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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA*

Thursday

March 26, 2020

*Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the House of Assembly did not sit according to the Parliamentary Calendar in 2020. The Assembly adjourned on March 12, 2020, and did not sit again until March 26, 2020, to hear urgent matters. The House then adjourned to the call of the Chair.*

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

**MR. SPEAKER (Reid):** Admit strangers.

Order please!

We're going to get started. It is a bit of a – well, it is a very unusual situation that we find ourselves in, but I want to thank all parties for agreeing for us to have this different sitting, different rules and different seating arrangements.

We also have exemption from the order to not have more than 10 people at a gathering and we've taken precautions as advised by medical professionals in terms of social distancing in this House and the way we operate here. I'm going to table this exemption for Members.

While I'm doing that, I just want to thank the Table Officers of the House, the Sergeant-at-Arms and people in the Broadcast Centre and Hansard will be recording this later on. Members of the media are here so we're trying to, as much as possible, keep with the principle of openness and transparency in terms of what happens in the House. Having said that, we're going to proceed with the session.

### **Orders of the Day**

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, welcome to this adapted House and thank you for everyone for being here today. As anyone who's watching, it's modified. We have maintained all the requirements from the Public Health orders: social distancing, physical distancing, making sure that we have plenty of

sanitizer available to us and minimizing the number of people in the House.

I thank the Table Officers and you, Mr. Speaker, for your help during this very difficult time. The 10 of us who are here today to represent the 40 of the House – this is the minimum requirement, of course, for the House of Assembly – we will do our utmost to represent the people of the province in making sure the legislation that goes to the House today is in their best interests. I know all of us take our role and responsibility very seriously.

My colleagues who are home, I know that there are a number of Members of the House of Assembly who are likely tuning in this afternoon. They've all had the opportunity for briefing today as well on the bills and the bills have been presented to them.

Mr. Speaker, I know many of them may be watching today. I want to thank them for their hard work in their communities and in their districts. I can tell you that they've been working very, very hard trying to disseminate information, assist as possible in making sure that everything that can be done and should be done is being done. I thank them for those efforts. It's been long days, long nights and big effort on behalf of a lot of people.

To my colleagues who are here in spirit, but perhaps watching on television, thank you for what you are doing. I certainly thank those that are able to join us today in this hon. House.

Mr. Speaker, I give notice and by leave, and seconded by the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, move the following motion: That notwithstanding any Standing Order of this House, that Routine Proceedings of the House of Assembly are suspended for this sitting day and the Orders of the Day provided for in this motion shall be dealt with in the manner provided by it; that notice of motion is deemed to have been given on the following bills: the Interim Supply Act, 2020, No. 2, Bill 29; the Interim Supply Act, 2020, No. 3, Bill 30; An Act To Amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957, Bill 31; the Loan Act, 2020, Bill 32; An

Act Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic, Bill 33; and that the bill, An Act Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic, Bill 33, shall be deemed to be read a first time; and that notice shall be deemed to have been given under Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Thursday, March 26, 2020.

I so move this motion, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Was there a seconder for that motion?

**MS. COADY:** Yes. The Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

Motion has been moved and seconded.

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.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to mention that while the galleries are closed and the Speaker's gallery is closed, we do have media here today. I thank them for their hard work during the last number of days and I'm sure in the weeks ahead. I've noticed them working around the clock and I appreciate, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, their efforts of keeping everyone informed and for their dedication to that task, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, and I think there are members in the gallery, so thank you very much for doing that.

Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper Bill 32, the Loan Act, 2020.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are strange times, indeed. I thank all of my colleagues for being here, in particular those that are part of the all-party Committee dealing with COVID. I think that has been an exercise that has worked very well in dealing with these strange times and what the province is dealing with. I commend all Members of that Committee for their dedication and what they bring to the table, their insight on that particular Committee.

Mr. Speaker, I know that brevity is the order of the day because we have a number of bills to deal with, so I won't tie up much time. I'll just speak very briefly about this particular piece of legislation, Mr. Speaker. It gives the province the ability to borrow. We will be borrowing a little more than we had anticipated borrowing.

I'm also very thankful, Mr. Speaker, for our Table Clerks because they always keep us on track.

Mr. Speaker, I did neglect to put this into Committee, so I give notice that I will move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider certain resolutions relating to the Loan Act 2020, Mr. Speaker.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I should now leave the Chair.

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 32, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province.

A bill, "An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province." (Bill 32)

Resolution

Be it resolved:

That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$2,000,000,000.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I will get directly to what we're doing here. We are borrowing money to allow for the operations of the province. This is normal procedure, we do it every year, except of course in those years where we have surpluses. I would like to see more years with surpluses, but that's not always the case in our province. It allows the province to meet its day-to-day financial commitments to respond to revenue volatility.

We know, based on the oil price war between Saudi and Russia, that there's considerable volatility today with oil prices. We're trending in the \$26-\$27 range for oil. We know that there are additional expenses as a result of COVID-19, Mr. Chair. There are some areas where we'll save some money in terms of travel over the next three months. For example, as departments are not operating at normal, travel has been suspended until we get beyond COVID.

The areas where we'll save money are considerably less than the areas where we'll have additional expenses. Mr. Chair, we have a number of initiatives where we're going to be putting forward to try and help businesses or individuals and so on get through this, so that when we come out the other end of COVID-19,

our economy is impacted to a lesser degree than it would be without those initiatives.

We also have revenue concerns. Every conceivable source of revenue in the province will be impacted, Mr. Chair, in terms of the economy slowdown we'll see from business tax, payroll tax, income, retail sales and other taxes that are due to the province; changes that the federal government made in terms of student loan guarantees and our province signing on to those; changes that we've seen the federal government make in terms of deferral of the payment of income tax.

We know that oil revenue is going to be significantly reduced until oil prices get back to normal. Oil production is still happening. At any day, Mr. Chair, the oil companies may decide to suspend production based on where COVID-19 is going and how that's going to have an impact. So the loan bill is higher this year than what we would normally expect, but it's to deal, essentially, with the unknown.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**MR. CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Opposition House Leader.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Indeed, it's an honour to stand in this House again and speak; it's in challenging times. It's in a unique situation that we're here. I do welcome my colleagues back.

To the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, while we all realize there are challenging times happening right now and probably in the near future, we are a very resilient group of individuals; 500 years ago we proved that, the 500 years since we've proven it again and again and again and 500 years from now we'll prove it again.

We will get through this. There are unique things that have to be done. We've come a long way in just a couple of weeks in collaborative approaches to addressing the challenges that people have in our communities, in all parties putting partisan politics aside to ensure that the best things are done for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. So hats off to the

political will to do that, but, particularly, to those health care workers, to every other civil servant or every other individual out there who provides services to people to ensure they have products that they need, that they're kept safe and that things continue to move at a pace that ensures everybody's healthy as we go through this.

I do want to reiterate what the Premier said, what the Minister of Health has said and what the chief medical officer has said: please be safe. The best way to do that, if you don't have to be out in the public, if you don't have to have contact with people, please don't. If there are issues that you are dealing with, adhere to all the regulations and all the best practices to keep safe.

Mr. Chair, with that, again, we realize that government has to function, even though it may be a challenging approach to how we're going to do it, the monies need to be put in play so people are still paid, we can still address particular issues and we still have the flexibility to ensure, as we divert from one priority to another, the monies are there to do it.

We fully support the minister's endeavours and the government's endeavours here in this House of Assembly to borrow the \$2 billion to ensure we get over this challenging time and that our province gets an opportunity to serge forward.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**MR. CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

This is a defining point in our generation. We have unprecedented problems facing us today and I think that coming together here is the right thing to do. We are all adhering to the guidelines. We are doing the right things to keep the public safe.

As government, in addition to keeping our public safe, we need to keep our finances safe and we need to ensure that there is an economy and a society that is going to be viable once we make our way through this hardship.

The primary role of government is not to find business opportunities or generate revenue; the primary role of government is to even out ups and downs in an economy. When we reach a point in our economy where we're in a recession or we're in difficult times, it's the time for government to step in and smooth that time. Then, when we see boom times, government is also smoothing but also saving for those bad times. What we're seeing now is a very real realization that we are in a very difficult time, and it is time for government to step up and ensure the safety and security of our people.

In invoking this loan bill, we are enabling our government to provide the supports that are necessary to help everyone make our way through this in as best as we possibly can. For that reason, I'm happy to say that myself and my caucus do support this bill.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's always a pleasure to be in this hon. House and to represent my constituents, the people of Mount Pearl - Southlands. I wish it were under different circumstances, however.

Before speaking to the bill, I do want to certainly throw out a big bouquet to the Premier, to our Minister of Health and Community Services, in particular, and to Dr. Fitzgerald. I think they have done an absolutely stellar job in keeping the public informed and offering some very good advice.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. LANE:** I wish more people would take that good advice. Unfortunately, that's not the happening in all cases, but I do think they have done a great job in managing us through this situation thus far. I thank them for that.

Also, I think we would all be remiss if we did not recognize and thank all of our front-line workers, in particular those within our health

care system that are dealing with this. Thankfully, we haven't seen much pressure in terms of our actual acute care facilities at this point. God willing, that's not going to happen, but if it does, I know they will be prepared. I thank them for their service.

Certainly, for all the other people who have to go out and work. When we think about people that are working in our grocery stores, as an example, they are, in a lot of cases, the unsung heroes in all of this. It's not a group of individuals that normally we think of, because we go about our day-to-day lives and life goes on and we take a lot of these for granted, but I mean these people are literally at the front lines providing essential services, whether it be food or medications in the case of our pharmacists, our truck drivers that are bringing goods into the province. All the people who are, what we would now deem essential, I think it's very important that we recognize what they're doing for us all. I certainly thank and commend them all. I hope that they all stay safe. God willing, they don't have to deal with the effects of this virus.

I would also be remiss, Mr. Chair, as well, if I didn't mention – and I'm only going to bring this up once just for Hansard, for the record. I just want to say that I do appreciate – I think all Members talked about the collaborative approach that's been taken with this corona virus issue and the all-party Committee. I think that's wonderful. I think it's something that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have been calling on all parties to do for a long time. I'm glad it's happening.

I just want to say for the sake of Hansard and for the public record that this all-party Committee excluded the independent Members, so myself and the Member for Bay of Islands have not been included in any of this. I'm very disappointed that happened. I'm not going to mention it anymore, but I wanted to put it on the record.

In terms of speaking to the actual bill itself, we're going to be granting the ability for the government to borrow \$2 billion. I understand the necessity of that. Services have to continue; government has to go on. We have needs. We have perhaps greater needs than ever under this

current situation. Obviously, I'm going to support the bill from that perspective.

I do want to point out though, that while it's important that services continue, while we recognize the challenges that we have in dealing with this virus – and there are going to be extra expenditures, there's no doubt about that; as the minister said, there will be some savings but the expenditures will probably outweigh the savings in the normal course of business – I think it's still important that we all recognize that we're borrowing an additional \$2 billion, with a B, again this year, on top of what we've been borrowing year over year over year. I'm not putting it on the government. I'm not. I say for the record: I'm not. They're doing what they have to do. I appreciate that, I really do.

The point is once this is all over and we get through this, we have to really start realizing and buckle down to dealing with the huge year-over-year deficits and the huge debt, whether it be our provincial debt, whether it be what's going to be accrued through Muskrat Falls and the concerns and so on.

We've seen the Auditor General's report that came out a while ago about our provincial debt. I have to be honest with you, it concerns me. I'm sure it concerns us all. I know we're focusing on this virus right now, but in the back of our minds this is something that we have to be thinking about as we continue to borrow more and more money.

