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Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The Government House Leaders are ready? Yes.

Admit strangers.

Order, please!

In the Speaker's gallery today, I would like to welcome Dr. John Campbell, Ken Dicks, Sister Roisin Gannon, Sister Bernadette Doherty and Sister Lois Greene. They are joining us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

In the public gallery, I'd like to welcome teachers Michael Kinsella and Elizabeth Murphy, along with students from the Mount Pearl Senior High civics class.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Also in the public gallery, I would like to recognize family members of Mrs. Margaret Doyle, visiting us today for a Member's statement.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today, we will hear Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Lewisporte - Twillingate, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Labrador West, Topsail - Paradise and Harbour Main.

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Roots are important to Cottle's Island Lumber Company. Roots anchored in the soil of our beautiful province which grow the spruce and fir upon which Cottle's Island has built its business. Roots growing through four generations of this family owned and operated business. Roots supporting generations of families who have made their living from the logging, processing and transportation of Cottle's Island Lumber products and roots nourishing the communities of our region.

Cottle's have proudly turned logs into lumber, siding, panelling and flooring in several styles to

make our homes beautiful and strong, along with high-quality fuel pellets and firewood to make our homes warm.

In this, their 50th year of operation, they've added a new log sorting system to maximize the value of the resources they harvest and a state-of-the-art kiln that will allow Cottle's Island Lumber to better service customers and expand production capabilities that will provide new employment opportunities for the communities in Notre Dame Bay and Central Newfoundland.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Cottle's Island Lumber on 50 years of successful operations in the forest products industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to recognize a dream which will soon become a reality, a reality made possible through the hard work and dedication by these special guests here today: Dr. John Campbell, Ken Dicks, Sister Roisin Gannon, Sister Bernadette Doherty and Sister Lois Greene, amongst others.

These are just a few of Lionel Kelland Hospice board members. Their commitment, along with the devotion of a strong community, has raised over \$880,000 to open a much needed end-of-life care facility in Grand Falls-Windsor. The facility is only possible due to the Presentation Sisters' donation of a wonderful building, quite fitting for its future purpose.

The Lionel Kelland Hospice and its staff offer dignity and comfort to dying patients and their families. We hope this is the beginning of these important units throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. To my community and the board members of the Lionel Kelland Hospice, I say thank you for ensuring future patients will have a private, personal and, yes, Mr. Speaker, a beautiful experience as they leave this world on to the next.

Thank you and God bless you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand in the House today to recognize Ms. Noreen Careen of Labrador City. This year, Noreen was honoured with the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors of Distinction Award for her decades of community and volunteer work in Labrador West.

Noreen has been a tireless advocate and the voice of women and seniors in the Big Land. She has been an active participant in organizations and groups such as the Status of Women Council, the Labrador West Housing and Homeless Coalition, Seniors Pioneer Living, the NL 50+ Federation, and the IOC-Labrador West Community Advisory Panel, just to name a few.

Ms. Careen also serves as a member of the Provincial Advisory Council on Aging and Seniors. Noreen is perhaps best known for her work with creating the Hope Haven outreach program and emergency shelter, which helps women and children in Labrador West to overcome domestic violence.

Noreen Careen is an amazing member of our community. I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing her continued work on behalf of women and seniors in Labrador West.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is an honour for me to stand in this House and congratulate Levi Moulton, a 19-year-old resident from the beautiful District of Topsail - Paradise.

Last month, Levi, who attends Memorial University and is a member of the Sea-Hawks Cross Country team, was recently named Memorial's athlete of the week but also named Atlantic University Sport men's all-star, after finishing fifth in the men's eight-kilometre AUS championships on October 26 in Fredericton, New Brunswick with a time of 25:58.

This made him a conference all-star and secured Levi a place in the national university championships hosted at Queen's University in Kingston, Ontario this past November 9.

Completing 9.9 kilometres, Levi finished with a time of 33:28 seconds, placing him 87 out of 143 participants – an outstanding accomplishment.

Levi has also had success this season with the Sea-Hawks, taking seventh place at the StFX invitational on September 21 and also taking third place in Wolfville, Nova Scotia on October 5.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Levi on all his cross-country accomplishments.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am delighted to honour a very special lady, Margaret Doyle, from Avondale in the District of Harbour Main who celebrated her 100th birthday on October 12.

Mrs. Doyle is a mother of eight with numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren. She has been a lifelong volunteer in her school and church communities. Even today, she remains very active and continues to be keenly interested in politics, literature and the arts. A cause of great pride is her family's connection to theatre, and she has seen every production of theirs, no matter where she had to travel across Canada or abroad.

I recently had the pleasure as her MHA in attending a commemorative mass in her honour in Conception Harbour with her many friends and family members – one of whom was the well-known Damhnait Doyle, who sang as part of the heartfelt celebration. This was followed by a celebration in her home where I first-hand witnessed the quick wit and humour of this extraordinary woman.

I ask all Members to please join with me in recognizing Mrs. Margaret Doyle.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Status of Women.

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize the Mokami Status of Women Council as they celebrate their 40th anniversary this week.

The Mokami Status of Women Council started in 1979 when a group of women began the Happy Valley-Goose Bay Status of Women Council. Soon afterward, it adopted its current name.

The initial focus of the council was to start a transition house in the area, Mr. Speaker, but their work soon expanded to other women's issues.

Today, the Mokami Status of Women Council is an equality-seeking feminist organization that links women by sharing ideas, resources, skills, experience and knowledge. They are dedicated to serving the needs of the women in their community.

Mr. Speaker, I was pleased to have the opportunity to have travelled to Happy Valley-Goose Bay in October, where I was able to meet with the executive director, Raelene Vickers, and several council members.

During our visit, we were able to discuss some of the great things the Mokami Status of Women Council have accomplished over the year, such as: The Women Helping Women Program; the creation of a resource manual; a drop-in service; a weekly craft group; resident retreats which are held each year, Mr. Speaker; and a guardian and tots group.

After 40 years, the Mokami Status of Women Council continues to do great things for women and girls in their region.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all of my hon. colleagues to join me in congratulating the Mokami Status of Women Council on an amazing 40 years.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to extend a heartfelt and sincere congratulations to the current and past members of the Mokami Status of Women Council; 40 years of service to the women and girls of the Happy Valley-Goose Bay area is a tremendous accomplishment.

Mr. Speaker, this organization does so much more than advocating on behalf of women and girls. They offer support groups, a gently used clothing store, host craft classes, special events and even run a lending library which has a wide range of resources, fiction and non-fiction books.

I would also like to take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to recognize the work of all the Status of Women Councils across this province. Together, they are continuing to advocate on behalf of women and girls and in the process they make their communities a better place to live and work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. Congratulations to the Mokami Status of Women Council on 40 years of amazing work in Labrador, Lake Melville.

The council has campaigned hard for more housing for vulnerable women, and even developed some of their own units. The women helping women program supports more than 450 women and children, providing personal hygiene and infant care items. It also plays a crucial role in counselling and supporting women who are victims of violence. It deserves adequate support for its growing needs. I congratulate them on 40 years of excellent work.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Furthers statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, it is truly an honour to rise today in this hon. House to highlight *The Way Forward on Adult Literacy*, the province's partnership-driven adult literacy action plan.

The five-year plan includes 30 actions and was developed through engagement with key stakeholders such as adult learners, adult literacy service providers, Indigenous groups, community organizations, industry, labour and post-secondary education institutions. I was pleased to see so many of these stakeholders at the official launch of the plan at The Murphy Centre on October 17.

I want to especially thank the dedicated staff at the Department of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour for making all of this possible.

Mr. Speaker, literacy is more than just reading and writing – it is the ability to find, understand, create, communicate and compute using printed and written materials in different situations. Our vision for Newfoundland and Labrador is a strengthened adult literacy system that helps people get the literacy skills needed to lead healthier, more productive lives and fully take part in the province's economy.

The Adult Literacy Action Plan will be supported by \$60 million in funding over five years and will be implemented in three phases. The first phase includes 12 actions to be completed by March 2020. We will work with the adult literacy stakeholders to build on the existing strengths, improve current programming and services and develop new programs to support adult literacy.

One of the highlights of launching the plan was hearing the personal and inspiring story of Gladys Pardy from Marystown, this year's recipient of the Council of the Federation Literacy Award. After dropping out of high school and spending over 30 years in the workforce, Gladys made a life-changing move by going back to school to complete her adult basic education. After finishing her program early, Mr. Speaker, Gladys is now enrolled in the child and youth care worker program at Keyin College. She's absolutely amazing.

Mr. Speaker, I invite all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating Gladys Pardy. I look forward to more inspiring stories like hers as we continue to implement the important work of advancing adult literacy throughout our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for a copy of his statement.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to offer my congratulations to Ms. Gladys Pardy and to all of those who make a life-

changing decision to obtain their adult basic education certificates. Mr. Speaker, the story of Ms. Parly is truly inspirational. Her story is a testament to the fact that hard work does pay off and that every person can obtain education with hard work and the proper supports in place.

I would also like to take a moment to thank those who teach the adult basic education course. These mentors work diligently to help individuals put their best foot forward, but also to inspire students to think beyond the adult basic education program.

Mr. Speaker, literacy is a must in this world. I encourage anyone who wishes to follow Ms. Parly's footsteps to do just that. I'm sure all Members of this House would be happy to chat with and assist any constituents who are considering attending the program.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I also thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. I, too, join in his congratulations of Gladys Parly on her wonderful accomplishment.

As a former English teacher, I can attest that advancing adult literacy is indeed important work. There is a direct correlation between literacy and good government and the health of society.

Good government and better public policy come from an educated and informed populous. Those who need adult literacy training must be encouraged to step up and take advantage of the actions the minister notes, not only for themselves, but for the good of our province and our country.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and this will be my first ever minister's statement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAGG: I rise today to highlight the positive work of municipal leaders which was recognized at the annual Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador Conference and Trade Show this past weekend here in St. John's. I was very pleased to join Premier Ball and other ministers and MHAs at the convention to acknowledge the work of our municipal councils and employees who work tirelessly every day to improve our communities.

I'd like to extend a sincere congratulations to all long-service award recipients whose hard work and dedication have made a great difference and helped to build vibrant communities across our province.

Mr. Speaker, I was also extremely pleased to join Premier Ball for the fourth annual Premier's Forum on Local Government. We participated in thoughtful, frank discussions about the municipal approach to health, diversity and inclusion. The input from delegates that participated in the forum will be vital as we continue to work to support our municipal leaders to achieve the common goal of ensuring Newfoundland and Labrador is the best possible place to live, work and raise a family.

I know a lot of the hon. Members in this House of Assembly had their political starts with municipal governments and I ask you all to join me in thanking everyone who helped organize the convention. It is certainly no small task to run such a successful event. We look forward to continuing the ongoing collaboration with municipal leaders and staff that supports building safe and sustainable communities across Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, we are also pleased to recognize the valuable work of our municipal leaders across the province, which was highlighted at the recent Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador Conference. I, along with many of my colleagues, had the pleasure to attend this year's conference. It was an impressive event that provided a great opportunity for constructive discussion.

I enjoyed meeting representatives from many municipalities and hearing their concerns and opinions on a wide variety of issues affecting their communities. There's a tremendous amount of work being done in the municipalities across the province and, of course, there's still work to be done addressing important issues such as drinking water, firefighting and emergency services and, of course, waste water regulations.

I would like to congratulate and thank the members of MNL for their continued commitment to providing improved services and to making our municipalities better and stronger places to live and work for our residents here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. As the minister knows, I had an opportunity to attend the conference as well. The MNL Conference is a productive venue to talk with municipal leaders and the province on a host of issues facing municipalities today.

I join with the minister in congratulating the municipal leaders and the MNL staff for yet another amazing conference.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Seeing none, Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The chairman of Northern Harvest, parent company Mowi, has apologized to the people and Government of Newfoundland and Labrador for the catastrophic salmon die-off.

Will the minister responsible for aquaculture follow the example of the chairman of Mowi by apologizing for his handling of the salmon catastrophe?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that lessons have been learned. Those lessons have been incorporated within our new robust policies, our licence conditions and the things that will be established within regulation.

The learning environment that was provided is unfortunate. It's regrettable. I'm delighted that the president of the company apologized not only to the government but to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The one point that I think this House can take and take some clear confidence in is that with the robust set of policies, with the robust licence conditions, with our advancements on the Code of Containment we're working on with the federal government and with the new regulations, which will be put in place, aquaculture is going to be sustainable and it's here to stay providing jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Clearly, the answer, Mr. Speaker, is the minister will not be tendering an apology.

People across the province are voicing frustration over delay in applications with Crown Lands, with some reports of two to five years wait time. Yet, I heard the minister at Municipalities NL this weekend say that the backlog is cleared up.

How can the minister explain this discrepancy between his version of wait times and what people are encountering constantly?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: I really want to thank the hon. Member for the question. It does provide me with a platform to be able to speak of the great things that have been happening in Crown Lands. Yes, there have been serious problems within the Crown Lands application process.

Mr. Speaker, we did have a backlog of 10,000 applications that were – some delayed as much as 10 years. That was very serious. We put in place a service delivery standard now of 90 days. We have eliminated the backlog.

One of the issues we did identify was that there was a shortage of front-line staff. When I became minister responsible for Lands, we recognized there was upwards of a 48 per cent vacancy rate within the Crown Lands, front-line services and offices. We said that's not good enough and we fixed the problem, and that helped fix the problem of the backlog.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, I was at that town hall on Saturday and I was incredulous to hear the minister say the turnaround standard was 90 days.

Can the minister explain why the application of Great Northern Port corporation for land for industrial development near St. Anthony, perfected in June, is still awaiting decision five months later?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Yet another example of a great question, and I appreciate the hon. Member for asking it.

I had an opportunity to ask the mayors from the region to get input from them and I, during the course of that meeting, was able to explain that, as they were well aware on June 19, the environmental assessment was released. There were a number of issues within the environmental assessment and the release which were outlined, that, of course, the proponent would have to fulfil. We're working directly with Great Northern Port corporation to try to map out their strategy to deal with what is required for a Crown Lands application.

Mr. Speaker, this is not an uncomplicated application. It deals with over 1,000 acres of land and seabed. It's a very important application for the area, but what I do know is that there is a very strong appetite for good, solid communication and for delivery of a good product.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: What I hear the hon. minister saying, Mr. Speaker, is that there are items outstanding that his department has sought from the company.

The thing about Great Northern Port is that industry and jobs are the best hope for the Northern Peninsula.

Will the minister assure the House that he will investigate the status of the application for lands for development at Crémaillère Bay and report back to the House this week on a likely date for a decision by Crown Lands?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

There is no doubt that there are items that remain outstanding. Those items, in part, were listed within the environmental assessment release. It's a public document. That, obviously, would be part of an LGIC consideration of an application, along with other elements.

Obviously, with a land base of a thousand-plus acres of land and sea, this falls within LGIC, or Lieutenant-Governor in Council, consideration, which is a requirement of statute. Obviously, with that comes a significant body of information that would have to be considered, including business plans.

Mr. Speaker, let's not confuse the issue. There are questions that the company are very much aware of that are included within the environmental assessment release, which they know they have a responsibility to provide answers to.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

General Electric software which is required for the operations of the Labrador-Island Link was supposed to be operational in 2017. Two years later, this software is still not installed and working.

I ask the minister: How will this impact the delivery of power to the Island?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The people of the province are aware that there are concerns around GE Grid, a contractor to the Muskrat Falls Project, delivering on a software program for transmission. We have been following this concern for quite some time,

through the Oversight Committee and, of course, through the board of directors.

As the people of the province know, Mr. Marshall, the CEO of Nalcor, has been public about this concern, and he has been to visit GE Grid most recently, Mr. Speaker, and has assurances that by early January of 2020, the software solution will be available to Nalcor and they will then start the commissioning on that process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The CEO of Nalcor spoke about this when he testified at the PUB. He noted that it could be two or three years before the software is fully operational.

I ask the minister: Will this delay full power from Muskrat Falls?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Member opposite is absolutely correct. Mr. Marshall has been very forthcoming on the concerns around this. I believe his statement to the Public Utilities Board is fully commissioned, versus available for power.

I have assurances by the CEO of Nalcor, who is following this on an hour-by-hour basis – not just a day-by-day basis, but an hour-by-hour basis. He advises that we should have software – as the people of the province know, we actually have some monopole software. We did take delivery over the transmission line, but we will be following and monitoring this. They will be operational throughout 2020, Mr. Speaker, but there will still be commissioning changes and concerns following that implementation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The CEO of Nalcor said that he had a positive meeting with GE and a version of the software will be ready this year.

I ask the minister: Is this the final version which will be used or an interim version?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I would not presume to know enough on the intricacies of this transmission package or the software package to say whether it will be the final version, Mr. Speaker. We have yet to receive that version. Nalcor will start the commissioning of that new software come January. There will be updates to that software. Everyone knows that there are software updates as we go through a process, Mr. Speaker, it happens with our home computers and our telephones, but there will be continuing updating of that software.

We are still on track throughout 2020, as that software is being implemented, to get to full power by the end of 2020. That's according to the CEO of Nalcor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister noted that we are engaged with another contractor to develop a backup plan.

I ask the minister: How much is this backup plan costing and how quick can this solution be implemented if GE does not deliver the software in time?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As has been done throughout the Muskrat Falls Project, Mr. Speaker, when we do see challenges with delivery, like we did with one of the other major contractors that was doing their work in Muskrat Falls for the power generation, we're seeing concerns now about some of the software around power transmission.

We always have a plan B just in case something does go untoward but, right now, according to the CEO of Nalcor Energy, we should see that software by the first of 2020 and then, throughout the year, as we move to full power by the end of 2020.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, Nalcor's CFO was removed from his position with a \$900,000 compensation package. This is just one example of the employment contracts in place at Nalcor.

I ask the minister: Will she commit that all future employment contracts signed by Nalcor employees will fall under Treasury Board guideline?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I do want to remind the Member opposite, it was during his tenure in government that that contract was originally developed. The obligations under that contract, of course, now that the board of directors have made a decision to release without cause one in particular employee, that the obligations under that contract have to be met.

