as his family, school and his support system.

Our party has always been and remains focused on education as a key pillar for our growth and prosperity as a province.

Congratulations, Moroti, on your many accomplishments and we wish you every success as you continue to make positive contributions to our province and, indeed, the entire world.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

The NDP offers our warmest congratulations to Moroti and know that this is just the beginning of many more acknowledgements and opportunities; very, very pleased to see such opportunities in water sustainability.

I cannot help but reflect on the chronic shortage of teachers across this province, however, the very professionals who make

great achievements like this possible. We, therefore, call on this government to listen more closely to the NLTA and the workers on the ground. They have the solutions and we need to implement them.

Once more, congratulations, Moroti.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

During our September information session when the PCs were criticized for failing to answer questions about their Churchill Falls deal, they told us to bring those questions back in the fall and ask in Question Period. Well, we've tried that for two weeks and haven't got any answers. We know the Premier is also afraid to debate the final agreements in the House before they're signed.

So when does the Premier believe the public will get the answers they deserve about why the PCs are giving Quebec the upside on our province's most valuable resource?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I find it interesting that the Member opposite and the Opposition Party are finding that Quebec somehow has a better deal when they agreed to a deal that would see $225 billion approximately coming to the province and our new deal provides $273 billion to the province. Why are they saying yes to $225 billion but saying no to $273 billion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: This week, Hydro-Québec filed with Quebec's energy regulators their plans for our resources in Churchill Falls and Gull Island. Of course, we have to learn this from Quebec once again and not from our Premier.

Hydro-Québec is saying – quote – the framework agreement will give Hydro-Québec access to more than 10,000 megawatts of potential generating capacity from Labrador. The PC government and the Premier here say Quebec is getting 8,500 megawatts.

So why is Quebec claiming they're getting almost 20 per cent more power than this Premier is telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: I, again, go back to what was voted on, supported by and campaigned on by the Member opposite, which was an MOU that said Newfoundland and Labrador would have 1,990 megawatts of power.

Well, the new agreement provides 2,350 megawatts of power. Again, more power than we ever had before, and they're complaining about it. They're complaining about it. They're against prosperity for Newfoundland and Labrador. They're voting against prosperity.

The federal government has stepped up. Everybody recognizes the greatness of this new deal. Talk to any of the labour unions.

Talk to the boards of trade. Everybody except for the Liberals.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I'm just asking why Quebec has a different version of the deal than the Premier. It's very troubling.

Hydro-Québec's filing also says – quote – these projects, whose parameters have yet to be determined, are not included in the supply-demand forecast of this plan. So Quebec are upfront and admitting there are parameters left to be determined.

I'll ask the Premier if he can answer this question without focusing on the past and actually listening to the question. Why won't he admit that there are issues still to be determined and that the House did not vote on a final agreement?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, we're not focused on the past. We are not at all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Not at all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: We know what the past brought us. We know what the past brought us, a $10-billion deficit, a billion dollars a year in the last 10 years.

For the last year, we've been focused on developing our own resources – Bay du Nord. Bay du Nord will now move ahead. Look at what's happening with our oil bids in our oil industry. Look what's happening now. We've got a brand new and better deal on the hydroelectricity development. One called the biggest deal in North American history. A deal supported by the federal Liberal government and Prime Minister Carney, and we're very proud of it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Of course, Bay du Nord is moving ahead. They gave away the opportunity to build topsides in our province.

It's been more than a week since the Premier finally admitted he had secretly hired a new negotiator – a fact, of course, he kept hidden which he likes to do about the Churchill Falls debate. He also failed to disclose that Mr. Smith had recently worked for the federal Natural Resources minister, raising serious questions from us and the media about a potential conflict of interest. What the Premier says is he didn't bother to ask Mr. Smith about his past work history.

Now that time has passed, has the Premier actually taken the time to ask Mr. Smith whether he worked on the Churchill Falls deal on the federal side?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, when you have an opportunity to hire great people, to turn around and have Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who want to come home and work for their own province, that's exactly what Mr. Smith has done.

He was on a contract with the federal government. He gave up his work with the

federal government to come back to Newfoundland and Labrador. He believes in Newfoundland and Labrador. He believes in the prosperity of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is unfortunate that the Members opposite do not believe in prosperity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: We do and we also believe in openness, transparency and democracy.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Mr. Smith was present at the Churchill Falls announcement in August.

I ask a very simple question to the Premier: Was he there as the federal government's staff member or as the lead negotiator for the province?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you who else was there. Roger Grimes was there. Dwight Ball was there. Dwight Ball said the previous MOU was a mulligan, but this MOU is a straight shot right down the fairway, hole in one – his words.

Mr. Speaker, we are bringing forward a better deal and they still want to play politics. It is pure politics what they are doing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: They are looking for things that aren't there. This is a better deal than they had. They supported a much poorer deal. Now, all of a sudden, they don't like prosperity.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, the Minister of Environment again refused to speak to the media. The media asked which is worse, a minister refusing to speak to the media or the Premier insisting that his ministers don't speak to the media. Let me be clear, both are unacceptable.

But I ask the Premier – who also, by the way, refused to scrum with the media yesterday after Question Period – which is it, are ministers refusing to speak or are you directing them to be silent?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Let's set the record straight, Speaker. I spoke to the media yesterday. I held a scrum out in the lobby of the Confederation Building here yesterday. I spoke to the media, and we will speak and my ministers will speak any time to the media when we have something to tell them –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: We have no hesitation in speaking to the media about any issue that needs to be discussed that affects and impacts the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We will continue to do that. We will continue to speak to the media to spread our story –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: I want to hear the Premier, only.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: We will continue to speak to the media and my ministers will continue to speak to the media to spread our story of Newfoundland and Labrador, the prosperity of Newfoundland and Labrador, the opportunities for Newfoundland and Labrador and we are going to continue to make it happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I noticed the Premier caught himself because he was about to say our ministers will speak to the media when the media asks, but he did not finish that thought. What he said was, we will speak to the media when we have something to say.

I say to the Premier, this is not how it works. When the media have questions and when the Opposition have questions, the ministers and the Premier are there to answer them. Guess what? It is in the job description.

Why isn't the Premier and why aren't the minister doing their jobs and answering the questions that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are asking?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, we are doing our jobs. We have done our jobs for the last year. Let's talk about what we have been able to do in the last year, what my ministers have done, what my caucus have done: the new historic Churchill Falls deal; advancing Bay du Nord; an $8-billion commitment on 5 Wing Goose Bay; putting money back in people's pockets, including today's announcement, which brings it over $300 million back in people's pockets.

That is what we have been doing, Speaker. Living up to commitments we made in our blue book. We will continue to make those commitments. We will continue to live up to them and that is what we will do for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, you wouldn't know from media reports because we have seen time and time again media stories over the last year which report no comment from the minister but rather a statement from someone who works in the department. This has been how this government has been operating since the election.

Why does the Premier think it's acceptable to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to hide his Cabinet ministers who are accountable to the public and rely on Members of the department to just simply file statements?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, maybe if this government had spent the last 10 years doing their jobs instead of out talking to the media, taking photo ops and looking for things to make themselves look better –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – actually doing the work required instead of putting us where we are right now, he'd understand why we're doing our jobs. We're doing our jobs to make Newfoundland a better place for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: We're cleaning up a mess that was left behind and we're doing a hell of a job at it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

M. KING: Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. We are doing our job on this side of the House and that is to hold this government to account.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. KING: The Conservatives' lack of transparency isn't limited to the Churchill Falls file. This week, the media asked for the Minister of Environment to answer questions about her draft climate action plan, but she wouldn't make herself available. This plan is very important, especially in rural communities in this province that are facing coastal erosion.

Why won't the minister answer questions about her plan, whether it is a draft or not?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: Thank you, Speaker.

I am so excited that climate change is getting so much needed attention. I'm here to answer any question about climate change. The truth is, what was put out in the media, what was mentioned, the model that was ATIPPed, was a draft.

I thought it was just the NDP that didn't clearly understand what was going on, but it was also the Liberals as well.

So it was a draft. It was a draft model and we're working on a final model. But right now, we're looking for feedback from the communities, from the people of this province to talk to us at engageNL until November 26.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

M. KING: Mr. Speaker, accountability and answering questions does not stop at the door of this Chamber. It is incumbent on ministers of this government to answer questions for the media for the public of Newfoundland and Labrador. We are seeing a pattern being developed here.

First, it was the climate action plan, then it was refusal to talk about her trip to Beaumont Hamel, also it was about the inappropriate sole-sourced contract for key chains of an inappropriate symbol at a very solemn ceremony.

Why is this minister refusing to answer questions from the media, and will the Premier and this government commit to answer the questions from the media as it is the standard practice here?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I think we should have a conversation about openness and transparency here, Speaker. If they want to stand up and play politics like this, which is exactly what they're trying to do, they should take self-realization. I challenge

anyone in the public to ATIPP the amount of emails that these guys on that side have sent to the ministers on this side looking for information on anything. I can tell you, everyone in here is probably much similar to what I get – nothing from these guys.

I have not gotten one email from my Energy critic.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: I haven't received one email from the leader with regards to Bay du Nord –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – or with regards to the Churchill Falls MOU, nothing.

So they come in here and they try to play politics in front of the media and they're getting it dead wrong – pure politics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: The minister still hasn't responded to the letter I wrote him as soon as he got appointed.

SPEAKER: I never recognized you.

Could you just have a seat for a second, please?

I just want to say to all Members, we got to have order in this House. I've been hesitating yesterday and today to start naming people again because, quite frankly, I feel it's embarrassing to be naming people every day, but if I'm going to have to start again, I'm going to have to start again.

So from now on, ask the question, then be quiet and listen to the answer and vice versa.

Thank you.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, it's been seven months since the PCs said they would expeditiously draft a letter required by law.

Quick question for the Deputy Premier: Did you get that letter to the chief justice written overnight or do you still need a few more months?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's good to see their priorities are straight, that this is the biggest issue facing the province today.

All I can tell the Member opposite is we'll have that letter drafted, we'll have something coming to announce in the next week or so, just stay tuned, it'll get there.

But I can tell you right now, the people in CBS and the rest of the province, the last thing on their mind is a boundaries commission, but we'll get there, I promise we'll get there.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. STOYLES: Speaker, earlier this week the Premier said – and I quote – any MHA, literally any MHA that asks to meet with me, I will meet with them. Yet, the Premier hasn't responded to my letter from August asking him for a meeting about one of my constituents who has been dealing with

lockjaw for almost two years with very little action from this government.

Speaker, will the Premier keep his promise and meet with me to help find a solution to this lady's problem?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

I'm happy to provide an answer. The Member opposite did reach out and a meeting was scheduled within my department with my officials and I. The Member opposite cancelled the meeting. For whatever reason, I don't know and I didn't ask. However, a meeting was scheduled. We were prepared to meet to discuss the MHA's issues with respect to her constituent. The MHA herself cancelled the meeting. I'm happy to meet with her at any point in time to discuss any issue with any constituent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Speaker.

Yes, I had a meeting scheduled with the minister that I cancelled because of a family emergency. My office reached out to the minister and his staff said that they will meet with me, maybe, in January.

Again, I ask the Premier, this lady is waiting –

AN HON. MEMBER: The Premier.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. STOYLES: The Premier I'm asking. Maybe it's time for this Premier to step down if he's not going to meet with the MHAs. There are only 40 of us here and 15 of us on the Liberal side, maybe it's time, if he's not willing to meet – I'm waiting. I'm willing to meet any day with anybody to discuss this issue and a couple of other issues that I have related to health. I have reached out to the minister's office again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to respond to the Member's question.

Mr. Speaker, I will meet with anyone within this House and outside of this House to discuss any issue. I can tell you my schedule has been ATIPPed many times. I have a full schedule until Tibb's Eve and I'm not ashamed to say that.

I can say, I will meet with any minister or any Member of this House. I offered the time in January. If that is not sufficient, I will look at it again to see if I can fit her in, but, Mr. Speaker, I never turn anyone down for a meeting, ever.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Speaker.

There are concerns about schools in St. John's that have been down custodial services since September. As a result, only the bare minimum is getting done and after two months the condition of the schools is deteriorating.

Does the minister consider this an acceptable level of services for our schools?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, anything not up to acceptable standards is not good enough. We don't condone any of that. It's a challenge to keep ahead of all this stuff. That's an ongoing issue within my department as we look at school infrastructure – all infrastructure for that matter.

Any schools that need required repairs, there's a continuous work plan. Some of the stuff that we have on the scope that's been misinterpreted by an ATIPP request, but that work is getting scheduled to get done and it will get done. We're keeping ahead of that as best we can.

It's a challenge because there are a lot of schools, our geography is vast and it just takes time. We're well aware of the issues and we're dealing with them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wasn't talking about maintenance in the school, I was talking about cleanliness of the schools. We have a rise in absenteeism due to sick children and staff because these schools aren't being cleaned appropriately.

These schools are now entering a third month without adequate custodial staff. Is this the standard of maintenance the families, staff and students should become accustomed to under this government?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd ask the Member opposite to provide me with the list of schools and I'll get them checked out.

He's standing on the House of Assembly floor and questioning me on this. Do you know what? I'm the minister responsible for the maintenance of schools; I never heard it before. So if he wants to, again, as my colleague says, play politics, go right ahead. I will fix the problem. Give me the list of schools and I will quietly get my staff to look into it.

I will not stand on the House of Assembly floor and answer set-up questions that he knew ahead of time. Why didn't he just pick up the phone and call me, like my colleague said? Maybe they should stop playing politics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: This is a waste of everybody's time. Give me a call; send me an email. It's not political. I'll get it done. I don't want any schools dirty in this province, not in his or anyone's district in the province, and I will make sure –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm over here looking at you and everybody is just continuing on with the conversations like I'm saying nothing. I'm going to start naming people and people are going to lose speaking privileges. I've had enough.

Does the minister want to finish off? I'll give you 10 seconds.