With that, I would say to the Minister of Finance – who I have the utmost respect for, and I will say that for the record, 100 per cent, never a question, never will be. But I will say to the minister, that as we go through this exercise of borrowing this money – and I realize the extra expenditures related to the COVID and related to the fact that oil has dropped and the devastating impact that's having on our budget, we cannot, and I'm sure he would agree – we cannot simply be in a mindset that says because we've got these additional expenditures we're just going to borrow more money and write more cheques that we can't cash.

I think it's important that at this time, more than ever, we start looking at some of the expenditures. And we have to ask ourselves, can

we find savings? If we're going to incur additional expenses because of the COVID virus, are there things we could be doing to save money in order to avoid borrowing more money? I think that's important that we need to get ourselves there.

I'll give one example – and this has nothing to do with any particular program, any minister, any department, it doesn't; I swear, it doesn't, but I did see an announcement, I think it was yesterday, maybe the day before. There was an announcement by the minister responsible for fisheries and agriculture – I forget the exact name of the department – and this is not on him, either, I'm just saying. An announcement about, I think it was \$500,000 for the community gardens, as an example.

Now, I got nothing against community gardens. Church of the Good Sheppard in my district has a community garden. I sent it to them, so if they could upgrade their gardens and apply for their share of the pot. I did, that's my job as their MHA. I'm not against community gardens, I'm not against that concept, but given the fact we're going to have these additional expenditures – I use that as an example – and going to borrow \$2 billion, with a B, then you have to question, maybe, for this year only – I'm not saying cancel the program in totality, but maybe for this year only, should we be spending that money?

That's just one little thing. I'm not picking on that program, it's just that happened to be an announcement that came out yesterday that just stuck in my mind. I'm sure there are all kinds of other ones. I'm not talking about cutting essential services or cutting jobs or anything like that, I'm just saying that this year in particular – we have these additional expenditures and we're borrowing \$2 billion – that we have to be mindful. It cannot just simply be business as usual; we've always done it so we're going to keep doing it.

If we can get an extra year out of our fleet, for argument's sake, maybe we should. If we can defer a capital project until the following year – we're not going to do it this year; we just can't afford to do it this year – maybe that's what we need to do.

But simply saying we were planning on this amount of money, we were going to borrow X amount, now because of the anticipated expenses related to this COVID outbreak it's going to cost us more. If the automatic response is we'll just borrow more money – and I'm not saying that was the thought process; I'm just putting it out there. If that was the automatic response, then I don't think it should be. I think it should be how can we find savings to divert those savings to pay for the additional expense.

That's the only comment I make on it. Other than that, I understand it has to be done. I'm going to vote for it, I'm going to support it and I thank the minister for bringing this forward.

The other thing I want to mention is my colleague for Bay of Islands – because we did have a discussion about these bills. He's not here and he needs to be represented. His people need to be represented as well. He said to mention to the minister given where we are financially and everything else, this is the time to start digging into the ABCs. The time has come to really dig into agencies, boards and commissions and start finding real savings in those operations so that we have the money to pay for all this stuff.

That was something that government did commit to do. I know they've done some things. I know the minister has done some things with them, but there's a lot more I think that could possibly be done, a lot more scrutiny that needs to occur so we can find savings so we don't have to keep borrowing more and more money every time an emergency comes up.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Seeing no other speakers, shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, “An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province.” (Bill 32)

**CLERK (Barnes):** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 through 7 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 7 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 7 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 Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province.

**CHAIR:** Shall the long 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 resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Government House Leader.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 32.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 32.

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

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):** The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.



**MR. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report the resolution passed without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the resolution be now read a first 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:** Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$2,000,000,000.

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the resolution now be read a second 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:** Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

That it is expedient to bring in a measure to authorize the raising from time to time by way of loan on the credit of the province a sum of money not exceeding \$2,000,000,000.

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill, the Loan Act, 2020, Bill 32, and I further move the said bill be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province, Bill 32, and that the said bill now be read a first 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.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province," carried. (Bill 32)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province. (Bill 32)

On motion, Bill 32 read a first time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 32 be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill 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.'

Carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province. (Bill 32)

On motion, Bill 32 read a second time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 32 be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 32 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 Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province. (Bill 32)

**MR. SPEAKER:** The 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 Authorize The Raising Of Money By Way Of Loan By The Province," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 32)

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Bill 31, An Act To Amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Ways and Means to consider certain resolutions and a bill, An Act To Amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve into a Committee of the Whole.

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 debating the related resolution, Bill 31, An Act To Amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957." (Bill 31)

Resolution

**CLERK:** That it is expedient to bring in a measure further to amend The Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957, to provide for the advance of loans to and the guarantee of the repayment of bonds or debentures issued by or loans advanced to certain corporations.

**CHAIR:** Shall the resolution carry?

The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

A little bit of levity before we continue with the serious business of the day. Somebody can retire from the House, but the House never retires from the person. I got a message from my mother that she's tuned in and watching us.

Mr. Chair, this is another important act. We have to provide this loan guarantee to the Stephenville Airport by March 31 or they go in default. I actually met with the Stephenville Airport a couple of years ago prior to approving the loan guarantee at that point and talked to them about some of the things they're doing in trying to secure additional business.

They've attracted a number of Hercules aircraft for refueling. In fact, I know during Snowmageddon the Canadian troops that eventually made their way to St. John's, many of them actually landed in Stephenville. It is a secondary landing site in the event an international flight runs into trouble, Mr. Chair.

It's important that we provide this loan guarantee to the Stephenville Airport. It's the same amount that we've provided for a number of years, but it allows them to continue their operation. I know they have the support of the Town of Stephenville and they are looking at ways of expanding and bringing additional business to the Stephenville Airport.

Mr. Chair, I'm supporting this bill that I'm bringing forward today.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Opposition House Leader.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll just stand for a second to support this bill.

When I was minister a number of years ago, I had the privilege of meeting with the airport authority and looking at the asset. It's a very valuable asset. Unfortunately, the last number of years there's been some struggles around the airline industry in attracting continuous tenants there, but you have a very vigilant group out there. You have the support of not only the Town of Stephenville but surrounding communities itself.

It's a very valuable asset that we shouldn't give up. We should be able to keep supporting it because no doubt as they reach out and start to secure more tenants it will be an economic driver, not only for that region, but for Newfoundland and Labrador.

We, on the Opposition side, fully support this and we wish the airport authority and the Stephenville region all the best in making this a viable entity.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Third Party Leader.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

To jump off on that, I have heard – and I stand to be corrected – that Stephenville Airport is also an alternative for the space shuttle landing. That is another very good reason to keep it open.

This being a loan guarantee, if this is a very simple thing that we can do to help sustain the infrastructure in that particular region, who already has enough hardship in addition to COVID-19, in addition to everything else that's been happening, I think this is the right thing to do and I fully support it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I, too, will support this bill. It's just a loan guarantee. Obviously, as everybody has already said, we do have a valuable piece of infrastructure to the province. Certainly, we know there are challenges there and have been challenges there over the years, but hopefully we get to a point, in the province, when things turn around. We know we have lots of opportunity with all of the oil prospects out there and so on that we have confidence that things will turn around at some point in time. Hopefully, we will see, when that time comes, that it's going to pay off for us all, for the province as a whole.

Certainly, even right now, it is still providing that service for people in that part of the province. The town is committed, all the players are committed, so we're just simply supporting it.

The Member for Bay of Islands just wanted me to, I guess, inquire with the minister – perhaps the minister responsible for business – was there anything at all tied to this renewal or is there simply some separate plans that he has heard about which has to do with, apparently, some consultant bring hired from Manitoba or whatever to come out and do whole review of operations. I'm just wondering if there's any validity to that, what it is they're actually doing, who's involved, what the price tag might be.

There were some talks it could be a couple of hundred thousand or more for that. This was a question that the Member for Bay of Islands, on his behalf, asked if I would bring it up at this time to the minister and ask the minister to just inform us all what's going on at Stephenville Airport as it relates to trying to turn things around and improve situations.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

**MR. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. He is correct. There are some inner workings that are happening in the background of this that are not hinged upon the loan guarantee but are part and parcel of when the loan guarantee is affirmed here today, we hope, that they can move forward and work towards bringing in whether it be a consultant from Winnipeg to look at this. We haven't received the final proposal on that yet, but that will be coming in shortly, from my understanding of working with the town as well as Stephenville Airport Corporation.

I hope that answers your question.

**CHAIR:** Seeing no other speakers.

Shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** 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 Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957.

**CHAIR:** Shall the long 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 resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move the Committee rise and report the resolution, Bill 31.

**CHAIR:** The motion is the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 31.

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

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 hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

**MR. BENNETT:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Ways and Means have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Ways and Means reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred, have adopted a certain resolution and recommends that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the bill now be read a first 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:** That it is expedient to bring in a measure further to amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957, to provide for the advance of loans to and the guarantee of the repayment of bonds or debentures issued by or loans advanced to certain corporations.

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that the bill now be read a second 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:** That it is expedient to bring in a measure further to amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957, to provide for the advance

of loans to and the guarantee of the repayment of bonds or debentures issued by or loans advanced to certain corporations.

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957, Bill 31, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the bill now be read a first time.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, that the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board have leave to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957." (Bill 31)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act To Amend The Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957. (Bill 31)

On motion, Bill 31 read a first time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 31 be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the bill now be read a second 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 Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957. (Bill 31)

On motion, Bill 31 read a second time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 31 be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 31 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 Loan And Guarantee Act, 1957. (Bill 31)

**MR. SPEAKER:** The 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 Loan and Guarantee Act, 1957," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 31)

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Interim Supply Act 2020, No. 2, Bill 29.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wish to advise the House that I have received a message from Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All rise, please.

The message from the Lieutenant-Governor:

As the Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit a request to appropriate sums required for the Public Service of the Province for the year ending 31 of March 2021, by way of Interim Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the Constitution Act, 1867, I recommend this request to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lieutenant-Governor

Please be seated.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move that the message from Her Honour, as well as Bill 29, be referred to a Committee of Supply.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The motion is that the message, together with a bill, be referred to a Committee of Supply and that I do now leave the Chair.

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 (Stoodley):** Order, please!

We are considering the related resolution and Bill 29, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

### Resolution

Be it resolved:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$200,000,000.

**CHAIR:** Shall the resolution carry?

The Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

This particular bill today – generally, when we do Interim Supply there is an amount that goes into contingency in the budget and we generally wait for the budget, but the contingency amount in budget last year – I think was \$22 million, if memory serves me correctly. We didn't use all of that. Some years we don't use any contingency. Some years we use some.

Last year, I think the rainstorms and so on, on the West Coast and the damage caused by those and there was an issue with Child, Youth and Family Services where they required some funding for children in care.

Madam Chair, the reason for this particular funding this year, and the reason it's not in the initial Interim Supply, we didn't anticipate what was happening with COVID. This particular funding at this particular time gives government

the ability to provide funding unforeseen at this particular time. In other cases, we know where the funding is going if there are initiatives already announced. Those initiatives are discussed by the all-party Committee.

The commitment that I've given the all-party Committee, because this is such a large amount of money this year – the intent outside of the initial or the original amount of contingency generally on an annual basis, \$20 million or \$25 million. The fact that this is considerably more, the commitment I've given to all Members of the all-party Committee, and it's good to have it on record today, is that if we're going to use this fund which is intended for COVID purposes and initiatives through government for COVID, that I would inform the all-party Committee of any amounts.

What could this be used for? We have no idea at this particular stage what some of it will be required for in dealing with COVID, but if one of the health authorities have to hospitalize large numbers of people and need additional equipment or additional resources or additional funding for that purpose, that's what this funding is for. We certainly hope we won't need to use this funding that's put in contingency, but the reason we're putting it there is for the unforeseen.