As the Member opposite knows, we have been saying to Nalcor Energy over the last – since we became government – that Treasury Board guidelines are important for all contracts – sorry – for all employment within Nalcor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

No doubt we're all aware here that this was an existing contract and would have to be lived up to. But what we're asking is that in future Nalcor's contracts would be in line with Treasury Board. That's what we ask for anybody in other organization we have here, and particularly those who work in government.

Mr. Speaker, for nearly two years, a number of municipal leaders and others in Central Newfoundland and Labrador have been lobbying government to consider Gander as a base for an air ambulance to improve response times and save money for the operation.

I ask the minister: Does he think it's about time to consider Gander as a base of operations for air ambulance?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Our air ambulance system is a hybrid. Part of it is provided by staff based in Gander, through government Air Services dispatch, which is based in hangar 21, if I'm not mistaken, at Gander International Airport. The other part of that is provided by a backup and a backup to the backup, one of whom is based in Gander, and when operationally appropriate can base their machine out of Gander.

On a go-forward basis, we are looking as part of our ambulance review to streamline both the organization of both ground ambulances and air ambulances. The prime consideration is high standards of care and quality of care, and that's where our focus is, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I should clarify, one of the companies that provides an aircraft for the air ambulance process is based out of Gander. The air ambulance service is not based out of Gander.

With 27 municipalities from Central and Southern Newfoundland lobbying to have an air ambulance base in Central Newfoundland, doesn't the minister think it's about time he and his senior officials attended the meetings they have been invited to, to discuss and assess the proposal put forward by these municipal leaders?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

From the ambulance perspective, I've been happy to meet with a multitude of municipalities, and indeed I met with some at MNL on Friday of last week. Specifically, Gander, but also others. So I'm certainly open to any discussion around that.

I would point out that there isn't technically an ambulance base anywhere in the province, if the Member opposite wants to go into detail. The aircraft are moved dynamically, based on clinical need, and there are flight teams that are currently housed in St. John's and in Goose Bay. I'm open to any suggestions, and personally, as the Member for the District of Gander, I'd be happy to see it there.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Official Opposition would like to express our sympathies to the family of Lloyd Fudge Sr. of McCallum, who passed away a few

weeks ago while moose hunting in a mountainous area at Facheux Bay.

On behalf of the family, I ask the Minister of Justice and Public Safety: Why was the decision made to deny the son's request for an emergency airlift from this remote location, leaving them to fend for themselves?

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

I'm at a loss, Mr. Speaker, to give an answer here today. I'll certainly look into the question and provide an answer back to the House.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, when people pass away suddenly in our communities, the police and other agencies step in to do their work. Many people in our province, and visitors, go hunting and hiking in remote locations.

I ask the minister: If he's unaware, can he please advise us of what the protocol is, what's the official procedure to make that decision to deny emergency service and support in this horrific situation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. WARR: Again, Mr. Speaker, while I don't have the information, I'm certainly going to take the Member's question under advisement and I will report back to the House.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, last week, funding was committed for the capital costs of the Lionel Kelland Hospice in Grand Falls-Windsor.

I ask the minister: Will he commit to funding the committed \$1.3 million needed for operational costs at this time?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I was delighted to go to Grand Falls, two weeks ago now, for the announcement about the design RFP being released. Construction should start there, my understanding, in early 2020.

With the issue around operational standards, we do not have any in-house operational standards for hospices and residential services here. So, we have been discussing with Mr. Bradley and the Lionel Kelland board around what those standards would be and we'll probably temporarily steal Ontario's. At that point, we'll be in a position to figure out exactly what operational costs will be incurred on this new model.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Mr. Speaker, I have to ask, on May 8 of this past year the Premier sat in front of some of these people and committed the \$1.3 million. If they weren't in line to do it now, how were they in line to do it then?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I say, we're breaking new ground here around hospice, and residential hospice in particular. I think the important thing is to get

this right. We cannot afford to have Lionel Kelland fail.

Equally, if \$1.3 million is not enough, what do we do if we've committed to a number? I think it's impractical at this stage and, indeed, our discussions with Mr. Bradley and the board have been very cordial and collaborative, not at all positional. I would suggest we are best continuing in that vein when we discuss how best to staff this hospice.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: I thank the minister for his response.

Mr. Speaker, last Thursday when I posed a question about waste water regulations, the Premier's response seemed to suggest that this was not a big concern for community leaders across the province. The outgoing president of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, however, told the conference that the new federal waste water regulations remain one of the most pressing issues facing towns in this province.

How can the Premier dismiss the concerns of municipalities and the municipal leaders across the province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, first of all, I would suggest that the MHA who's asking the question here not mislead and not confuse what the question is all about. Last week, what you asked about was people going to jail about not meeting the current regulations. You had actually said people were concerned about – not going to jail.

When I answered that question, I said I had met with the group four hours that same day and no one said to me they were concerned about going to jail. As a matter of fact, I spent five hours with the same group on Saturday night, Mr. Speaker, with one Opposition Member there, that being the Member for Labrador West. We

had a considerable contingent there supporting MNL on Saturday night.

Mr. Speaker, they are concerned. I've expressed this in many interviews that I would have done with the media about the regulations and the impact on communities, the impact on the Treasury of the provincial government. These are federal guidelines and we are committed to working with MNL on this issue and many other issues. As a matter of fact, MNL was very complimentary to the work of this government at the closing ceremonies on Saturday night and spoke highly about the open door policy we have in our office and our willingness to work with them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Mr. Speaker, Mr. Keats himself said that it was an issue. They are being threatened – they are. I talk to municipalities all the time and they are being threatened about going to jail. Some of these are actually on a volunteer basis, so these people don't deserve that kind of treatment.

Mr. Speaker, two of the resolutions put forward at this weekend's MNL conference addressed the importance of the waste water issue. Municipal leaders are very worried about not being able to be compliant with these regulations.

Minister, what exactly are you doing to advocate with the federal government on behalf of our municipalities right here in this Province about the issues?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question, and a great question indeed.

It should be great for me to notice, too. I was in environment back in 2012 when these recommendations came into effect. Back in 2012, this came into effect, with an end date of January 1, 2015. So this is not a new scenario

we just came up with. This has been ongoing for the last almost eight years, Mr. Speaker.

My plan, and the plan of our department – as soon as the new minister is sworn in, we plan to meet and look for a way that we can maybe, not so much to change the regulations but find a way we can work within it.

This weekend I met with close on – I'm going to estimate – 30 municipalities. One was more concerned about the waste water than anything else. The other ones, it was a concern, I kid you not, but way more top priorities for their towns than the waste water regulations. We're going to find a way to work with these people.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

It's been over two years since the government entered a memorandum of understanding with the Innu Nation leadership on the inquiry into the treatment of Innu children in care. At the time, the Premier indicated the terms of reference would be set by July 31, 2017 and the inquiry started by September 30, 2017, over two years ago.

Why has the Premier failed to live up to his commitment to the Innu Nation?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I will guarantee you, this Premier has not failed in living up to his commitment. We made a commitment to this. As a matter of fact, it was just this morning we got some recent information. We're prepared to move on with this inquiry.

I can tell you now that we are, as a government, completely engaged with the Innu Nation and with the Innu people of Labrador on this inquiry.

Putting in place the appropriate measures to make sure the inquiry actually makes the recommendations and gets to the point where information is shared, Mr. Speaker, in languages and legal representation is available to those who are involved.

I will tell you, this government is committed to getting this inquiry done; committed to getting it done, however, with the full group of all those who are involved. They will be involved in every step along the way, as they have been.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Child and Youth Advocate report released in September painted a grim picture of the treatment of Inuit children in the children protection system. Almost half of Indigenous children in care are Inuit. Sadly, children are being removed from their communities because of a lack of foster care homes.

Mr. Speaker, in order to become a foster parent, individuals need to complete the PRIDE training, PRIDE program, Parent Resources for Information, Development and Education; however, potential foster parents in Nain have been waiting over three years to complete the training.

Why is this not a priority for the minister?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for her question.

There's a lot of effort that goes in between building a positive relationship from the Department of CSSD and all of our Indigenous partners and our partners around the province.

Mr. Speaker, I was in Nain on the 5th of September when the Advocate released her report. I was happy to talk about some of the progress that we have already made, full complement of staff in all our Inuit communities

at that time, tremendous progress. The Member knows the challenges even around staffing.

The new bill that we brought in to the House in May '18, proclaimed June 2018, the Advocate acknowledged that we are well on the road to implementing.

Mr. Speaker, we now have new partnerships where we're working with families and connections in the communities like Nain to help keep children in their own communities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: There are foster homes available, they just need the PRIDE training. Waiting three years to become a foster parent while children are sent outside is unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

The Advocate's scathing report also highlighted other failures of this minister's department, such as one Inuit foster home didn't have an annual review in over 22 years – no review. Another example is an Inuit child – very serious – had 11 different social workers handling their file – 11 different social workers. No consistency, no help for our most vulnerable.

Does the minister consider this a failure to the system?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate for this hon. House that I do believe the department has an ongoing and respectful relationship with the Indigenous groups. In this case, we're talking about a Nunatsiavut Government, Mr. Speaker.

I was in Nain in September; I'm actually going to be back in Nain on the 27th of November, working very closely with the minister for social services, with his deputy minister.

We've had challenges with staffing on the Coast, but I believe that we have made tremendous progress and our number one priority is keeping children in their own homes

with their family. As a last resort, when we have to move them out, Mr. Speaker, we always look to place them in kinship homes first and we have had success, and we will continue to build upon that success in partnership with the Indigenous governments.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Minimum Wage Review Committee members were announced just a month ago. The deadline for consultations is December 2.

I ask the minister responsible: Will he table the committee's terms of reference and explain why government is not allowing adequate time for proper public consultations?

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very pleased that the Minimum Wage Review Committee has been struck. As part of the statutory requirement, they have met multiple times and they have released an engagement on engagenl.ca. The terms of reference was released when they launched the committee. That can be made available. If it's not publicly available, certainly do so.

It's really important for minimum wage that the balance is struck for employers and employees and that everybody has the opportunity, that wants to contribute to this online survey does. I would encourage Members of this House to reach out to employers, employees and have them contribute. The last time the Minimum Wage Review Committee was struck, they did five public engagement sessions in the community, and there was just a small number of people that attended publicly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Our minimum wage in this province is so low that at the current rate of increase, it won't reach \$15 an hour until 2030. That's a decade away.

Will the minister instruct the Minimum Wage Review Committee to include in its report and timeline of getting to \$15 an hour minimum wage than currently it is projected?

Thank you.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will say that the Minimum Wage Review Committee is an independent committee. They represent employers and employees. They do have a terms of reference to abide by. They have reached out for public engagement. There were over 300 submissions that were received even just over the weekend on engageNL. There is interest in this, Mr. Speaker.

One thing I will not do is instruct the committee and predetermine any type of outcome. They have a terms of reference and they will come back with the recommendations and they will do the report on this matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Aeration is one measure used to mitigate against warm-water events. In the 2018 aquaculture application from Marine Harvest, Mowi, aeration equipment was supposed to be inspected daily.

I ask the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources: Was aeration equipment in use in the cages where the die-off of some 2.6 million salmon occurred? If so, what was the frequency of inspection?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As part of the application process the hon. Member refers to, there was an inclusion of a requirement for various mitigation measures, both proactive and reactive. There was an inclusion, but I have to admit, if I were to offer a criticism of the application that was put forward in 2012 and the application process from that time, relatively, it was a boilerplate application. You just simply acknowledge that there would be an existence or an assumption of certain equipment that was there.

What I can report to this House, Mr. Speaker, I think is far more valuable. There is a requirement now under licence condition that not only proactive measures be in place, but mitigative measures. They include 20-metre-depth cage sites, aeration equipment on site. I can get to the hon. Member with a specific answer to the times that inspections occurred and other things. Those are not available to me at this point in time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Mr. Speaker, a little over a month ago the minister asked the Marine Institute to carry out an investigation into the salmon die-off.

Would the minister update us on the terms of reference of this investigation and who exactly at the Marine Institute will lead it?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the hon. Member for the question. Yes, indeed, the

Marine Institute has been asked and they have accepted, in principle, to conduct an independent third-party investigation or a review of the incidents in question. They hold the pen.

In other words, they will write the final words to the draft. We're expecting that. We would like to have that as soon as possible. Obviously, time is somewhat of an essence. But we do also appreciate and respect that the university itself wants to get this right.

There has been some questions about the independence and the ability of the university to be able to engage in this particular piece of work. I have full confidence in the independence and the academic autonomy to be able to produce truth to power related to this event, and I look forward to the university getting back to me with their final piece of work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Present Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On Thursday, during Question Period, there was reference to the Aker report, and I wish to table a copy for the Members opposite.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

In accordance with section 19(5)(a) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I hereby table the minutes of the House of Assembly Management Commission meeting held on September 25, 2019.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, I give notice of the following private Member's resolution, which will be seconded by the Member for Mount Scio.

WHEREAS The Way Forward on Climate Change highlighted increasing electric vehicle usage within the province as a priority for this government; and

WHEREAS increasing access to electric vehicle charging stations will encourage the transition to electric vehicles;

THEREFORE BE RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in its efforts to establish a network of electric vehicle charging stations across the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to Standing Order 63(3) the private Member's resolution entered by the Member for Lake Melville shall be the one to be debate this Wednesday.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Demise Of The Crown, Bill 18.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to be a little clearer. In Question Period, based on the question asked by the Member for Labrador West, when the news release went out for the Minimum Wage Review Committee on October 16, in the background in the release the terms of reference is clearly stated there as to what the purpose and the terms of reference for the committee, and that's what they are ascribed to abide by.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Also, in response to Question Period and the Member's question from Torngat, I neglected to also share that we provided funding to Nunatsiavut Government for them to hire two social workers, to recruit and make foster homes available and we passed over the ability for them to actually deliver PRIDE training in an effort to make it faster and reduce the times that people were waiting, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I present another petition on behalf of the residents of Humber - Bay of Islands (inaudible) on Route 450. I could read the petition again, just for the House and for the people.

WHEREAS the rainstorm of January 2018 caused major flooding to Route 450, South Shore Highway in the Bay of Islands, and there are areas of the highway that still have not been repaired including pavement repairs to a section of John's Beach, clearing of debris from gabion baskets, the tender for Cammies Brook Bridge and replacement of other necessary work throughout the region was not done, and where the condition of the road is causing safety concerns for motorists;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, call upon the hon. House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure all urgent repair work and upgrades are included in the Department of Transportation and Works tender call for the 2020 construction season, and carried out immediately in the spring to ensure the safety and well-being of the motorists using the highway.

Mr. Speaker, again, I wrote the department on many occasions. There is some work – and, of course, I know the Minister of Transportation and Works can dispute if it was part of the damage or not, but I'll just use one area. I know the minister is aware of it, and I know the minister, once he became aware of it in the last day or so, or even this morning, is taking action on it. So I have to recognize that, I got that letter back from the minister.

It's the part in the John's Beach area where there was major flooding. When we were there, we all considered part of the flooding, where the tractors actually tore up the road and had to release the water to run, because there were so many houses flooding. Because of that, all that pavement was torn up with the heavy equipment in the area, they said it was the heavy equipment, it wasn't the flooding, and it was never repaired.

I'm going back last year when it was committed to have it done. This stretch that I'm speaking about now, that's still open, is about a four-foot stretch. That's it, but there are about five potholes a foot each which were caused by the floods, and we just can't get that small stuff fixed. I can go through a lot of the smaller things, but I know the minister has committed to help with it. The gabion baskets, where we know haven't been done.

There's another serious incident that may happen – and I'm going to bring it to the minister's attention now. To be fair, I haven't brought it to the minister's attention yet. I took pictures. It's when they put in the culvert in John's Beach, this is probably about a 50-foot drop the culvert was down. It's a big culvert. It's a big job that was just completed. On one end they have the guard rails, on the other end coming up from Lark Harbour there are no guard rails going into that ditch. If someone goes off the road three or four feet, they're gone down 50 feet.

To be fair to the minister, I haven't brought it to his attention, but I will be sending him pictures later this afternoon or tomorrow and I will be asking. That's the kind of small stuff that right now they're saying, well, it's only a guard rail, but if someone goes over that area, it's very dangerous and it's very steep. So to be fair to the minister, he wasn't aware of it. He will be aware of it later this afternoon.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the petition.

Mr. Speaker, just to the Member's petition. We do have a business case approved under the northern and rural funding to actually do the permanent fixes to the John's Beach area. I've asked staff this morning to make sure that if we have the asphalt recycler in place, that we can actually make some temporary repairs to those areas to get us through this winter season.

With regard to Cammies Brook Bridge, Mr. Speaker, we actually issued that tender this year, but there were some complications, I think, with Newfoundland Power. We had to rescind that tender, but it will be in an early tendering package going out this year.

To the other point the Member just mentioned about the rail. Mr. Speaker, if he sends me that information, I'll make sure it gets to staff in the region as quickly as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to return affordable air transportation to the region of Northern Labrador through subsidization of the cost of airfare between Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the Northern Labrador communities of Rigolet, Makkovik, Postville, Hopedale, Natuashish and Nain.

Our Northern Labrador communities are totally isolated, with no road access or marine transportation, which is limited only to the summer months. With the provincial government cancellation of the Lewisporte freight boat to our communities, families are now struggling with increasing costs of basic needs, including food security.

Our only means of transportation is marine or air. Our marine transportation service is a once-a-week ferry running July to October. Our air transportation service is provided by a single monopoly airline, Air Borealis. The cost of air travel for residents living in Northern Labrador is grossly disproportionate to their available income, thereby restricting travel and increasing cost of living and contributing to isolation.

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 provide an air transportation subsidy to reduce the cost of air travel between Happy Valley-Goose Bay and the Northern Labrador communities.

Now, just looking at this petition for a second, people automatically will say: Why a subsidy? That seems a little bit unfair. I'm just going to point out, for the Labrador districts now – Lake Melville District, Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair District, Labrador West – my friend in Labrador West. That's in Labrador. If they need to travel

to visit friends and relatives, they can get in their car and drive to Goose Bay or drive down the South Coast, drive into Quebec, drive to Newfoundland, right? The only cost is the cost of maintenance of their vehicle and the gas, or they can actually fly on travel with the airlines.

In my district, every single community in my district is isolated and that isolation is not just a lack of road access. It's a lack of actually being able to travel, being able to visit people, being able to go on sports tournaments, being able to just socialize with friends and relatives. It's very, very important for people to understand that. We are totally isolated.