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

B. PETTEN: Just provide me the list of schools that need cleaning done or custodial work done and we'll endeavour to get it done. This is wasting our time on the House of Assembly floor trying to create politics over something like this. Nobody wants dirty schools, especially me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, that is unbelievable to say that it's a waste of time to ask questions, after the schools have been asking for two months.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: Not me, the schools have. They have been asking for two months. I'd like the minister to do something about it. There are custodial staff that are missing because they can't recruit them. That's a problem, but there are fixes to it as long as the minister wants to get involved to do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: It's a waste of time, I guess.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

If the schools are not getting the answer, he's the MHA representing those schools, email me. He has no problem emailing me.

B. DAVIS: You're the minister.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Email me. Call me. Talk to me in the House. There's no issue whatsoever. Schools should not be dirty. We shouldn't be short staff. Sometimes that happens, but that's not acceptable. I'm not condoning it, but I can't be blindsided here in the House of Assembly when I know nothing about this issue.

But I will try and endeavour to fix it, but getting on your feet in the House of Assembly and playing politics and trying to get your gotcha moment, it don't cut it with me. Anyone that knows me, that does not work with me.

Call me, email me and I will look after it, no questions asked. Standing in the House of Assembly playing politics, we are getting tired of it.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, the Premier refused to bring the 17 final agreements to the House, refuses to hold the referendum he promised and anyone can see the costly taxpayer-funded ads he is using to try and sell the public on his deal.

Speaker, I ask the government: How much are they spending advertising for the Churchill Falls deal?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I cannot reference the order or magnitude of how much it is in comparison to the soccer scandal that they had, but we are spending money on advertising, no question.

As for her referendum comment, she publicly stated that she was against the referendum so she should be relieved by it. It is a waste of money – her words, not mine.

Third to that, as for how much we are doing and what we are doing with regard to all of that, she voted for less and voted against more, and now she comes in and she wants these questions asked.

I can tell you what, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, there is no referendum; she didn't want a referendum. There is a good deal; she don't want a good deal. It is all about prosperity; they don't want it. It is pure politics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, I did not promise Newfoundlanders and Labradorians a referendum and I did not get elected on a promise of a referendum.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Taxpayer-funded Churchill Falls ads actually feature the Conservative government's election slogans.

Why does the Premier think it is acceptable to use partisan slogans to sell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on something the Energy Minister says is a done deal?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: It is a great question. After 10 years of political slogans and red signs and Members campaigning saying that if you want your roads done, you need to vote for me on their campaign signs and in their letters – it's an incredible question to have.

What I will say is this, the public deserves the knowledge.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: The government has the means to advertise and get knowledge out to the public. That is our job to do. She voted for less. She voted against more. It is –

L. STOYLES: (Inaudible.)

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

L. STOYLES: Sure.

SPEAKER: If I have to speak again, your speaking privileges are gone.

The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines – I will give you 10 seconds.

L. STOYLES: He isn't going to answer it anyway.

SPEAKER: Okay, the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North, your speaking privileges are revoked for the day.

The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines – I will give you 10 seconds to answer because you were interrupted.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

A $160,000 soccer ad that was proven went nowhere. Mr. Speaker, the answers are clear, we are doing what is right for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Deflect, deflect, deflect, Mr. Speaker.

Yesterday, the RNC issued an advisory following reports of an armed individual in the East White Hills Road area.

Can the minister outline what protocols are in place to ensure schools in the vicinity of that area are notified of the potential safety threat in their community?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you for the question.

With our schools, of course, as you know, safety is paramount and we work towards the finalization of a new draft of our Safe and Caring Schools protocol. That deals with any armed individuals or any violence that's close to the school, and certainly anything that enters the school in terms of lockdowns and ensuring that the proper officials are called. So those are the protocols.

I know in recent days there were some instances that required that to be followed and I can guarantee you, the administration in those cases have followed the protocol to the T and responded by contacting the appropriate legal people, the RNC. To date, we haven't had an issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

There's no playing politics in this House of Assembly; it is politics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. O'LEARY: So far in this House of Assembly session alone, we have seen a lack of transparency around Churchill Falls team members terminating their contracts or leaving positions; government backtracking on its commitment to bring the final agreements before the House before signing; multiple ministers taking jabs at the integrity of the media with one evening refusing to speak to reporters after directly accusing them in this House. Transparency and accountability are essential to building public trust.

I ask the Premier: How does he expect the public to trust his government when this is how it operates?

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 people of Newfoundland and Labrador showed what party they trusted in the last election. We have a job to do and we are doing it. We are delivering on better health care, we are delivering on safer communities and we are delivering on a brighter future for all of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: We can sit here all day and talk about policy and the different things that we want to do. For the Member across the way to stand up and ask a question like that with all of the ideas that they've had and no way to fund anything, and all they want to do is halt prosperity and shut everything down. I think it's atrocious.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, it appears that the government just can't stop thinking about the NDP.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. O'LEARY: We were the ones who had a costed platform in our campaign.

We've also seen multiple statements from the Premier himself about how this government is engaging with the Innu Nation, or not, on the Churchill Falls deal. Yet until yesterday, when the Innu Nation had to interrupt an event just to be heard, the Premier had not even met with them.

I ask the Premier: Why did you allow the public to be given the impression that meaningful engagement was taking place when you knew you hadn't even met with the Innu Nation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs; Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm really glad to have the opportunity to clarify something. There was an impression yesterday that we weren't scheduled to meet with the Innu when the Innu was talking publicly. In actual fact, we had a meeting scheduled for 9:30 that day, that was preplanned, all our staff knew about it, it was organized and it was at the request of the Innu.

So for the media and people out there, I just want you to know that, basically, we had that meeting planned. We weren't bullied into meeting; we weren't harassed into meeting or anything like that.

J. KORAB: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member for Waterford Valley for your co-operation.

L. EVANS: We actually had set up a meeting, scheduled for 9:30 that morning, after the Premier did his speech. So it's very, very important for people to understand that, Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to clarify.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: I'm very happy to hear this government talk about transparency and how transparent they are. Surely, they have no trouble at all with the next questions.

We just saw an amazing mid-term tsunami in the US, showing that people are tired of corruption and big money influencing in their politics.

So seeing as this government is making many legislative changes to put our province in line with the rest of the country, I ask the Premier: Will his government bring forward legislation to ban corporate and union donations as most other provinces have done?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I will take that question, but I also want to talk about legislative reform. What the Member opposite talks about is something that's part of legislative reform. Just as we've talked about everything we need to be doing in this House of Assembly when we talk about

legislative reform, about how we recruit new people to come into the House of Assembly, what that would look like. We have lots of things that we need to be doing in this House of Assembly.

So when we talk about legislative reform, I think it's not just about one thing; it's about many different parts of it, including how we recruit more candidates for the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, we're talking about money and bias and conflict of interest. That's what the question was about.

Speaker, nine MHAs in this House are landlords but the public can only find out that information by booking an appointment with the office of Legislative Standards whose only office is in St. John's. If you live in a rural community or in Labrador, there's no way to find out what possible conflict of interest your MHA may have.

Also to keep us in line with the rest of Canada I ask the Premier: Will this government also bring forward legislation to make MHA disclosures and conflicts of interest available publicly online? Full transparency.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the first thing I'd like to address is the preamble. It's pretty rich of the Member to stand and talk about union donations when their party accepts them. If they had such an issue with the donations from the unions, they should not have taken them over the last three years, which they have. You can go online and you can look at them. They're clearly there.

As for the second part of her question, the reality of it is there's a legislative process that surrounds this and we're always reviewing legislation. But, right now, the legislation that is in place, it's how it is and that is exactly the rules that's around how an MHA's pensions and salaries and everything they held is accessed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Pensions Act, 1997 No. 2, Bill 36.

SPEAKER: 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 Respecting the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance, Bill 38.

SPEAKER: 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 Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, Bill 39.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow that I will introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, Bill 37.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), this House will not adjourn at 5:30 on Monday, November 16, 2026.

Speaker, I give notice that I will also on tomorrow move the following motion: That in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), this House will not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 17, 2026.

Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, November 18, 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, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the following motion: That in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 19.

SPEAKER: Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador saw a 22 per cent increase in opioid-related deaths from 2023 to 2024; and

WHEREAS the provincial government has supported access to naloxone through schools, community health organizations, correctional facilities, youth centres, addiction treatment facilities and shelters, however, financial and geographical barriers to equitable access throughout the province remain; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador is one of the few provinces that do not currently provide publicly funded take-home naloxone through community pharmacies, despite pharmacies being among the most accessible health care professionals in both urban and rural communities; and

WHEREAS Canadian national consensus guidelines recommend that patients receiving opioid prescriptions be proactively provided with take-home naloxone and counselling on its use, recognizing the importance of naloxone in preventing opioid-related deaths; and

WHEREAS the educational and professional guidelines for medicine, pharmacy, nursing and social work all agree that naloxone is a life-saving intervention during opioid overdose; and

WHEREAS the 2025 All-Party Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Addictions recommended the continued public funding of naloxone kits and training;

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 reduce the number of preventable opioid-related deaths in this province by ensuring publicly funded, take-home naloxone kits are available sustainably through all community pharmacies across Newfoundland and Labrador, establishing the appropriate remuneration for pharmacy professionals for dispensing naloxone and providing patient education and training on its use; and adding a naloxone provision to the MCP ailments and conditions list to enable pharmacist billing for this essential service.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the individuals from Allied Health students and health professionals who shared their concerns in outlining this petition. We've been working primarily with a couple of doctors, Gagnon and Bishop, on this file. I think they've also met with the minister. I encourage those discussions. I hear those discussions have been positive. So I thank the minister for that.

We're supporting the advocacy work for this, not just for communities that lie in urban centres, like mine, but communities right across our province where people, at any point, through no fault of their own, can have the use, have the need for naloxone kits. So I just wish and urge the government to move on this as quickly and as expeditiously as possible; hopefully, faster than seven months.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Member opposite for bringing forward this petition on behalf of his constituents. It is a very important issue. My team and I in the Department of Health and Community Services met with a group who came in to discuss the availability of naloxone kits throughout our province, and I agree with the point with respect to pharmacists. We need to make sure that we use pharmacists here in our province, who do great work each and every day, to the full scope of their practice that's available.

We recognize the important role that naloxone plays in reducing related harm. As we see, it saves lives. We currently support a distribution site across the province. There are 170 sites, currently, across the province. There is also the option for a mail-out. If someone wishes to have that, we can mail that directly to them.

With respect to the important role that pharmacists play within health care, this is another area that they certainly do important work with health care delivery in supporting harm reduction. I always appreciate, as I said earlier today, to have the conversation with anyone, with any group. If it's going to make the lives better here in Newfoundland and Labrador for all of our constituents, I'll certainly have those conversations. We'll continue this work.

I, again, thank the Member for bringing it up. It's an important issue. I'll certainly advance this as we move forward, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further petitions?

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

The petition I table in this hon. House of Assembly today is to protect 34 Battery Road, Limeville, from development.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Developers have proposed to build a subdivision on two parcels of land situated

at 34 Battery Road and Cabot Avenue, formerly known as Limeville.

Thirty-four Battery Road is a Southcott-style, second empire historic property that has not been designated or registered as heritage, although it was built in 1870 and survived the Great Fire of 1892.

If built, this subdivision will fundamentally alter the character and irrevocably destroy the heritage landscape and greenspace of the Battery and Signal Hill neighbourhood.

Preserving built heritage and culturally significant natural landscapes is crucial to Newfoundland and Labrador's tourist economy.

Signal Hill National Park has 750,000 visitors each year, while 85,000 walk through The Battery and the North Head Trail.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to declare this property to be a Provincial Historic Site under the *Historic Resources Act.*

I so table.

Speaker, just a few words. The folks who have been adamantly educating the public, talking out about this, advocating for the preservation of this historically significant area are called the Protect the Gateway to the Battery, and people can find them if they look for them online. There are ongoing demonstrations, presentations to, not only to the City of St. John's, but, of course, here to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. We know that it now has incredible military historical significance, as well, with a former veteran, who was a corporal, I believe, Walsh who first owned the property.

This is a really significant area for the tourism industry. This will hit people, not only in terms of cultural identity, but in the pocketbook. I would encourage everybody, our governments, the destination hospitality industries who use The Battery as their calling card in all of their advertising and promotion, to actually understand the significance of this area and certainly abide by the petition.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm very honoured to present a petition in the House of Assembly today from residents and parents who live in the Kenmount Terrace catchment area in terms of the new school. The government has built a new school which I understand has been committed to opening in September 2027. Unfortunately, the government made a decision recently that they are going to change the catchment area so that children of families living outside the Kenmount Terrace area will no longer be able to go to the new Kenmount Terrace school.

My petition says: We, the undersigned, urge the House of Assembly to implore the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to re-evaluate options that would allow greater equity between the students living in the Larkhall and St. Andrew's area and students living in the Kenmount Terrace area, so that all students and families can benefit from the new schools, benefit from green space, pre-K, early French immersion and students remain in cohorts with their classmates and friends.

Speaker, I've heard from so many families concerned and devastated with the government's decision. Part of my district now will lose French immersion, lose the promise that they had of early French immersion. They're going to lose access to pre-K. They are going to lose green space, lose access to afterschool. St. Andrew's

school in particular is going to have more students than it currently does.

Also, Speaker, I've heard from families that their children are devastated that they are going to be separated from their friends. Friends, students have gone to school with for years, they're now going to be separated. I've had parents tell me they were afraid to tell their children of how devastated they're going to be.

I ask, implore, the government to re-evaluate the options. At the very least, I ask the House of Assembly to urge the government that they consider grandfathering in families, as I understand they're doing for the Portugal Cove - St. Philip's students whose high school students are going to PWC. I urge the House of Assembly to ask the government to grandfather these families in so that children and families can have a choice, otherwise friend groups and children are being separated. The anxiety and stress of families and students in my district is enormous because of this change.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to quote the Member opposite. On October 2, she said, I had meeting after meeting after meeting with the deputy minister of Transportation and deputy minister of Education, the clerk, the Premier to make sure the school that was built was going to be big enough. What's missing from that quote is constituents.