Madam Chair, this, I think, is very important. We've discussed this with the Official Opposition and the Third Party. I apologize to the independent Member; in hindsight, I should have called and told you that we were putting this amount forward as well. So I'll apologize for that in advance.

The reason for this is to deal with COVID. Again, what I've already indicated, some of this we already know where it's going, but a much smaller amount, but for the unforeseen as well.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR:** The Opposition House Leader.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, it's an honour to stand here as we talk about how we financially ensure that people are safe and that we have enough money to put



programs in play and continue the province moving forward.

As the minister has noted, contingency funds are normally much smaller than this amount, but as we're preparing here and we don't know what the uncertainties are in our society right now, we want to ensure that there's enough flexibility for government to be able to ensure programs and services continue and if there's an unfortunate need in one area or if there's something that can alleviate some of the stresses and some of the health concerns for our citizens in another area, that the flexibility is there, that it's not an encompassing process to be able to transfer money in that particular area.

I do remember a decade ago, Igor – people can remember that – that we weren't prepared to have enough money there and there was a mad scramble to be able to do it. Now, knowing that there's enough money there in case of a critical situation that we have presently right now, that we have that flexibility to do it, and the fact that minister has reassured us publicly now, too, that this money will only be used when necessary and then it will all be taken part and parcel of the budget process when we get back to some normality in the House of Assembly.

We on the Opposition wholeheartedly support this and we look forward to hopefully never having to use it because we get over this hump without too many challenges around having to draw down our money, but it's there to ensure people are safe and healthy.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Ms. Chair.

Thank you to presenting this. I'm not at all surprised by the \$200-million amount. This is not unprecedented. Looking back to last year, we had more than \$300 million in contingency, I believe, because we had our payout of our severances. I'm not sure that went in contingency or not –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. COFFIN:** Wasn't contingency, I'm sorry, but it was a large sum that was designated for a particular purpose, so this is not unusual.

Even thinking this through a little bit, of some of what the unforeseen things were, some of the foreseen things could be something as simple as needing to plant seedlings or to have an expanded transfer of plants, because we could potentially have a disruption in our fresh produce. These things need to be considered. We need to have ample opportunity and ability to respond to these needs.

I will offer a little bit of caution. Within this \$200 million, if there's money there that's going to be used to help alleviate stress on businesses or on individuals, I think we need to do that with some caveats as well. Certainly, there have been examples in the past where we have subsidized businesses for a variety of different reasons, but some of those have not come back to the benefit of people of Newfoundland of Labrador. I can give an example of a \$1-million either grant or loan given to a company who then moved their headquarters out of Newfoundland and Labrador. So I don't think that's a prudent move.

Now, given the guarantees that I have from the Minister of Finance that this money will be allocated and accounted for appropriately to all Members of our joint panel – and I assume everyone in our House of Assembly – I feel quite comfortable that this money will be used prudently and properly. I have no hesitation to allow this bill to pass.

Thank you very much.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Madam Chair.

I say to the Minister of Finance I accept your apology. I'm sure the Member for Bay of Islands, who is home watching this, does as well.

Madam Chair, obviously, once again, I'm going to be supporting this. I wasn't aware it was

coming, the same as some other Members probably would be, but I am now. I understand the rationale. We need to have a contingency in place.

I just want to take the opportunity to continue to drive home the message though. I'm sure I'm not saying anything that the Minister of Finance is not thinking in the back of his mind, and probably trying to do anyway, but I just want to emphasize the fact this is a contingency fund.

In my past life in the municipal world – I'll just go back to that – I think about change orders. Every time you'd do a project, you'd put in money for contingencies and change orders and so on. You could rest assured I would always say, b'ys, if we're going to put in a couple of million dollars here for contingencies and change orders, it's just as well to add it on to the price of the project, because every last dime is going to be spent.

So, again, I just throw that out there as caution. I know the minister is responsible and he's going to do the right thing – I'm not suggesting otherwise – but before we start dipping into contingency money, let's try to find savings from within and divert money from other programs. Not essential services, again – I'm not talking about slashing jobs, none of that old foolishness, I'm not talking about that, but ways that we can divert, whether it be deferring certain things or whatever so that we can find the savings within our existing budgets so that we don't have to be spending and borrowing more money that we don't have. I think it's important that we continue to be of that mindset as we proceed.

The only other point I would make, I did hear the minister indicate that there was a commitment made to the all-party Committee that as money is spent for these contingencies, which would be specific to the COVID virus situation, that the Committee Members would be informed of those expenditures, what they would be spent on and so on. Given the fact that myself and the Member for Bay of Islands are not part of that group, I would ask that we would also be – if the minister is going to send the Committee information about what money is being spent on COVID, then myself and the Member for Bay of Islands have the right to know, and the people

we represent also have the right to know. So I would ask that we be included in this email list.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Seeing no other speakers, shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 through 4 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 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:** The Schedule.

**CHAIR:** Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

**CHAIR:** Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

**CLERK:** An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

**CHAIR:** Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, long 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 resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

**CHAIR:** The hon. Government House Leader.

**MS. COADY:** Madam Chair, thank you for leading us through this Interim Supply.

I move that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 29 carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 29 carried without amendment.

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

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 hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and directed her to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that the resolution now be read a first time.

All those in favour of the motion?

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$200 million.

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the resolution be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the resolution now be read a second 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:** Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$200 million.

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, for leave to introduce the Interim Supply bill, Bill 29, and I further move that said bill be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the bill should now be read a first time.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, that the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain

Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service,” carried. (Bill 29)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 29)

On motion, Bill 29 read a first time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill now be read a second 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 Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 29)

On motion, Bill 29 read a second time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill now be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBER:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 29)

**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 Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 29)

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I’ll call from the Order Paper, Bill 30, Interim Supply Act, 2020 No. 3.

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Her Honour the Lieutenant-Governor no sooner got home but she came back with another message. I wish to inform the House that I have a message from Her Honour.

**MR. SPEAKER:** All rise.

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor:

As Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I transmit a request to appropriate sums required for the Public Service of the Province by the year ending 31 March 2021, by way of Interim Supply, and in accordance with the provisions of sections 54 and 90 of the Constitution Act, 1867, I recommend this request to the House of Assembly.

Sgd.: \_\_\_\_\_  
Lieutenant-Governor

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** I move, seconded by the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains, that the message, along with Bill 30, be referred to a Committee of the House.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that this resolution be referred to a Committee of the House.

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 the related resolution and Bill 30, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

### Resolution

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service

for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$1,971,702,600.

**CHAIR:** Shall the resolution carry?

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

**MR. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We passed, a couple of weeks ago in the Legislature, Interim Supply for three months. This here will extend it six months. The schedule on the back with the additional amounts, which will reflect the original amount in the initial bill for a six-month Interim Supply. All of these amounts are similar, when you add Interim Supply one, I guess, and Interim Supply two, adds up to the amounts we saw on the six-month Interim Supply.

The reason for this, Mr. Chair, quite honestly, we don't know if we're going to be back here before June to debate the budget. We're not sure how COVID is going to unfold, what the impacts are going to be.

You see 10 Members here today spread out throughout the House for social distancing. We're not sure when we're going to be back here to debate the budget and if Interim Supply is needed to be extended – that's the intention of this today – to ensure that government operations can continue; the important work that our health care workers are doing through this global crisis can continue; that other work by other government agencies and departments can continue; that individuals continue to receive their paycheques; and those on income support continue to receive their benefits.

Mr. Chair, I will admit myself, when the department initially asked for a six-month Interim Supply – I spoke to this in the Legislature prior to passing Interim Supply and indicated that even I didn't fully appreciate at the time whether or not we needed six months, and the fact that we do. Today, we're here and we do.

It's no reflection on anybody really, because two weeks ago we didn't have any cases in the province. A week ago we had four, and today the numbers are considerably, considerably higher than that. We can anticipate over the next

number of days that the numbers continue to increase.

I'm not sure, I'm guessing by now that the update has been given, so people in the province know we're up to 80 cases today. I anticipate tomorrow that number will be higher and the day after will be higher again. What I will implore on people throughout the province is to stay home. As the prime minister has said, go home and stay home. That's the best way we can fight the spread of COVID, Mr. Chair.

Until we can get beyond this and we see no further cases in the province, we're not sure when we'll sit in this Legislature again to pass the budget. This Interim Supply guarantees that the services of government will continue, should we have to go beyond June before we're back sitting in the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair, and it's indeed an honour again to speak.

This is about reflecting on, ensuring that, as the minister had said, our valued civil servants and everybody out there and all the people that we contract work with have the ability to be paid. They still have to maintain their financial security and ensure that their staff are taken care of and all the necessary resources are very valuable.

The minister is right. A few weeks ago when we stood in this House, when it was first proposed around a unique approach to interim funding, a six-month proposal, nobody on the Opposition side agreed with it at the time and we actually made an amendment that was supported by the government to pull it back to the three-month concept. Then it wasn't about COVID-19. That wasn't the big thought process then, from a perspective here, it was worrying about the uncertainty from a political environment. We could have been, in the next couple of weeks, into an election because there were changes about to happen.

The world has changed, and I say that because that's what we have to be cognizant of. Priorities take preference over politics, and that's where we are right now. We're here about the priority of the safety of our residents and the security of this province.

We, on this side, and my colleague the Member for Torngat Mountains, who is joining me in the House to debate the legislation here today, is cognizant of the fact that we need to ensure that the people in Newfoundland and Labrador have the ability to have financial security and that the government has the flexibility and the process we have now, the collaborative process of ensuring that things are vetted through different avenues to get the best process and the best programs in play is indicative of what we need to do for people in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have probably turned the corner on a new approach, not only in politics but how we operate in the House of Assembly.

So hats off to all of us. The independents have a role to play in that. All three parties have a role to play in that, but particularly our civil servants have a role in helping us direct where we go.

This money will ensure, for the next six months, we have some stability. We would hope it's over in six weeks, but we need to be reassured that things will continue and we can continue to fight the challenges we have and ensure people are safe.

Mr. Chair, we totally support the additional three months. We hope we're back in this House prior to that and we're debating a budget because everything has worked out well for people in Newfoundland and Labrador and we know look at the going forward and addressing the financial needs of the province.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, this is very pragmatic. This provides stability and certainty at a time when our province most needs it, at a time when we are facing tremendous uncertainty and instability.

By offering an additional three months, giving us a six-month Interim Supply, it is going to allow us to provide vital services such as health care, as well as things that would normally happen anyway like road clearing and snow clearing and driver's licences and a variety of other things, so the certainty that those are going to continue during uncertain times is absolutely vital. At the same time, this also provides some certainty for public servants, many of whom are working during this time. Several of whom have actually had to come to work, like we see right here today, but also many more who are working from home. That certainty is also very important because that's what's going to keep our economy and our society running.

At the same time, we also need to ensure that payments to individuals and businesses, that we're going to help them bridge the gap through this uncertainty and ensure that they are going to be able to survive until our economy and our society recovers from this. That is absolutely vital as well.

It's for those reasons, in addition to many, many more, that I fully support this bill. I look forward to seeing a budget in due time, but for now I think that this will provide us the certainty and stability at a time when we absolutely need it the most.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm glad to be able to speak to this. The first thing I want to say, and I kind of alluded to it earlier but I just want to put it on the record, on behalf of the Member for Bay of Islands – and I want to assure the people of Humber - Bay of Islands that their Member has reached out to me. We've discussed all these bills in as much detail as we could with the time that we had allotted, because things came kind of fast.