Just looking at some of the costs now. I have the costs here on my phone. I just want to be able to let people know. For example, two parents with two kids who want to travel – the most northern community now in my district is Nain. For two parents and two children to travel to Goose Bay – that's just to Goose Bay return – is \$4,116. That is crazy. That's insane.

A single person to travel is \$1,029.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Member have leave to conclude her comments?

MS. EVANS: The point I'm trying to make is that it's really, really important for this subsidy to be put in place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further petitions?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, the road map guiding the future of Newfoundland and Labrador is *The Way Forward* – allegedly a vision for sustainability and growth in Newfoundland and Labrador.

To achieve sustainability today and for future generations, we must be held accountable for the effects of our actions on climate change – today and for future generations.

According to *The Way Forward* on Climate Change, the provincial government's climate

action plan, the province is already experiencing effects of climate change.

Newfoundland and Labrador joined the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change in 2016, but it is not on track to meet its 2020 target.

The effects and threats of climate change fit the official definition of an emergency.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call on the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to declare a climate emergency and put a plan in place to mitigate, adapt and ensure resilience to the changing climate.

Mr. Speaker, I had the privilege of speaking with a group of young people today who are very much engaged in what's happening with our climate. Many of their signatures are here on this piece of paper. The decisions that we make today will far more affect them than it will ourselves. We cannot look beyond what is happening right in front of our own eyes today. Our climate is changing and it's not for the better.

When people think of global warming, it's not global warming; it's global catastrophe. I quote Greta Thunberg when she said that we have to act like our house is on fire because our house, this world that we call home, is on fire. Mr. Speaker, it has to go beyond plans. It has to go beyond words. It has to go concrete actions. It doesn't have to be entirely massive actions, even small ones that we could start today.

Mr. Speaker, I would love to hear what this government sitting has done. Not what they have planned but what they have done. I look forward to the minister's response.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Environment.

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, it was a great petition. It's great to be a part of the climate change, but I bring everyone's attention to *The Way Forward* and our plan on the Climate Change Action Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador.

I would ask each Member on the other side to reference this guide. I could table this right now, Mr. Speaker, if he would like. We are very ambitious in what we do. Our targets for 2030 are meant to be ambitious because they're meant to challenge every person that lives in this province. I was a part of the 4,000 students that marched upon Confederation hill so that we could support climate change initiatives for this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. BRAGG: Mr. Speaker, some order would be nice here right now. A little bit of protection, please. If not, I will carry on.

I look forward to many other petitions on this because the more we can bring and highlight the need to address climate change initiatives for this province – because this is a global concern, Mr. Speaker, climate change. I thank the Member opposite for the petition. I thank him so very much and I ask him to bring forward one each and every day (inaudible).

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

MR. BRAGG: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. DWYER: I'll save you on the one for Bull Arm until tomorrow. I'll get back to that one tomorrow. We're only getting so many in today.

The reason for this petition is about highway 210. It's the main road going through the community of Swift Current.

The Department of Transportation and Works are currently working on a two-year project on

highway 210 from Garden Cove towards Pipers Hole.

The current tender for the highway work includes highway 210 only. The side roads of Swift Current are not included.

The side roads in Swift Current are in a deplorable condition. The side roads have not been repaved since the initial paving in the early 1970s. The side roads, which were used to divert traffic during the current tender construction contract, are in worse shape now due to the extensive traffic it endured.

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to consider paving/upgrading of the sides roads including Darby's Cove, Sharpe's Lane, Maple Crescent, Old Church Road, Academy Hill, Hollett's Point and Shoal Cove Heights in Swift Current on the current existing road upgrade project as an add-on.

I have pictures and everything there, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Transportation and Works and I have spoke on this. I just drove through there again this weekend. There doesn't seem to be anything done on it yet for side roads, which is really not acceptable because they use the side roads to divert traffic. Currently, they're using the side roads – a couple of side roads that I've mentioned in my petition on behalf of the people of Swift Current, they're using Old Church Road to store heavy equipment overnight, which is right next to the playground which is used on a regular basis. It's also the road where the post office is.

Having this heavy equipment parked there overnight is certainly not helping upgrade that road. I call upon the minister to listen to the people of Swift Current. If we're calling this a project for the Town of Swift Current, then I think it's incumbent on the minister to provide some work inside the Town of Swift Current as opposed to just cutting Route 210 straight through their town. Obviously, they have kids that ride bikes. They walk their dogs and stuff like this. It's not Route 210 that goes through Swift Current for them, it's Seaview Drive, Mr.

Speaker. I look forward to the response from the minister.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

WHEREAS current means of transportation for persons who are unable to access conventional transit due to disabilities and accessibility challenges are inefficient, expensive and inadequate; and

WHEREAS the availability of suitable transportation systems –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

MR. P. DINN: – is crucial to enhancing participation in all aspects of community life. Accessible, affordable transportation must be provided in a dignified, respectful manner; and

WHEREAS throughout the province, individuals living with mobility challenges identify transportation as one of their greatest needs;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take a more proactive approach to ensuring affordable and inclusive transportation is available for all individuals who experience accessibility challenges.

Mr. Speaker, this is not my first time bringing this petition forward. We have lots of data. The recent Seniors' Advocate report spoke to more and more seniors returning and re-entering into the workforce after retirement. As we know, more and more seniors have issues with driving their own vehicles. Some can only drive at certain times; some with any kind of weather, are not out there. So if they're re-entering the workforce, then they need transportation to and from.

We also know the recent report, *Vital Signs*, that was done by the Harris Centre. They spoke to the silver ceiling, again, addressing the issue around more and more seniors returning to go to work.

We also have the public transit review that was just done by St. John's. That report speaks to the expense of transportation for those with mobility and accessibility issues. It speaks to issues around schedules, having proper schedules that will allow them to efficiently use transportation systems. They talked about the unreliability of the current systems that cater to those in need.

Again, we're not talking just about seniors in this particular instance. Again, from the report, we're talking about individuals who have physical disabilities, vision disabilities, hearing disabilities, intellectual and learning disabilities, mental health disabilities and neurological disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many individuals out there who are looking for, as I said, a more proactive approach, a more dignified approach that individuals in a reliable and cost-efficient manner can get to and from where they have to go. This is not an issue or a problem that's going to go away. We are an aging population, and health and accessibility issues are growing.

So we petition, on behalf of these individuals, to come up with a better approach to transportation for these groups.

Orders of the Day

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

From the Order Paper, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 18, 2019.

MR. SPEAKER: The motion has been moved and seconded.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Order 2, under Motions, I move, seconded by the – sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was reading.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Provide For Damages And Recovery Of Opioid Related Health Care Costs, Bill 17, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Provide For Damages And Recovery Of Opioid Related Health Care Costs, Bill 17, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, “An Act To Provide For Damages And Recovery Of Opioid Related Health Care Costs,” carried. (Bill 17)

CLERK (Murphy): A bill, An Act To Provide For Damages And Recovery Of Opioid Related Health Care Costs. (Bill 17)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 17 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Order 2, third reading of Bill 5.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that a bill entitled –

MS. COADY: If you recognize me, Mr. Speaker, I’ll go there.

MR. SPEAKER: What?

MS. COADY: If you recognize me, I’ll go there.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, Bill 5.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, that Bill 5, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 5 be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to speak about (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to speak on something that I was asking questions to the Minister of Service NL and the Minister of Transportation last week, and it was about the role of the registrar. As I mentioned, the registrar, at one incident in the province, they contradicted what the Minister of Service NL said four or five times in writing. The Minister of Transportation and Works said four or five times, it took almost nine months. I don't even know, actually, when it was withdraw, but it took about eight, nine months to get it resolved.

I just want to let people know, this is why it's so important that we put in the regulations, if there's a suspension and if someone is going to be released or the amount of time is released off the suspension, why it's so important to have regulations in place. Because when I was standing on that, I'm sure people were saying, here's Eddie Joyce going again, there's something going on. I know a lot of people in Chapel Arm, I was dealing with on it also. There's one set of rules for people in St. John's and one set of rules for everybody outside, and it was the registrar.

When the Minister of Service NL stood last week and said it was withdrawn, the X plate for the Kubota in St. John's, can you tell us when it was withdrawn? This is why it's so important. It was nothing for me, but if you have a registrar who makes a decision and the Minister of Service NL is aware this decision is made, which is against the act, which is against the letters that she has written herself, against a letter that the Minister of Transportation and Works has written, this is why we need: what are going to be the stipulations in place for the registrar of this province, whoever it may be?

It may be five years down the road, it may be 10 years down the road; if a registrar of this province can make this arbitrary decision now and the minister was aware of the decision, the Minister of Transportation and Works with his act, he wrote a letter, he should have been aware. I'm not sure if he was, that's up to him, but if you have a registrar down the road who can make arbitrary that I'm going to suspend your licence for 15 days instead of 90 and someone out in Humber - Bay of Islands somewhere puts in the same application: no, yours is going to stay the 90.

This is a prime example. It took me a while to get to it, and I know people were wondering where I was going with it, but it's a prime example of how we have to put regulations in place. That if there is a rule made and a regulation, it's for everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador, not for certain people. When the regulation is put in place, it has to be enforced by the minister.

In this case, the minister was aware of this X plate that was given. A number of people in Chapel Arm couldn't get their X plate. It was taken away. They had the same opportunities for commercial purposes, they couldn't get it, but because someone knew somebody or some other regulation that we know nothing about, which the minister wrote and said: it don't exist, can't happen – that's why. So when you speak to your group in Chapel Arm, you can tell them now they're being treated like every other person in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

It took eight or nine months to get to it. It took letters that were false to get to it, but when you talk about some suspension – if you want to talk about someone's suspension, that if someone got 90 days and someone says I got to have this to get back and forth to work. Okay, I broke the law, but I need this just to go from 8 in the morning to 4 o'clock. If the regulation is there that if you need it for work you should get it, and it shouldn't be just enforced for people on one side of the Island. People on the other side can't get it, so this is very important.

I ask the minister: When was that X plate withdrawn? It's very important to know when that was done, when the X plate was withdrawn. When it was, why weren't the people that we made application to, to use it for a business opportunity, why weren't they given the same opportunity as whoever is given this X plate by the registrar?

Why wasn't it communicated? Whatever is withdrawn, why wasn't it communicated back to all the other Kubota owners I represented? I know there were other letters sent to the minister about commercial businesses, can we use it for commercial businesses, and it was a flat no.

The few people in Chapel Arm – and I think there were five in Chapel Arm – the two or three

that actually do have businesses and were using it for their businesses, when I wrote them and sent them copies of the letters that were sent back to me, they said: Oh my God, how can you do it in St. John's and not here? Don't ask me, I'm trying to find out for you. Don't ask me, I have no idea.

I'll ask the minister: Can you tell me when that was withdrawn? Has it been communicated to all the other owners who made the request – through me, some probably without me – that it has been withdrawn and the reason why?

Can you explain why this registrar had the authority to give this X plate and how you, as Minister of the Crown, knew about this X plate, knew about this act being broken, knew it went against your own comments and letters, knew it went against the Minister of Transportation's own letters that he wrote to the City of Corner Brook – and how we can let this go on for so long and not be communicated to the people. This is so important, that if we're going to put in regulations to ensure that everybody is going to be on the same playing field, we have to ensure the regulations.

This is why I'm skeptical of this. I agree with the bill, no problem. One hundred per cent it's an excellent bill. There are going to be some kinks along the road, we all know that. We all know there are going to be kinks along the road, but when you give discretionary power to a registrar of the province – it may be five years, 10 years down the road – when you give discretionary power without putting in the guidelines that's going to be treated for everybody in this province, we're going to run into the same problems that we just ran into in the last six, eight, nine months, probably even longer.

This is why, Mr. Speaker, it was so important for me to bring it up, because I had first-hand knowledge from a lot of people in Chapel Arm, how their rights were denied but other rights for other people – I still don't know how you can approve something if you denied it to everybody else. I still don't know. It's beyond me.

I ask the minister also – and this is a great time. This is great for Chapel Arm because they asked me, the people in Chapel Arm, what is unique

commercial needs? I can't find it in the act. I wrote and asked, where is it in the act, unique commercial needs? They asked me, I don't know. I can honestly say, I don't know.

Here is a great opportunity for the minister to tell us where in the act, where the registrar, which you're aware of because I wrote you. I don't know if I wrote you, but it was – I think I did, and asked for that, show me in the act where unique commercial needs is for something to be registered in St. John's but nowhere else.

I say to the Minister of Transportation and Works also, where the registrar will be using the powers under the *Highway Traffic Act*, that you ensure also, I say to the Minister of Transportation and Works, that the guidelines for the registrar that is going to be part of this legislation, which is a dual legislation between Transportation and Works and Service NL – it's a dual legislation – that you ensure the guidelines are there that everybody in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are treated the same way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL, if she speaks now will close the debate.

The hon. Minister of Service NL.

MS. GAMBIN-WALSH: No, I'm responding to the Member opposite, Mr. Speaker.

I ordered the review, Mr. Speaker, when the issue and concern was brought to my attention. As the Minister of Service NL, I'm not involved in the operations. I don't get down to that level, Mr. Speaker. I did order the review.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

It has been moved and seconded that this bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act. (Bill 5)

MR. SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and that its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 5)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Order 4, Second Reading of Bill 10.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to move Bill 10, seconded by the hon. Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 10 shall now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Passed.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Forestry Act." (Bill 10)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, this is excellent.

This is Bill 10, because it's a perfect 10. This is a bill which speaks to the value of the power of the consonant, the letter: S. It speaks to the value of the precision of words and language and how important words and language within statutes can be in administering and interpreting acts.

This is Bill 10, it's a perfect 10 because it creates value for seniors; it creates value for those who harvest wood for domestic purposes but occasionally need help. It speaks value to those that would like to have a helper or helpers assist them in harvesting their domestic wood that they use for heating their own homes and their own cabins. It speaks to how we as a government respond to practical, pragmatic requests from those who we serve.

Every Member on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, has been very aware that there has been some frustration, some concerns expressed by the fact that under our *Forestry Act*, not just our guidelines or our regulations, but under the act itself, the capacity for a permit holder for domestic wood harvesting – although they retain a privilege and an opportunity to be able to receive assistance in the harvesting of their permit by a helper, it has been restricted to only one helper, singular. This is where the power of the letter S comes in, the consonant S, which is being amended in this act to allow not just for a person, but for persons.

This is very, very straightforward and simple, but it is so important. By amending the legislation to allow multiple assistants or multiple persons to assist a domestic wood harvesting permit holder, they now have the option to be able to add additional names.

The frustrating point, the frustrating part of all of this, Mr. Speaker, was that those who obtained a domestic wood harvesting permit, they had an opportunity to list a single assistant, but in case, as we always know, sometimes that helper may not necessarily always be available.

You may want to have your son, you may want to have your daughter, you may want to have your uncle, you may want to have your cousin, you may want to have a close friend who will

help you harvest your domestic wood permit so that you can heat your homes. You may have a period of ill health and you may need multiple people to help you with that.

Under the existing act – and this is where the letter S comes in – when you use the singular form of a noun, person, as opposed to the plural form of the noun, persons, you are left with a requirement as minister to only allow one helper to be listed. This amendment simply expands the jurisdiction or the authority of the minister to be able to add multiple helpers to a domestic forestry permit by adding the letter S. That's the power of the simplicity of language.

It's very, very important, Mr. Speaker, because what we'll see is that domestic permit holders will be able to add multiple helpers to the list. This will prevent red tape; it will prevent unnecessary delays. In the past, as I said earlier, you could only have one designated helper, and if that designated helper was not available to you on any particular day, then, of course, you were left unable to harvest your wood or to go work on that particular day.

Now, for the clarity of the House and all those that may be watching and listening, the permit holder, herself or himself, does not have to be present while the helper is cutting the wood. The helper can be out harvesting the wood as long as they're designated, as long as they're listed on the permit. Well, of course, as we experience now, there's been a lot of confusion, a lot of frustration because the helper who is listed has not always been available, so all activity stopped. By adding multiple persons to the permit, the domestic permit holder can then ensure that a range of people – up to 10 is what the intention of the government is – will be able to harvest on behalf of the permit holder.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is good because it helps. As we know, seniors in particular sometimes would avail of the helper designation. People who may face ability challenges often request the help of assistance. It's also something that mothers and fathers do. They go out with their daughters and sons to harvest, to take their annual wood. Now this has all been perfectly made streamlined and easier and legal to be able to have more than one helper on site cutting a domestic wood permit.

Mr. Speaker, the government's intention goes well beyond this particular act or this amendment. I also want to announce, for the benefit of the House, our intention to revise regulation as well to allow the gifting of firewood. Right now, it is illegal – it is contrary to the regulations for a domestic wood harvester/permit holder to gift wood to someone who may be in need of wood.

This regulation is not in place right now, so I caution all those who may be listening. This authority is not currently in place to be able to gift wood from your domestic wood permit, but it is coming, and coming very, very quickly.

The principle here is very simple. Just as we have an opportunity to gift moose meat, big game animals, by conveying the meat with a letter attached indicating that there is a rightful entitlement to have harvested the big game animal to begin with, and that the meat is being conveyed to an eligible recipient and the eligible recipient is retaining a document that says that the meat was gifted, much the same will occur in the gifting of firewood.

Mr. Speaker, this is very, very well received news from so many in our province, so many who would like, first off, to be able to gift wood to an elderly family member or a neighbour who cannot necessarily go out and cut wood themselves, we now have, or soon will have, that ability to be able to gift firewood in much the same way, much the same process in which we gift big games animals, moose meat in particular, for example.

This amendment to the regulations will be coming, and coming soon. Stay tuned, Mr. Speaker, for a final update on when the regulation will be in place, what the rules around the gifting of firewood will be and when exactly it can occur. But I am delighted to make that announcement on behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and this side of the House that we have listened and listened carefully to the expectations, the hopes and to the points of view of people who have been asking for two considerations.

One, the number of helpers assigned to a domestic cutting permit be expanded from one to more than one, to multiple persons. We are

doing that, as a government, because we are listening. Mr. Speaker, we're going to go beyond that. In the coming days, I'll be making further announcements about legally being able to gift firewood. I'll provide the rules that will be attached to it, but it will be very simple and straightforward. It will be great news.