There was a town hall hosted in June 2024, parents raised issues on this school. They told those in attendance, the Member for Mount Scio, the then minister of Education, the then minister of Transportation, told them the school would not be built on time and the school was not going to be big enough. That's what was told. They said the school had to have at least 1,000 kids.

We've inherited a school that's over 60 per cent complete, that can only accommodate 850 students, not the last count of 1,058. You cannot squeeze that many students into a school that's built for 850. You have to look at the catchment zones and rearrange them.

I don't deny it's hard on parents and hard on kids, but we were left with no other alternative.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I stand today on a petition regarding the diesel plant in Charlottetown, or lack of. These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

WHEREAS due to a fire in October of 2019, Charlottetown lost a diesel generating station that supplied around 300 residents in the communities of Charlottetown and Pinsent's Arm; and

WHEREAS seven years later, the plant has still not been replaced and the residents rely on temporary mobile diesel generators and sea cans while awaiting a permanent replacement solution; and

WHEREAS the temporary solution is neither sustainable nor acceptable; and

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro made the decision to build back a regional facility, made application to the PUB and was rejected on two occasions; and

WHEREAS residents feel they have been left in limbo and there is no real plan in

place to provide a steady, secure supply of power to the communities;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, call upon the hon. House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to intervene with NL Hydro and the PUB to effect a solution to this ongoing problem.

Speaker, I would say that Hydro's number one and most important job is to ensure that households in Newfoundland and Labrador have a reliable source of heat. Our diesel generating station in Charlottetown was burned to the ground in October of 2019. That started years of a flurry between the PUB and NL Hydro and the community caught in the middle of that.

At the time, it would have cost $22 million to replace the plant in Charlottetown. NL Hydro, in their wisdom, decided they were going to build a regional at a cost of $78 million. Then it went up to $87 million, and now it's $110.9 million. We're talking 900 customers. Who's paying for it? Charlottetown and Pinsent's Arm, which relied on that plant, just want a reliable source of heat, not mobile units. Winter is coming on. We're in the North. We've got predominantly seniors.

Speaker, Hydro filed a rate application to the PUB with their big idea, and the PUB rejected it. They said we're bound by legislation; we have to go with the least-cost option. Hydro went back and filed again. It has been back and forth, back and forth. Midgard was hired to do a study.

Anyway, then Hydro, still deciding to plow forward with their plan, took the PUB to court. Meanwhile, winter is coming on again. We have a small volunteer fire department. Hydro lost in court. All of this has happened since the election last fall.

I met with the minister, the very first meeting I had when the PCs formed government, because this is heat. I represent a district that pays the highest gas and diesel in the province repeatedly. I've got Norman Bay that don't even have a road or an airport.

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

The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair is absolutely correct. The only Member from the other side who's asked to meet with me, and I did meet with her, there's no question. This fire happened in 2019, and the failure is systemic, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024, 2025, nothing done –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: You're telling lies.

L. PARROTT: I'm not telling lies. The fire happened in 2019 while you were still a Cabinet minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask the minister to take his seat.

I will say to the Member of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair you clearly said he's telling lies. We just had a ruling on that. You cannot accuse a Member of lying. I will ask you to withdraw that statement.

L. DEMPSTER: I fully withdraw the statement. The decision only came –

SPEAKER: Unequivocally.

L. DEMPSTER: Unequivocally I withdraw the statement.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

L. DEMPSTER: The decision came down on October 14, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Take your seat.

The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, my point is the decision should have came long before October. It should have came in 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 or 2025. There was lots of opportunity for it to be done. The PUB has blocked this. I believe it's absolutely outrageous. I got no problem saying that about the PUB.

The people in Labrador deserve the exact same power as anyone else in this province. They deserve the exact same courtesy from Newfoundland Hydro. Newfoundland Hydro feels that way. They understand it, and unfortunately the PUB has made a decision here that I do not agree with. Not one little bit. It should have moved forward. It should still move forward. The whole South Coast of Labrador needs this power.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I said to the Member of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, I'm asking for your co-operation now.

Petitions are completed.

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that the House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2026.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that this House do not adjourn today, Thursday, November 5, at 5:30 p.m.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Order 8, Bill 27.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Bill 27, An Act Respecting Civil Forfeiture of Property, and that it now be read a second time.

SPEAKER: No, we're going to continue on with debate, whoever is the next person to speak.

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I believe I had a few minutes left. I'm not going to take the whole time. I did just want to conclude my remarks on this important bill; it is quite significant.

Previously, we talked about the Justice Department and the new division that the minister is bringing forward in terms of the civil forfeiture and how the burden of proof will be on the individual to show that the proceeds are not as a result of crime.

I did just want to tie in how in Newfoundland and Labrador we have kind of expertise in this area. We have Verafin, for example, a major technology company whose tag line is fighting crime. They are kind of a global leader, owned by Nasdaq, in terms of fighting crime with the individuals and experts that they have which work in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is interesting because anyone in Newfoundland and Labrador, any cash transaction above $10,000 gets triggered by FINTRAC, which is a federal government agency. Any transaction over $10,000 triggers a FINTRAC notification. Interestingly, I think it's worth noting that Verafin works with banks and credit unions in Newfoundland and Labrador as financial transactions are flagged through FINTRAC, and that gets fed through, potentially, to JPS in terms of working with the Crown attorneys and the lawyers and the people in the Department of Justice and Public Safety to determine which items the government will take forward in terms of bringing them to court.

I did just want to flag that this is kind of an ecosystem in terms of flagging financial crime as an example. The credit unions have a part of which the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador regulates the credit unions. The federal government regulates banks, but this is all kind of a system in terms of financial crime, not necessarily kind of property crime but financial crime. I just wanted to make a note I find that's interesting connection with this bill, that Verafin, a local company, we have a lot of expert people working in Newfoundland and Labrador who fight financial crime.

So I think it's just interesting and noteworthy how that company is doing well and the people in Newfoundland and Labrador working for that company are now going to be playing into this larger picture which is covered by the *Civil Forfeiture Act*.

I know we have many questions in Committee, so that concludes my remarks on the second reading.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

I would just like to, in closing the debate, acknowledge the speakers that rose in this House to talk about this very important bill. We had a total of six MHAs that spoke on this matter. We started with the Justice critic, the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. I was pleased to see that she indicated they will be supporting the bill. She recognizes the importance of this legislation that we are bringing forward with respect to seizing assets as a result of unlawful activity.

I would like to also acknowledge the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville who also indicated that he as well and his constituents share the same values that we do, especially when it comes to the importance of judicial oversight and, as well, protecting individuals from unreasonable intrusion. We will see in this bill that those considerations are very important.

As well, the MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, I would like to acknowledge the points that she made, especially in reference to the

restorative justice features of this important legislation. She talked about the reappropriation and repurposing of money and that's also caught in this legislation.

As well, the MHA for Mount Scio who has just finished speaking, she talked about some points that were worthy of consideration, involving the burden of proof. I think that's a very relevant point that she has raised. I can also say that this bill does address those issues with respect to the burdens of proof that are aligned in this legislation and addresses any concerns, in my respectful opinion, that would come from the different burdens of proof that we see in this legislation.

Finally, Members of this government, I would like to acknowledge both the Member from Lewisporte - Twillingate and the Member for St. George's - Humber who also spoke very well about the importance of this bill. The Member for St. George's - Humber also acknowledged that this is important legislation because it's filling a legislative gap that exists in our province and will bring us in line with other jurisdictions in this country.

So, on that note, I just want to say that our government was elected on the very important mandate of creating safer communities and this legislation is an important step towards doing that. It will provide that additional tool to address property connected to illegal activity and enhance public safety in communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

On that, I'll close my remarks and I look forward to questions from the hon. House.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Are Members ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 27 be now read a second time.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

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

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

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

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Civil Forfeiture of Property," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently. (Bill 27)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, when you're ready.

L. PARROTT: Good one. It's a good thing it's not dinnertime.

SPEAKER: Yes, that's true.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Order 8, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 27.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 27.

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.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 27, An Act Respecting Civil Forfeiture of Property.

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

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

It's good to be in the Committee of the Whole to discuss Bill 27, An Act Respecting Civil Forfeiture of Property. I do have a number of questions.

First of all, what groups were consulted through the drafting of this legislation?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

The Department of Justice and Public Safety consulted with our policing partners in the province, namely the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. We also consulted with provincial and civil forfeiture offices and invited feedback from Indigenous governments.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Has there been jurisdictional scans as well?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, there have been.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

How many staff and what level of resources will be required to establish and operate the office?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We will have the director and asset manager, solicitor.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

What safeguards are in place to ensure that the civil forfeiture is not used as a substitute for criminal investigations and prosecutions?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: There are a number of safeguards that are built in the legislation. We can look at various sections that provide some supports and some oversight to address that. Information is one way, for example, it does not flow back, it's protected from disclosure under ATIPPA 2015.

When I say it does not flow back, I mean that any information that is obtained is not transferred to the criminal side of our justice system. This is purely a civil forfeiture process within our civil law system. It's separate from our criminal justice system.

So those are, I think, very important ways that it is safeguarded. As I say, with respect to information, that's protected from disclosure as well.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

In the briefing, officials noted that the office won't accept tips from the public but, rather, from law enforcement directly. Residents who fall victim to fraud, scams and other unlawful activity could be eligible for compensation through the legislation.

How will the government ensure that they're aware of that? How should residents go about reporting such instances?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: There are a couple of pieces to the question that you've asked.

With respect to the victims, the legislation provides support for victims in terms of the ability to have victim compensation. So that is an important piece, and victims will have that opportunity to be, I guess, restored in their original position after they have been the subject of loss due to illegal activity that has happened.

There's nothing preventing it. The primary referral source is essentially law enforcement agencies. There will be information available to outline how victims can make applications for compensation. We will also have a comprehensive public website. That will also be anticipated to come.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Is there a concern, given that this creates a variety of ways that a director can proceed with civil forfeiture, that this will create unnecessary red tape?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Again, that's an important question because, in keeping with our mandate here in the government about reducing red tape, this bill is not intended to create additional red tape, especially for law-abiding individuals or businesses. It establishes a legal process for dealing with property that is proceeds of unlawful activity or an instrument of unlawful activity.

So what this bill does is it provides an administrative forfeiture process and it is intended to deal with a specified property without requiring, for example, to go through the Supreme Court proceeding in every case. It avoids that, but it maintains appropriate safeguards for people who claim an interest in the property.

Another thing about the red tape issue or concern that you have, this bill will provide opportunities for matters to be settled, to resolve matters without requiring every case to proceed through that full forfeiture process. That's also a way that we're having the off-ramps to avoid red tape problems or concerns.

So there are opportunities for settlements. They're intended to support earlier and more efficient resolution, where it's appropriate. Reducing unnecessary time and costs and procedural burden. That's all what reducing red tape is about. There are

objectives and there are features in this legislation which will do that.

But as I can also say about the red tape point that you're raising, as the regulations are developed, the department will be mindful of the government's broader regulatory improvement and efficiency objectives. Obviously, we are going to seek to assure that requirements are very clear, they are necessary, they're proportionate, and that processes are as efficient and straightforward as possible, trying to, again, keep in mind those important principles of avoiding additional red tape.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Regarding the forfeiture fund account, how will the director quantify the costs of criminal activities and the identified victims, and what will the mechanisms be to financially compensate the said victims?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'm just looking at that particular section, one moment.

There will be an application process for compensation for eligible victims, and I think most or part of that will be basically set out and prescribed in the regulations.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: The definition of unlawful activity is broad in the introduced legislation. So can the minister explain the types of offences and activities that would fall within this jurisdiction?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So you're talking about right now, section 2, which defines unlawful activity. I think it might be beneficial to just look at that for second, just to clarify that unlawful activity means an act or omission described in one of the following paragraphs. It talks about any acts or omissions in the province or in another province. It also speaks about where an act or omission occurs in jurisdictions outside of Canada. These are all things which outline unlawful activity.

I think that pretty much answers the question. I mean, it's set out there in section 2 of the bill.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Minister, can you actually give some specific examples of unlawful activity?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Sure, that would be like drug trafficking. It would be a criminal offence. Also, in addition to drug trafficking, perhaps criminal organization offence. Those would be a couple of examples.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: I would imagine – and you can elaborate on this. It was brought up and we know that stats show that we do have significant human trafficking that also involve children. I would assume and I would think that those sorts of incidents would also be included within the unlawful activity as it relates to the human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: You're just asking if human trafficking would be

included. If you're asking that question, the answer is, yes, it would be.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Can the court order a partial forfeiture where only a portion of the property is connected to any unlawful activity?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Just to be clear, for any of the public who are watching, basically, there are two streams in this legislation. There's the administrative stream, civil forfeiture stream and then there's the court stream or avenue to acquire assets.

To answer your question, the answer would be yes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: I'm going to look at clause 10. Are there protections in place for someone who may have known about the unlawful activity but did not benefit from it or participate in the unlawful activity?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: You're looking at section 10, specifically relief from forfeitures. Is that correct?

P. PARSONS: Clause 10.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes.

To answer your question, yes, information in the table.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Could you outline or be specific about the protections that would be put in place?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'm just going to kind of set out what some of the safeguards are that are built into the legislation.

This section ensures fair and just outcomes for people uninvolved in the criminal activity. For example, the court has discretion here. If it decides that forfeiture is not in the interest of justice, the judge may refuse to issue the forfeiture order, or there are other things the judge could do, limit the application, put conditions on the order, protect the share of property owned by the uninvolved owners.

The section also outlines how this relief from forfeiture can be granted. Just to give some examples, the safeguards are built in there. They're built into the legislation to allow for people who do not engage in the activity to not be financially punished. So what it does, is it tries to – the legislation actually does, it doesn't try, it succeeds in my view, in striking a balance between operational efficiency, effectiveness and what's in the best interest.