The bottom line is that he's watching what's going on here. We had a good discussion, and some of the comments I'm making reflect his

comments as well. On a couple of occasions, I talked about his concern about the agencies, boards and commissions. Now is the time for us to really start thinking about digging into finding savings where we can, as opposed to borrowing more money.

Of course, there are questions around the Stephenville Airport and there will be other things that come up. There are a number of things we agreed on and there were a couple of specific things he had. I just want to, in fairness to him, because I said I would – and for anyone who's watching from his district, not everybody could be here for obvious reasons, but we did have a good chat. Like I said, he is watching and anything that I'm saying here, a lot of it we talked about and he's in agreement of. If there are any specific questions that he had, I will bring them up so that the people of the area know they are well represented in that regard.

Mr. Chair, obviously, as I said, I'm going to support this. I think as the old expression goes, hindsight is 20/20 and at the time, as the minister alluded to, he had brought in a six-month Interim Supply. Of course, over on this side we all kind of freaked out a little bit, thinking something is up politically and it got changed to three months. I think I might have said, actually, at the end, like the minister did – I'm not sure if I said it here or if I said it to him privately – I don't know, maybe we should have went for six months after I reflected on it.

I don't think anybody thought that we were going to be in this position with COVID. I don't know if we necessarily realized the seriousness and the impact it was going to have at the time. Obviously, now we do. We need to do what we can to ensure that our public servants get paid and that we're able to continue on with services that the people need and require at this time, so I will be supporting it.

I just want to take an opportunity because where this is Interim Supply – it's a money bill – we have a little bit of flexibility. I'm not getting on to any topics, only COVID-related things, I will say to my colleagues there; I only have seven minutes at most anyway. There are a couple things I was asked by constituents and other people, just to bring up. I committed I would so I will.



First of all, I don't know about other Members, but I received I don't know how many emails from pet owners who are very concerned about veterinarian services. I woke up the other morning; I think I had 180 emails. Where did this come from? I think 150 of them or more were from people concerned about shutting down of veterinarian services. That apparently did happen during Snowmageddon when they called the state of emergency.

I know the Minister of Health and Community Services has come out and indicated that veterinarian services are still available to the public. They all get that. Everyone gets that. That's not really their issue. Their concern is because it's not considered an essential service, so to speak, or it's not declared an essential service, they just have a concern that if we were to go into state-of-emergency mode, if you will, and put further restrictions, they're afraid that vets will have to shut down.

All they're looking for from government is an assurance that even if we had to ramp things up even more and shut more things down that, at the very least, emergency veterinarian services would be available. If the minister were to come out in one of his briefings and tell everybody that and say it on the record, I'm sure everybody, all the pet owners out there, would be happy and have that peace of mind.

I just put that out there to the Members opposite to bring it up to your colleague. That's all they're looking for, and I think it's very reasonable, to be honest with you.

Child care centres – again, I don't about others but a lot of concern with the daycare operators. I know I just happened to take a flick at my BlackBerry there, and I've got – I'm like, where did this come from, and now there are a load of complaints coming in, apparently, because when government just deemed that for emergency workers, nurses and emergency workers and doctors and so on, that regulated daycares can open to take their children, because, obviously, we need them on the front lines working, someone has to look after their kids. All fine and dandy, but, apparently, in what was sent to them, now they've been told, or threatened, whatever way you want to look at it, in their mind threatened, that this is not asking you to open,

we are telling you, you have to open or we're going to cut your funding and your subsidies if you don't open. Now they're saying you are forcing me to open up and put myself and my family at risk and so on.

If anyone hasn't seen that yet – I just noticed it – it's an issue. I understand we're in unprecedented times and there are going to be tough calls that have to be made, but I'm just saying, there are still issues with – there are unregulated daycares, of course, as well that have concerns about that.

I had someone from an unregulated daycare who said that because the minister announced free daycare for all of the emergency workers, now I had a couple of nurses, for example, who had kids in my unregulated daycare who said, I'm sorry I'm going to drop out now because I'm going to get free daycare over here at the regulated ones and now they're left – because I can get free government daycare, so to speak.

I know it's like a Catch-22, no matter what you do there are going to be issues, but I just throw it out there that there are still concerns as it relates to child care.

I've also had a number of people who have concerns about people who are arriving at the airports and are not self-isolating. I know we've all heard that. I know that we do have health officials now, when the planes come in, that are greeting the passengers or whatever and giving them information, telling them to self-isolate and so on, which is good. But I've had a few people sort of say maybe there should be a member of the RCMP or RNC stood up next to that person, basically, just to send a message that we are serious and we do expect you to go in and self-isolate. If you don't, to hand them a piece of paper that basically talks about the fact that you can now be fined, lose your driver's licence and so on. In other words, step up the enforcement, strengthen that message to people coming in through the airports who are not necessarily self-isolating.

Those were just a few things, I'm sure there are others. Those are just a few I happened to jot down. We all know that these are issues. There's not going to be a perfect solution. At the end of the day, as I've said to many people who have

raised any number of concerns, there is no perfect solution. A lot of this is what I would call the honour system and we are depending on people to do the right thing. Unless we're going to go around and have martial law or something and have the army going up and down your street and a tank and armed soldiers forcing people to stay in their house and all this kind of stuff, unless we're going down that road, which I certainly hope we're not, then we are depending on people to be sensible and do the right thing. This has been said over and over and over again. I know a lot of people get it; I think most people get it. Unfortunately, there are still some people who do not.

I commend the government for bringing in that policy now to get tougher on people who feel it's okay to put our families lives at risk because they don't want to stay home. I think that was unfortunate, but it was needed and I'm glad it was done. If we have to do more, then so be it.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Seeing no other speakers, shall the resolution carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, resolution carried.

A bill, "An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 30)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 through 4 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 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:** The Schedule.

**CHAIR:** Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, Schedule carried.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** WHEREAS it appears that the sums mentioned are required to defray certain expenses of the Public Service of Newfoundland and Labrador for the financial year ending

March 31, 2021 and for other purposes relating to the public service.

**CHAIR:** Shall the preamble carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

**CLERK:** An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service.

**CHAIR:** Shall the long title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, long title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill carried 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 resolution and a bill consequent thereto, carried.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 30 carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is the Committee rise and report the resolution and Bill 30 carried without amendment.

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

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 hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

**MR. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of Supply have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that they have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Supply reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report that the Committee have adopted a certain resolution and recommend that a bill be introduced to give effect to the same.

When shall the report be received?

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, that the resolution be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the motion now be read a first time.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$1,971,702,600.

On motion, resolution read a first time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate, that the resolution be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the resolution now be read a second 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:** Be it resolved by the House of Assembly in Legislative Session convened, as follows:

That it is expedient to introduce a measure to provide for the granting to Her Majesty for

defraying certain expenses of the public service for the financial year ending March 31, 2021 the sum of \$1,971,702,600.

On motion, resolution read a second time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Torngat Mountains, for leave to introduce the Interim Supply bill, Bill 30, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 30, the Interim Supply Bill, and that the said bill now be read a first 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.

Motion, that the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service," carried. (Bill 30)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 30)

On motion, Bill 30 read a first time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill now be read a second 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 Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 30)

On motion, Bill 30 read a second time.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Service NL, that the Interim Supply bill be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said bill now be 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 Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For

Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service. (Bill 30)

**MR. SPEAKER:** The bill is now 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 Granting To Her Majesty Certain Sums Of Money For Defraying Certain Expenses Of The Public Service For The Financial Year Ending March 31, 2021 And For Other Purposes Relating To The Public Service," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 30)

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Bill 33, An Act Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 33, An Act Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic, be now read a second time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that the said bill now be read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic." (Bill 33)

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are challenging times in which we all live. We are faced with an unusual circumstance with a pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

I, first of all, want to recognize the Members. I said it earlier, the Members in this House today

who have come forward at a time in representing this House of Assembly – there are 10 of us today in this House. Just for the record, I do want to make sure that we recognize the Member for Torngat Mountains, the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, the Member for Waterford Valley, St. John's West, the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's, Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, and the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. I also want to recognize you, Mr. Speaker, from St. George's - Humber, who are sitting in the Chair today, and the Chairs of Committee, the MHAs for Lewisporte - Twillingate, and Mount Scio, for being here today.

I looked around the room a little earlier and I did want to note that we have parity in this House this afternoon and equality. There are 50 per cent females and 50 per cent males here today from various regions around the province. It is important to note that.

I want to recognize Table Officers who are here this afternoon. They have been stalwart and important during this epidemic, Mr. Speaker, this pandemic, and we appreciate them. I want to recognize the many, many civil servants who have risen – I can only say this much, they have done more than was ever expected by anyone.

I could tell you there were people overnight here last night. There were people who worked throughout the evening to make sure we had legislation. We just received some of the legislation, this omnibus bill, moments ago. I've been speaking with my colleagues from the House over the last week preparing them for what we were seeing coming out of the various discussions and the various work that was being done – sorry, Mr. Speaker, I was distracted there for a moment – throughout government to address some of the pandemic concerns and the impacts that it was having.

So this omnibus bill, Mr. Speaker, has four parts, and I'll introduce each of the parts briefly and then speak to each of the parts. But I did want to recognize the incredible work of Cabinet Secretariat, the incredible work of the departments that this impacts. The co-operation, collaboration and support from my colleagues in

the Opposition – the Official Opposition, the Third Party, the independents – all came together, worked through the legislation, cooperated into late last night and today. I certainly, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – and not just on behalf of the Liberal Party but on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – thank them for coming together, supporting each other and working through the challenges that we are seeing.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, this omnibus bill has four parts. Part I is an amendment to the Hydro Corporation Act, 2007, to increase Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro's borrowing authority by \$500 million and the Crown's debt guarantee of \$2.6 billion to accommodate a reduction in revenues anticipated as a result of COVID-19.

Part II is an amendment to the Labour Standards Act to provide job protection for individuals who will miss work as a result of the public health emergency for communicable disease set out in the regulations – in this case, COVID-19.

Part III is an amendment to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2018, to allow for eviction notice periods to be extended to not less than 90 days where a tenant suffers loss of employment or reduction of income due to COVID-19 public health emergency.

Part IV will enact a new statute entitled Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act, which will temporarily allow a minister, the Premier, the Speaker or the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to vary a statutory deadline or time period for not more than six months. This authority is a temporary measure that will expire and cease to have effect at the end of the next sitting of the House of Assembly.

Allow me to walk you through and walk the Members of this House and the public through what each of these amendments mean. Part I, the Hydro Corporation Act, 2007, amendments: Section 30 of the Hydro Corporation Act, 2007, sets out the borrowing limit of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro, as well as the amount of the corporation's debt that may be guaranteed by the Crown.

The current borrowing limit of the corporation and maximum amount of the debt guaranteed by the Crown are both \$2.1 billion. At this point, it's not known if Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro will suffer revenue impacts as a result of COVID-19 pandemic; however, if this pandemic continues, this borrowing will ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro can access funds, expeditiously if required, to deal with such a situation.

Part II, the Labour Standards Act, and we do have the Minister of Service NL with us this afternoon for any questions that may be needed to be addressed, the labour standards amendments and the Labour Standards Act currently provides various types of job protection leave to employees such as parental leave, sick leave, bereavement leave and family-responsibility leave. Currently, the act provides only seven days of unpaid sick or family-responsibility leave, beyond this an employer is not required to hold an employee's position.

Given the public health emergency, there is no legislative job protection provided to employees who cannot perform the duties of their position for a period beyond the existing seven-day limit. The bill will provide authority for the Lieutenant-Governor in Council to designate a disease as a communicable disease for the purpose of this act. In this case, there would be a designation of COVID-19, as a communicable disease, under the act. This would then provide job protection to employees in a variety of situations including for employees under medical investigation, supervision or treatment related to a designated communicable disease.