Both of these provisions are great news for those that would like to get some help, first off. Second off, it's great news for many, many seniors who would like to be able to have multiple helpers associated with their wood cutting permit, as well people who would like to be able to receive a gift of firewood from those who do have a domestic forestry permit and a domestic wood permit and that of course, includes many, many seniors.

Mr. Speaker, on average, there are about 25,000 domestic forestry permits that are issued in Newfoundland and Labrador; 25,000 harvesting about 500,000 cubic metres annually. This is very important, this is not an initiative which is somewhat boutique-ish in its form or nature. It's not something that's limited to a small number of people; 25,000 domestic forestry permits are issued every year in Newfoundland and Labrador.

These two provisions will go a very, very long, long way in making it easier to be able to harvest your domestic wood, to be able to heat your homes but also to share the benefits of not only our forests, but your hard work assisting others with their own needs to be able to heat their houses and to enjoy the warmth of a wood stove on a dark and cold winter's night.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think much else needs to be said. This is very straightforward. In some respects –

AN HON. MEMBER: You already said too much.

MR. BYRNE: The hon. Member says I said too much. I can never say too much when it comes to helping seniors, Mr. Speaker. When you help seniors, when you help those with ability issues, when you help those who want to be able to share, you can never ever say too much.

I'm delighted to continue to speak and expand on the benefits of this government initiative, but I will close off by saying, sometimes, when things are so straightforward, so sensible, so meaningful and so valuable, it strikes me that they weren't done before.

This is something which is very, very reasonable, straightforward and responsible to do. It strikes me that it was not done before. Sometimes it just takes the act of listening, the act of acting to get things done. I, as the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, am delighted to take on that challenge.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for his briefing and officials of his department to provide the amendment to subsection 27(3) of the *Forestry Act* to allow more than one assistant on a domestic wood cutting permit.

Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to talk to this one today because this does particularly interest my area, and it sure would help the people of my area, because it's a question that has been posed to me a couple of times, actually. This is something that would help the people that need wood for their source of heat. There are many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that need wood for their source of heat, and a lot of times accessing that wood, that domestic wood cutting, sometimes creates a problem with only one person as the helper on the application.

So, Mr. Speaker, having multiple applicants – now, how many helpers are going to be on that application, well, yes, that's up to the minister; we don't know. But it will certainly help the person get that wood for their heat. Especially with seniors, people with disabilities need to take advantage of the helper permits. One son could be gone away, sickness can happen, anything can happen that they need to get that help to get the wood cut for their permits.

So, yes, Mr. Speaker, we are in favour of this amendment. It's good for my area, and like I said, it's good for people that need to obtain wood for their main source of heat or secondary source of heat. Especially with disabilities and the elderly, like I mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, not only are wood cutting permits good for the collecting of the wood, but it also cleans up our forest area along the sides of the roads. People take the blowdowns, that kind of stuff. So it really cleans up the visibility on the side of roads, getting access to that kind of stuff. So the more people on that permit can certainly help out in that manner.

Mr. Speaker, in the briefing it was also said that the permit holder won't have to be present during the wood cutting, as it was on the previous application that the permit holder was supposed to be there during this activity. Which creates a little more help, because sometimes the applicant can't go or doesn't have access to go, so they need to get the wood home when they need it, and this can be done.

Now, whether that's going to be the permit holder with the helper, with regard to the note to be able to gift the wood, I don't know if that's going to be gifted from the permit holder themselves, or is that going to be able to gifted from the helper that's listed on the permit. So it creates a little bit of a confusion there of who is able to gift the wood. If the helper is there alone gifting the wood, is the helper going to be giving the wood to someone else or is the permit holder going to be giving the wood to someone else? It seems to me there's a little tiny bit of confusion there. I'm sure that will get straightened up.

Mr. Speaker, I've had a lot of seniors in my area say to me it would be nice to get this done. I'll be glad to see this one go through as soon as possible so that we can get this done. Not only that, they don't have to revisit the forestry office in order to get – when the helper leaves and they don't get anybody to help. When the helper leaves and they need somebody else, they don't have to go in to the forestry office to say I need my other son or my cousin or my friend to be put on that permit, they can list all those as soon as possible. If one can't do it, then the other one can. It alleviates time and availability to get the permit and get the wood out of the woods to

their home so they have their source of heat. That's a good part as well.

Mr. Speaker, this also gives the minister how many people are available to go on that maximum permit now. How many people are on that permit? That's up to the minister. He will be deciding that. Also, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the permits if one helper is on one permit, are there going to be other helpers on another permit – the same helper on one permit that's on another permit. If one helper can go for his father, the other helper, that same helper can go for his brother. How many permits will one applicant, one helper, be allowed to take advantage of? That's something that has to be decided as well. I'm sure that it all helps out to get the wood done.

There are 25,000 permits out there right now, Mr. Speaker, so that will tell you that there are many people needing a source of wood to be able to get that wood home. The more people that's on the permit, the better it is for that applicant, especially the senior or disabled person to be able to get that wood home. Twenty-five thousand permits out there tells me there are a lot of people that are using wood for fuel and heat.

According to the department, Mr. Speaker, the permit handling will be handled by the officials and that people won't have to revisit. Also, Mr. Speaker, on that permit, wood cutting permit, if you're going cutting wood during the fire season, you also have to get another permit allowing you to cut the wood during the fire season. So I don't know if the minister is going to collaborate all that into one permit or if you have to buy two permits or which way it has to be assessed with regard to fall and winter as it is to summer cutting.

Maybe it's just one permit will allow one person to have everything stated in the one so that once they have their permit, they will have their permit. The permits right now, Mr. Speaker, are \$25 for a regular permit and \$16.25 for seniors. Hopefully that remains the same.

Other than that, yes, that creates a great deal of alleviation from people who need to get this work done. The more people on the permits to help people create their heat and source of heat

for the winter when they need it is a good thing to happen. We'd like to see this done and we'd certainly like to see this brought forward.

With that, we will be in agreement with this amendment. It was great being able to speak on this because I know that in my area there are many, many people that want this done and they need to get the wood access. It's been raised to me many times in my district.

Mr. Speaker, in Committee, I guess there will be some questions that will need to be asked because I did mention a couple of things there then. In Committee, there will be some questions that will be asked as this moves forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to stand for one minute and support the amendment from the government on (inaudible). I cut wood and sometimes on private land and other times when you go out.

Mr. Speaker, this happens to be so helpful to a lot of people. I'll just give you a good example. If you're out cutting wood today and you can't get your helper, you're in the woods alone with a power saw, just the safety concerns in that alone with having no one around you if you happen to cut yourself somehow.

I know a lot of elderly people in the Humber - Bay of Islands also who like to have their firewood. Their sons may go in and get their firewood and has to be on the permit and they may not be able to go if one of the brothers can't go with them or a neighbour. So, it's good all around.

I understand the management part of it for the minister, but when you look at it with the rising cost of electricity, I can assure you in a lot places in rural Newfoundland and Labrador wood is going to become another source of heat, which is already a big source of heat, but will probably be used more. I could see more people installing wood stoves.

I know the Member just brought up about people with disabilities that can't get in the woods. That's a great point you brought up, because people with disabilities – they may not be severe disabilities but disabilities that you can't go climbing over logs, you can't get in the woods, you can't lift a power saw. So the idea of people with disabilities that are disadvantaged by that word, "S" makes a huge impact to their lives.

I know a lot of seniors would use it. I know for safety concerns, a lot of people would love to have other people when they can't find the person who's on the permit to go with them. It is a safety concern. To all of us who are representing people in rural districts, this has been brought up to us on many occasions. On many, many occasions this has been brought up to us and a lot of times we try to explain it and we try to push to get it done.

It's so funny, Mr. Speaker, here's a minister from Corner Brook, who's not even from rural Newfoundland and Labrador, brought in to protect people cutting wood; cutting wood for people out around rural Newfoundland, because I don't think you're allowed to cut wood in Corner Brook. Minister, I just want to recognize that also, that you recognize also the rural parts of the province on that and the impact it has had.

I'll just give you an example. For us going in Lady Slipper Road – I know the Member mentioned also about all the down falls that are already there. So if I'm with somebody and I'm not on the permit, I can't lift a stick of wood. I'm not allowed to go in and help with the wood. Now, if the other person on the permit was there, the two of them could do it, but if I'm there, I'm not allowed to get involved.

Now, if he was hurt with a power saw, and that's probably why a couple of times (inaudible) someone got hurt with a power saw: Okay, you can go in and give first aid or get help, but, technically, you weren't allowed to lift a stick of wood; even though you are with the person, even though it's a safety concern, you weren't allowed. To all rural Newfoundland and Labrador and all the people who cut wood, this just makes a lot of sense.

I know in Committee there are going to be some questions asked about the number of people who

can be on a permit. I don't know the exact number that can be put on a permit, I guess that depends on the minister. There are other questions that are going to be asked, but, in general – and I'm sure this is going to be passed in this Legislature – this is a great piece of legislation. This is something for the safety concerns of people with disabilities, and for more people, with the rising cost of electricity, that people now will be able to install wood burners, that they can get help – especially with seniors.

We always hear in this House of Assembly that seniors are going to be impacted with the rising cost of electricity. Now, if you have a senior who puts a stove in, okay, they can get their son or somebody to get wood for them. That saves a lot of cost to seniors. So this makes sense all around for everybody in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I want to commend the minister from Corner Brook for the wood cutting permit to add “S” so other people can cut wood for safety and for other people in the province and keep down costs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd also like to thank the minister, and I'll follow on my colleague, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, in that this is a big deal. While it's just some subtle changes in the text, this is a big deal for the rural parts of this province, and I'm really glad to be on my feet speaking about it.

I also wanted to speak about it today because I have a forestry degree. This is my professional training in some 35 years – is it 35 – 35 years ago I was graduating from forestry at UNB, and it was certainly a very different time back then. Back in 1984, when I graduated – just a little quick background – firewood collected in this province represented some one million cubic metres of wood. At that time we had about 32,000 permits; and at the time, Minister, they were only \$5 a permit.

Now that represents, as you indicated in your remarks, we're harvesting about half a million cubic metres of wood now through firewood. That represents some 25,000 permits, and the cost of those varies. So while the demand has come down somewhat, it is still extremely important for this province.

Back in – I was challenged by my colleague here. I specialized, actually, in woodlot management at the time. It was interesting, in the 1980s – and this is just how much things have changed. My woodlot management professor, his name was Joakim Hermelin, from Sweden, and he used to say the forest industry was very important in Sweden. It was only slightly ahead of revenues from ABBA at the time. So that's how things have changed a lot. ABBA at the time was generating about \$200 million in revenue. So it was no pushover industry themselves. Anyway, I digress.

But I did want to mention how things again have changed. Back in the early '80s, late '70s, the preoccupation in forestry and forest managers was all about the AAC – the annual allowable cut. Looking at our industry, especially in this province, we used to have three operating mills, a huge demand for domestic cutting for firewood, for other types of uses and so on.

We had projected back in the '80s, that Newfoundland and Labrador, and all of the Atlantic provinces, frankly, were going to go through a 15- to a 20-year gap where there would be not enough wood. There was a desperation on at the time as to how are we going to come up with the fibre to keep all these saw mills, pulp and all the other uses going. We were into everything from pre-commercial thinning to fertilizing. We knew that if we started planting trees, they weren't going to be of a sufficient merchantable size by then.

It was a hard spot to be in, and then along came the Internet, and it was an amazing decline in demand. We saw mills collapse in this province as they have across the country and, frankly, around the world. Anyway, just to mention that little side story. It's just how much things have changed.

Minister, you may like to hear me talk about the fact that we have, currently, about one-third of

our Newfoundland and Labrador homeowners use some form of firewood to subsidize or support their heating in their homes. What's even more important – and for those of us who represent rural districts in this province – 25 per cent of the households in this province are solely using firewood for a heating source. This is as of 2014; 25 per cent. To me, that's a pretty substantial number, and that's why this is, Sir, a 10. It is a big deal.

We do have an opportunity now with less demand and a chance to learn from the past. I would suggest that we are starting to wisely manage and use our forests in a much more sustainable way. This is a renewable industry. It is virtually carbon neutral – not completely, but it's essentially almost registering zero in terms of our net emissions into the atmosphere, and, of course, it's insulated from the ups and downs of the petroleum industry.

Borrowing on some good notes from my colleague, the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, where woodcutting, especially by people to supplement their heat, is also a big deal. I'd just like to also pass on some other thoughts and get right to the rationale for what we're dealing with in second reading. The way it's worded right now is in the past, the name of the assistant used to be printed on the permit, and that person was the only one who could help with harvesting timber.

I got to say, in my office in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, we have been encountering this problem of having to go and get another permit or get another name added to the list. So I'm really looking forward to seeing how this is going to roll out because it will mean now that any permit holder will not have to rely on a single person to help and assist them with harvesting their timber. It's certainly going to be much easier for certain individuals, especially seniors, people with disabilities and anyone else who's having difficulty in doing that work.

I have my own woodlot – it's quite a large one – with a company, so I enjoy spending a lot of time in there, but I do know how difficult it is to get the help if you're not able to time-wise or, certainly, if you have some physical limitations.

As I said, if you needed to get another friend on that permit to cut the timber, that's where you found a problem. With this move here today and with this Bill 10, we certainly will see many more options for people to go out and procure their firewood; again, a good, sustainable resource-harvesting strategy.

To address this procedural slowdown, that's what we're addressing here today and I thank the minister for doing that. This amendment will make it so that more than one assistant can be added to a timber permit. This means that when one of your friends is not available, another person will be able to assist you. It'll save on a trip and it'll save you from the headache of having to go back and get your permit reissued, which I've been hearing about in Labrador.

It's very much a good thing. Many people in many of our districts on both sides of this House are going to feel some nice, warm pats on the back when they realize how this will help us. Especially as this province has an aging population, we do have a vast number of people who are relying on timber who are seniors. As I said, 25 per cent of our provincial households use wood solely as their source of heat.

The minister has talked about the role and support for seniors. It's great. I'd also like to quickly highlight, back in January 2 of this year for the first time individuals have been able to go online and renew their domestic cutting permits. That is also providing a great support for this pursuit and supplement and ways to deal with.

As we've all been talking so much about rate mitigation and looming costs for electricity, being able to much more easily access your permits and then procure your wood is what this government is all about. Certainly, this service cut down on paper waste and by using electronic processes, the Digital by Design aspects of *The Way Forward* will provide a better and more responsive service for our citizens.

Minister, I agree with you. It is a 10, it is a big deal and I thank you very much for the time to speak to it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

MR. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I stand on a point of order.

The Minister of Service NL just made a comment that she cancelled the X plate – and this is very important to the people in Chapel Arm. She cancelled the licence as soon as she became aware of it. That was her statement just then. I assume every person who makes a statement in this House must be correct and honest in the statement.

Mr. Speaker, I have here emails –

MR. SPEAKER: What's the Standing Order number, please?

MR. JOYCE: Forty-nine. I have emails here that were sent to the minister and to Alan Doody September 18 and September 20 explaining about the X plate in St. John's and a picture of the X plate itself in St. John's. On September 23 there was a letter written from the registrar who wrote: I'm responsible for the licensing of vehicles and your emails to Minister Gambin-Walsh and to Allan Doody, Assistant Deputy Minister, has been forwarded to me for response. Thank you for bringing this to my attention.

I can confirm there has been no changes concerning the licensing of the off-road vehicles. Under the legislation, as registrar, I may assess the use of a vehicle and use the proper plate accordingly. With respect to the photo, being reviewed by the official division; following the assessment of the decision of the registrar, it was communicated to the registered owner. The vehicle is registered to a commercial company and used for unique commercial needs. I was –

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

This doesn't appear to be something under Standing Orders. I will ask you to move on.

MR. JOYCE: It's a statement that the minister made in this House and I am asking you –

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair has made a ruling.

MR. JOYCE: Pardon me?

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair has made his ruling.

MR. JOYCE: But what is your ruling?

MR. SPEAKER: It's not within the Standing Orders.

MR. JOYCE: So you're allowed to make a false statement in the House?

MR. SPEAKER: No, Sir.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible) this what the Standing Orders are for.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair has made his ruling.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible) I'm not finished it.

CHAIR: We'll review it and get back to you.

The Chair has made his ruling. Please take your seat.

MR. SPEAKER: The Speaker recognizes the Member for St. John's Centre.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

When good legislation comes to the House, we are happy to support it and this is one example of this good legislation. If anything it highlights the whole notion of being inclusive and providing accessibility. Certainly as a former teacher, those are things that are always important: accessibility and inclusivity.

It's interesting last week when this was first to be discussed, I don't know if any of you follow *Land & Sea* on CBC but there was a great show on called *The Little Lumberjack* about a gentleman Ralph Coombs in Bay d'Espoir, 89 years old. Retired when he was 65 and spent the last 20-plus years in the woods cutting wood as a pastime. It was his hobby he said and, basically, it's what breaths life into his world.

His family figured he shouldn't be in the woods, but he comes to the woods alone to work. Five years ago, he had a stroke and the one concession he made to his family, of course, was the fact that he took a cellphone in. However, his

sons tend to go with him now. So you can sort of see here for this gentlemen, if he were unable to go into the woods, it would take away a good chunk of an activity that brings meaning to his life.

As has been noted, the *Forestry Act*, as it currently stands, allows for the name of one assistant in the permit, and that person has to be there to assist in the cutting of the allotted timber. Basically, if another person is required, it results in a refile of the permit, more red tape, more wasted time, I guess, for those who wish to cut the wood. What we can see is that this amendment, since it allows multiple assistants on the permit, it negates the need to refile each time.

From our point of view, this is a good piece of red tape reduction. It's an excellent change that will benefit many people in the province, and not just those in the rural areas, although they will be greatly impacted in a positive way. As noted, the amendment will also allow people with disabilities, seniors and others having difficulty in accessing domestic timber to get their wood harvested. From our point of view, that's a very people-oriented type of bill and legislation.

With that, Speaker, this is probably the shortest time I've spoken and I'll sit down.

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

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for your Member's statement for the District of Lewisporte - Twillingate recognizing a company 50 years contributing to the forest industry of our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, Cottle's Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. MITCHELMORE: It's very positive to hear the Member for St. John's Centre talk about the importance of today's legislation, as to how it's all about helping people. I will say, Mr. Speaker, that as a very young child, I remember helping my father, certainly, stack up lots of wood. Like many others, probably, in this House, I've done quite a bit of packing tiers of

wood over and over and over because the primary source of heat at home on the Great Northern Peninsula, like many others, is by firewood.