A couple of examples I can give you would be, if a family owns multiple vehicles, multiple cars, for example, but only one partner participated in that activity. The luxury car could be forfeited while the family car is retained for reasons to transport the individual to and from work. Another example might be a property is sold but the portion of the profits belonging to the uninvolved people is returned to them.

There are, as I say, safeguards clearly and effectively built into the legislation.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

Okay, and what about incidences in particular where a landlord is aware of illegal activity that's taking place on their property and doesn't take action to attempt to stop the activity through, say, like an eviction, what would happen in that scenario?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I just want to be clear about what your question is. You're asking if we would have any control over a landlord who doesn't take action against a tenant?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Yes, I guess I'll be literal.

What about instances where a landlord is aware of the illegal activity that is taking place on the property but doesn't do anything to intervene, say, by way of eviction or even notify authorities?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: First of all, I mean, the way the legislation exists right now, this legislation will not affect the landlord who's not involved in the criminal activity. Their property rights will not be affected as long as they are an uninvolved party. For example, the drug dealer's property will be targeted but not the landlord.

Being aware of the activity, though, is not enough in this instance. Basically, the legislation, it's about the civil law. If the landlord is not involved in the criminal activity, they are not involved and they're not aware, it will not be affected as long as they're uninvolved.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Even us, as MHAs, in different parts of communities throughout the province and districts, there are situations where landlords are aware and where residents are even stating it's known. In some cases, where landlords even receive government funding to operate trap houses or slum landlording and what not. So there is no consequence for situations such as this to crack down?

That is a legitimate concern about landlords. Based on the feedback that MHAs receive, as well as, I imagine, the department, on where this activity is happening, yet nothing is stepping in and nothing is done.

So is there any way to kind of crack down on that? Unfortunately, that has been a problem, and it probably currently is in different areas throughout the province.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I think we need to focus on what this legislation does. This legislation targets the proceeds of unlawful activity. It is one lever to make communities safer.

Now, if we're getting into does this apply to trap houses? It will apply to seize the tools and the profits of drug dealers. For example, if you have a vehicle and a cell phone that is used to acquire products and conduct sales, but if the home is owned by the drug dealer operating the trap house, then it can be forfeited as well, subject to the conditions of the legislation.

But, again, this legislation targets the proceeds. That's the focus of this legislation and it focuses on the proceeds of unlawful activity.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: In jurisdictional scans that you've said you've done, the department has done, in regard to this, where the illegal activity is happening and the landlord is aware, yet nothing is done, I would think this should be considered in this legislation because we do often hear, and it's been in the news even recently, about where this activity is allowed to occur.

What have you found in other jurisdictions with regard to this particular question where landlords are aware of a situation and allowing it to happen and it's continued?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: One thing I do want to say before I even get to answer your question, I really do want to say how appreciative I am of the work that has been done by the officials in the Justice Department. They have worked so diligently for a long time to make this legislation come to this House. I just want to send out an extreme thank you for the work of the officials at the Justice and Public Safety.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: To get to your question, what happens is each application will be reviewed on its own merits, on its own facts. The tools exist for the director to review and take applications wherever it's appropriate.

This legislation is based on the models that exist in our country, in our Canadian model, and this has been reviewed and upheld by the courts.

Again, this is legislation which basically targets the proceeds of unlawful activity and that's where the focus is. It's a civil forfeiture law. It's not a criminal. It's a civil forfeiture law, but by virtue of this legislation, it will be used to take away profits and property gained from illegal activity.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you.

Before I move on, will be there any consideration, though, to take that into consideration, I guess, to put more safeguards in place where landlords could be aware? Again, did you find any specific examples in other jurisdictional scans throughout the country where, perhaps, this is more elaborate with regard to landlords?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to jurisdictional scans that have been done, I can certainly get back to you to see if there was anything that you're speaking of but, from my understanding and review of this, not particularly in this legislation. Sometimes it happens, but it would be, again, on a case-by-case basis. Each application is reviewed on its facts.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

How will government ensure that individuals are not unfairly deprived of access to essential assets that have been frozen, such as their home or a vehicle, while proceedings are under way?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I mentioned that in a previous response that I gave you, actually. The safeguards are built into the legislation.

When I talked about, for example, if a family owns multiple vehicles, but only one partner participated in the criminal activity, let's say there was a luxury car, that could be forfeited while the family car is retained.

Those are the safeguards that are there. Again, there are other safeguards which will allow for the property to be sold, but the portion of the profits belonging to the uninvolved person will be returned to them.

Those are just two examples, but the legislation has the safeguards built into it to allow for those who did not engage in the criminal activity to not be financially punished and, of course, that will be looked at as well by the courts. The judge will always look at this to see; it has to be in the interest of justice.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for the answers so far in Committee.

I'm wondering if you can walk us through how the department balances all the needs of all the different areas. So I know they're always doing occupational health and safety investigations and taking people to court for that and how they're working on the civil forfeiture. I guess I'm thinking, Chair, the minister walked us through the extra roles that are going to be in the department, so I'm wondering if the minister is confident that they're giving the department enough resources to appropriately staff and manage the legislation put forward, and how the department prioritizes that internally?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, I am confident, because of the dedicated team that exists in the Department of Justice and Public Safety, that that is not an issue. Really, this is separate from the processes that you are talking about. This would be a new office with a new tool.

It's separate from criminal. It's separate from OHS prosecutions. It's independent from that. So, yes, I am not concerned about that at all.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I'm wondering if the minister can explain where the government anticipates or how they anticipate using the funds collected.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that it's set out in the legislation, actually, but it talks about different – just one second, I'll get that exactly for you.

It's set out in the bill. Essentially, the funds will go towards crime prevention. It will go towards compensation for eligible victims. It will go to the administration of the office. It's actually set out in section 64 of the bill.

The payment will come out of the civil forfeiture account. Like I said, the victim compensation, crime prevention, remediation of the effects of unlawful activities, it will be redistributed to cover the costs of the civil forfeiture program and provide money to these types of programs.

I think it goes to the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi in her remarks yesterday who talked about the point of reappropriation, repurposing money so it goes back for the public good. That's exactly what section 64 does. It's got those restorative justice type features in it.

I'll just mention BC for examples of the crime prevention funding that they have invested since they utilized their model, their program. Over $93 million in crime prevention and community safety grants since the program was launched in 2006. That was 20 years ago. I can just say that this bill has been modelled after much of what was done in the BC legislation.

Nova Scotia, for example, also just provided nearly $300,000 in grants to a number of eight community-based initiatives. So that builds section 64, which outlines the payment for civil forfeiture out of the civil forfeiture account.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I'm wondering if the minister can explain or speak to whether or not the RNC will get additional resources from the government in order to appropriately execute on – because I imagine this will cause extra work for the RNC, so I'm wondering if the government is providing the RNC with additional funding, or the RCMP, to accommodate these changes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I think it's important to clarify the role of the police in this legislation. All of this civil forfeiture legislation will result in a referral from the police. So the director of this office will be the one responsible for the investigation, not the police.

So there is no additional investigation expected at all from law enforcement as it pertains to this legislation.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: I've concluded with my questions.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair, and, Minister, thank you.

Where do uninvolved interest holders rank in priority for payment of proceeds, under section 39 is what I would be referring to? I'm just wondering if the director covers the costs first and distributes the remaining money to the interest holders, how that containment happens?

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

So you're referring to section 39, and this section, as you indicated, details how interest holders may claim an interest in any money that remains from property disposal. You're just inquiring in terms of if there's a ranking, like, who gets rights first, I suppose, is what you're saying.

This is how they claim an interest. It doesn't set out the ranking. The distribution actually will be set out in the regulations and that will essentially be an operational decision for the director.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

How will the director be appointed? My apologies if you've already answered this question.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Actually, I haven't answered it but I will.

Essentially, the director will go through the merit-based Public Service Commission process.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

What skill set and background are required for this type of position because it deals with enforcement, but a director of this position, I'm just curious what the skill set would be?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I think the safest thing to say with respect to this is that will be determined prior to operationalization or operationalizing this. The experience in investigations would be something that comes to mind, obviously, would be important to have this role, a legal background, but again that will be determined prior to it being operationalized.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

How much staff will be needed to facilitate the function of the director? Will these be new employees or will they be existing employees of the department, reprofiled with their duties expanded?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, we did have some discussion about that earlier. There will be a director. There will be a solicitor and there will be an asset manager. It's anticipated that there would be three new employees.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Will the director's annual report be tabled in the House of Assembly for public access?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That's section 60 of the report and it will be submitted to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, myself, and that will be made public. As I stated, that's under section 60. Of course, our goal there is to ensure that these reports enhance transparency and accountability. So that's why it will be made public.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Partners, children and other dependents of a criminal can be impacted beyond the immediate financial effects of civil forfeiture and in the wake of the removal of a criminal individual from their life, they may need support and protection. Certainly, that was something that was discussed about the impacts of vulnerable people in the mix.

Will funds from the civil forfeiture account be available to support these individuals?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that this legislation does have attention given to uninvolved and I guess you could say the innocent. There's a process in place for compensation for eligible victims. So that's certainly an important safeguard. We're going to work with all of our partners and other government departments to ensure that there are proper supports there as well.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

That's it for me.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, just a couple of questions. First, if we could just look at section 7(3), it talks about in proceedings commenced under section 6, which is really the full purpose of the act, the director will notify a person when required to do so by the court or the regulations.

I'm just wondering why those regulations couldn't be spelled out in the legislation. Perhaps you might have an answer about what those regulations would look like to provide some clarity.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you.

I just want to be clear that we're looking at the same section. So you're talking about section 6 under Part II, Forfeiture Orders?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: It's on page 16 if that helps, section 7(3)(a) and (b).

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: In proceedings commenced under subsection (6), like you said, section 6, that is the meat of this legislation, really, the director shall notify a person. So those notice provisions are there to ensure operational flexibility. I think that's why it will be going to regulations. It's to ensure operational flexibility, but, as well, balancing due process.

I guess we want to make sure that we have the ability to adapt and that all potential parties receive that notice without having come back to the House. So I think that's the primary reason that will be set out in the regulations.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Chair.

Just reading it, who the director shall notify obviously can and will be spelled out in the regulations. My thought is that you would be able to determine, in a general situation, the person that should be notified in this case.

Why couldn't you put those individuals in the legislation itself, with additional people could be done through regulation? So you can still have that flexibility that you talk about but be clear at the outset about who will get notification from the director.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I do think that this is the preferred way to go because it does give that ability to adapt and to have that flexibility and ensure all potential parties receive the notice. I think that each case has to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Sure, we could have done that, but it was determined through careful analysis that we wanted the most flexibility possible and that's why this route was chosen.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

Are you able to provide, at this stage – and I know that the point of the flexibility is that the regulations can and probably will change over time – about who you contemplate the director will be notifying of proceedings under 6(1) or (2).

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I just want to be clear; you're asking examples of who the director would be notifying. Is that what the question is?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Yes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I guess I can say one thing in response is it would be purported owners who would be examples of people that would be notified.

Perhaps, in addition, I would say, it would be people who may have an interest in the circumstances. People who appear in a search in the Registry of Deeds or with respect to the Personal Property Registry. Those are some examples of people that would have to be notified pursuant to this section of the legislation.

That's not everyone. That's just some examples.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Well, I appreciate that and, again, I do appreciate the need for flexibility. If the Minister of Justice, you, or anyone in the future, feels the need, or Cabinet feels the need, to change those regulations, I do agree that that flexibility should be there.

Back to my point, that could still be there, and you just gave some examples which could be in the legislation as well and still provide flexibility in the regulations, but I will move on to section 10. It says, "where a court determines that the forfeiture of property or the whole or a portion of an interest in property under this Act is not in the interest of justice," then it gives the court the ability to do several things.

I'm wondering if the minister is able to expand on what not in the interest of justice would mean?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition, who is a lawyer, knows that it's very hard to define a broad concept like that. Not in the interest of justice will be determined by the judge that's involved in the case. Trying to set out what the interest of justice is, I mean, it's a very broad concept. It's there to provide discretion to the judge as well, and that will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Yes, thank you. I am aware, obviously, that's a broad concept, but I'm also aware that judges do, and have in court cases I've been involved in, looked to *Hansard* to get the intent of what the government meant at the time so they can make that interpretation.

I can think of a case when I did not provide that to *Hansard* and the judge had to do it himself. He wasn't that pleased that we didn't provide it and he had to do his own research on that. So the judge of the day may very well look at *Hansard* and wonder what the government of the day or the Minister of Justice contemplated in that definition and, rather than simply defer it to the judge, they may want input from the government's intent of the day.

Does the minister have any comment on what that phrase would mean in her legislation?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: When we look at that section, that's section 10(1), and I'm just going to read it out to provide that context so that we're looking at this in its entirety. "Notwithstanding section 9 where a court determines that the forfeiture of property or the whole or a portion of an interest in property under this Act is not in the interest of justice, the court may do any of the following:" – and it sets out a number of things – "(a)refuse to issue a forfeiture order; (b) limit the application of a forfeiture order; or (c) put conditions on the forfeiture order."

The thing I can say is that when a judge is assessing the facts of any case, the judge is going to look at things like what is in the best administration of justice? What is fair? Looking at what is in the interest of justice, what is in the best interest of the public good and a judge will take into account all of the circumstances of the particular case, the totality of the circumstances. It will ultimately be the court's decision based on case decisions.

Again, the thing that I can say, without restricting or confining what that concept means, the interest of justice, the judge will look at what's fair, what's reasonable, what's necessary in the particular case that's before the judge.

That's the best I can say in terms of the interest of justice, but that will depend on each case as it comes before the trier of fact.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Thank you for that answer, I appreciate that clarification.

Minister, I'm going to ask you a question and you are maybe going to have to take a second to just read it because the sections get jumbled a little bit. It is about section 10(2) essentially, it says: "In the case of property that is proceeds of unlawful activity, the court may grant relief from forfeiture … where a party to the proceedings" proves certain things.

I think, and you can correct me if I'm wrong, obviously, the whole point of this is to collect proceeds of unlawful activity, but you don't want to take it necessarily from an innocent party or an innocent bystander or something like those kind of words.