For employees acting in accordance with a communicable disease order under the Public Health Protection and Promotion Act related to designated communicable disease. For employees in isolation or quarantine as a result of information or directions provided by the government or chief medical officer of health related to the designated communicable disease. For employees acting under a direction from their employer due to concerns that the employee may expose others in the workplace to a designated communicable disease.

For employees who must provide care or support to individuals set out in the act such as a

person's spouse, children, parents or siblings. For clarity, this includes a circumstance related to a school or child care service closure for a reason related to a designated communicable disease. For employees who cannot travel back to the province because of travel restrictions related to a designated communicable disease. This would cover the many situations we are familiar with related to extensive disruptions especially related to air travel and particularly international air travel. For employees who cannot perform the duties of their jobs for other reasons prescribed by regulations made by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council related to the designated communicable disease.

The bill would require an employee who takes this leave to provide evidence to the employer as to their entitlement to the leave, if requested. The evidence requested must be reasonable in the circumstances and at a time that is a reasonable in the circumstances, but an employer cannot require a note from a doctor or a nurse practitioner as evidence.

The entitlement to the leave will only last as long as the Lieutenant-Governor in Council has designated the communicable disease in regulations and that the employee meets the criteria I referenced moments ago. The entitlement to the leave will terminate when the Lieutenant-Governor in Council makes a regulation to remove the designation of the disease or when the employee no longer meets the criteria.

The bill sets out an extensive list of family members. At section 43.39(4) for whom an employee is eligible to provide care and support, as I noted previously. In addition, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council can designate additional individuals for the purpose of this section if necessary.

The bill prevents an employer from dismissing an employee where they are entitled to the leave and requires the employer to reinstate the employee to his or her previous position on the same terms and conditions once the entitlement to the leave ends. If an employer dismisses an employee in contravention of this, the onus will rest on the employer to prove that the reason for the dismissal is not related to the communicable disease leave.

The bill includes various powers to make regulations for the Lieutenant-Governor in Council including to designate communicable diseases, to set dates on which entitlement to the leave begins, to prescribe additional reasons or family members beyond those listed in the act or exempting classes of employees from the application of section 43.39 or a provision of it. That is the section that sets out the reasons the employee may take the leave. These regulations may be made with retroactive effect.

We do have the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation with us who can answer questions to that particular section.

Part III, Mr. Speaker, is the Residential Tenancies Act, 2018, and, as I said, we have the Minister of Service NL with us concerning this amendment. The bill will amend section 19 of the act to extend the length of notice that a landlord must provide to a tenant where the landlord seeks to evict the tenant for non-payment of rent. Currently, the act requires notice periods that depend upon a particular lease for week-to-week rent. The current notice period is three days for renting month to month. Or on a fixed term the current notice period is 10 days. The bill would extend this notice period to 30 days.

The extended notice period will apply only where a tenant can demonstrate loss of income as a result of employment loss or a reduction in work hours as a result of the COVID-19 public health emergency. A tenant would be required to provide the landlord proof of the loss in a form of documentation from the person's employer, either in writing or by email, or by an affidavit. If you are participating in self-employment or you're a musician in downtown and don't have an employer per se – you're self-employed; you're part of what's referred to as the gig economy – you can certainly provide an affidavit.

The bill also provides that if necessary, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council can extend the 30-day notice period related to this public health emergency. These provisions would not provide a blanket ability for tenants to stop paying rent. That's key, Mr. Speaker. It only applies where there is a demonstrated loss of income related to COVID-19, such as those workplaces that are

closed due to the pandemic and whose employers have reduced their work hours.

The final section, Mr. Speaker, is concerning Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act. Many statutes and regulations set out deadlines and time periods for certain things to happen. For example, section 5 of the Transparency and Accountability Act requires category 1 government entities, such as departments, to publish strategic plans every three years, not later than three months after the beginning of the first fiscal year of the period covered by the plan. Departments are currently in the final year of the existing three-year plans, meaning that new plans must be made public no later than June 30.

Section 24 of the Law Society Act, 1999, requires an annual general meeting of the Law Society to occur each year in the month of June. ATIPPA, 2015, includes many timelines for everything from responses to requests to the complaints process. In recognition of some of the challenges expected related to the access to information regime, the OIPC, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, obtained an order from the Supreme Court last week which provides him with a 65-day extension for access to information requests and to complete formal investigations related to complaints and issue reports.

Given the ongoing COVID-19 situation and the disruption this is causing governments, the private sector and individuals, this bill is being proposed to provide a mechanism to vary deadlines and time periods set out in legislation. We can now go through the bill section by section.

Section 2, the only definition provided in that act, includes subordinate legislation as defined in the Statutes and Subordinate Legislation Act. Section 9(1)(e) of that act reads: subordinate legislation includes a regulation, proclamation rule, order, bylaw, or instrument that is of a legislative nature and made or approved under the authority of the act.

Section 3 authorizes a minister, on the advice of the Attorney General, to “vary a deadline or time period prescribed in an Act administered by that minister for a period not exceeding 6 months. To



find out which acts are administered by which ministers, we can look to the departmental notices issued under the Executive Council Act.

Normally, any change to an act can only be done by the House of Assembly, but this bill would create a time-limited exception to that, only in respect to setting deadlines or time periods. It's very limited in scope, Mr. Speaker.

Section 4 authorizes the Premier, on the advice of the Attorney General, to "vary a deadline or time period prescribed in an Act listed in Schedule A of the Executive Council Notice, 2019 for a period not exceeding 6 months."

Section 5 provides similar authority for the Speaker of the House of Assembly by authorizing the Speaker to "vary a deadline or time period prescribed in an Act listed in the Schedule for a period not exceeding 6 months." This section also authorizes the Speaker to do so retroactively to March 14, 2020 if required. You may recall this is the date that the province first directed persons returning to Newfoundland and Labrador from outside the province to self-isolate for 14 days.

Mr. Speaker, section 6 provides authority for the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, on the advice of the Attorney General, to vary by order any act of the province administered by a minister or by the Executive Council for a period not exceeding six months.

This is similar to the power provided to ministers under section 3 and the Premier under section 4 with a couple of differences: first, variations made under this section can occur retroactively to March 14, 2020, again, the date of the order; second, variations under this section are considered subordinate legislation. These orders would be drafted by the Office of the Legislative Counsel, similar to acts and regulations, and would be published in Part II of The Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette.

Section 7 sets out the notice requirements where a variation is made under the act. In all cases, notice must be published in the Gazette and on a government website, so for a department, this could be a departmental website. In the case of the Speaker of House of Assembly webpage,

this ensures that the public can access and become informed of any changes.

Section 8 confirms that where a deadline or time period is varied under the authority of this act, a person who complies with a revised timeline is considered to have complied with the act in which the deadline or time period is set out.

Section 9 provides that this act terminates at the end of the next sitting of the House of Assembly. This ensures that the authority provided by the act is time limited and extends no longer than is required to deal with this ongoing public health emergency.

It is important to note that this bill does not eliminate any requirement to do anything. It merely provides a means to vary time periods where they are not feasible, given the circumstances we are in. The act does not make any changes to substantive law or authorize anyone to do so. These are about administrative or procedural time periods only.

On that, Mr. Speaker, that is the omnibus bill before you. It's unusual for us in this Legislature to deal with an omnibus bill, but it was expedient for purposes of this House of Assembly to combine these bills because they're all related to COVID and the requirements under COVID to address conditions and concerns. That's why it's presented in one bill, Mr. Speaker, versus having four and having to do each of these four. It's more expedient to do them as one. That is with concurrence from my colleagues. We've put them all together, Mr. Speaker. There will be questions; we will deal with those questions as we go through Committee.

I'll now take my seat and allow my colleagues to rise to discuss this bill in second reading. I'm just looking to make sure that everyone is ready and available to do that, Mr. Speaker, but we will take any questions or any variations during Committee and deal with them as we can.

Thank you for the opportunity. I thank the Members of this House of Assembly and my colleagues watching and working in their constituencies today, but I'm sure very engaged in what's happening in this House of Assembly and what's happening in their constituency. We

certainly do appreciate all the hard work that they're doing.

Again, much thanks to the civil service, the people that stayed very late and worked hard to make these amendments and changes and recognize what changes occur. Again, to this House of Assembly, the Table Officers and all those that are gathered here today, we certainly recognize and appreciate the efforts that they have made.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, this is a very unique piece of legislation that we're bringing forward here as an omnibus bill itself that has a multitude of particular changes in our existing legislation. My colleague, the Member for Torngat Mountains, will speak to a particular piece of that, or maybe more than one piece of it, relevant to what we're discussing here.

While we endorse and support moving this along, there's no doubt when we get into Committee there are going to be a few questions here because, as it was noted, we only got this recently. There's been a lot of moving parts here. It's been an exceptional working entity here of co-operation and staff trying to move things forward. Again, we're trying to maximize the time in the House of Assembly to ensure bills and legislation are put in play to let government and all the outside entities, including the House of Assembly, do its job in an efficient manner.

There's no doubt, there are a few questions here. We've been back and forth and, as we speak, Mr. Speaker, there are changes being played out behind the scenes to ensure that we have the right amendments to the legislation. It's not anything that's earth shattering, but it's very important to ensuring timelines and proper wording so that we don't put people at risk when we're trying to eliminate risk for them.

Sometimes when you get caught up in the whole flow and you're talking 20, 30 and 40 different

clauses, there becomes an issue around – specific wording might restrict the real intent of what you were trying to do. Our haste may have gotten us to this point, but our due diligence now is going to ensure that we rectify any nuances here that need to be dealt with.

There's no doubt there are going to be a couple of questions there that we're having around the landlord and tenants act. Some of them have been worked on as recently as the last hour or so and some are still being worked on. There may be some clarification or some concern around the act, representing temporary variations of the deadlines and time (inaudible). Particularly, one of the big issues, while we've had some discussion on this on a conference call this morning, might be around the time frames around the Elections Act itself.

I know the stress has to be there for clarifications around the fact that this all ends once the state of emergency ends, would be my understanding, and can only be pushed out for a maximum of six months. But when you're talking about the Elections Act, there are concerns around – we had this discussion and I was brutally honest three weeks ago and I was brutally honest a half an hour ago about why we couldn't support, on this side, a six-month interim financing, because we weren't sure of the political landscape and how it may have played out in the last number of weeks.

Now, we know a lot of things have changed dramatically. We know that the Liberal leadership has been pushed out and rightfully so, but there's a clause in here that still brings up some concern and it's particularly around the Elections Act and what may or may not be instituted in that period of time. We're going to probably want some clarification, on the record, as to what exactly that would mean when we get to those particular discussions.

A lot of the other timelines, we see the validity. There's no doubt they'll all have to be taken into account as we move things forward. The perspective, from where I sit, is around the emphasis on, once the state of emergency ends, then so does all of the timelines associated with this piece of legislation to change the reporting process for those particular entities or the acts that have built into its legislation a reporting

process to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and to the House of Assembly and the respective departments or agencies that it falls under.

There are a couple of things that, when we get into Committee, there'll be some clarification questions asked. There may or may not be a need for an amendment, depending on how the discussion goes. But with that being said, I'm very pleased on how things got put together. Like all of us, we would have liked more time to digest it and give some additional feedback. We have to give credit to the line departments and their officials for dealing with a particular situation in an expedited manner and trying to reflect all the particular needs when we're dealing with the challenges we are in our society around COVID-19.