We have a tremendous amount of domestic woodcutters on the Great Northern Peninsula and we have a long storied history of forestry. There were towns that were created just because of the vast fibre resources in Main Brook and Roddickton, known as the land of lumberjacks, and in Hawkes Bay and some very important impacts to the economy.

I want to thank the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources for taking significant action on forestry, bringing it to the forefront and making sure that we have a forestry action plan here in our province. That is so important, and being willing to look at the act itself and make necessary changes that will help people.

Mr. Speaker, in my own district – district 17 and 18, if you go by forestry districts – there are an average of 2,500 domestic cutting permits per year issued, and over 55,000 cubic metres of timber that will be cut based on those allocations. That's more than 10 per cent of all of the forestry that would be cut by domestic permits, cut on the Great Northern Peninsula. That shows the significance of wood as a heat source for people on the Great Northern Peninsula.

As our population and demographics age, it's really important that we make good, positive policy shifts here as government. These regulations that we're debating here today will provide greater access to the province's forestry resources, enabling permit holders to obtain the assistance of one or more individuals to help the cutting of timber for personal consumption.

The new regulations will benefit individuals, certainly in my district on the Great Northern Peninsula, previously unable to cut wood due to health or mobility issues, especially older or infirm residents who generally use firewood as a primary source of home heating. We want people to be able to stay in their homes longer to build that stronger sense of community, especially in rural regions of our province.

The new regulations certainly help mitigate against potential abuse and align with the province's commitment to sustainable forest management. I commend the minister for putting this forward and I want to talk about how important the forestry is on the Great Northern Peninsula.

When I moved back to the Great Northern Peninsula in 2009, one of the first matters that I had to deal with was dealing with the forestry. It's been a big part of my life ever since I moved back. When I was dealing with growing up, dealing with a fire, setting the fire and making sure we had enough firewood was really important in my household, and it will be going forward.

This is a really important heat source to the people of the province. Making these changes are helpful, and I encourage others to contribute to the debate here this afternoon.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, first and foremost, have to say that, unlike most times, I actually agree with the minister when he says this is a perfect 10. It's a practical change, a little change. While we have a great presentation on the letter S, it does have a big meaning when it does include the plurality of people being able to help an individual with a permit to harvest wood for their heating of their home.

One thing that I do different from the minister is I do have lots of practical experience in cutting wood to heat the home for my relatives and such. Much of it was done on private land, but I used to spend a lot of time in the woods with my great uncle. He was born in the year 1904 and never, ever modernized to the point of using a chainsaw. At the age of 12, the chainsaw was almost half as high as I was, but he relied on me to cut most of his wood.

I remember one thing that always stuck with me; we'd be in the woods and, of course, you'd dress up for the weather but by the time midday came around you'd be done to your T-shirt and pants. He'd always say to me: Wood's a great thing, it keeps you warm while you're getting it; it keeps you warm after you got it. You can't get much more truth to it than that.

One thing we always, always relied on was additional people in the woods with us, largely for safety purposes, using axes, saws and horses. It was quite a risky undertaking at times, and it was always great to have that third and fourth person there because if you were injured or if someone did get pinned underneath a tree, obviously, you'd need somebody there to help the immediate situation but also send somebody for help.

I remember one time, and it wasn't because we were in peril, but we were in and we were kind of a little bit short on labour, so what my uncle did was he tied the reins up on the horse and smacked it on the rear end and the horse went back to the farm, and then someone came out with our lunch. The same thing could be done, I guess, if we were in trouble.

As we evolve into a more natural, fibre-based home heating – because I do see an increased demand in this, because not only is it more of an environmentally friendly way to heat our homes, but it's also a great way for people to get out in the outdoors, get exercise and really appreciate what nature can offer during the winter, in particular. Because cutting wood in the summer is absolutely a miserable task because the flies are as thick as the wood sometimes.

It's one of these simple, little practical amendments that is being made to legislation that makes it more functional. That's something that we have to continue to look at.

Without saying much more, I fully support this. I will not waste my time speaking on proposed legislation, I will just speak to this. I thank you for the opportunity to do so.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to speak long to this. I just wanted to say, for the record, I will be supporting Bill 10.

I wouldn't have an overabundance of people that are cutting wood to burn in my district, but I would have some. I actually do have some. I do have people that do have wood stoves and so on; probably more so down in their rec room or even their shed, as opposed to their primary source of heat. I do have people that do burn some wood, but certainly nowhere near the magnitude as a lot of Members would have in the rural districts.

This is an issue that's been ongoing for a long time. Even though I might not have had a lot of people affected personally, I do hear from people from all over the province, whether it be through social media or email or whatever. It was something that, certainly, I had raised with the department.

I think it was about a year or so ago we were having a briefing, something to do with allowing farmers to cut down trees on their property to clear for farming and so on. At that time I took the opportunity while we were there with the staff to ask that very question, actually. Because it seemed very unfair to me that you would have a situation where you might have a senior citizen who's living home by herself, maybe her husband has passed away, and in order for her son – for argument's sake – to give her a bit of wood, he'd have to go out and pay for a permit to cut the wood and then she'd have to go and pay for another permit to receive the wood. Which I thought was just heartless and unfair, to be honest with you.

So this is going to deal with that issue. Actually, I think it may be dealt with in the regulations, the minister said, about the gifting piece. So glad to see that part will be taken care of.

Certainly, the other part, which is in the actual bill itself, about the number of persons who can be on a permit, it just makes good sense, as has already been said, to allow more than one person. Because for safety reasons you wouldn't want to just have one person up trying to do it by themselves. Of course, again, whether it's a senior, whether it's a person with a disability.

I can think of scenarios, for example, where there could be a senior who might have a permit, maybe living around the bay, and perhaps they might have a couple of sons, or daughters for that matter, come up for a few days to help dad out and cut a bit of wood for the winter and help. That wouldn't be possible if these changes weren't made.

I think it's a good thing. It speaks to helping people, as has been said, with their daily lives. It's funny how it goes. We stand here in this House of Assembly week after week and we debate all kinds of legislation. Sometimes we debate very, very serious legislation with very serious implications and, a lot of times, it's sort of happens – it needs to happen but it happens and people don't think a whole lot of it or pay attention, but I find that a lot of times it's the little things, like this, that make an actual tangible difference, that people appreciate the most.

I often said it was the same thing when you would have a minister go to a district and announce a million dollars for roads or \$2 million for roads or whatever, and it kind of happens – I think you get in a bubble thinking that you're going to get this big political bang for the buck. You actually get more appreciation when you go and you help out the Lions Club or you help out some community group or sports group with a bit of equipment or to help them out with projects they're doing. You actually get more appreciation for those things, because people look at that as those little things, tangible things, that you're actually doing to help the community and people actually see it.

This is an example of a little thing that we can do. It's only a very minor change to the legislation, but it's actually something where, from a more tangible point of view, people can say this is going to help a lot of seniors, people with disabilities and so on in the community just to make life a little bit easier for them.

Anything we can do in that regard I think is a positive thing. I commend the minister, the government, for bringing this in. I certainly say to the minister, in terms of the regulation that he spoke to, about the idea of being able to gift wood, the sooner that we can get that regulation in place, the better. Because there could be

situations, I'm sure, again, primarily we're talking seniors, where you may have a senior living by herself, for argument sake, doesn't have any family and people in the community want to be able to help to get her a bit of wood.

I mean, that was a long-standing tradition for years and years. It's part of our culture here in Newfoundland and Labrador as a matter of fact. Not just wood but I'm sure Members, as we lament, we think about times in a lot of communities where if somebody went out and they caught a few fish, everybody used to go up and bring a couple of fish up to Aunt Mary up the road or whatever because she got no one to get her some fish; or if someone went out and they caught a few trout or something, they'd always bring a few up to Uncle John or whatever the case might be. That's kind of how a lot of communities operated where people took care of the elderly people in their community who might not have had family members to help them. The same thing with getting a bit of wood or anything they needed.

This kind of ties in to that tradition and way of community life in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly in rural Newfoundland and Labrador that we're all so fond of. So, all the way around a good piece of legislation and I will be voting for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I want to say a special thank you to all of my colleagues, all the Members of the House who spoke on this initiative, and for reflecting that this is indeed a perfect 10. Bill 10, an amendment to the *Forestry Act*, has been recognized as a very solid piece of legislation. Very simplistic in its form but very complex and very important in its delivery of a social good to each and every one of us and to our districts throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands in a tongue-in-cheek way said that the Member for the District of Corner Brook having not many domestic woodcutters in my constituency – having this legislation come from such a Member is a little bit ironic. Of course, as the hon. Member knows, there are many, many, many domestic woodcutters in Corner Brook. Often, we avail of the help and services of friends and relatives from the District of Humber - Bay of Islands to help us cut our wood, so it's always a pleasure.

I want to say a special thank you to the Member for Exploits; for St. John's Centre; the great coalition from Mount Pearl North and Mount Pearl - Southlands, who have joined in recognizing the value of this particular initiative; and, as well, the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, who gave a very strong reflection of the aspirations of his own constituents and how important this is to people who he has a direct relationship with and a direct membership.

The one confusing element to all of this, Mr. Speaker, I have to admit, is the Member for Lake Melville. I just couldn't understand. His reference to ABBA was confusing to me. I had no idea what a 1970s-'80s rock band had to do with any of this. All I could say is that "Knowing Me Knowing You" there is some relevance to this, but it was indeed music to my ears to hear the praise. I want to say "Thank You for the Music" because that's "The Name of the Game" is getting those perspectives together.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for Exploits did say there were some confusing elements to this. All I want to say to that is "Take a Chance on Me." He also referenced the fact that there are some issues around some of the expense, the fees to be paid for permits. Well, "Money, Money, Money" is always an issue. The domestic permit, of course, is \$25, but I also want to add, Mr. Speaker, the cost for a senior's permit is \$16.25, so "Money, Money, Money" is always an issue.

"Mamma Mia," Mr. Speaker, it can't go unsaid that the winner should never take all. The winner does sometimes take it all, but this is something that benefits each and every one of us. So I'm just delighted to now sit in my chair and we'll get into Committee of the Whole and we'll be

able to reflect on some of the more serious aspects.

Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, it's wonderful to hear the House in harmony with each other, recognizing that we can do important things through some very minor, but very influential changes to legislation. Not only will this legislative change make a big, big difference in the lives of people who face ability issues, but also those who are senior and are just looking for a helping hand to be able to help them heat their homes.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I'll take my seat. I want to say a special thank you to the House for all that has been said today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): "Here I go again."

Is the House read for the question?

The motion is that Bill 5 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act. (Bill 10)

MR. SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a second time.

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

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Forestry Act," read a second time, ordered

referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 10)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole and consider Bill 10.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. 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 (Bennett): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 10, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Forestry Act." (Bill 10)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those opposed?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognize the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Can the minister confirm whether an assistant or helper can harvest wood alone or does the permit holder have to be present?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the question.

The permit holder does not have to be present during the harvesting of the wood, as long as the named assistant is on the permit and the named assistant is in possession of the permit itself for inspection by conservation officers.

The hon. Member may have been thinking that based on his comments during second reading, that that's a change from the past practice. My assistant deputy minister informs me that that is not a change of past practice. That the helper, as long as they are named on the permit and they are in possession of the permit, they could have in the past been harvesting wood. Now, with the new permit, as long as the helper holds the permit, they're named on the permit, they can harvest that wood.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: How will the minister determine the number of assistants on each permit? Will this be assessed on application by application basis?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Chair.

Right now, the considerations we're making are both practical and reasonable. One of the

considerations, given the fact that our permitting system – and this is another great advantage that our government has created, to be able to assist people in getting access to forestry permits in a timely basis. Applications can be now done online.

One of the issues that we'd like to explore with the OCIO, Office of the Chief Information Officer, is we'd like to make sure that our process streamlines with the technical parameters around the online application process.

What I can report to the hon. Member is that my consideration, at this point in time, is to a maximum number of 10 assistants being able to be named on the permit.

CHAIR: The Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: What analysis has the department done to determine this number of assistants on the permit?

CHAIR: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Again, Mr. Chair, I want to thank the hon. Member for the question through you. The analysis, as I just revealed, just in my previous answer, is that part of this is a pragmatic or a practical exercise.

We want to make sure that the full value and benefit of the online application system is still available. That does create a ceiling or a limit as to the number that can be included within the context of the online application system. The system itself would not be able to accommodate an infinite number of potential assistants.

We're working with 10, because in keeping with the principle that this is a perfect 10, Bill 10 is a perfect 10 in terms of legislation. We also think that 10 would be a good number of assistants to be able to offer our domestic holders.

It is a function of how we integrate this within our informatics systems. During the course of consultations that I've held, my own personal consultations – because this is how this bill originates is just my own understanding of the needs of domestic woodcutters. We also

recognize that gifting of firewood is an essential component to be able to advance the needs of our seniors and people who face ability challenges.

I'd like to hear, though, if the hon. Member would like to provide some feedback, as to whether or not he feels that 10 assistants would be excessive or would be not sufficient enough. I'd be very pleased to receive that feedback.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Can a person who holds their own permit be listed as an assistant or helper on another permit?

CHAIR: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: I'd like to again thank the hon. Member through you, Mr. Chair, for the question.

Absolutely, the objective here is to ensure that the permit holder has capacity to be able to receive help from an assistant. There's nothing in terms of a conservation issue that we're aware of. Our forestry officials are learned forestry professionals. Our registered professional foresters have analyzed this particular amendment to consider if there's any potential enforcement issues, compliance issues or conservation issues.

The ability to be able to cross-authorize people within the forestry permitting system is just sensible. We have small communities where, of course, you would want to have, basically, those who are able to assist you – and it may not necessarily be a large number – you would want to be able to have those people be able to be registered as assistants on multiple applications. There's no consequence to conservation whatsoever, or to enforcement.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Will there be a limit to the total amount of wood that the individual can cut if they are listed on multiple permits?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: The limit of the total allowable cut is listed on the permit itself, and that is the compliance mechanism that is employed by our conservation officers. So, no, there is no limit that is anticipated or being planned because there's no apparent value to doing that. I appreciate the question, though.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: With multiple applicants and helpers, what measures are in place to limit or prevent potential abuse related to these changes?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: I thank the hon. Member through you, Mr. Chair.

I've spoken in depth about our reflection of whether or not there are any compliance enforcement issues related to this. It is currently the practice that helpers can harvest wood for domestic wood permit holders. The authority rests with the permit itself. It's important that the permit holder ensure compliance for his or her own permit.

Having multiple permit holders, as long as the permit itself is present with the helper, with the assistant, and present when the wood is being cut, that allows the conservation officers to be able to do their job, to conduct inspections – roadside inspections or site inspections – to be able to monitor the amount that's being harvested.

There are no known, foreseeable enforcement concerns that are readily apparent. If the hon. Member knows any, I would be more than happy to receive his counsel.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Will the price of the domestic permit remain the same for both the permit and for seniors?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Chair, this legislation contemplates no change in the cost for a permit for either the regular stream of applicants, or for seniors. We're very delighted on this side of the House to be able to say that while a domestic – for the cutting of approximately four cords of wood, in the vast majority of cases, seven cords of wood in areas where there is less supply and significant demand, the ability to be able to cut 7-10 cords of wood – 35 cubic metres in total, for a cost of \$25, given the considerable enforcement initiatives and conservation initiatives that are involved, is a very, very good, solid deal.

But what we're most proud of on this side of the House is we recognize that seniors, many of whom face fixed incomes, will not bear a \$25 cost for their permits. They continue to have a discounted rate of \$16.25, and there's no intention – no intention – to change that to a higher amount anytime soon.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Will the helper be able to gift the wood?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Chair, the only one who can gift the firewood is the owner of the permit. Again, the nuance to this is pretty straightforward. I appreciate the hon. Member may be confused somewhat. The holder of the permit is the body that is entitled to be able to disperse the firewood.

I'd like to caution that the gifting of firewood is not a regulated option at this point in time. I announced to the House my intention to be able to offer the gifting of wood in due course. So I would encourage no one to go forward and gift wood thinking that it's currently the right and the privilege to be able to do so.

To answer the question directly, only the permit holder is accountable for the wood itself, and only the permit holder will be able to make appropriate measures as they become available under regulation. That would foreseeably be the gifting of wood in due time. Because the helper is not the permit holder and does not have a

rightful entitlement to the wood itself, he or she only has a rightful entitlement to assist in the harvesting of the wood, the helper would not be eligible to gift something which they do not own.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: How do you plan to make the public aware of these changes?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Well, Mr. Chair, that is the beauty and the benefit and the miracle of this House. We're already communicating to the general public today of the merits of these changes and the intentions to make these changes should they receive Royal Assent. We will further be communicating to the general public, not only through our district forestry offices, through our conservation officers, but we will engage in a communication strategy to be able to make sure that knowledge of this is available.

Obviously, of course, the best pinpointed way to make people aware of the changes is when the forestry permits are issued, either at the district office or online, then have that information available very clearly, very visibly at that point. So we, basically, arrange for 25,000 domestic forestry permits to be issued annually. It's during the course of the issuing of the permits that creates an excellent venue or entry point to be able to get that education piece out there and well known as to what the changes are and what is eligible under the law.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: When will the proposed changes take effect?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Chair, as we know in the capacities of the House and our legislative process, Royal Assent is required for legislation to take effect. What I'm hoping, be it the will of the House, is that this can be wrapped up and for the issuing of new forestry permits, which begin

on January 1 for the coming calendar year, that, obviously, this would be a time when we can have those new provisions in place for the beginning of the upcoming calendar year.

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

MR. LESTER: I ask the Chair, in the event where two or more permit holders head to the woods to co-operatively harvest their permits, will each one be required to be listed as a helper on one another's permit or will their primary permit take precedence over the harvest?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: If two people are harvesting wood – I'm trying to think through the – there's an old puzzle that I remember when I was a kid: that if a plane crashes on the border of the United States and Canada, where do they bury the survivors? The answer is you don't bury survivors.

The question is, if two people are harvesting wood, both have domestic permits, I guess if one person is not harvesting for herself or himself, they're both harvesting for one of the permit holders, then the permit holder would be able to harvest, but she or he would have to have the other person listed as a helper.