If you look at 10(2)(b)(iv), I think what this is saying is that if you acquire the property from a person who is allowed to keep the property – so essentially if you bought it from someone who should be allowed to keep the property because they didn't do anything wrong, I hope you're following. I guess my question is that it doesn't continue to go down the line, it sort of stops at that first person who acquired it from the individual who was, sort of – quote, unquote – innocent in this situation.

So you go down the line of acquiring that property – again, they had nothing to do with the unlawful activity – how are they protected? And if they are not, should this section be expanded?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I'm just going to carefully look at that section.

You're referring to section 10(2)(b)(iv): In the case of property that is proceeds of unlawful activity – it's basically saying the court can grant the forfeiture relief. You're talking about the party who acquired the property or an interest in the property from a person described in (i), (ii) or (iii). So that would be the innocent party, okay.

So just give me an example. I just need clarification. I'm trying to determine what you're saying here now.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Yes, I think you got my question. I know it's confusing when the legislation is (a) and (b) and subsection (i) and (ii), but the way I read it is the person that acquires it from you and I referring to the innocent party, but what about the person who acquires it from the person who got it from the innocent party? It sort of stops at that one transfer.

Again, I say to the minister, it's not always easy to think the logic through these, so if she wants to take some time and come back with an answer, that's okay with me. I think she understand the question.

CHAIR: Okay.

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Yes, I do understand your question. I'm just wondering, where do we stop it, though, right? That's the thing. The protection really will extend to people who acquire the property from an uninvolved party. It's protecting the first person that acquired it from the uninvolved party. I think that's the way it should be, from what I can see.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Yes, and if that's where it stops, then that's the answer. I accept that as the answer, but I would suggest it should continue further down the line to protect other individuals.

Of course, the further you get away from it, the less likely it is that they're going to have any involvement with the original person who was involved in unlawful activity. I'll just leave that for the minister to contemplate.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I just want to be clear because, even though it says in subsection (iv), acquired the property or an interest in the property, I'm going to get clarification. It's my understanding that it doesn't just stop there because if you acquire it from an innocent party, it should fall for everyone who comes behind – it should, because basically you're acquiring the property from someone who's innocent anyway.

So even though it suggests that you might think that it stops there, I don't think that's what the intent is. I think that basically all who come behind that first person who acquires the property will be protected. It will extend to all people who acquire the property.

That's my understanding now. I can see if I can get clarification on that for you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: Thank you.

I think you're in agreement with the concept, but that's not the way I read it because it says acquire the property or an interest in the property from a person described in subparagraphs (i), (ii) or (iii). But if that's the answer and that's the interpretation – but you understand the concept and I appreciate the recognition of that, so I'll leave that there.

Thank you.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 78 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 78 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 78 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 27 without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 27 without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for the District of Burin Peninsula West and Chair of Committee of the Whole.

AN HON. MEMBER: Placentia West.

SPEAKER: What did I say?

AN HON. MEMBER: Burin.

SPEAKER: Is that what I said?

Let's try again.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 27, An Act Respecting Civil Forfeiture of Property, be passed without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends Bill 27 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, Order 5.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 28.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that this House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 28.

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.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 28, An Act Respecting the Status of Women and Gender Equality Advisory Council.

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

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I just had one question and a comment.

I know we asked a lot of questions the last time and I'm assuming, then, the minister went back to her team. I was wondering if there was anything the minister wanted to clarify or correct or anything. I'm just genuinely asking from our last session in terms of the structure or anything like that from the questions that we discussed last time.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Women and Gender Equality.

L. EVANS: Yes, just looking at organizational matters, I know the Member had asked some HR questions and about the organization structure.

The Advisory Council operates independently and at arm's length from government. That was made clear yesterday. There are three staff in addition to the CEO, so it'll be four staff located in St. John's. It's led by the CEO. There's a financial coordinator, policy and research analyst and the director of public engagement. The organization has continued to operate under the existing structure. Even though this is new legislation, it's not impacting the existing structure.

Another question was about the employees who work for the Advisory Council, do they report directly to the minister? The answer is no. The Advisory Council operates at arm's length from government. Its staff are in St. John's and there are policy and engagement personnel as well.

I think the Member also had a question about the pension plan and whether it fell under the Treasury Board oversight or government classification system. Also a question was asked, do the Treasury Board policies apply to their hiring and employment, including acceptable gifts, grants, procurement and conflict of interest?

So the council employees participate in the government pension plan. We actually had to dig deep to get that. They have their own human resources policy that mirrors government. The Advisory Council is not scheduled to the *Public Service Commission Act* and operates independently from government. The organization is responsible for its own hiring and financial management. The organization has its own policies for corporate matters which mirrors government.

I think that was the basis of what you were asking yesterday, but you can actually ask additional questions if I missed something.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I want to thank the minister for clarifying those questions from last time.

I guess, just a comment, I didn't realize that this group was not covered under OCIO in terms of the IT management. I don't want to go too much in-depth but I do think that there's a cybersecurity risk for the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in not having this managed by OCIO.

I never thought about this when I was in government, so I would implore the government to take steps to ensure that all of the rigour and everything that goes around the government technology also gets applied to this organization as there would be a risk in not doing so.

That concludes my questions.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Women and Gender Equality.

L. EVANS: The government grant that's provided to the council covers the organization's expenses including salaries, rents, office space, but, importantly, to your question, it covers IT support and other corporate expenses. So if there was a problem with the quality of support from IT, I think that the council would reach out to us. The council has its own IT support and it's not from OCIO.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you, Minister, for clarifying those questions. I only have one question and I hope I didn't ask it previously but I don't believe I did.

I'm just interested in the intersection or the relationship between the Regional Advisory Council on the Status of Women throughout the province and the Provincial Advisory Council. I'm just trying to get my head around the relationship between the Provincial Advisory Council and, obviously, how it's moving forward and those regional offices, as well.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Women and Gender Equality.

L. EVANS: Well, the Advisory Council, their mandate is to actually provide advice to government. They are at arm's length from government so, in actual fact, they're not influenced by any political interference or any influence. Basically, they're considered at arm's length, so their main mandate is to provide government advice.

The other regional councils are there to support the people that require support. They're totally independent, but, of course, the Advisory Council does meet with them and it does take advice from the different regional councils and then they come back to government.

The names are confusing. I found myself, growing up and even before I got into government, I had difficulty even remembering the full length of the name and then I used to get the St. John's council mixed up with the provincial council in terms of the name.

Back in the day, when I got into Opposition, I quickly learned the difference because you need to know the difference.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Minister, just to follow up on that question, I guess, I do know that one of the board members, right now, is a representative from the St. John's Women's Centre, I believe. So I'm just curious as to whether or not there's representation from these regional councils?

Again, I'm just trying to mine down into the intersection, understanding your answer that they are independent, but there is still overlap somehow. I'm just curious about that kind of relationship.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Women and Gender Equality.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

The regional offices, they're volunteer organizations. They deliver services. So it's important for them to be able to provide information and advice to the Provincial Advisory Council, who provides advice to government. In actual fact, like I said, it's not a conflict of interest for them to actually serve on them.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you again to the minister.

I just wanted to circle back and revisit this one that I brought up there the other day. I just wanted to ask if you had given some consideration, maybe even consulted with the team. I asked, given the expansion of the mandate and the name, of course, from the Status of Women to Women and Gender Equality, can there be some designated spots on the board, positions on the board, specifically for a member of the 2SLGBTQQIA+ community of gender diversity? Also, perhaps, Indigenous, given

the fact, the focus and the significance on missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls and, also, to name another organization, the Multicultural Women's Organization. They do fabulous work. I've worked closely with them as minister. I know they do a lot of good work and support with the Office of Women and Gender Equality.

I was wondering if you can consider and make it mandatory to designate these three spots for these specific groups, given the expansion and the mandate now of the new Advisory Council?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Women and Gender Equality.

L. EVANS: Chair, the council is at arm's length from government. I think that would be appropriate for the council to make those decisions. If they want to recommend having specific seats on the council, one for Indigenous, one for gender diverse, that could be something that we would support as government. For me as minister and the staff at Women and Gender Equality, we always look to the council for them to provide recommendations and advice on what they need as a council.

As society evolves, as the environment that we live in evolves, there are many challenges. The challenges keep changing as well so it's important for the Advisory Council to be able to actually have some control over the structure of the council to make sure it's effective and efficient. I don't think government should be dictating to them how to actually function.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: I'll conclude by saying, given my experience with these qualified individuals, these women, it is something that we do see that diversity and those values and principles reflected in their work, based on my experiences with them, so I really commend them. I thank them for their work, but I would like to state for the record my personal opinion that I would like to see these designated spots for those groups I mentioned. Just to reiterate the importance of protecting the rights and standing up for the rights of women and gender-diverse individuals, including Indigenous women and girls here in our province.

That will conclude my remarks. Thank you and congratulations, I'm happy to work with you on this legislation.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Women and Gender Equality.

L. EVANS: Thank you.

I know what you're saying is something that you passionately feel. The council itself has to represent structurally who they represent in the province.

That was one of the reasons why we actually don't have the full appointments. What we're doing now is we're going out and doing a little bit more publicity and advertising for people to come forward to be a part of the board, especially now that we're going to actually have the opportunity for people to be in a role in terms of advocating for gender-diverse individuals. We would be very interested in actually having gender-diverse people come forward for appointment to the board. Also, we want to make sure that the Indigenous population is aware of the opportunity to sit on the board.

One of the things that I noticed when I've been talking to different people throughout the province is a lot of times they're not really aware of the opportunity to sit on a board. So this is a good opportunity, especially the issues that you raised for having representation for gender-diverse individuals and Indigenous people and just making sure the board is also reflecting who they represent.

So thank you for that.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 21 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 21 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 21 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 28 without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Let's see if I can get your district right this time.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered matters to them referred and have directed me to report that the Committee recommends Bill 28, An Act Respecting the Status of Women and Gender Equality Advisory Council, without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends Bill 28 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Arts, that Bill 31, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022 No. 2, now be read a second time

SPEAKER: Hold on now.

L. PARROTT: It's me.

SPEAKER: Yes, you're supposed to select from the Order Paper. It's Motion 10, right?

L. PARROTT: Sorry, yes.

SPEAKER: Okay.

It's been moved and seconded that the bill be read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022 No. 2." (Bill 31)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, today, I'm pleased to introduce legislation that would provide greater financial support to workers who are injured or become ill on the job and to their families.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Workers' compensation replaces a portion of a worker's take-home pay when they are unable to work because of work-related injury or illness. The income replacement rate is based on pre-injury net earnings and helps determine how much of the worker's lost income is replaced. Through workers' compensation benefits, Bill 31 would increase that rate from 85 per cent to 90 per cent of net pre-injury earnings, subject to maximum earnings, beginning December 1, 2026.

To put that into perspective, a worker with a take-home pay of $1,000 per week currently receives $850 in wage-loss benefits. At 90 per cent, a worker earning $50,000 a year would receive almost $2,000 more annually. A worker earning at or above the maximum compensable amount would receive an average increase of more than $2,900 a year.

The change would benefit approximately 8,000 workers and dependants annually. It would apply to both short-term and long-term wage-loss benefits and increase benefits for eligible dependants when a

worker passes away as a result of a workplace injury or illness.

Speaker, behind those numbers are people. A workplace injury or illness can change someone's life in an instant. Along with the physical and emotional impact, there can be very real concerns about paying the mortgage or rent, buying groceries and supporting a family when a regular paycheque is no longer coming in.

Workers should be able to focus on recovery, not on how they are going to make ends meet. This increase will not take away all of those pressures, but it would put more money into the hands of the workers and their families when they need it most, providing greater financial security and peace of mind.

There is also some important context behind this legislation. Increasing the income replacement rate to 90 per cent was recommended in the 2019 statutory review of the workers' compensation system and remains one of the review's outstanding recommendations. Frankly, Speaker, one could reasonably ask why it was not acted on sooner.

The review was clear. The workers, the unions, the organizations and career professionals have continued to advocate for better support for workers who are injured or ill. Let it be known that we have heard you loud and clear. Thank you for continuing to raise these issues and push for meaningful improvements for workers and their families and for a better system for the people who need it.

Speaker, this bill builds on Bill 10, introduced in the last session of the House, to strengthen retirement benefits for injured workers. Those benefits from WorkplaceNL began rolling out to eligible workers and dependants in late October. This government believes that, when the workers' compensation system is in a strong financial position, we should look for responsible ways to improve the support it provides to the workers.

WorkplaceNL's Injury Fund is separate from the provincial government's Consolidated Revenue Fund and, based on 2025 results, it is 139.5 per cent funded. This is in comparison to the target funding of 110 per cent.

Increasing the income replacement would add a one-time increase of approximately $60.7 million to WorkplaceNL's benefit liability for eligible workers and dependants who are already receiving the benefits. The Injury Fund can absorb that cost and it is projected to remain approximately at 133.9 per cent funded, well above its target.

So, Speaker, this change is a responsible change that puts workers first. Most importantly, it's about compassion. When someone is facing injury or illness, they should have confidence that the workers' compensation system will be there to support them and their family, and that is what Bill 31 is about. I am pleased to bring it forward today.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 31. This legislation is important because, when a worker is injured on the job, they should not have to worry about whether they will be able to support themselves or their families while they recover. Workers deserve a compensation system that recognizes the financial challenges that come with a workplace injury and provides meaningful support during what can be an incredibly difficult period in their lives.

Bill 31 proposes a relatively straightforward amendment to section 83(2) of the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, increasing the income replacement rate for injured workers from 85 per cent to 90 per cent of their calculated loss of earning capacity. Mr. Speaker, that is a positive change.

If someone is injured at work and suddenly finds themselves unable to earn their regular income, even a small reduction in their weekly earnings can have a significant impact. Mortgage payments, rent, groceries, utilities, transportation and other household expenses do not disappear simply because someone has been injured and cannot work.