I'll take my seat on that. When we get to Committee, I may get up to speak on a couple of other issues relevant to that as we start digging a little bit deeper into interpretations and meanings and potential other ramifications that they may have. We'll get a chance to speak to this a little bit later on some other issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this, too is a prudent piece of legislation and I look forward to a discussion of it in Committee. There are a couple of things that I would like to reiterate. The Opposition House Leader did make some very valid points in terms of the definition of what the next sitting is, as we see in section 9 of that Schedule. We also have some concerns about the Elections Act, 1991 and what the implications are for that and whether or not they are truly necessary. I'm sure those discussions will come up as we go back into Committee.

I would also like to point out a couple of other little things. In terms of the Hydro Corporation Act, 2007, I think it is also quite wise to prepare for the possibility of individuals facing hardship who are unable to pay their bills. It's prudent to allow Hydro the opportunity to be able to

borrow and to be able to offset some of these things.

I will caution that once we make our way through this public health emergency, I would think it very, very inappropriate for all of these bills to come due immediately and I would like to recommend that Hydro also take that into account and look at alternate payments schemes, as well as possible forgiveness of some bills. So that's some additional things that we can contemplate into the future.

I would also like to point out that the Labour Standards Act – this is a wise move as well – will also allow individuals who find themselves without protection of unions to be able to access some federal funding. It's going to make that a whole lot easier for individuals who have less protection in the workplace access to some federal government supports and programs that are going to be able to help them weather this very, very uncertain time.

However, I would like to point out that we have lost a very important opportunity to be able to add paid sick leave to individuals who are in non-unionized workplaces. While we have allowed the ability for these individuals to get sick and access federal funding, any individual who is sick for another reason – for example, a simple flu, which the influenza, we're also going through a resurgence of that in our province right now.

Individuals, unless they are directly affected by COVID-19, if they fall ill, they do not have any protection. They do not have access to any federal government programs and services, nor do they even have access to paid sick leave. This extends to people like our grocery store workers, our delivery drivers, the people who we are depending on the most right now. The people who are the most vulnerable are not being afforded simple protections like that, and I think that's an omission that perhaps we ought to reconsider.

In addition to that, Residential Tenancies Act, I'm going to echo the same concerns as I did with the Hydro Act. It is good that we are enabling individuals – especially those, again, who are most vulnerable – the opportunity to have a little bit of deferral of their rent. What I

would hate to see is that these individuals are faced with a huge rent bill once we make our way through this. Again, it would be terrible to see that someone has their rent deferred for a month or even two months, depending on how long this goes, but then only to face a multi-thousand-dollar bill immediately after this pandemic has passed.

I think we ought to think about that a little bit more comprehensively and ensure that the individuals who are paying rent are not left in the lurch, but, at the same time, we also need to make sure that the individuals who are the owners of the rental apartments are also protected as well. So I think that's an important piece to add to our discussion.

I think there is one other thing that perhaps I need to bring up in this context – and this might be a clarification piece that we'll see once we go to the Committee of the Whole – and that would be any timelines that we're seeing at Nalcor right now, certainly that they have been given some timelines that are suggested and not legislative. But I think that perhaps we also need to look at that piece of legislation and see if any of their timelines need to be adjusted, then we ought to act prudently there as well.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to discussing this more in Committee.

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

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak to this. I will say, Mr. Speaker, up front, before seeing this bill, we did agree with the omnibus bill.

I hope this is the last time I see an omnibus bill in this House. I hope this is not going to be the new norm. I have concerns about one bill in particular, which I'll get to and, certainly, I'll get to when we get into Committee, the one about changing all the timelines on a number of acts and the fact that when we look at it we're talking: Auditor General Act; the Child and Youth Advocate Act; Citizens' Representative Act; Elections Act, 1991; House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration

Act; House of Assembly Act; Seniors' Advocate Act; and the Statutes Act.

We have eight significant pieces of legislation and contained within those eight pieces of legislation I would suspect there are going to be a number of timelines associated, different clauses. There are going to be clauses in all eight of those that are going to have timelines on things, like 30 days for this, 60 days for this, six months for that, a year – whatever it is.

I absolutely understand that we have a pandemic and I appreciate all the work that's been done. I'm not knocking anybody, I'm really not, but I have to say that we have eight pieces of legislation, significant pieces of legislation, where timelines could be changed for whatever reason and whatever purpose and we've had zero time.

Really, if this was done – and I understand where we are in the situation, but if this was to be done right, I would have time to take out eight pieces of legislation and have the time to go through it, comb through it clause by clause and anywhere where there's a timeline for anything, I would be able to understand what is the timeline, and now that could be changed for up to six months. What impact would that have on this, what impact would it have on something else and so on.

I kind of feel, on this piece of the omnibus bill only – and I'm not suggesting that the intent is anything but honourable, I'm really not, but the reality of it is, when it comes to this piece of the omnibus bill, I'm voting on the blind. I really am. I'm voting on the blind because I've had no opportunity to look at this piece of legislation and to look at what could possibly be changed and what the implications could be for any one of those eight pieces of legislation. I've had zero time to do it and I just have to trust that it will be done for the right reasons and done in a way that most people would agree with, including Members of this House, including me if I vote for it.

Of course, the fact that it's part of an omnibus bill, even though I might have an issue with that one, if I vote against that, then people could say then that means you voted against changing the Labour Standards Act to protect workers. Or you

voted against protecting people who lose their jobs and now they could be thrown out on the street after three days or 10 days by their landlord. By voting against it, even though I might agree with all those other things, if you vote for one – you have to vote for it all or vote for none of it. That's the issue with an omnibus bill.

Of course, we know it was an omnibus bill related to this whole SNC-Lavalin thing and everything federally. That was all kind of snuck in there as part of an omnibus bill. I'm not saying there's anything snuck in this. I'm not trying to make that comparison. I'm not. I'm just saying that's the danger of omnibus bills in general.

I'm not talking about this omnibus bill and I support everything except I have concerns about that. I want to say that's true, but it is a concern. I would not be doing my duty as an elected MHA if I did not bring that concern forward. I wouldn't be. So I am bringing it forward as a concern.

Now, in terms of the actual sections here, one has to do with Hydro and basically giving them the ability – right now they have the ability to borrow. They can have a debt limit on their line of credit, so to speak, \$2.1 billion. We're going to increase that by \$500 million, giving them the ability to now borrow \$2.6 billion instead of \$2.1 billion.

I don't have an issue with that per se. I understand the rationale. I understand the challenges that they're going to have in terms of decreased revenue coming in, if there are people who can't pay their light bills or they have to defer them. Maybe some will have to be written off and maybe there will be programs put in place to reduce light bills. They still have to pay their bills, so if you cut it here, they have to find money somewhere else. I get that. Again, though, I would say to the Minister of Natural Resources – because I know there's an independent board and so on, but it still falls under Natural Resources – as I've said before, the same thing applies.

I would hope and I would encourage Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro to find ways to absorb lost revenues through their ongoing

operating budgets instead of spending more money and borrowing more money. Because at the end of the day, that \$500 million, if they were to borrow an additional \$500 million – we could say it's Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro but it's really the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, because we are the only shareholder in Nalcor. Newfoundland Hydro, being a subsidiary of it, that's another \$500 million that Newfoundland and Labrador and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are going in debt, not Hydro. They're not some fictitious entity. They are our entity and it's our debt. So, again, I encourage them to find the money within what they have, if they can, as opposed to borrowing more money.

One thing that comes to mind – and at the briefing the Leader of the Third Party, I believe, raised it – is the fact that with oil prices where they are, while it's bad for the provincial government in terms of our coffers, in terms of royalties, there is a benefit to Holyrood. There is a benefit to Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro at Holyrood because they're burning Bunker C. Obviously, if they are paying less for oil, then those are expenses they would be paying normally that they're not going to be paying now, so there are some savings there. Now, whether it's enough savings to offset what has to be done, I don't know, but there are savings there.

So, again, any opportunity to find the money within, without borrowing more – whether it be core government, whether it be agencies, boards and commissions, whether it be Crown corporations, including Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro – that's what they need to do. I encourage them to do so, and I certainly encourage the Minister of Natural Resources to keep on top of it to make sure they do just that.

In terms of the other one here on the Labour Standards Act, of course, what is being put in place – and I support this 100 per cent – is basically offering protection for employees who find themselves a victim of this virus, whether that be directly getting the virus and being sick from the virus, whether it be having to self-isolate because they were on vacation or whatever, whether it be having to self-isolate because they came in contact with someone who had the virus, whether it's to care for a loved one

that has the virus and so on – and they're all listed, I'm not going to repeat them all. We did save most of them anyway, but the bottom line is a protection so that their employer can't basically say oh, so you have to stay home now for a month to look after your husband; we're going to get rid of you. We don't need you. Don't bother coming back.

It's a measure put in place to protect those individuals, and Lord knows those individuals need protection from a labour point of view because a lot of them don't have a lot of rights, unfortunately. I've seen a lot of examples of employees insofar as I'm concerned be totally abused out there. Total abuse in terms of split shifts and part-time shifts and everything else. I think the Labour Relations Act, or the Labour Standards Act, I should say, needs to be overhauled in a lot of areas, to be honest with you. That's just my personal view.

I do support this amendment, although I do question, is it really protection? It all sounds good, but at the end of the day, we put this in place and someone is off; they're saying you can't fire me because I was off for 30 days looking after a loved one. No, I can't. Then, they come back to work and two days later say: We're going to have to restructure and you're gone. I take cold comfort in this anyway, but I suppose you can't control everything. Again, it speaks to the need of changing the Labour Relations Act in a much broader way than what we're doing here today, but I do support it.

The only concern I have about this particular amendment is that specifically when it talks about an employee, it's under individual medical investigation supervision or treatment related to a designated communicable disease would qualify to be offered that protection. One could read that and think that it means, okay, that clause would mean someone who actually has the virus in this case.

The only point I want to make here is that we talk all the time about mental health being just as important as physical health. There was another All-Party Committee on Mental Health and Addictions and so on, so everybody says it is a big deal, which it is, but I'm going to be looking for clarification that if somebody, for example, has diagnosed with anxiety – and I'm not saying

that anyone could just come in, say I don't want to go to work, b'y, my nerves are gone. I don't mean that. If somebody legitimately has been diagnosed with and has an anxiety disorder and so on and because of the virus, in this case, saying I just can't go to work because my anxiety is gone through the roof, I'm frightened to death that I'm going to catch this virus, and a doctor can back it up with medical evidence that this person indeed does have an anxiety disorder, then that needs to be factored in to this particular clause to say that person should be covered as well.

Again, I'm not saying that someone can willy-nilly go up to the employer and say I'm not working here because I'm afraid I'm going to catch the virus. I'm talking about someone who has a diagnosed anxiety disorder and their doctor is willing to back up the fact that this person cannot come to work. It's actually none of the employer's business, really, why the person can't come to work anyway. It's just that the doctor knows what the issue is and can say that person can't come to work.

All I'm saying is that mental health should be factored into this clause. Now, whether it needs to spell it out or whether the minister is going to tell me that it's covered anyway – it's implied and it will be covered – that's fine. I'll wait to hear from him.

The other part, the Residential Tenancies Act – again, I'm going to support this. I'm glad to see that as a result of the briefing we had this morning that we managed to arrive at a place that I think is fair and reasonable. I felt the original draft weighed far too heavily on the tenant. Not that tenants aren't important. I'm not saying that, but there has to be a recognition of what's also fair for the property owner, the landlord.