If the property is to be held by only one of the domestic permit holders at that point in time – it's the domestic permit which is the legislative authority or the authority on which the wood is being harvested – it would be necessary for the permit holder to be there and her or his helper to be there and to be listed.

I hope I'm answering the question.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Maybe I should clarify that. Say if you and I were friends and we decided one Saturday morning we were going to head to the woods and we were going to harvest each one of our permit allocations co-operatively, would I be required to be listed on your permit as a helper and would you be required to be listed on my permit as a helper?

CHAIR: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Chair, I can assure the hon. Member for Mount Pearl North that we are indeed friends. I would like to stay friends for a very, very long time. Maybe with the answer to this question, we can further entrench and cement that friendship.

If the wood is to be owned by a single, solitary permit holder, then that is her or his wood. If it's being cut by someone else who does not have authority to own that wood, they would have to be listed as a helper. I hope that's clear.

Now, if what you're saying is let's go in the woods together, let's cut together and let's have a lunch together, let's have Vienna sausages and a tin of Pepsi and enjoy the day together, you know what, that's a good – and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, I'd love to do that with him someday because we're good friends too. If you're cutting your wood and I'm cutting mine, and the wood that I cut I'm going to own and the wood that you're going to cut you're going to own, well then you're working within good authority and proper conduct of the permits themselves.

If you're cutting wood and I'm going to own it – so if two of us are cutting wood and I'm going to own the wood and you're going to help me to cut it, you have to be listed as a helper because the authority is in the permit. If you're going to possess wood, you have to not only have a permit to be able to do so, but if you're getting assistance in cutting wood that you will take ownership and authority over – if you're getting help to do that, you have to have the helper listed on your permit.

CHAIR: The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Does the requirement of being listed as a helper go beyond the actual cutting of the wood? What about the loading of the wood or the stacking of the wood? Is that the requirement to be listed as a helper?

CHAIR: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Chair, I spoke earlier about how straightforward, simple things – it's a mystery as to how they don't get done. We're really digging in to the weeds here and it's good, because we're getting to the bottom of this. This is sometimes why stuff doesn't get done.

The answer is that if the loading of the wood is a normal course of effort that's required to be able harvest wood, that's covered under the helper's permit. Remember, the point here is that you possess the permit. You're the helper but you have a copy of the permit in your possession. Your name is on the permit, so as you cut and transport the wood, it's all in good order because you are cleared. You have been given authority by Her Majesty, by the Legislature and by the permit holder to be able to do all this work. There should be no violation of the requirements, if that is indeed the case.

CHAIR: The Member for St. John's Centre.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you.

This question is about sustainability and management, I guess – no guessing about it, it is. Our population is not that great; however, when you look at some of the comments, Mr. Chair, with regard to as Muskrat Falls comes online and the thought that more people will turn to wood, I'm looking at it in terms of when it comes to management and procedures in place – especially if the number of permits increase – ensuring sustainability, replacement and so on.

Even in the metro area, while there are not a whole lot of woods around unless you look at the Southside Hills, there's still a lot of people who do burn wood. I'm just looking at in terms of as we go forward – and especially if there's an increase in cutting permits as a result of this that could happen – what measures are in place to look at sustainability to make sure that people do have this opportunity to cut wood in perpetuity.

CHAIR: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, to the Member for St. John's Centre.

He's raising, actually, a very, very important point, because it's not an unlimited set of permits that can be issued. The limitation here is on the wood supply, the total allowable cut that's available within a particular forest management area.

It's not an unlimited capacity to be able to just issue permits, regardless of whether or not the forest inventory can withstand it. We establish what are domestic forestry cut blocks or areas, we establish the amount of wood supply that will be in those blocks and then we reconcile the number of permits that are issued in keeping with the sustainable allowable yield from those particular blocks.

That's a very important question because in some areas, such as on the Avalon, there are limitations to the volume that's allowed within the permit. It's based on the wood fibre supply and the demand. In the vast majority of areas, you can cut up to 10 cords – and I mentioned this number earlier – or 35 cubic metres, the same number. Or in some areas where demand is larger than the normal supply if you were to issue 10 cords, you can only cut seven. So there are strict limitations on the number of permits that are issued.

Forestry officials work very, very hard to identify and establish domestic cutting blocks to make sure that they're accessible, that they're convenient and that they meet the needs of the domestic woodcutters. Sometimes, Mr. Chair, there are some conflicts which get created between commercial cutters and domestic woodcutters, but we always find that when there's an effort, when there's some enthusiasm, some good honest discussion and acts of compromise and understanding of each other's point of view, those conflicts become settled very quickly. A better result occurs because we get a combination of both commercial woodcutters and domestic woodcutters, problem solved and it's great.

I will also say that I would go out in the woods any time with this hon. Member for St. John's Centre for a tin of sardines and a Fresca, my favourite meal in the woods. That's how we enjoy our great Newfoundland and Labrador outdoor heritage.

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

MR. J. DINN: A quick follow-up. I thank the minister for the answer.

With regard to this, in terms of management then, in the future would it be like a lottery system if pressure increased or would it be more or less decreasing the amount that you would be eligible to cut? The latter would allow for more people to do it. The former would restrict it but allow people to probably cut the amount of wood that they need. I'm just curious about that.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much to the hon. Member for the question through you, Mr. Chair.

I'm reluctant to engage in a hypothetical exercise simply because there's not a body of evidence which suggests that this could reach a critical point where lottery rationing is required. There are instances already – and I pointed this out, especially on the Avalon – where we've been able to accommodate by reducing the overall permitted amount universally for everyone who would apply to that particular area. That doesn't mean that someone from, for example, downtown St. John's couldn't apply for a permit in Central Newfoundland and get access to a domestic wood supply, should they so desire.

One element why I would prefer not to engage in a hypothetical here is that we have rebounding forest inventories as a result of some of the closures of the pulp and paper mills. As the Member for Lake Melville pointed out, demand was so much higher; we had over 1.2-million cubic metres, I believe, being harvested – I better check my – historically, just from pulp and paper mills, from forestry operations for paper mills alone just on the Island portion of the province. We also had sawmills, we had very significant sawmill operations.

When the paper industry began to recede, now being left with only one active paper mill in the

province, one of the biggest issues today – and this is a really important point for all of us in the House to recognize. Back prior to 2008, a forest was viewed as a very large inventory of fibre. It was really not any substantial reflection on what was the forest made up of; it was just simply there was a capacity. Mercantile fibre was there. You could take small-diameter wood and sell that as firewood or pulpwood. What we now call small diameter, more often called small-diameter wood, was normally called pulpwood.

Well, today, one of the biggest issues is getting a market for small-diameter wood, for pulpwood or for firewood. A forester or a harvester will come in, will harvest the entire block of forest. They would always have a ready market for what I'll call the hamburger, which is the pulpwood. They sell that to the pulp mills and a little bit to the firewood market, but the sirloin was always the sawlogs and so they'd utilize the sawlogs.

One of the great synergies between our paper mills and our sawmills was the exchange of the hamburger and the sirloin. Paper mills would provide the sawlogs from their own domestic permitted area and the sawmills would supply the pulpwood in exchange for the sawlogs.

Well, today, of course, one of the biggest issues, one of the biggest constraints on our forest industry is a slower, lesser market for the small diameter wood. That's why I'm of the belief, I think it's better to start with a proposition that there is a reasonable body of timber that's available for domestic woodcutters and the notion of rationing is not something that's readily apparent at this point in time.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

Minister, previously you mentioned that it's similar to what it was with last year's permit, but last year's permit says that the holder of the permit has to be present at all times during the operation. So that has changed?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Mr. Chair, I may have misspoke, but I asked the assistant deputy minister just a while ago that the rules have always been that the permit is held within the hands of the authorized individual. As long as the permit is held by the authorized individual then there's a legal right to be able to do so.

If there's a mistake in what I've informed the House then I'll certainly correct that information, but as it stands now, I have no cause but not to stand by my original assertion.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

I have a copy of the permit right here and it says that the permit holder has to be present during all times of the operation.

I have a question for the minister. We've seen a lot, especially in TW, where there are a lot of roads in the province that are in very close proximity to the highway and we're always looking for brush cutting and stuff like that, but under any permit for a domestic cutting permit, it has to be 100 metres from the road in order to be engaged in.

Is there any consideration in giving permits to people on the shoulder of the road so that you could solve two purposes, you could do a bit of brush cutting and you also can get a bit of wood?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works.

MR. CROCKER: I thank the Member for the question. I guess it's really a TW question.

The wood he's referring to would be in the province's right-of-way. One of the concerns around that is always safety, but I know in cases, previously, we've worked with contractors when they're doing harvesting of brush cutting and contractors have worked with individuals who would like to harvest some of the larger wood, but that's usually on a case-by-case basis, because the biggest concern with that certainly would be safety.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Minister, I agree with you. If you're on the Trans-Canada Highway, I'm sure we don't want anybody cutting wood on the Trans-Canada Highway, but on some of our roads – I was presently down in the Coast of Bays and they were doing some brush cutting there along the main road. It would be a great opportunity for anybody to get a bit of wood. It's close, it's handy and it's easy to do.

I just hope that could be given some consideration. Not in all cases, but in cases where it could fit. Also, Minister, will it still be only one permit per household? Will it stay one permit per household?

CHAIR: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

To the hon. Member: Yes, the intention is that it would be one permit per household, to make sure that there's fairness and balance within the allocation itself.

I just want to go back to the original question because I don't want to leave that question hanging. I've tried to make great effort to communicate and recognize that it's the permit which is the authority to which harvesting can occur. If the permit holder names an assistant and the assistant holds the permit, then they are in effect the statutory agent of the permit holder.

I just reached out to my assistant deputy minister again, who confirmed that while I recognize the hon. Member read out that the permit holder must be present, if an assistant is on the permit, then they are indeed considered partly to be the permit holder. They are able to harvest the wood without the presence of the original permit holder. It's a legal construct but a valid one.

CHAIR: The Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: I thank the minister for that but I can assure the minister that a lot of people that had their permits beforehand always considered the permit holder as the person who

had the permit, not the helper. That has changed a little bit. You could have 10 permit holders on an application right now. That's basically what you're telling me.

Minister, I'm just wondering, are you anticipating any reduction in the 25,000 permits that are issued because of these changes you've made?

CHAIR: The Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources.

MR. BYRNE: There could very well be. We don't know for sure but, obviously, we'll monitor behaviour, we'll monitor appetites in this regard.

The hon. Member does raise a very good point, Mr. Chair. In the past, because the number of assistants was very limited and, as well, because the gifting of firewood was not allowed, you potentially – and we'll monitor this very closely over the coming months and coming years – may have people who went out and applied for and received a permit that would not necessarily need the full 10 cords.

The average household in Newfoundland – it's an interesting point for the House to know – will harvest 7.5 cords of wood per year from a 10-cord permit. In other words, the vast majority of people don't harvest the full capacity or full authority within their permit; they only harvest a portion of it. Of course, if you can't gift it, you only cut what you need yourself because there's not much point in doing anything else.

I would suspect – and we're going to monitor this closely – that some people went out and acquired a permit for a full 10 cords because they didn't have any other source to be able to get the firewood. This may change over the coming months and years and the hon. Member is quite right to point it out. This is something we contemplated. This could actually be a conservation tool as opposed to a conservation risk.

CHAIR: Seeing no other questions, shall the motion carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Opposed?

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Forestry Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Opposed?

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill carried without amendment?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Opposed?

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: I move, Mr. Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 10.

CHAIR: All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Opposed?

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

The hon. Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that Bill 10 is carried without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole has reported that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that Bill 10 is carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 10, second reading of Bill 16.

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that Bill 16, An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 16 entitled, An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008." (Bill 16)

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I can't claim the prize for brevity today in terms of amendments to an act, because this is four words rather than one letter. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, this is An Act to Amend – as it says – the Registered Nurses Act, 2008.

For the benefit of Members who are new to the House, this act regulates the practice of nursing in this province. Members who were here during the last session will recall that we made a significant number of amendments to that act at that time related primarily to nurse practitioners and their scopes of practice. Nurse practitioners are registered nurses with significant additional training and education over and above that of the regular RN, as you say.

At the same time, we also passed a change to the name of what was then the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador to change it to the College of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador to more accurately reflect their licensing and regulatory amendment. Because the college is, under this act and its amendments, the regulatory body created for that purpose. Its mandate is to advance and promote the ethical and professional standards of the nursing profession and to promote proficiency and competence in the nursing profession.

Essentially, its mandate is to ensure that registered nurses who provide care and services to the people of this province are qualified and that they deliver those services in accordance with professional and ethical standards appropriate to the practice of nursing.

The amendment I am moving and proposing is simply to change one section by adding the authority to make regulations respecting the scope of practice. This is a request that has come from the College of Registered Nurses itself. It's a simple amendment and, again, trying to speak

to the principle of bringing the act rather than the detail of the amendment, it's very difficult to avoid when you only have four words to work with. But the impact is fairly significant.

The introduction of and scope of practice, to that phrase, brings in at least two principal possibilities. The act actually allows the college already to designate certain categories of nurses. What this would do then would enable the college to stipulate the scope of practice of those nurses.

For those Members who may not be aware, there are a significant number of national certification programs, for example, that provide RNs with advanced training in focused areas. There's the Canadian Society of Gastroenterology Nurses who met at their national meeting, in actual fact, in St. John's quite recently. There are advanced certifications in perioperative care that are nationally recognized, and there's a shopping list – there's pediatrics, there is intensive care and these kinds of things.

What they lack at the moment is the ability to have an expanded or a designated scope of practice. This province has never worked on the principle of an exclusionary scope of practice as some jurisdictions have done whereby if you're in this category of trained individual, you can't stray outside.

We've had a much more inclusive and collaborative framework which fits very well with the mandate of the department and, indeed, of this government in trying to inject collaboration and overlap, if you like, rather than restrict. However, what this has done in other jurisdictions has focused people's attention on the possibilities of RN prescribing.

I will go a little bit down this road, just simply to produce some context for the Members. This amendment, this change to the act, however, is an enabling one. It makes no recommendation about where it would go with this. That would be directed by the college as having the appropriate responsibility and authority to look at what nurses should do and how they do it, but it is one of those things that they may bring back after due diligence to the department and the minister for sign-off, at some future stage.

So for the benefit of the House, RN prescribing has actually been in existence in the United Kingdom since 1986. It's become more accepted, nationally, having been introduced in British Columbia, in this country, in 2015. In the last three years, we've seen Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec introduce legislation and approval is currently pending in Ontario and Nova Scotia.

Once again, through this bill, we are not granting authority to RNs to prescribe, but rather we're granting the college permission to explore options related to a scope of practice, which could then include prescribing, so it's enabling.

There is a lot of work that needs to be done. The college themselves recognize that there is no formal training in prescribing in the RN syllabus as it stands. Obviously, their view very much is that education and training and appropriate training would be necessary before engaging in any endeavour in clinical world. Again, this is an enabling piece, it will not, of itself, change the scene, as it were, clinically.

While regulations under the act actually belong to the council of the college, the Minister of Health and Community Services is legislatively required to approve them before they can become law. This is a parallel process that exists with all of our regulated professions, those that are regulated by stand-alone legislation as well as those that are regulated more collectively under the *Health Professions Act*.

Officials in the department are currently working with the College of Registered Nurses and should they wish to draft regulations around scope of practice in the future, we would be involved in the process and, as part of that process, there would then have to be, from our point of view, if not the college's, a thorough consultation with any affected stakeholder. That is, as I say, not what we're agreeing to today. We're simply enabling, at some future date, that process to begin.

For example, if you want to hearken back to the areas I have mentioned, O. R. nurses who have the O. R. certification are trained as part of their training to close skin wounds in elective surgery. That, at the moment, is not generally regarded as part of an O. R. RN scope of practice. It would

be something one would consult with the Medical Association and the college to get their view on before you introduced it.

In the same way, were the college to talk of prescribing authority for RNs, that would then become a discussion between those professions that currently have prescribing authority, which includes nurse practitioners, physicians and pharmacists, and would tangentially have effect on midwives as well.

The other piece of that then is because this would involve a change in work pattern, there would be issues, potentially, around collective bargaining. Discussions would then have to take place with the Registered Nurses' Union and also with the educators through the school of nursing, the Centre for Nursing Studies and Western Regional School of Nursing.

Our government really cannot say enough about the contribution and value that RNs bring to our health care system. They provide exemplary service every day. They provide care at needed times to people who are vulnerable. Health authorities have identified possible roles for registered nurses. Wound care nurses, for example, often write prescriptions for current prescribers around the technical aspects of what dressings may be applied or what appliances might be needed for people with stomas and these kinds of things.

Quite frankly, having been on the receiving end of these prescriptions, I have signed them as the surgeon responsible for this patient with a stoma, but whether it's a 70-millimetre flange product or whether it's a 50-millimetre convex, I have no idea. I have relied on the year and a half of advanced training of an enterostomal therapy nurse to tell me that. This would then, in these situations, if the college went down that route, would allow that nurse to simply assume that responsibility as it being appropriate and within his or her skill set. They may also be able, revising their scope of practice to be involved in admitting and discharging patients from health care facilities.

The RN prescribing piece which had figured, I think, quite prominently around the technical briefing, would be consistent with the efforts we've made to see primary health care providers

collaborate, work to their maximum scope of practice. This would go a long way, I think, to dealing with access, particularly in rural or remote areas.

In my time with what was then Grenfell Regional Health Services, the regional nurses, particularly on the Coast of Labrador, really were effectively doing everything but the prescribing. They would dispense. They would diagnose with assistance, but it was the physician in Goose Bay or St. Anthony who was technically writing the prescribing authority, and, in a sense, that was problematic.

It's been our position that access is really now the key driver for health service delivery. It's the right service at the right time from the right provider; ideally, in the right location, which for us would be as close to home or their home community as possible.

We have made it a point to remove what barriers we have seen from a legislative or regulatory perspective, and we have sought the views of the front line workers to do this and to try and address them. We have gone a considerable way with the amendments we made last session, as far as nurse practitioners were concerned with the amendment to the nursing act, but this builds on that and does the same thing we did for nurse practitioners, only for registered nurses.