For many workers, an injury can mean an immediate disruption to their financial stability. They may be facing an uncertain recovery period, changes to their employment circumstances and the stress of not knowing when they will be able to return to work. Increasing the income replacement rate to 90 per cent provides additional financial support during that period. It recognizes that workers should not be left carrying an unreasonable financial burden as a result of injuries sustained in the workplace.

Mr. Speaker, workplace safety is about more than preventing injuries. It's also about ensuring, when those injuries do happen, workers are treated fairly, supported appropriately and given the resources they need to recover.

Newfoundland and Labrador workers contribute enormously to our economy and our communities, whether they're working in construction, health care, transportation, manufacturing, the fishing industry or any number of other sectors, workers deserve to know there is a system in place to protect them if something goes wrong. That is why we believe improvements to workers' compensation are important and why we will be supporting this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, supporting this bill does not mean that the government should be exempt from answering questions about how this change will be implemented and what it will mean for injured workers across the province. Some of the most important questions concern the actual impact this amendment will have on workers.

The government is proposing to increase the replacement rate from 85 to 90 per cent. We want to understand how many injured workers are expected to benefit from this change and what the government anticipates the financial implications will be for the workplace health, safety and compensation system. It's important that the government provide some clarity around the number of workers who will see an increase in their benefits, the projected cost of the amendment and whether any changes to employer assessment rates or contributions will be necessary. These are reasonable questions and workers and employers deserve straightforward answers.

This legislation is scheduled to come into force on December 1, 2026. That means WorkplaceNL and the department must be prepared to implement the new calculation and communicate that change to affected workers and employers. The government should be able to demonstrate that the necessary administrative preparations are underway and that workers will not experience delays or interruptions to their benefits as a result of the transition.

While we support this particular amendment, we believe it's also important to recognize that the effectiveness of a workers' compensation system cannot be measured by the income replacement rate alone. Workers need timely access to benefits and appropriate rehabilitation and recovery support. They also need clear communication about their claims and their rights and when they are medically able to return to work, they need access to meaningful opportunities to do so.

An injured worker should not have to fight an unnecessarily complicated administrative process while simultaneously trying to recover from an injury. We must ensure that the system is accessible, responsive and focused on the well-being of the people it is intended to serve. The government should continue examining opportunities to improve the experience of injured workers and ensure that the compensation system is meeting their needs. This amendment is a positive step, but the government must be transparent about its cost, its implementation and its anticipated outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, no one goes to work expecting to be injured. People go to work to earn a living, provide for their families, contribute to their communities and build a future for themselves. When a workplace injury takes that ability away, even temporarily, those workers deserve to know that their government has their backs.

Increasing the income replacement rate from 85 per cent to 90 per cent is a meaningful improvement. It will provide additional financial support to workers who find themselves unable to earn their regular income because of a workplace injury.

We believe that workers should be protected, that their contribution should be recognized and that our compensation system should provide the support necessary for them to recover with dignity. We will therefore be supporting Bill 31.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

R. BALSOM: Thank you, Speaker.

I am pleased to stand today in support of Bill 31. This legislation demonstrates that we can strengthen benefits for injured and ill workers while continuing to manage the workers' compensation system in Newfoundland and Labrador responsibly. This bill would increase income replacement from 85 per cent to 90 per cent and, importantly, Speaker, the system is in a strong position to make this change.

The workers' compensation system is an employer-funded, no-fault insurance system administered by WorkplaceNL. The system serves approximately 230,000 workers and 17,000 employers. It provides wage-loss benefits, impairment payments, health care and rehabilitation services, return-to-work supports and retirement benefits to workers with work-related injuries or illnesses.

Based on 2025 results, WorkplaceNL's injury fund was 139.5 per cent funded, well above its target of 110 per cent. The increase would add approximately $60.7 million to the benefit liability for existing claims. Even after accounting for that cost, the injury fund is projected to remain approximately 133.9 per cent funded, still well above its target.

Speaker, that is important. A strong workers' compensation system must be financially sustainable but it must also work for the people who depend on it. When the system is in a strong financial position, we should look for responsible ways to improve support for workers. Bill 31 does exactly that.

It also moves Newfoundland and Labrador closer in line with the income replacement benefits provided in most other Canadian jurisdictions. This change does not stand alone. Together, with recent improvements to retirement benefits for injured or ill workers, Bill 31 represents another step toward providing greater financial security for workers and their families.

Speaker, it's simple, when the workers' compensation system is strong, workers should benefit from that strength.

This change would support our government's ongoing affordability initiatives while maintaining a system that is fair, effective and sustainable for workers and their families.

Bill 31 is responsible, sustainable and, most importantly, focused on the people the workers' compensation system exists to support and I am pleased to support it.

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.

It is my honour to stand and speak in the House on behalf of the residents of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi on Bill 31, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act. Again, to reiterate, this bill amends the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act to raise the income replacement rate for injured workers to 90 per cent of its lost earnings.

Just for information sake for the public who may be watching, when workers are injured, they're currently entitled to receive 85 per cent of pre-injury net earnings, of course, the gross pay, minus probable EI, Canada Pension Plan and income tax deductions. However, there's a maximum of how much income is considered in this calculation. That 85 per cent only covers the first $80,935 of income in 2026; any more income earned after that is not considered for lost wages.

So in 2019, the statutory review of the workers' compensation system recommended increasing the income replacement rate from 85 per cent of lost wages to 90 per cent, just like in most other provinces. This bill would amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act to raise the income replacement rate for injured workers to 90 per cent of the lost earnings.

Speaker, I'm very glad to see government doing this. The NDP certainly will be supporting this because we've been advocating for this for quite some time. Of course, if we had an NDP government, it would have been implemented quite some time ago.

This is paid by, of course, employer contributions, which comes out of an account that is funded far over 100 per cent. This initiative will cost no extra money. This was a part of our 2025 platform pledged by the NDP government to amend legislation to increase it to 90 per cent and the party has been calling for this measure for years. That's why we will certainly be happy to support this going forward.

A strong workers' compensation system is crucial for our workers. Injuries can happen at any time, even in the most safety-conscious workplaces. It's a frightening situation that nobody wants to find themselves in. At a time of rising inflation, those receiving payments from workers' compensation have limited means of keeping up with the cost of living. Despite being able to work, these folks still have households to maintain, car and mortgage payments to make and grocery and medications to buy.

So this could have been done in previous iterations. However, I'm very pleased to see this coming forward here today.

I would like to also just reference the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour who put out a media release in July of 2026. "'Adequate income replacement isn't a favour to injured workers, it's what makes recovery possible,' said Jessica McCormick. 'When workers are forced to

choose between paying their bills and taking the time they need to heal properly, everyone loses: the worker, their family, their employer and the compensation system itself, which ends up paying for re-injuries and longer, more complicated claims.'

"The last statutory review of the workers' compensation system explicitly recommended that there be no further discounts to employer assessment rates until the income replacement rate for injured workers is increased. Despite that recommendation, employers have continued to receive rebates while injured workers have been left with a replacement rate that has not kept pace with what workers actually need to get by during recovery."

This was something that was released in WorkplaceNL's 2025 annual report, following that, and the report showed that the fund was at almost 140 per cent funded, which makes the imbalance even harder to justify.

So, again, obviously, there has been a call for a long time from the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Labour and certainly from the NDP as well to support this, and we're very pleased to put our backing behind that.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Are there any other speakers?

Seeing none, if the minister speaks now, he will conclude the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Government Services, and Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I won't go in too far on this, but I'll thank both Members and then certainly the MHA on this side who spoke to it.

I cannot stress the importance of what happens when somebody gets injured, and I think everyone in this House has either experienced a workplace injury or has been ill themselves, or has had a friend or a family member who has lost their wages due to sickness or injury. So I think this bill is extremely important.

I will say the Member for St. John's West had some very valid points. I have made this very clear inside the department, this is not our money and it's not workers' comp's money; this is the workers money if they are injured. It is specifically designed to help the workers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: You know, employers, they pay a lot of premiums, but the way that this is designed, they pay a lot less premiums. If they were going out and doing this privately, it would be astronomical.

Workers' comp has proven time and time again that it works. That doesn't mean it's not without its issues. It doesn't mean that people don't struggle when they're trying to get to appointments or they're trying to get approved for the benefits. There is a lot to be fixed. We're aware of that and we're going to make strides to do that, but this is an important move that could have been or should have been done a while ago Unfortunately, here we are and we're going to move it forward, and I think it's a great step forward and I look forward to questions when we get to Committee.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are the Members ready for the question?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022 No. 2. (Bill 31)

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

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

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022 No. 2," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 31)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 11.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Recreation, that Bill 32, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022 No. 3, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022 No. 3." (Bill 32)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services, and Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, while we were talking about this internally inside our department, I think everyone in this House understands where I'm going to go right now. We recognize that there was an individual who has been really lobbying and fighting hard for all of this and, unfortunately, he's not around to see this bill come through.

I think it's really important that we recognize James "Jimmy" O'Toole.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: James "Jimmy" O'Toole was born July 2, 1979, and passed away April 25, 2026. I want to take a moment to recognize the late James "Jimmy" O'Toole – a firefighter, a leader and a tireless advocate for his fellow firefighters.

Jimmy devoted much of his career to advancing protections for firefighters facing occupational cancer. He helped champion presumptive cancer coverage here in Newfoundland and Labrador and carried that advocacy nationally, always working to make things better for firefighters who would come after him.

That work was deeply personal, but Jimmy never made it about himself. Even while facing his own challenges, he continued to speak up for others, mentor young firefighters and advocate for stronger protections for the people that he served alongside.

Speaker, that is why legislation like this matters. Legislation like this is about people. It's about recognizing the very real risk firefighters take on every single day in service to us and our communities and ensuring the system is there for them when they need it.

As we consider this change and look to strengthen these protections, I think it is fitting to acknowledge Jimmy's contribution and recognize someone who worked so very hard to move this conversation forward.

Jimmy understood that protecting firefighters was about more than just the person wearing the uniform; it was also about the spouse, the children and the family standing behind that firefighter. To Crystal, Ryan and Gavin, as well as Jimmy's extended family and firefighting family, I offer my deepest condolences.

Please know that his advocacy made a very real difference and the firefighters who come after him will be better protected because he chose to speak up. His service and the difference he made will never be forgotten in this province.

Speaker, I'm pleased to introduce the legislation, as it will strengthen protections for the people who put themselves on the front lines when wildfires threaten our communities. Wildland and volunteer firefighters do extraordinary and demanding work. They work in difficult terrain, in extreme heat and smoke for long periods of time, often under unpredictable and rapidly changing conditions. They do that work for one reason: to protect the people and communities of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, when we ask people to take on that responsibility on our behalf, government has a responsibility as well. We need to make sure the systems intended to protect workers recognize the realities of the work that they actually do. That is what this legislation is about.

The amendments we are introducing will expand presumptive workers' compensation coverage for wildland and volunteer firefighters. Presumptive coverage is important because it recognizes that, for certain occupations and certain illnesses or injuries, there is an established relationship between the work a person performs and the risk that they face. We're extending presumptive workers' compensation coverage to wildland and volunteer firefighters, recognizing the unique occupational risk associated with the work that they perform.

Where wildland and volunteer firefighters meet the requirements established under the legislation for prescribed occupational disease or condition, the connection to their employment will be presumed for the purposes of workers' compensation claims. This means the worker does not have to establish that occupational connection in the same way they would under a regular claim. This puts wildland and volunteer firefighters within a presumptive framework designed to provide a clearer and more direct path to workers' compensation benefits when the legislative requirements are met.

Speaker, this is an important change. It means that a worker who has spent their career protecting our forests, our homes and our communities will not face the same burden of establishing the connection between their work and a recognized occupational condition. It means that a worker and their family spend less time establishing the occupational connection and more time focusing on treatment, recovery and moving forward.

Speaker, we are also removing the age restriction that currently applies to presumptive coverage for colon cancer. That matters. Firefighters can face occupational exposures throughout their careers and an age cutoff should not create an unnecessary barrier to presumptive coverage for colon cancer. These changes are about making the system fairer and ensuring the legislation better reflects the occupational risks these workers face.

Our workers' compensation system exists to support workers when workplace injury or illness occurs. This government has already taken action this year to strengthen benefits under that system and today we are taking another important step.

Speaker, our wildland and volunteer firefighters are there for Newfoundland and

Labrador and they're there when we need them most. This legislation recognizes their service, recognizes the risk associated with that service and helps ensure the workers' compensation system is there for them when they need it most.

I look forward to discussing these amendments with the Members of the House, and I thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to rise today again to speak to Bill 32, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022. I'd like to say that, of course, we support this legislation and we'll be voting in favour of this bill. This legislation is important because it recognizes the sacrifices made by firefighters across Newfoundland and Labrador and it takes another step towards protecting their long-term health.

Our Liberal government initially introduced presumptive cancer coverage in 2016, and we believe expanding those protections to include firefighters and volunteer firefighters who are regularly exposed to the hazards of forest fires is a necessary and welcomed change.

Firefighters play an essential role in keeping our communities safe, whether they are career firefighters in larger municipalities or volunteers serving smaller rural communities, these individuals make tremendous sacrifices to protect others. They respond to house fires, vehicle accidents, natural disasters and, increasingly, forest fires across our province. They regularly put themselves in dangerous situations to protect homes, families and entire communities.

While we often recognize the immediate dangers associated with firefighting, we must also recognize the long-term health consequences that come with the job. Repeated exposure to smoke, chemicals and other hazardous substances can have serious effects on a person's health and those consequences may not become apparent for many years. The fact that a firefighter has returned home safely after an emergency does not mean that the risks associated with that experience are behind them. That is why presumptive coverage matters.

When someone develops an illness connected to the dangerous work they have performed, they should be able to access a system that recognizes the realities of their occupation. Firefighters should not face unnecessary difficulties trying to establish a connection between their work and an illness when they have spent years exposed to known occupational hazards.