I'm not talking about someone who owns 20 or 30 houses or an apartment building and some kind of a business like that – I'm not talking about that. But if there's an individual – there's an awful lot of people that the only reason why they're able to have a house to live in themselves and can afford it is that they are depending on the rent. They're depending on that rent to come in to help pay their mortgage. So there has to be a fair balance to ensure that

the homeowner can't get stiffed with multiple months' worth of rent.

Right now, what's being proposed is we're going to give an additional 30 days. So if you are normally a month to month, I think you get a 10-day notice if you don't pay your rent and now we're saying really it will be 40 days' notice.

I'm sure there are still landlords out there, normal landlords, homeowners, who are even going to cringe at that and I get it. I'm sure that in most cases if you have a tenant, you have a good tenant, you have a decent relationship, they're going to work something out. They're going to say I can't afford to pay this month; we can tack it on. I'll pay it back. Once I get settled away and I get my EI or whatever, if I got laid off because of COVID, I'll pay an extra \$100 a month or something until it's paid off, or once it's all over I'll pay it all back or I'll pay half of it back now and half of it back later, whatever. I'm sure there will be some arrangement, no one is going to just toss someone out on the street for no reason, but we also know there could be situations where someone does take advantage of this and actually stiffes the landlord for the rent. We need to make sure that landlords are also protected.

I think, now, we have struck a fair and reasonable balance. There's no winner; there's no loser. Hopefully, at the end, both parties will come together and work something out anyway. No matter what way we do it, there's always going to be someone who's going to agree, there's going to be someone that's going to disagree. It's impossible, we all know that. All of us here know any decision that you make you're never going to please everybody; it just can't be done. I think we reached a fair and reasonable balance so I will support that.

Again, before I conclude, I just want to say that as it relates to the – by the way, myself and the Member for Bay of Islands discussed this, so this is pretty much reflective of his views on this as well.

When it comes to the Temporary Variation Of Statutory Deadlines Act, which is the fourth and final amendment, I'll have questions when we get into Committee, but I do have a huge

concern about the fact that there are eight significant pieces of legislation that are going to be impacted, potentially, by this and I've had no time to go through those pieces of legislation to see what could be changed and what impact it could potentially have.

I wish there was a way to actually remove this one, pass the other ones and deal with this one separately, that's what I would like. I know it's not going to happen, but I will say for the record that's what I would like to happen because I have – I don't think I'm alone, I think my colleagues in the Official Opposition said that they have some concerns about this as well. I'm not sure about the Leader of the Third Party but she's nodding her head, she has concerns.

I think the other three pieces, for the most part, everyone is going to be in agreement with, but I think that the fourth one, there are concerns and I wish it could be removed and dealt with separately but it's not so when we get to Committee, I'll have some questions on that one in particular.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MS. EVANS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to speak a little on the amendment to the Labour Standards Act, but before I start, I just want to say I was very inspired, actually, by the Government House Leader, the Minister of Natural Resources, what she said at the beginning. She talked about tumultuous times, turbulent times. We are in turbulent times. I was listening to her words.

I don't like saying I'm a rookie MHA, but this is the first year for me and I'm new to all of this. It is turbulent times. It's unprecedented, I think. In many aspects it's impacting us on a personal level, on a regional level. It's affecting us on a government level, a provincial level, international and national level. It's very, very turbulent and we have a lot to deal with.

For me, as a new MHA, I've been in the House now for almost a year and on some levels, I don't think it's as turbulent because when I look

around, I see the co-operation. We are stepping up on a government level. We are. In that way I find it less turbulent than when the House was sitting under normal circumstances.

It's very inspiring. The co-operation is there. I don't think there was any level of mistrust when these bills came out. We looked at them and we have a lot of confidence, not only in the government as a whole, but the formation of the joint all-party emergency response Committee working together. We are working together. The information is being passed from the Committee back to all the parties. We are informed of what's going on and, like I said, we're working together, so in a lot of ways it's less turbulent.

We also look to our medical experts. The legislation that's coming down, the changes in direction are actually coming from the medical experts, Public Health and the regional health boards. Everybody is participating in this to make sure that the advice the government gets is the best advice, to make sure that at the end when this pandemic is over, we can look back and say we did a good job.

A big part of this is the co-operation, not only from the Opposition side, but also from the government side. It's very, very inspiring. I wanted to say that at the beginning and I want to thank you for everything that you do. I know it's difficult times.

Just looking at this amendment now, I use the word "huge." That's my own word. The value of this amendment is huge to the general population. It's very, very important. What it does is it basically has provisions to protect people's jobs if they can't work, because they're impacted by this virus. There are many levels that are going to help people. It outlines how they're entitled to unpaid leave and that their jobs will be protected while they're dealing with this virus that's impacting them. It's about job security.

It also lists the range of conditions that a person will be covered, and it's all related to the COVID virus. I want to say there's so much value. The value of this amendment is huge. Also, the protection is retroactive to March 14. That's when the chief medical officer came out and told people that they must isolate after

returning from travel. That's when we started to see the direction given to us on how we can contain and eliminate this virus. That came from our medical professionals.

Just looking at that, when people look back at this amendment and when people look at it today, the public will see two things. One thing they'll see is job security for people. A job to return to after this pandemic is over, after the people have weathered the storm as they say. Also, it's not only about job security, the value of this amendment is great because – and these are my words – it takes steps to ensure that people will act in a way that protects the health and safety of the general population.

The way this amendment is going is it will ensure that people, when they're not working because they're impacted – they either have to be in social isolation or they may be sick or they may have to be caring for people who are sick when they're not working. It allows them to have some job security to return to their job, because in reality we know there are people out there now who need their jobs.

In actual fact, they will work if they think that's the only way they can protect their job. If they're sick or they're supposed to be in isolation, they will break the rules in order to protect their job. What this amendment is doing is it's protecting not only the worker from that; it's protecting the general public. That will give us confidence in ensuring that we're taking the right steps to contain this pandemic.

The chief medical officer has made it clear of the conditions that we have to take to, as they say, flatten the curve. This amendment is going to go a long way because at the end of the day, people need that job security. They need to know that after this is over, they'll have a job to go back to, and that they'll be able to take steps to protect their health and safety and the health and safety of the general population. This is a good amendment.

Also, it outlines that the employees can take leave as long as they're impacted; there's no restriction on that. It does give us confidence. It allows people the freedom to deal with life circumstances that's being impacted by this virus.



This legislation, like I said, is about job security and about protecting the general population. But there's another thing that this amendment is actually doing as well; it's actually about protecting mental health of the population. My fellow Member up there talked a little bit about mental health. Because if you're not able to work because you're impacted by this virus, that's going to create stress.

Mental health is very, very important to reduce job stress, also financial security. This amendment helps people with financial security because, at the end of the day, they'll be able to return to a job and that's critical. It's very, very important for us.

Right now, there's a lot of doom and gloom. So this amendment, I think, will restore that confidence in terms of their financial security. And just as important is protecting the family and the quality of life.

I remember back about 20 years ago I was doing some job training and one of the things that they told us was that in order for you to have balance between your job and your personal life and your emotional wellness is that you have to be in the room. If you're home with your family, trying to instill confidence with your children or your elders that everything in the end is going to work out and we're going to be fine, you have to be in the room. You can't be distracted by all this stress. It can't be playing on your mind whether you'll have a job to go back to, will you be able to earn an income.

This amendment here is critical for that. That's the biggest reason why we, our party, supports this amendment. The only thing I have a little bit of concern with is in section 43.39(2), it's very vague there about what the employer will require from the employee. It talks about providing "evidence reasonable in the circumstances, at a time that is reasonable in the circumstances." That's a little bit vague, so that could be open to misinterpretation and also to some abuse there.

As a whole, this amendment is very, very important to restore the confidence of the people, to also reduce emotional and mental stress and also to actually help people ride the storm out – very, very important.

So with that, I'll just say that this is a good amendment and I have a lot of confidence that it will go a long way to actually, as the chief medical officer says, flattening the curve.

Thank you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

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

**MS. P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As always, it certainly is an honour to stand in our seats here and to represent and speak on behalf of our district. I proudly represent the strong District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave. I just want to add my comments here today as well.

I look around the room; clearly, we're down to a very minimal number of MHAs here today, given the instructions of social distancing and preventative measures, but I want to commend everyone for coming together. It's great to see that politics has taken a back seat and we are all working together on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We're working with the people who are our essential workers, the people on the front lines, our Members of Parliament in Ottawa who are also working very hard, of course, to get those aid packages out. Because as you know, Mr. Speaker, we are facing an unprecedented global pandemic. There's a lot of panic, there's a lot of concern, as Members here reflected on, from all districts, of course.

As MHAs, we're on the phone and communicating with our constituents late at night and, of course, early in the morning, throughout the day. I just want to commend everyone for what we're doing. We're coming together. I'm confident when I say that all MHAs are working very, very hard to do the best we can for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to get us through this.

I want to thank members of the public for their diligence and, please, encourage everyone to take the advice and the instructions given by our health care professionals. I'm confident in our

all-party approach that we're seeing, and our chief medical officer, Dr. Janice Fitzgerald, is doing an amazing job. I just want to say that.

Again, it's great to see everybody here working together. I'm confident this approach is the absolute best approach. I always say, Mr. Speaker, by working together we get the best results.

On that note, I will take my seat and again, it is a great honour to be here to pass this very special legislation to support the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Acting Government House Leader. If she speaks now, she will close the debate.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I certainly appreciate the Members of the House of Assembly speaking to this very important bill.

Indeed, we don't normally do an omnibus bill. I think it's extraordinary circumstances, but all of these changes to these acts come together to do one thing and that is to offer protections as best we can from COVID-19 pandemic, Mr. Speaker.

Allow me to speak to a couple of things. I listened as intently to try and address some of the concerns that have been raised.

First of all, the likelihood of ever having an omnibus bill is very small. I worked with the Members of the House of Assembly to determine how we can best move through items in the House of Assembly as expeditiously as we possibly can, because, of course, we all know that we should be at home. That's what every person in this House would say to everyone: go home and stay home.

Today, we're practicing all the requirements under the public health order, but, overall, we have asked people to stay home. So we as well will be going to our homes again. It's my first time out of the house in quite some time as well, Mr. Speaker. Everything that I've been doing, as

I know all my colleagues, because I've been on the phone with them late into the night, have been doing, they've been staying home.

Allow me to address, I think, a concern that I heard from one of the Members opposite about the temporary variation of deadlines. Allow me to reiterate this is indeed temporary. This does not eliminate a requirement to do something. It does not eliminate the requirement to do something, it merely extends the time period for which something may be done. Okay? So it does not eliminate it, it only extends it upwards to six months or until after the next sitting. Mr. Speaker, we're trying to limit that use.

Speaking to the number of bills that are in this documentation, this Schedule that is attached, that actually comes from the House of Assembly. The House of Assembly did speak with all the statutory officers and got a list of legislation. It has nothing to do with government, Mr. Speaker. It really does have exclusive jurisdiction over House matters, and that rests with the Speaker. It's not resting with government, not resting with the Premier, it's not resting with the minister. It is the House business. It's all under the House of Assembly. They consulted with statutory officers.

Again, it's only extending it by six months or to the end of the next sitting, and, really, it is the House jurisdiction. I want to emphasize that because it's not like we're doing anything other than that, and it was through Table Officers and, of course, the House of Assembly, where those lists came from. I'll say that to my friends opposite.

I will also address – I heard the Member opposite talk about, or there was some discussion amongst ourselves about statutory declaration versus affidavit. I know that the minister who is here is working on that in conjunction with colleagues and address some of the concerns that have been raised.