Currently, we are blessed. We have 6,400 registered nurses in this province, and we have over 180 nurse practitioners. We lead the country in terms of our nurses and nurse practitioner per capita ratios. We have the same number of nurse practitioners in this province as they have in Manitoba, which actually has three times our population. They work in acute care centres, they work in community, they work with children, they work with adults, they work with frail seniors and they're a crucial piece of the health care system.

So Bill 16, we would see as a way of supporting that work, dealing with some of the access issues and allowing the newly-named college to fulfil its mandate. We have worked very closely with the college about the amendment. Not many words, but it fits the bill, hits the mark.

We will continue to work with the college to see what further developments they can come with to reduce barriers. I would, in the interest of matching the length of my speech to the length of the proposed amendment, Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to take my seat and listen to the debate unfold.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's indeed an honour to stand here as we speak to Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Registered Nurses Act, 2008. As I listened to the minister outline exactly what this means, while it's written that it's technically, I should say, from a word point of view, minor changes within the actual wording of the act itself, it's substantive when it comes to the potential we have here to changing the approach we have in health care and our approach in delivering the services here.

I think it's a positive thing in how we look at the roles all our health professionals play in delivery of health care in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly our RNs who are front line, who are very entrenched in the health care delivery, who are very professionally trained and have a scope of talent and abilities to broaden exactly what they do as part of the whole process.

As the minister outlined here, the bill makes an addition to the regulation making role of the council. It will allow the council to make regulations, with the approval of the minister, regarding the scope of practice of registered nurses.

Mr. Speaker, myself and the minister have had some debate over the years on legislation that changed that would outline that the minister gets to make the decisions, and I'm not adverse to that. I see the value in it in a number of cases and I see the value of another professional organization, the College of Registered Nurses, making recommendations or lobbying for particular changes or things that should be implemented around regulations.

We debate on numerous occasions here about what regulations will be when we pass legislation, and it's always a concern because we're not sure what angle they may go in. We're not sure if there are other opportunities to do things more beneficial or more equitable or to include more partners in the processes here. I know this has been a request from the college itself, and I respect that and I see the value of it and particularly support it.

We've talked about this before, support about changing our approach to delivery of health care and the importance that all of our stakeholders have; but particularly in this one, the nurses themselves and how they would do it and how they would regulate and help prescribe what are the responsibilities and duties of RNs, in addition to what they already have. We already know in their scope of work and in their practice and in the regulatory processes what it is they're entitled to do. We know the operations from a regional health authority in each of the organizations, the role that nurses will play in the delivery of health care.

So, with that being said, I support, and I would think my colleagues here would support, the process and the move forward of including the RNs or changing, giving the ability for the college to have more dialogue around and adding the scope of work for nurses and how that itself would be regulated, because that's very important, too. Because if you're going to add other responsibilities that we know are within the professional qualifications of RNs to be able to do certain things, are there other supports that are necessary? Is there going to be additional training? Will there have to be additional checks and balances to ensure how things are being done? Are there other resources that may have to be added to the entities that they're going to be partnering with? These are all valid issues that I would think would support how we would move this forward and how we would do it.

The issue here becomes, again, around the practice of not only the registered nurses, which is very important here, but other health professionals, how we keep that continuum going. If we're having a discussion around the scope of work and being able to prescribe that and, in this case, fully support where it would

go, in the back of our minds as we move changing our approach to health care, that we keep in mind the other key components that are out there, from pharmacists to paramedics to licensed practical nurses, to all the other health professionals that would have a major stake in how we move things forward.

I think we need to be cognizant as we support one organization that has a legitimate, positive request that we also keep in sequence, when we're doing this, what it would mean as we move things forward. When I say what it means, it's not necessarily the legislation. It on the regulations, because you don't want to bring in regulations for one entity that may add a hindrance or confusion or a challenge to another particular entity that can support what we're doing, in this case, supporting our health care system. When we look at it here, as I mentioned, it's a simple legislative change, but it's a major philosophical change in how we deliver our health care system.

We talk about the process and what would be important, and as we go through and, no doubt, we get into Committee, there will be some questions around what we think some of the other partnering health agencies and entities here would feel about the additional responsibilities that could be added. I would hope they would be complimentary to it. I would hope they would be very supportive of it. I would hope they would see it as a step forward, but in saying that, I would also like to know what some of their concerns may be, more importantly some of their suggestions on how this fluently could be rolled out and how it would enhance our health care system.

We've talked in this House here about – and I've said it on numerous occasions and the minister was (inaudible) with me – that we have some of the best, if not the best, health professionals in every sector here, in delivering our health care system.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: What we lack sometimes is being able to connect point A with point B with point C along the continuum line to ensure that when we come into a health facility or we are first assessed, that the service we get there

continues to move to the end result, where, hopefully, our health has improved or we're ready to – we can manage the health situation that we're facing. While we have people who do that, we need to ensure that works more fluently.

As we have challenges around recruiting doctors, as we have challenges around recruiting other health professionals, there's an ability here to look at the ones we already have, the ones that are already established. We have thousands of health professionals that work within our system who have the capabilities to take on other responsibilities. In a lot of cases, they're already trained to do that as part of their professional training that was instilled in them and certified to do certain things.

Our system is designed that we sort of segregate – certain groups can only go to this line and can't step over that to do other health interventions, another group can only go to this line. Whereas, what we're proposing here and what would be a great opportunity would be to look at stretching that line or collaboratively having two particular groups in one area being able to do similar things or support each other or take the burden off one other particular group who then has the ability, the skill set to deal with other portions of the health delivery system.

From a collective approach here, I think this opens up the door in a positive way of looking at the other parts of the health system that we have and how we can move things forward, no doubt. I see that again from the paramedics, and we've all had a discussion around that recently. I see it around pharmacists, what can be done. We see it around the LPNs, what can be done. We see it around the personal care attendants, all the direct health initiatives that we would have and the other professionals within our health care system from X-ray technicians to all the other specialists that we would have. Looking at it is there a burden in one area that could be offset by a health segment being able to offer that.

I commend the college for making this proposal. I know they wanted to look at other jurisdictions, and there are other jurisdictions that have started to implement some of this. There are other ones that are now only looking at it. It would be good for us to be proactive to how we move it. The concern would be around

the time frames. I say the time frames from two perspectives. I think we need a little bit more dialogue with some of the other entities to ensure that they're supported along the continuum so that it fosters something that's positive all along the way. The second would also be, at the end of the day, that we resource the individuals involved here, particularly the RNs and the college itself to be able to ensure, when they're doing their perspective licensing, if there's additional training, if it's the regulatory process, whatever is necessary to ensure that it's a positive move forward, that it works here.

I will look at the point that when we do get to Committee, I would like some clarification around a number of the issues here. I give the minister notice on that so that we could get some clear answers here about what ramifications this may have for other members in the health field. What are the particular resources we would need? Is this a dollar-related scenario?

We've talked about some of the issues around billing. We've had that discussion already when we talked about cataract surgery and some of the other interventions around eye issues. We're talking about how do we do billing? That seems to be a contentious issue on moving one of those types of things forward.

We'd like to have that up front because, again, I see that as being if we find a way to do billing in that particular area, then there might be something else that an RN has the ability to bill for as part of a procedure that they're provided, if it's from writing prescriptions, if that's part of it, or if it's some other interventions. We talked about some of the other prescribed responsibilities they possibly could have around asking for X-rays and some of the other diagnostic types of interventions that they could have.

When you look at this piece of legislation, the three things that stand out to me that I see as positive and we've talked about on this side is, one, that the college itself has come and made the request. They've done their homework. They know what the limitations may be of the registered nurses but, more importantly, they know the capabilities and they see this as a step forward.

The second being, we've all talked about we need to change some of the approaches in our health care system, because while we have the most professional people working, we're not getting the outcomes that we should for the monies that we're investing. That's because our coordinated effort in certain areas – and that's not to blame in any way, we have a geography that's unbelievable. We have some health concerns that are unique to our system here. We also have some issues around having one primary-tertiary care facility, so there are some challenges around that.

The third would be that at the end of the day we've adopted that we're going to change our approach to delivering health care, and that we can now ensure that somebody in a smaller remote community – because we have the ability for an RN or a licensed practical nurse to be able to do other interventions, that would at least give them timely access to that particular assessment.

I see three of those as positive things. I do look forward to hearing some other speakers and also when we get to Committee, getting some clarifications on some particular issues that we have. Then, I personally would have no problems in supporting as we move this forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We will certainly be supporting this bill. It will, I think, be a marked improvement for the health care system.

As we understand it, Bill 16 would enable the college to make regulations regarding scope of practice of registered nurses, as well as nurse practitioners and allowing RNs to write prescriptions and order diagnostic tests on a limited basis. It expands the scope of practice for registered nurses, is something the College of Registered Nurses has been working towards for a while and it's the national trend in best practice. More importantly, this expanded scope, as I just noted, will enable health centres,

hospitals and nurses to better meet patient needs, and it will improve access to health care in rural communities.

The act authorizes the college to make regulations in areas such as licensing, training, dispute resolution and liability for RNs and nurse practitioners. It also enables the college to set a scope of practice for the nurse practitioner as well, including ordering diagnostic tests. It's in keeping with the national trend towards this and broadening and legislation the scope of practice of RNs. BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Quebec have brought in similar legislation and Nova Scotia and Ontario are pending.

As we understand it, the process of expanding the scope of practice will be incremental and will be linked to specific situations where it is needed. Officials from the department and the College of Registered Nurses gave us some examples of where it would happen.

We can see in wound care for people going home after surgery, the discharge nurse at the hospital can write a prescription that they will need for recovering at home. The public health nurse who visits the patient at home may see inflammation in the wound and may be able to prescribe medication right away, instead of the patient having to wait and see his or her physician. Most importantly, the registered nurses will not be acting alone, but will be part of a team, including a doctor, who will know what prescription the nurse is writing.

The public health nurse also will play an important role in delivering sexual health services, especially in rural areas, or be able to order things such as an iron test for pregnant women or medications for people with diabetes without the person having to find a doctor or go to an emergency room. That alone would present an increased cost on the system, but it also allows for people to receive medical help in a timely manner. From my own point of view, what I like about this is it does define the scope of practice in terms of a collaborative health care team forming around the province in private physicians' clinics and in community health centres.

Nurses will be working with others. A family practice physician, a collaborative team or a community health centre or a hospital. As we understand it, the new scope of practice will not apply to self-employed registered nurses. From what we also understand, nurses will not be prescribing controlled drugs or substances.

Overall, this is a good piece of legislation. Hopefully it will address many of the challenges that our health care system is facing throughout this province. It will provide peace of mind to the citizens of this province, especially those who may not have access to a family physician.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, wanted to stand today and give my support to this legislative change. Like my colleague said, while it appears to be a simple legislative change it does reflect a large policy change.

As the minister has alluded to, it will enable the College of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador to do background research and determine which regulations they want to make regarding their scope of practice. In the briefing they did point out that the college did approach the department looking for this change.

The minister also spoke about the desire of RNs to expand their scope of practice. There are five provinces that currently, I believe, allow RNs to do some form of prescribing ability: BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Quebec. Apparently, Nova Scotia and Ontario are also introducing the ability, so that change is currently pending government approval.

In some provinces, RNs can prescribe, based on a list of ailments, conditions, et cetera, while in other provinces they can prescribe based on a list of medications and items. It was also noted earlier that RHAs see value in having RNs being able to prescribe during the discharge process. This would allow the RN, who has completed a

discharge with the patient, to write the prescription for wound care or prosthetic, et cetera, as the minister has alluded to in his own personal case. All of those things are good things, Mr. Speaker.

The minister alluded to the number of nurse practitioners we have, the number of nurses we have in the province, but the minister is also aware of the challenges that people in rural parts of our province have in recruitment. In my District of Stephenville - Port au Port, as of August, the report I had from Western Health was that in Stephenville - Port au Port District and in the long-term care facility in your own district, there were actually 20 RN vacancies, 10 LPNs, seven PCAs, three nurse practitioners and three physicians.

So those vacancies are continuing to exist and we need to keep working hard on doing that. Obviously, anything we do to enhance the scope of a professional in our health care system, I think it's a good piece of legislation. Anything that we do that turns around and reduces process time is a good piece of legislation. So I believe all of those things are important, that we focus on them.

Again, the idea for all of us in this House is basically to improve outcomes. I don't think anybody can disagree with that. Maximizing out the skill set of our health professionals will help us do that. Obviously, this change in legislation would appear to actually help move that forward and to make it happen in a faster way by having the college itself be part of that process. So all of that is quite good and nice to be able to see all that happening.

We do have some questions, as my colleague said, for the minister when we get to Committee. So I'm not going to belabour that point, other than to say, yes, we stand and support the introduction of this legislation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take a lot of time. I just want to stand once again for the record and just to offer my support for the bill.

Not to belabour the points that have been made, basically this bill provides an opportunity for the nurse association – registered nurses, of course – and their college, to have the ability now to look at best practices across the country, and, I guess, even globally, for that matter, and to be able to make recommendations to the minister, to the government about ways in which they can expand their scope of practice. And particularly, to look at things they can do in terms of prescribing medications for minor ailments and things of that matter.

Given the challenges we do have around health care in our province, certainly in certain rural areas, remote areas and so on where there may not always be doctors available and, certainly, as we move towards a model that I'm hearing that we're going to be moving towards, that doctors are asking for this whole team model, I think that this would be complementary to it. It's not something that's going to happen over night. As the minister said, this is not going to just simply give them the right, right now, to start expanding that scope of practice, but it certainly gives the college the right to be able to explore options and things they can do, to bring it to the minister to sign off on where and when it makes sense.

I have stood in this House many times over the years and talked about the fact that I think that one of the things we need to be doing to improve our health care system and to make it more efficient is that health practitioners at all levels need to be working to their maximum scopes of practice, where and when possible, and this is certainly a step in the right direction, and I will be supporting the bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services speaks now, he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to hear what sounds like fairly universal support for this. It's, as we've said, a simple matter of four words, but it does actually open up a whole dictionary of possibilities. With that, I'll kind of take my seat and look forward to Committee.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

It is the motion that Bill 16 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008. (Bill 16)

MR. SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a second time.

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

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill "An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 16)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that this House resolve

itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 16.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I should now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. 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 (Bennett): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 16, An To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008." (Bill 16)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, as we noted earlier, we would be supporting this, but we wanted some clarification on some of the particular approaches that have been used here. We know that the College of Registered Nurses are the ones who lobbied the minister to move this forward, and we commend them on that, but it doesn't indicate the changes that they're advocating for.

Can the minister share with us what they outlined, what increase in scope of work they were looking for?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for the question.

It's not so much necessarily an increase in work, it's almost like a codification of work they do. There is no acknowledged scope of practice that's written down around nurses or particular categories of nurses. They haven't come with a particular predetermination.

I think what they have done is bring to our attention that fact that other jurisdictions have moved through this kind of approach towards nurse practitioner prescribing, but that is not necessarily the only place they see themselves going with that. This is simply an enabling bit.

What they want to do after that, they will bring to us worked up and fleshed out and then we will consult and then consider.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I assume from that, that there hasn't been any consultation with the Registered Nurses' Union or the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association or the regional health authorities around the changing of the scope of work when it comes to RNs, at this point.

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

MR. HAGGIE: Again, I'm not trying to sound vague, honestly, but we don't really know what to talk to them about because we're not sure what the next piece under this would be.

This has been on the cards for some time. The RHAs are aware through discussions with the department and with the representatives of the college, particularly through Eastern Health because there is a lot of interaction there with

members of Eastern Health senior management team actually being active on the council.

The council of the college actually has representatives across all the RHAs and that's where they tend to go for their feedback. In the same way that we would reach out to our constituents on things, they reach out to theirs.

The issue around the NLMA is does the NLMA need to be involved in discussions about standards of nursing care in a particular area, which is well within the province of nursing? If and when they come back with something to do with prescribing, then obviously we would want to make sure and be part of consultations that would involve any of the current prescribers, and maybe any of the ones who may be hovering on the edges such as midwives, for example.

That's the next layer down. When the CRNNL comes back with a specific set of issues or an area they wish to examine, that would be the time for us to do the due diligence and that would be the kind of straw man you could go out to the stakeholder groups with.

CHAIR: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the minister for outlining that.

Can the minister, for my benefit and I think my colleagues on this side, take us through what he sees as not only the process, but the end result, I mean from a jurisdictional scan from other areas of how you would see the end result. I'm not asking you to tie in to anything but so we would understand how we're going to get to what is being proposed in the sense of changing some of the responsibilities or some of the abilities within the health system for RNs.

CHAIR: The Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: I use an example from my own practice. Essentially, if you want to focus on the area of nurse prescribing, for example, at the moment a patient with diabetes might go to a diabetic educator. This is an RN who has national certification, experience in the field and extra qualifications.

They have also now had some training in modifying insulin regimes. They're not allowed to prescribe that, so at that point they would then go to kind of get their version stamped by a physician, in the same way I mentioned about the stoma care piece. I had no idea whether the flange that they had measured and the diligence they'd done in recommending a particular prosthesis for mastectomy or for a flange for a stoma was the right one or not. I relied on their skills. They had 18 months of advanced education plus preceptorship, but yet I was signing the prescription because that was the authority that was needed to allow the patient to have that service provided.

The regional nurses on the coast, for example, back in my day – and I only speak of my day so it may well have changed – they would ring you to say I have somebody here who obviously looks like they have. You would sort of listen to them and agree with their suggestion that they dispensed, but it would be your prescription. They'd have the medication there on hand. The elements that would need to be put in place for that would need to come from the college to talk about education, to talk about prescribing training, to talk about pharmacology and that kind of thing.

A more granular example is O. R. first-assist nurses are trained how to close a skin wound at the end of a surgical procedure. They can't actually do that at the moment, even though they're trained to do it. This would allow them to do that, so the surgeon could be comfortable and move to the computer to type up their post-op orders. That would be something less for the surgeon to do and something more for the RN to do. Those are the kind of examples.

In the community, it would offer you another primary health care provided. For example, if you were to go to a more rural setting where they have a Category B emergency department where there's an RN on, if that RN had done the appropriate course, then – the majority of people who attend in the early evening, for example, are CTASed, are triaged as level 4 or 5. These are fairly minor issues that could be dealt with by a primary care provider.