Bill 32 proposes amendments to sections 109 and 111 of the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022.* These changes introduce a specific provision recognizing firefighters and volunteer firefighters who have been regularly exposed to the hazards of a forest fire scene. Under the proposed changes a firefighter or volunteer firefighter who has been regularly exposed to the hazards of a forest fire scene and is diagnosed with one of the diseases listed in paragraph 108(e) may qualify for presumption, provided the diagnosis occurs on or after December 1, 2026. This is an important recognition of the different environments in which firefighters work.

Forest fires present unique challenges and we've seen those challenges across Newfoundland and Labrador in recent years. Firefighters can spend long hours working in smoke-filled environments, dealing with dangerous substances, difficult terrain and unpredictable weather. For many, particularly those serving rural

communities, responding to forest fires is a regular part of their responsibilities. Their experiences should be reflected in the protections available to them.

I also want to emphasize the importance of including volunteer firefighters in these amendments. Across our province, volunteer fire departments are essential to the safety and security of our communities. In many smaller towns they're the first people residents turn to when an emergency happens. These volunteers balance their responsibilities of working at home with the demands of responding to emergencies. They give up evenings, weekends and time with their families because they care about their communities and want to help their neighbours. Their contribution should never be considered less valuable simply because they volunteer rather than work as career firefighters. The risks they face are just as real and their health deserves the same consideration.

Mr. Speaker, we support the intent of this legislation. There are some important questions the minister should be prepared to address. First, we need to talk about implementation. Passing legislation is one thing but ensuring that the people who are supposed to benefit from it actually understand and can access these protections is another. Firefighters across the province need to know what these changes mean, who qualifies and what steps they need to take if they need to make a claim. The government should work directly with fire departments, firefighting associations and WorkplaceNL to ensure that clear information is available, particularly in rural and remote communities.

Another important question is: What constitutes regular exposure to hazards of a forest fire scene? How will WorkplaceNL determine whether someone meets this requirement? Will there be clear guidelines outlining the frequency or number of exposures required? How will the system account for firefighters who have responded to forest fires over several years?

These questions are particularly important for volunteer firefighters who may not have the same formal employment records or documentation as career firefighters. Someone may have spent years responding to a forest fire in their community without having a detailed record of every emergency they attended. We need to ensure that documentation requirements do not create unnecessary barriers for the people this legislation is intended to protect.

When firefighters respond to a forest fire, they are focused on protecting homes, infrastructure, natural resources and human lives. They are not thinking about what their exposure might mean for their health years down the road. They are thinking about the people counting on them and doing everything they can to keep their communities safe.

As legislators, we have a responsibility to recognize those sacrifices. We cannot simply celebrate firefighters when there is an emergency and overlook their needs when it comes to their long-term health and well-being. Supporting firefighters means ensuring they have the appropriate training, equipment, workplace protections and access to compensation when they develop illnesses connected to their occupational exposure.

The Official Opposition believes that those who put themselves in dangerous situations to protect the public deserve a workers' compensation system that recognizes the risks associated with their work. We believe volunteer firefighters deserve the same consideration as career firefighters and that presumptive coverage should not place an unfair burden on individuals who have already made significant sacrifices in service to their communities.

Bill 32 moves this in the right direction by recognizing forest fire exposure as a

qualifying circumstance for presumptive coverage for firefighters diagnosed with the applicable listed diseases. We're pleased to support that change. However, the government's responsibility does not end once the legislation passes. The real test will be whether firefighters can access these protections when they really need them. Eligibility requirements must be clearly communicated. Volunteer firefighters must not be disadvantaged by documentation requirements and WorkplaceNL must be prepared to administer the expanded coverage.

Mr. Speaker, firefighters across Newfoundland and Labrador deserve to know that when they put their health and safety on the line to protect the public, this province will stand behind them. They deserve a system that recognizes their service, understands the risks of their occupation and provides appropriate protections when they need support. For those reasons, the Official Opposition will be voting in favour of Bill 32.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: Thank you, Speaker.

I just wanted to add on to what Minister Parrott said about Jimmy O'Toole. I met Jimmy back in 2012. Actually, we were coming here; we were part of a committee that was coming to meet government about presumptive cancer for the first time. Both myself and James were on that committee. Actually, in 2019, when I was diagnosed with colon cancer through firefighting, Jimmy was one of the first fellows to step up to help me do my applications and get compensated by workmen's compensation. Jimmy was a fighter. I know he had faced two battles with cancer. The first one he got through a little bit, and then, a few years later, it struck him again and it took him from us. I just wanted to recognize Jim, too. He was a good friend and a colleague of mine as well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: Mr. Speaker, I could stay up here three days and talk about this, but I won't. I'll just take five or 10 minutes.

Like I said, I came from the first responder field, from the firefighting field. In every corner of our province, municipal firefighters, volunteer firefighters and forestry firefighters put their lives on the line to keep our families and communities safe every day.

Wildland firefighting is a very respected and challenging career as well. Over the last 25 or 30 years, we've had a lot of forest fires in Lab West, and I've actually got to work with wildland firefighters and see what they do. I can tell you right now, as a structural firefighter, I thought we had it rough, but forest firefighting is a hell of a lot rougher. When you're out there and you have to dig a hole in the ground, probably five or six feet deep, with a pickaxe and shovel just to get to the bottom of that fire, you're working – you're working very hard.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. POWER: Yes.

These front-line workers deserve a government that values their service and sacrifice. By expanding this coverage, we're showing them that we value their service and sacrifice.

Many provinces across the country have already changed the legislation to include forestry firefighters, so we're just following suit, which probably should have been done

a few years ago, but we're getting there and getting it done.

Speaker, I can speak from personal experience. When a firefighter is diagnosed with cancer, it puts a lot of emotional, physical and financial toll on their families. Fear and uncertainty that comes with a cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming. Families often face the burden of caregiving, juggling medical appointments, treatments and supporting their loved ones throughout the journey.

The financial strain can be very devastating with medical bills and potential loss of income that the firefighter takes when you got to take time off work. Not only that, his wife, his partner, his spouse might have to take time off work so they may be actually losing two incomes, not only one.

It affects everybody. Even firefighters that are on your department with you, it affects them. They're worried about you as a colleague and a friend. They're also a little bit fearful that they may get diagnosed with cancer as well.

By making these amendments, again, I'll just go back to my days as a firefighter and as fire chief. I've only got to go back to last summer. We had a barbecue for the forestry firefighters in the terminal at the fire department at Wabush Airport. Just to watch them ladies and gentlemen come back in that evening and they were black, covered in soot – like, black, dirty. There's no other way to put it. That might sound strange but they were just covered in soot and dirt and all this, and they're there trying to wash themselves and eat a hamburger.

Just to look at them, as a structural firefighter, I always had a lot of protection. I had bunker gear on. I had a BA on. I had the right equipment. As a forestry firefighter, most of the times they're wearing what we call a bandana. It works and it don't work. A respirator, an N95 would certainly work a lot better but in the conditions they're in, the bandana is usually mostly what they wear and fire-rated coveralls.

I think there is a lot of science around whether or not they're sucking in the same stuff that we were sucking without our BAs and that. I honestly believe it's worse for them. They didn't have the same protection that we've had. So I actually think they're exposed to a lot more.

There is also some science out there saying that forestry firefighters are not exposed to the same conditions but when a cabin actually burns, it's no different than a house – same materials. There are lot of old tractors and cars out in the woods that catch on fire during the forest fires – same thing.

I'm not a scientist but, after 30 years, I honestly believe they're probably exposed to a little bit more than I was exposed to at the end of the day. So these amendments will make a big difference to the forestry departments in our province.

I know Minister Parrott explained a little bit about presumptive cancer, but there's an easy way to put presumptive cancer when it comes to firefighting. Probably before 2015, when it was brought in, you could file for workers' comp. You had to actually prove how you got cancer. With presumptive cancer, now, I know fellows when I started out as fire chief, we had one guy, 850 pieces of paper we sent workers' comp just to prove how many scenes he was on, how many times he was out – 850 pieces of paper and we had to dig that up and dig it up and dig it up.

Right now, with presumptive cancer, it is presumed that you got cancer through firefighting, which makes things a lot easier, trust me, not having to prove and provide all this paperwork. I will say when we did start presumptive cancer in 2012, right now, any new firefighter that's joining any department in this province, they get a little book. It's a log book. It was a great idea, whoever came up with it.

I know it came out of the Fire Commissioner's office a few years ago, but right now after every fire call, the firefighter can fill out this log, throw it in his locker until the next call. He doesn't have to worry about going back and trying to prove that he responded to these many calls. So it also makes a big difference.

We've made a lot of changes over the years. First when I started, it was cool to have dirty bunker gear. It's not cool anymore. It's actually not healthy. A lot of departments out there now, I'm going to say the richer fire departments, can provide two suits of gear. Most fire departments now have washers that can wash their bunker gear. Like I said, it makes a big difference. We're after coming a long ways to help firefighters preventing cancer over the years.

I'm not going to go on too much, Mr. Speaker. Like I said, I could stay up here three days and talk about this but I think everybody here in this House gets what I'm saying, gets where I've came from over the years. I think it's very important that we include our forestry firefighters in the presumptive cancer.

I will say one more thing. Minister Parrott also mentioned the age for colon cancer. I was diagnosed in 2019. If I had to have been six years older, I wouldn't have been covered because I would have been hitting 60 years old, which I just turned a couple of weeks ago. But if I'd have been six years older at that time, I would not have been covered. So taking that age limit out of this – there are lots of firefighters in this province that are 60 years old and older, lots of them, and they're still active.

So I strongly agree with removing the age limit as well. I don't think anybody in this House should have anything bad to say or object to this bill, Speaker.

So with that, I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll start off a little off script. I'm just going to start off by saying thank you to the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL for the tribute he just did. I can virtually say that none of this would have happened without Jimmy and his advocacy, and I do appreciate what you said.

I also want to take the opportunity to thank the MHA for CBS because he introduced myself to Jimmy years ago in this very House. He said, you should meet with this young fellow, Jimmy O'Toole. He reached out and he was trying to get a meeting with us to talk about firefighting. The MHA for CBS said, I'll speak to him, he's a pretty cool fellow. I remember the conversation. I happened to be on the other side of the House and he was over here, but I do remember the conversation happening behind the Speaker's Chair and how important it was to where we are today.

Then my next thank you is to the MHA for Labrador West for his service, everything he had to say and his work that he's done for this. Legislation in this House of Assembly isn't developed by everybody in this House. It may be approved by people in this House, but it's developed by a lot of people outside the House and a lot of people from community and people as energetic as Jimmy and the leadership that he took.

I had the, I guess, unfortunate issue of going to his memorial. While the minister was doing his tribute, I was thinking back to sitting in St. Mary's church at the time and just watching how many people loved him, respected him, adored the work he did. He mentored them, not just from here in St. John's where he was a firefighter for St.

John's Regional, but Canada. There were international firefighters who flew up for this because he made such an impact, not just here on the local level, in the City of St. John's or the provincial level or the national level, but international firefighters. Just hearing them tell the stories about how hard he was working, what a great guy he was.

As the hon. Member for Labrador West said, taken far too soon. I can honestly say – and I know my colleague, the MHA for Placentia - St. Mary's, knew him well, as well, from working with him – everyone who has been in his presence will talk about how positive those experiences were, whether he was arguing with us across the table to tell us we need to do more, we need to do presumptive cancer coverage, as you said.

From where I'm sitting today, this is a good day in the House of Assembly, like right now, this afternoon has been a great day.

It's a great opportunity. We've done a couple of great pieces of legislation with WorkplaceNL. We're doing something that's great for the people that we all represent. I'm sure Jimmy and his group – not just Jimmy because it wasn't just Jimmy but it was a lot of others, as well – are looking at this and being very happy about what's been done here today for firefighters and people that are having to deal with WorkplaceNL when it's a challenging time for them.

With all that said, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to stand for Bill 32. I'm not going to take up my full time, I don't think. I've talked a little bit about some of these things I wanted to talk about because we truly wouldn't be here if it didn't start with Jimmy asking for the initial meeting with our group because he educated us on what were the problems, what were some of the things we needed to do. That can only come from those experiences that you have as a lived firefighter from that experience.

We all have a responsibility to do what we can for those who protect our communities and make sure they receive the appropriate protections, when they have consequences from their job or their volunteer work as a firefighter, whether it be in the woods or whether it be in a structure, we have a responsibility as legislators to ensure that they get the coverage they require and they need. It's a constant balance there's no doubt about that.

I've heard my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi talk about pushing for more and that's a great thing. We all push, it's great that we have people at the table pushing government to consider more. When the fund is in a healthy position like it is now, as highlighted by the minister, we can do these things and it has very little impact on anyone other than the people who are going to receive that benefit.

The businesses are not going to have to pay any more in premiums. They're not going to have to be affected. The fund is well-funded. We're in a situation where it's not a problem to do that and I'm happy that we're here to do that today.

Back in December of 2016, before the Member for CBS had said take this meeting with this young fellow, we got the opportunity to stand in the House of Assembly to do Bill 59. When we did that, that was the first, as the MHA for Lab West and chief said, we introduced presumptive cancer. That group that met with us at the time said this is lifechanging for firefighters.

You don't realize the impact you can have in the House of Assembly until you sit across the table from someone who is telling you that this piece of legislation that you just did is having this profound impact on their lives. The MHA for Lab West said it a few months ago, I think, when he was first in the House in the spring and he said it again today. I'd be remiss if I didn't say that that's an important thing that we all, as legislators, got to see the impact that that makes for

each of us and, more importantly, for the people who we represent.

We made progress and we continue to make progress and this bill today is another step in that progress.

In 2022, I had the pleasure of standing here and being in that position of minister responsible for WorkplaceNL and introduce Bill 12 and had many meetings with Jimmy and his group to talk about adding more cancers to the coverage for presumptive cancer coverage. We sat down and I told Jimmy later, after that initial meeting, Jimmy, you didn't have to sell us too hard on what we were trying to do.

One thing that you probably don't know, if you're listening in the audience, and I'm sure the minister responsible would know, they don't just come in and sit across the table and say, b'y, we're good people. This is what you should do. They come in with the stats to back it up. They come in well researched, provide that data and, in this case, they said these are the six cancers, Minister, we'd like you to consider.

As soon as Jimmy and his group walked out, I was sitting and talking with our staff, and we said, no, we can do better than that. Maybe a month or so later, Jimmy and his group came back, in that same boardroom that I think the minister would be meeting with his staff in, and said, Minister, what are we going to be able to do? I said we're going to introduce legislation, not just for the six you asked for, but the eight that will lead the country for presumptive cancer coverage, and that's what we did because he wanted us to push the envelope.

I think those two things just speak to the character of the person that you made tribute to, and I think every piece of legislation that we bring in that deals with firefighters, whether it be wildland, or volunteer or anything, is a direct reflection of the work and pressure that was put on us by people who really care.

Jimmy would be the first to say it wasn't just him, it was a full group, but I stand here today very excited about this bill. This is good. This is a good news story today. It's a great opportunity for us to support more individuals. When there's an issue happening in our community, whether it be a fire in a cabin, as the MHA for Lab West had said, or a brush fire that's going to come close to the community, everyone else is asked to evacuate and run the other way when these individuals, whether they're wearing a scarf or Woodland coveralls, they're running towards it and doing some very dangerous things each and every day.

I think everyone on this side of the House would say thank you to them. We've seen far too many fires that have impacted communities. I know my colleague for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde can speak to that; my colleague from Harbour Grace - Port de Grave that lived through it, very close. Many lives were impacted, and it would have been far worse without those individuals in the woods protecting the people.

This is incumbent upon us to do that. I know my colleague who spoke to it first on our side said there will be some questions. There will be, obviously, but they're more policy related, just for timing and things that we just want to know to make sure that we understand it completely. But there's no doubt in my mind that this is a good day. There's no doubt in my mind that you'll get full support of the House of Assembly. I don't want to speak for the NDP, but I'm sure we will.

I think, MHA for Lab West, I don't think I've said Lab West as many times in my entire life in the House of Assembly before, but Jordan Brown did give me a hug this morning.

J. POWER: I'll give you one after.

B. DAVIS: Perfect. Well, it was worth saying now.

But I do think it's really important for us all to understand the impact that this piece of legislation will make on those people that are doing hard, hard work and to protect us.

So I'm not going to go on for any longer. I just wanted to say that I'm happy that we're here bringing this piece of legislation forward. I'm very excited to support this piece of legislation and I look forward to more progress that's being made on WorkplaceNL files that would come that's going to happen because of the fund.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm just going to stand and have a few words also and support this piece of legislation in this House to help firefighters across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the paid and volunteer.

I'm going to go back a bit further than some people spoke to. First when the WorkplaceNL went and approved, I think it was 11 different types of cancers, I just want to bring up Duane Antle. Duane Antle at the time was the president of the Newfoundland and Labrador Firefighters Association, and who was on the board was the Member for Lab West that pushed for it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: I'm going back to 2016, 2017, when Duane Antle and the Member and the other Members of the Executive, finally I think it was 11 certain cancers caused by fires, by volunteer firefighters that were put under the workers' compensation because of that. So the Member goes back further than you want to talk about, but I just want to recognize the work that you and Duane Antle did back in 2016, 2017 to get this ball rolling.

Another person I want to mention, Mr. Speaker, is someone who's been pushing for this here, Jerry Earle, the president of NAPE. He's been pushing for this for a long while. He's been trying to get the association with the workers to have this approved.

Every time I speak at a volunteer firefighters' association in the Bay of Islands, which is a nice number of groups and I did at the city, I always go to the chief at the fireman's ball and say every fire that you attend, that you respond to, mark down what happened at the fire. Because, again I go back in 2016-2017, I seen people who unfortunately were exposed to elements that caused cancer and, at the time, they couldn't get any relief whatsoever.

When the act came in at the time, it was that it is incumbent upon the fire department, the chief or deputy chief or whoever is next, to log every fire, who attended, what they were exposed to and the reason why. It mightn't be now, it mightn't be five years, it mightn't be 10 years, it might be 20 years down the road that due to your exposure, you will succumb to one of those cancers.

That was the intent of the legislation. Again, Duane Antle and the Member for Lab West, they were the ones who put it in when they were having all the meetings with the fire departments saying log every fire. Make sure, that's your duty to do that.

Mr. Speaker, over the years, that helped so many people, so many volunteers and so many other people who were exposed to it, professional firefighters, volunteer firefighters. Because when you're going to fight fire, 20 years down the road, you don't realize what caused your cancer and who suffers? It is your family because you can't work.

On through the years, everybody added to it to make it stronger and this is another piece of legislation that's making it stronger also. It's adding to it to ensure that the people that everyone in this House are so proud of, the firefighters across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, either volunteer or professional or, in this case, people who are fighting the forest fires, that we are saying thank you for your service. We understand what you're putting yourself through. We understand what you're exposing yourself to. We understand what your family will go through if anything ever happens to you.

This is a recognition of this whole House, and I'm sure this is going to be accepted unanimously here in this House, to say thank you for what you do. We want to ensure that not only you are taken care of, but your family is taken care of and this is another step to say that this is something we should have done a few years back. It's being done today.

I applaud the government for bringing this in. I applaud everybody who started this process back in 2016. I thank every Member of this House of Assembly over the years, for the last 10 years, that every time a bill comes through this House of Assembly, everybody supports it because we know the value of the firefighters in Newfoundland and Labrador. We knew it last summer, too, with the devastation around the province with the fires.

I just want to say thank you to all the firefighters across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I thank Duane Antle, again, the minister and everybody else who pushed for this, got this and everybody who's going to ensure that people and families are going to be protected in the long run.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to get up for a couple of minutes on this one today. It's a very important piece of legislation, it really is, and it's great to see it. As Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands, and Emergency Services, it's great to see that the presumptive coverage is coming in for forest fires now as well as – it was there for the firemen but it's going into the wildland firefighters. I'd like to thank the minister, certainly, for bringing that forward.

I know everybody is in favour and it's nice to see because as our 32-year veteran of the fire services, our Member from Lab West said, they work hard. They do work hard. You can see it on their faces when they come from those fires. I saw it in Labrador when I was up there. I've seen it before. I have family members, of course, attached to the fire department so I know how they work. I've heard the story.

Not only does it help them now but it protects them, it enhances their protection and protects their families. Cancer, of course, as soon as you hear the word, you're devastated. Your life changes as soon as you hear this stuff. So to be able to protect their families with this coverage is amazing. Hats off to them, every one of them and it's good to see they're being covered under this presumptive coverage. They deserve that because they deserve everything we can do for them, they really do.

Certainly, I would like to thank them for their service, all the emergency services, fire departments, forest firefighters, those people, I certainly would like to thank them for their service and anything we can do to enhance their abilities to do their work is greatly appreciated and great to do.

With that, Speaker, I'm not going to take up a lot of time. I know that the forest division

and the emergency division have been working together for a long time with regard to services that they provide, not only in different areas, it could be disaster events, but forest fires we've known as late, both of the divisions work very close together with their IMTs.

We've known that forest fires have come into our communities in the past few years and they caused a lot of damage. The carcinogens and the stuff that's used to built houses and cabins today are more flammable. They're more intensive. They burn faster. They're more powerful and that stuff gets into the system. It's good to see that the forest firefighters will be covered under that because I know the cabins today and the houses, especially with communities so close to the fires today within the forest. It's great to see this.

I won't stay up any longer with it. It's just that I am really, really pleased to see this come forward today for the wildland firefighters to be added to the presumptive coverage.

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,

It is my honour to stand in this hon. House and speak to Bill 32, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act.

First and foremost, I want to thank the hon. Member for Lab West for sharing your experience. Obviously, your own health journey, but your invaluable experience as a firefighter, as a chief and as somebody who has incredible lived experience with that community and knows the ins and outs. I have a huge, huge respect for firefighters of all sizes and shapes, honestly. I want to thank you for sharing that.

I'll just speak a little bit to the bill. So the bill amends the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act to add further protections for some of the firefighters. Over the years, the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act has been amended multiple times to extend presumptive cancer and cardiac coverage for career and volunteer firefighters.

I haven't heard much talk about the cardiac aspect of it because that's one component as well, but this means that the firefighters meeting the criteria who contracted cancer from a list of presumptively covered cancers are presumed to have contracted the cancer from their work or as a firefighter unless the contrary is demonstrated. Of course, the same applies for cardiac illnesses. As a result, it simplified the claim process at WorkplaceNL and helps injured firefighters receive the assistance they need earlier.

Under the presumptive benefit, eligible firefighters may receive income replaced benefits, required health benefits and supports that are not covered by MCP. Eligible firefighters may also qualify for a permanent functional impairment award where the diagnosed condition results in functional impairment that is considered permanent or where the diagnosed occupational cancer is terminal. Of course, we've heard our hon. Members speak to some of those experiences.

If a firefighter covered by presumptive coverage passes away as a result of the diagnosis –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'll ask Members to keep their conversations to a minimum, please.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I think this is an important issue and a bill that the NDP are going to be supporting. So I'd like to be able to say a few more words on this, if I may.

If a firefighter covered by presumptive coverage passes away as a result of the diagnosed compensable occupational disease, a dependent may apply for the benefits. So that's also encouraging to know as well.

Ultimately, we've removed the restriction that the presumption for listed illnesses does not apply to a professional or volunteer firefighter who's regularly exposed to the hazards of forest fires and repeal the age restriction for primary colorectal cancer. We know that colon cancer is one of the highest rates of cancer that we have in our province and we know it's certainly a horrendous thing that is impacting our firefighter community.

I want to just speak a little bit because I know everybody has spoken to an incredible and dedicated fighter for this, and that would be James O'Toole. Of course, he was the local president of 1075. In my former role as the deputy mayor of the City of St. John's, I had the incredible opportunity to work side by side with him.

He was a fierce advocate. I won't say it was a gentle – I know, certainly, the Member has referenced about his advocacy. When I campaigned two different campaigns for the City of St. John's, I remember one of the first people who came to me was James O'Toole – Jimmy O'Toole –

J. KORAB: Same.

S. O'LEARY: Exactly – to make sure that we understood, because of our partnership with the St. John's Regional Fire Department, how incredibly crucial this health progression would be, that this legislation would be to firefighters.

I met him on many occasions and he advocated for the health of his fellow firefighters. I certainly commend him on his incredible dedication and efforts. Of course, we all wish that he rests peacefully and that hopefully his family can be comforted by the knowledge that the fruits of his labours – and of course his team, the many people that worked with him – have brought this bill into the House of Assembly. I certainly would like to acknowledge that as well. It was an incredible privilege to learn from firefighters, the people who are in the field, and that has certainly been my honour.

So just getting back to the bill now, specifically, and I will have a few questions to ask, but the NDP are very supportive of this. However, I do want to just talk about a couple of things.

The one thing that this bill does not address, of course, is extending the protections to wildland firefighters. We feel wildland firefighters also fight wildfires and are exposed to the same risks, so we have some questions about that. We want to make sure that everybody gains the benefits and health care from people when they're doing their jobs.

The NDP has been advocating for wildland firefighters to be year-round and, of course, those seasonal workers also to have the same benefits. I understand, from NAPE, that there are presently 100 wildland firefighters right now without presumptive legislation.

This is one of the things that we see as a disadvantage in the presentation of this bill, that there are still some omissions there. It continues to leave out wildland firefighters from the presumptive coverage protection. Something that, hopefully, we can start to move towards because, of course, we know there are so many different things involved

in this: the training, the equipment repair, climate change impacts and the firebreak intel. All of these things that, of course, people have to do in those positions as well.

I will say I'm very, very pleased to see this come forward, and I know that there was a lot of work that has been done to get it to this stage. I really want to say a huge commendation to the firefighters who have been advocating for quite some time for this.

We will be supporting it. We'll have our questions in the Committee, but I look forward to that opportunity.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers if the Minister of Government Services and Responsible for WorkplaceNL speaks now, he will conclude the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Government Services, and Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker,

I was just talking to my colleague from CBS about Jimmy. When I got elected and a lot of us on this side – and I might be wrong on the date, but I think it was May 16, 2019. The very next day, the phone rang and it was my brother and he said you're going to be getting a phone call from a guy; I gave him your cellphone number. I was, like, okay.

At the time, my brother was a fire captain at the Ottawa airport and about an hour later, Jimmy called. It was literally the day after we got elected. He said he wanted to meet and, of course, it was when are you coming in? I was like, Jimmy, I have no idea how any of this works. I'll let you know when I know kind of thing.

I sent him a message and said I think it is the 4th of June we're getting sworn in. He said: All right, where are you staying? I said: I'm staying at the Sheraton. He said: I'll meet you at 6 at the Sheraton. It wasn't can I meet you – relentless and hats off to him. This bill is absolutely a result of people like Jimmy and Jimmy's advocacy and hard work in order to see this go through.

Unfortunately, Jimmy is not here to see this, but happy to bring it forward. I can say on his behalf but –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: – it's on the behalf of all of the firefighters out there.

My colleague who just spoke will be happy to know that a wildland firefighter is a forest firefighter and this bill does cover them. So NAPE is wrong, this bill covers them 100 per cent. You don't need to ask that question when we go to Committee, wildland firefighters are covered.

I won't belabour this any longer. I think that my colleague from Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, he said the right thing. When we come to the House and we decide that we're going to work together, I think we do a great job. We've done it since 2019. When bills come to the House that we all believe in and we understand the value of them, we move things forward at the speed they should move forward for the right reasons and I think today was a great display of that.

So I thank everyone for the co-operation this afternoon. I look forward to the questions in Committee, and thanks for everybody's input.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Now if we could only apply that concept to Question Period, we'd have her scald.

Are the Members ready for the question?

All those in favour of the motion, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022 No. 3. (Bill 32)

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

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

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, “An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022 No. 3,” read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 32)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, 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.’

This House now stands adjourned until tomorrow, being Monday, November 16, at 1:30 p.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, November 16, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.