I would see an RN who'd done the appropriate additional training being able to actually

diagnose, treat and prescribe, if need be, those CTAS 5s, for example. The person wouldn't have to come back again. They wouldn't have to be reassured and told to go and seek help elsewhere on another occasion.

It's about using the skills they have, enhancing – this might not be for every RN. Every RN is not going to be mandated to do this and have to prescribe. This would be a matter of professional development of personal interest. I'm sorry I've gone on a bit, but I'm not quite sure whether that's helpful or too bitty.

CHAIR: The Opposition House Leader.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

No, Minister, it does. It actually gives me a better understanding, and I would think my colleagues here, about some of the potential benefits that could be used through RNs being able to prescribe and do other interventions.

On that note, we've known the last number of years that pharmacists' responsibilities for prescribing have increased. We've also looked at the nurse practitioners who have been doing that, but the challenge has been their inability to bill to MCP. Will this be addressed in your issue now with the registered nurses?

CHAIR: The Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: MCP is a program to fund physician services. This will not address that. How we compensate people who take on new responsibilities is a separate issue. That would be where the collective bargaining piece would come in for those RNs that are represented in that arena. I'm open to having all those sorts of discussions.

In actual fact, I met with the president of the RNU last week and we did talk about potential ways of compensating nurse practitioners differently than we have at the moment. Those discussions are really just starting. This will not open up, of itself, any new models; this is simply an enabling piece of legislation. At some point later on we will have to address what the approach from the Nurses' Union might be around how that job has changed as a result of it,

what new or different compensation that would attract and you would want to do that.

Those are all discussions that really you can't even start until you see what kind of model they want to talk about.

CHAIR: The Member for Stephenville - Port at Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: I just want to follow up on the minister's comments on that particular point and ask him to follow up on that with the nurse practitioners, in particular. We know they recently got passed legislation which allowed them to practice privately, but it didn't allow them to bill. That's the big challenge is who do they bill.

I'm not so sure that it needs to be an MCP billing mechanism. I agree that there are other avenues that we could pursue. For example, right now in our province, people like physiotherapists, occupational therapists and others can actually bill third party. Right now, some of the frustrations of nurse practitioners are not being able to bill third party. When they're filling out medical examination forms, for example, for somebody who has a medical, they can't bill the insurance companies or they can't bill someone else.

There are things I think that we could do that would help in those situations, until we get to the point where nurse practitioners are able to bill in another type of way. I think in rural areas of the province especially, we're seeing a model where we're seeing the nurse practitioners in a lot of cases replace hard-to-recruit physicians, GP positions, especially in rural areas. We tend to have more success in keeping them long term. If there had to be some mechanism that we could find – but I understand what the minister just said about it.

The same way, I guess – at the end of the day, this is the first step for the RNs in terms of scope of practice. But if you're going to have them out there in those places, they may be able to find a different way of billing, as well, without using the MCP model.

I don't know if you have any comments.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm not sure, really, there is a single question I can answer there. It's more of a commentary, and it's been the subject of significant discussions recently. With anything that's this relatively simple on the face of it – what is it somebody once said? For every complex problem, there is a simple solution which is invariably wrong.

My challenge here is that people have come with solutions, rather than having actually identified specifically the problem. I think there's a bit of me-too in it: if they've got it, we should have it, too. The challenge is that what they want is not working for us either, and I think the Member opposite, from his own experiences, will have some views on the merits of a pure fee-for-service system in complex primary care. It simply doesn't do what it's supposed to do.

The discussion with the president of the RNU was how we can avoid those pitfalls if we start with a blank page. We didn't have a blank page with physicians; we inherited a system, pre-Medicare, which was basically based on that of a legal system, a fee per hour, that kind of billing arrangement.

I'm certainly quite happy to have those discussions, but, again, from the point of view of this piece of legislation about RNs, in particular, is a couple of layers further down. We don't know yet what they're going to come back with in terms of recommendations about RNs and additional roles. I think one of the great unspoken pieces here, that it will allow them actually to codify and set standards for, quite clearly, what they currently do, and I think that shouldn't be underplayed. I think everyone, quite naturally, is looking at what the new bit of this is, rather than building on the old.

Happy to have those discussions, and, again, bit of a vague answer, but it was kind of a vague question, more of a commentary in many respects.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Yes, I was trying to determine whether or not it's a legislative requirement that would allow nurse practitioners to bill third-party billing or whether it's a union negotiation that has to take place, and is there a difference, or how do we do it? Is it a legislative change we've got to make or is it a union negotiation?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Actually, in terms of third-party billing, we have no role in that sense because private insurers and the government don't really have a direct relationship. The relationship there, I think, would be for a bargaining agent on behalf of nurse practitioners to approach third party. Government would not necessarily have a role in that. What's happened in the case of physicians is that the third parties have copied what the arrangements were between physicians in government and used that as a basis.

For example, for uninsured services or for DND services, or for WorkplaceNL, physicians by and large have agreements that are based on those between the government and the medical association, for example. That's been the template.

We don't have a relationship with nurse practitioners, for example, who are not employed by a regional health authority. The vast majority of nurses, certainly the ones we would see wanting to go down this route in the first instance are actually RHA employees.

Our principle first point of contact around compensation would probably be through the collective bargaining process, but, again, this act is simply that umbrella piece of legislation that enables the college to say this matters to us, we think it's a great benefit to access and what do you think and who should we consult with before we come to an agreement about what you might sign off.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Third Party House Leader.

MR. J. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just two quick questions, if I may, I see that the nurses' union is in support of it, and I don't know if was totally answered here, but I'm just wondering what the position of the NLMA is on this piece of legislation and the changes, which seem to intrude, I guess, for lack of a better word, on some of their rights or their scope of practice?

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

MR. HAGGIE: At the risk of sounding maybe a bit snarky, I really don't want to, but this really doesn't enter the NLMA's bailiwick, as it's written at the moment. What will enter and will impact pharmacists and potentially midwives and other prescribers is, should the College of Registered Nurses come back with a recommendation that includes criteria around prescribing for RNs, that's the stage at which you would go to the NLMA and say, well, this is the proposal we've got, what do you think of it?

At the moment, nurses are simply asking to be able to regulate the scope of practice of nurses and I think the NLMA or the social workers would be very upset if I went to one of the others and said, well, what do you think social workers should be doing or what do you think physicians should be doing? So, it's just a little bit of the niceties of it, in a sense.

This is a nurse-driven initiative. It's one that fits completely with common sense, *The Way Forward* and what we've been trying hard to do over the last three to four years. So, we don't want to marginalize any of those other stakeholders, but the time is not yet right for us to go to them with something that makes sense.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Third Party House Leader.

MR. J. DINN: Just one final question. Thank you, Minister, for that answer.

I notice that registered nurses will not be acting alone, that they'll be acting as part of a team, including a doctor, a family physician, I'm just wondering about those patients, then, or those people who do not have a family physician, how

will that impact the nurses to prescribe, let's say, someone leaving a hospital, if there's no family physician to check on? That is an issue, that for many of the people in my district, they're facing – no family physician.

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

MR. HAGGIE: Yes, that's a very good question. Again, a simple kind of question, but a rather complicated answer.

According to the Harris Centre, 88 per cent of the population have access to what they call a regular primary health care provider. So, the issue, for example, of how a nurse would function, I think the key – and I would go back to it – is collaborative teams. That's where our thrust has been as a department and through the RHAs.

We don't want anybody working in a standalone office by themselves. We've got tools to make continuity and connectivity accessible to all with an electronic health record. Who that particular prescribing RN would have a relationship with, in terms of a physician, is not even being considered yet. That would be part of the proposal, really. We've certainly seen it work very well in Labrador where there are practitioners on the coast who have a relationship with a named physician in Goose Bay, for example. So that could be the link.

Going back many years in another jurisdiction, I remember one regional hub divided its area of responsibility into subareas, and depending on where you were during the working day you would call a named physician for that community. That's one possible model. At night, whoever was on call would take the calls from everywhere.

So, there are a whole variety of options, but the idea is that, once the system got up, a significant proportion of people, these would be very straightforward things, by and large; 80 per cent of the workload of most practitioners is relatively straightforward, and it's the 20 per cent that you would actually need to discuss. We need to make sure there's a mechanism for that. That hasn't been fleshed out yet, but the 80 per cent, again, that's the access piece. If you can

worry about only 20 per cent of your workload, rather than 100 per cent of your workload, when it's all done you're better off, but the key really is around primary health care collaborative set-ups where there would be accessible to you, either virtually or physically, a range of other practitioners.

So as a diabetic educator with prescribing skills, you would have access to a family doc or a nurse practitioner and they in turn would have access to an endocrinologist to deal with diabetes, or a wound care specialist in terms of a surgeon or a dermatologist. So it's about those networks.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Third Party House Leader.

MR. J. DINN: That was my ultimate question, this is definitely the final one now.

For those orphaned patients or the people whose physician just retired, I'm just curious then, would it preclude the nurse practitioner prescribing, let's say, antibiotics for someone leaving the hospital if they have no family doctor.

I'm looking here, not necessarily in the Labrador Coast but even in the St. John's area, where there are a number of physicians that retired and their patients have nowhere to go. That's what I'm looking at in terms of if it's collaborative, who do they answer to with regard to the hospital when these patients leave?

I look at some of the people who frequent or avail of the services at The Gathering Place, but there are a number of constituents who have no family physician. They have no one to go to. They might go to a walk-in clinic but if they're in hospital and they're prescribed a course of antibiotics, how does that impact a nurse's ability to prescribe if there's no doctor for them to go to?

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

MR. HAGGIE: The short answer is it won't, because if you're in a facility there is an arrangement by which facilities have access either on-site or virtually to physicians.

The issue of what so-called orphaned patients, we're looking at dealing with through separate mechanisms. Essentially, if a discharge, a certified nurse with prescribing authority has a patient in a facility and wants to send them home with a prescription, he or she will be able to do so.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have two questions – probably just one, depending on how you answer. It's just a clarification. We talk about, of course, to be a registered nurse you need to do an accredited program, you write the national certification exam and you're a registered nurse. It sounds easy, but I know it's a lot more difficult than that.

Now, in terms of setting the scope of work we spoke to, I think you mentioned that it's not mandated, it's more like professional development. My question is, if the college sets the scope of work, is it applicable to all RNs here or is it only to those who are looking for professional development?

CHAIR: The Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: The answer is both. Because if you are a registered nurse, this amendment alone allows the college to stipulate what your scope of practice is. If you wish to do advance certification or advanced training that includes prescribing, they in turn will also set the parameters around that in terms of what you have to study in a syllabus, what your requirements are and this kind of stuff.

I would see the low-hanging fruit here. If they wanted to go down this route quickly, the quickest would probably be something like wound care and enterostomal therapy, because it's very unusual for them to actually prescribe medications as such, except topical, but it's usually wound dressings and that kind of thing. It would be the least contentious, and a lot of physicians would be really delighted because it's an area they know nothing about and they're

countersigning someone else's prescription anyway.

The other piece around if there is a designation for a gastroenterology nurse and there's a limited formulary of drugs there, the college would prescribe what they could do in terms of diagnosis and investigation on what formulary, what list of drugs they would prescribe from there. The choice to go down that route and become a gastroenterology certificated nurse is entirely down to the individual concerned. Similarly, not every surgical RN goes and does wound care and enterostomal therapy. That's a choice and that would be up to the individual.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

MR. P. DINN: Thank you, and this is my last question, unlike the previous one who jumped two extra questions.

I'm just thinking on the Canada Free Trade Agreement and the Labour Mobility chapter. Of course, it talks to other jurisdictions receiving barrier set-up for mobility of different professions. LPNs are a good example, because in every jurisdiction it's a little different.

Based on this particular proposal, this bill, do you perceive there being any complaints through that in terms of what we do here in terms of changing our scope of work in relation to being observed or seen as creating barriers for other RNs?

CHAIR: The Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: The short answer is no. These, I would envisage, would be by and large national certification, but licensure is always a provincial jurisdiction and there's always a little bit of friction around the edges between individual licensing bodies in terms of requirements.

It's sometimes difficult for some of our RNs to get certain jobs in other jurisdictions because of the way their scopes of practice are done. I mean, for example, we have paramedics come here who are trained to a national level, but in Ontario they can't do a lot of the things they can do in Newfoundland and Labrador. So they love

coming here for 18 months after they've just got their qualifications.

CHAIR: Seeing no other questions, shall the motion carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

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?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Registered Nurses Act, 2008.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: Opposed?

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 16 without amendment?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those opposed?

Carried.

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

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

MR. CROCKER: I move, Mr. Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 16.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 16.

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, that the Committee rise and report Bill 16 carried without amendment, the Speaker returned to the Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 16 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole has reported that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 16 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I call Order 8, second reading of Bill 14.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just have to make sure I get my hour on the clock before I start.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move Bill 14, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000, seconded by the hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000." (Bill 14)

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, there are four technical amendments that we're making to the *Income Tax Act, 2000* today, and tax legislation is complex. I know that the Members of the Opposition received a briefing on this, but these amendments are not as complex.

Having said that, tax legislation is often reviewed internally, Mr. Speaker, by staff in the Department of Finance. It requires regular scrutiny to ensure that we're fully up to date, not only with provincial tax policy, but to eliminate any anomalies that may exist, to ensure that we're in line with federal legislation.

So the amendments that we're introducing today, Mr. Speaker, will clarify provincial legislation; eliminate, in two of the amendments, inconsistencies; and ensure that we are aligned with federal legislation.

I am open to any questions that Members of the Opposition may have regarding any of these amendments, Mr. Speaker.

With that, I'll open debate.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'll use the rest of the hon. minister's hour.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. WAKEHAM: As the minister indicates, this bill is highly technical in nature. The bill includes four types of changes. Two changes are the result of changes made federally. Another change closes a tax loophole which has been found, and the final change fixes an error which was created in 2016.

As I mentioned, the first two changes have to be made as a result of changes to the federal *Income Tax Act*. The minister, again, alluded to the highly technical nature of them. The first change ensures that the changes to income splitting resulted in the age amount tax credit. The second change ensures that all pension income types are considered for the non-refundable tax credit.

As I also mentioned, there is a change to repair a tax loophole. Officials in the Department of Finance noted that there currently exists a loophole where an individual who doesn't file taxes in this province, but received any amount of income in this province, could claim the child, the volunteer firefighter or the search and rescue tax credit. An amendment is being made to ensure that only individuals who file taxes in this province can claim these credits, thus closing the loophole.

The final change which is being made is to the foreign tax credit. In 2016, the corporate tax was changed from 14 per cent to 15 per cent. The foreign tax credit amount was not changed at this time; thus, the bill now makes the change, which was missed at that particular time.

So, again, highly technical in nature. I have a couple questions for the minister that I'll ask in Committee.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like the Member there also said, this is filling in some loopholes that were in the system but also getting us up to par with the feds. Also, fixing that slight error with foreign. For the most part, this is just a good review, good catching on the Department of Finance of the loophole that was there.

So, for the most part, this is everything that needs to be done when we're updating legislation and reviewing it, internally.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, if he speaks now, he'll close the debate.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for Stephenville - Port au Port and the Member for Labrador West for your comments. I know we're going into Committee now, and any questions that Members may have on these technical changes, I'll be happy to answer.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 14 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 14)

MR. SPEAKER: The bill has now been read a second time.

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

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 14)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 14.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I should now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. 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 (Bennett): Order, please!

We're now considering Bill 14, An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000." (Bill 14)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a couple of questions; the first one is on the income-splitting piece. Can the minister outline how the change will impact any seniors who receive revenue through income splitting?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you for the question.

Mr. Chair, this will ensure that as a result of a senior who's receiving the seniors' tax benefit, if by splitting the income allows them to receive the benefit, the income that they're splitting with the child would have to be counted as income on their taxes as well.

CHAIR: The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Does it impact anyone else or any other member or any other person in the province, tax wise?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: No, it's simply seniors receiving the seniors' supplement who receive it as a result of income splitting.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On the pension amount, it was noted in the briefing by officials of the department that nationally there are about 261 people who will be impacted by this change, so it's not a big amount. Do we know how many of those are in our province?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you.

We're under 2 per cent of the population, so I'm guessing 2 per cent of that number. It is very small.

CHAIR: The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Do we know actually what the impact is to those people?

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: No, I don't. It's not significant. There's a very, very small number of people that would be impacted, obviously, in this province. The impact is not significant, as I understand. Each filer's situation is different, so it's difficult to say exactly, unless you knew the calculations on that individual's filing.

CHAIR: The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: I want to talk about clause 2 now, the tax credit loopholes. I'm just wondering if the minister can outline how your department determined that this loophole actually existed.

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: Absolutely. There was one individual who lives outside the province who was a volunteer firefighter, I believe was the circumstance, but in another province, but because they had income from this province, claimed the volunteer tax credit in this province.

The way the legislation is written it could be interpreted to allow people who are living outside the province, but for some reason had an income in this province, didn't do the volunteer work in this province, but could claim a credit as a result. It's meant to close that loophole.

CHAIR: Before we move on to clause 2, are there any other questions about clause 1?

Hearing none, shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against?

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. WAKEHAM: Yes, first of all I want to congratulate the people at the Department of Finance for picking it up, and then confirm that there was actually one person who did take advantage of it.

I don't have anything else on clause 2; I do have one on clause 3. Do I wait until —?

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Chair, I don't mind. I mean (inaudible) sort of omnibus.

CHAIR: Do we have leave to go through the remainder of clauses?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

CHAIR: Okay, go ahead.

MR. WAKEHAM: I just have one more question and that is the foreign tax credit. I just wonder if the minister can outline how the department determined that this change needed to be made.

CHAIR: The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

MR. OSBORNE: The foreign tax credit, I guess they picked up; it's listed in the legislation as 14 per cent. The change has previously been made that it's supposed to be 15 per cent, but it's not actually written, so we're just simply changing to correct that error. It's being charged at 15 per cent, but it's still written as 14 per cent.

CHAIR: Any other questions?

Hearing none, shall clauses 2 to 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 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: An Act To Amend The Income Tax Act, 2000.

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 Deputy House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: I move, Mr. Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 14.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 14.

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.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

The Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 14 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and directed him to report Bill 14 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall this bill be read a third time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Deputy House Leader for such a great afternoon of legislation. He did a great job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Considering the hour of the day, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that we do now adjourn.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to accept this motion?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House is now adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow.

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