First of all, the likelihood of ever having an omnibus bill is very small. I worked with the Members of the House of Assembly to determine how we can best move through items in the House of Assembly as expeditiously as we possibly can, because, of course, we all know that we should be at home. That's what every

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I will also address – I heard the Member opposite talk about, or there was some discussion amongst ourselves about statutory declaration versus affidavit. I know that the minister who is here is working on that in conjunction with colleagues, trying to make the

best legislation that we can, so that is continuing on. You'll hear more, I think, in Committee as we go through that.

There was a question about people who suffer from mental illness or anxiety. I think you used that example. I'm going to say this to everybody, and I've said this repeatedly, because as Minister of Natural Resources I'm responsible for a lot of industrial projects and groups that are happening around the province.

The thing we all have to remember; we are under public health orders. The requirements under those public health orders are there for a reason. If you're concerned that those are not being met, then you should make overtures to your manager. Or if you cannot or would not do that, you can talk to Occupational Health and Safety. You could report them. There are mechanisms and means under the [gov.nl.ca/COVID-19](http://gov.nl.ca/COVID-19). I know that's repeated quite a bit, but there are provisions there if you want to raise a concern.

It will be investigated, so I'll give you some of those parameters. I will also say – and I think the alternate minister is going to say a little bit later on that they are monitoring the situation. If it becomes a necessity to add additional reasons to entitlement, they'll certainly do that under regulations. There is that opportunity, but I'll leave that to my colleague in Committee to be able to speak to that further.

Those are some of the concerns that I heard during second debate. I thank them for being raised. I know that we've all been under tremendous pressure to get this legislation done. We're trying to work very co-operatively together to make the best decisions that we can in these circumstances and are willing to work with our colleagues to make those things happen.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat. We'll move into Committee. We can continue on with our discussion discourse over how we can best ensure that we are protecting people as best we can from the COVID-19 challenges, and we'll move forward from there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

The motion is that Bill 33 be now read a second 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 Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic. (Bill 33)

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

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

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 33)

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 33.

**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 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 debating Bill 33, An Act Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic.

A bill, "An Act Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic." (Bill 33)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Opposition House Leader.

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, as we move through this unique piece of legislation, we're getting clarification on particular issues around it and getting to a better understanding of how we can, I think, officially all sign off on this as the minutes tick away and we get some more clarification.

I'll say this publicly: We've been back and forth with the minister, as we speak, trying to get some clarification. I'm just going to probably put her on the spot when we talk about the landlord and tenants act around one of the particular issues.

Before I do that, I do want to acknowledge, too – for the general public who may be watching this I just had somebody text me and said: People don't want to sit next to you, Brazil? What's the situation? I don't think people understand. The minister mentioned it earlier. We are practising social distancing. While there

are only 10 of us here, I can vouch for the Members on my side and I would think any other Member of this House of Assembly all wanted to be in the House of Assembly to be part of what we're doing here, particularly around legislation that's important to addressing the particular needs that we have in our province right now.

To them who are out there watching, our colleagues, who wanted to be in the House, appreciate the fact that we couldn't bring everybody in and we tried to have as much representation across the Island as possible. We have my colleague from Torngat Mountains from Labrador and we have people from various districts, some rural districts, some urban ones and some social-urban, as I like to note sometimes. Just so people would realize, the other 30 Members of the House of Assembly are very diligently out doing their job this afternoon, as we all have been since the situation hit our province.

Back to the bill at hand here now as we move things forward, I just want the minister, if she can clarify, we've had some debate here about – at one point we were talking about the signing process under the Residential Tenancies Act about an individual to be able to get verification, particularly around their employment or a lack of income, I should say, from an employer saying that they don't have work.

We were trying to eliminate, in the discussions we had, living up to what we've been preaching, social distancing, where if you have to get a legal piece of paper signed you actually have to physically see somebody and have it stamped. So we're trying to work out new particular approaches to that. I think the minister may have come back and forth.

I just want her to clarify because if somebody does have this act out there now, they're reading this and saying: How would you achieve that goal?

I do ask the minister if she could outline how that's going to be achieved.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Service NL.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Member opposite for the question. We've had considerable debate behind the scenes here in the House this afternoon about that particular item that he just brought up. In actual fact, I will be entering an amendment to Part III, section 4 when we arrive there. How we're going to do this, we had in this bill today that we would do the signed affidavit of the tenant to achieve that, but we're going to change that to statutory declaration because of the social distancing issue that has been brought to our attention with that.

We are trying really hard, Mr. Chair, to ensure – I mean this is unprecedented times, difficult times, and I have to say we have been working very co-operatively in this House today.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The first question I have, I guess, to the minister – I forget the department now. Anyway, he knows who I'm talking about – not allowed to say his name. Anyway, on the issue of the Labour Standards Act – and I appreciate the Minister of Natural Resources did say that – I guess she was referring to section 43.39(1)(g): “other reasons prescribed in the regulations” – that could perhaps be a catchment area to deal with somebody who requires to be off work related to – well, in this case it's a pandemic, but I guess any communicable disease emergency. This happens to be COVID-19. Hopefully, after this is gone, we won't see anything else for a long time. I certainly hope not, but who knows. That other prescribed reasons would be a catchall or an opportunity to deal with someone who has a mental health issue.

Again, I'm referring to a legitimate, diagnosed mental health issue. Because we all recognize, we've all stood on our feet in this House of Assembly – I'm sure every Member has over the last couple of years, for sure – and talked about the importance of mental health and how it's just as important as physical health and so on.

I'm a little disappointed that there wouldn't be an amendment there to actually capture and actually say spell it out, that mental health should be covered here and that it's not really mentioned. I just want to ask the minister –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. LANE:** Yeah.

I hear the minister talking about it can be prescribed in the regs. That's wonderful. I get that, but, again, we all know the problem with the regs is that we don't get to see the regs here in the House of Assembly.

While this particular minister may run off as soon as the House is closed and say: Get that in the regs right away, this is important stuff. He might do that. I'm sure he probably will. I hope he does, but there's no guarantee that the next minister might say: What's that in the regs for? Take that out of there. We don't want that. And nobody would be any the wiser until it happened. That's the problem with the regs. The regs can be changed at any given time by the minister without the approval of the House of Assembly. That's why I have always had concerns about the regs.

I guess the best I can hope for, as I don't see an actual amendment to enshrine it in the legislation itself, I would ask the minister if he would be willing to – I'll sit down – commit here in the House of Assembly, publicly, that mental health issues are going to be dealt with by this legislation, legitimate mental health issues relating to any communicable disease, this time being COVID-19.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

**MR. DAVIS:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd just first like to say a sincere thanks to everyone in the province who's working tirelessly to respond to this situation that we're facing as a province, as a global community. Whether you're first responders, health care professionals or in the grocery stores, our colleagues have said across the way these individuals deserve our thanks. I just want to

send out a heartfelt thanks to each and every one of them.

To address the question from the hon. Member, we have the ability through the Occupational Health and Safety Act that individuals can refuse unsafe working environments under that. That's not directly in relation to the question.

One of the things that I will say is that I did sit on the All-Party Committee for Mental Health and Addictions, which did some great work across the Island and across the aisle here as we'll say. To do that, we've used legislation from across the country and used jurisdictional scans to build this legislation. We struck the balance between the employers and the employees in this case as well. We were modelled after Ontario, BC, Nova Scotia and Saskatchewan.

The opportunity for us to help individuals with respect to COVID-19, we can go through the details. I think the MHA for Torngat Mountains went through a bunch very eloquently and passionately about the benefits of this as well. With respect to what my colleague said, the Minister of Natural Resources and Government House Leader, this can be picked up in the regulations at this point.

One of the things that we wanted to ensure is that those entitlements that individuals need, we'll be looking at that on a daily basis to see how this progresses over the next coming days, weeks. Hopefully, we say weeks because we don't want it to extend too much longer, but that's the reason why we have other pieces of legislation in the queue here today. We're not really sure exactly how long this is going to take to work through the system, but we want to make sure we protect our employees.

I can't do it justice as well as the MHA for Torngat Mountains did about the benefits to protecting our employees and ensuring they have stability from the economic standpoint when they do have to deal with this situation, which I hope they never have to. But so many of us in our community are and that's why these standards have been updated here today, to protect those employees that are experiencing COVID-19 and to ensure they have a job to go back to with respect their employer.

I hope that answered some of the questions from the hon. Member. I will take it back to the department and deal with that as well.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I'm not trying to be hard to get along with. I appreciate your answer, but I didn't necessarily sort of – you referred to the Minister of Natural Resources and said it can be dealt with under the regulations. We all know it can be dealt with. I guess I was hoping for a commitment to say it will be dealt with under the regulations. I didn't hear that unfortunately, but I guess all I can do is just basically say, once again, mental health is very important.

I can see this as being an issue and I'm just going to ask you – I don't need you to stand up and speak again to respond, but I'm going to just say for the record that this has to be considered, as far as I'm concerned. I'm going to ask you that as it's not going to be captured under the legislation itself – now we're going to the regulations – that it do go into the regulations. I have no guarantee that will happen. I hope it does.

The other question I have, Mr. Chair, relates to the act, An Act Respecting the Temporary Variation of Deadlines and Time Periods Prescribed in Acts of the Province. A question on that one or clarification, I suppose, really. What we've sort of been told – and if you look under expiry here, it says, "This Act shall cease to have effect after the end of the next sitting of the House of Assembly."

I've heard it said that this ends after we've dealt with the COVID virus situation. That's what I've heard some people throw in there. That may well be the intent and I'm not saying it is or it isn't the intent, but fair enough. It doesn't say that in the act. It doesn't say at the end of this particular pandemic, it says, "This Act shall cease to have effect after the end of the next sitting of the House of Assembly."

My question or my clarification I'm kind of just looking for – maybe I should know this but I don't so I'm going to ask it here now. The end

of the next sitting of the House of Assembly – so we're into a sitting of the House of Assembly. We had to break that sitting of the House of Assembly because of the COVID virus. We've come back for an emergency sitting.

I believe procedurally – and, again, this is sort of a procedural thing – this is still considered part of the sitting that we were in. This is still the spring sitting, if you will. So if we're in the spring sitting, that would mean that if, in three months from now, we decide it's safe to come back here, so to speak, and now we have the budget – so let's say we're doing the budget in June month or July month, or maybe it'll be September before we do the budget – I don't know. But if that's still considered this sitting, if it is – and that's what I'm trying to clarify – then that means that end of the next sitting means the end of the fall sitting. But if the fall sitting gets cancelled because we're into the fall doing the spring sitting that means that, in theory, those powers exist right up until this time next year. If this is all considered one sitting.

I know the minister, maybe you can't answer it – it is more for the Clerk than anybody. I don't know if I can even ask the Clerk. But I'm just wondering in terms of this sitting, when it says the next sitting, if we come back in whatever, in June, and then we have our budget, does it mean this ends then or is that considered a new sitting or not? It might seem a bit confusing, but it does matter in terms of the time and the way this is written.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm consulting to find out what the determinants were for why after the next sitting. I can tell when the next sitting will be, but, more importantly, what were the considerations for making it after the next sitting.

First of all, the worst-case scenario is the pandemic will last for six months and you aren't forced to deal with this as the first order or business. So more along the lines of when the consultations happened with the House of Assembly on this issue, it was determined that it will be prudent, because we don't know the

length of this pandemic, we don't know when we can be back to normal regular business, that it would be prudent to put in those timelines. Now, if you are concerned that – so we're in a sitting currently. This sitting would end when we prorogue, correct?

**CLERK:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. COADY:** I'm sorry, I'm not quite hearing it. So I'm going to get that information for you. I will sit down and when I have that information for you, I will come back up. But I will say this – and I think it's important that I say this – again, this was in consultation with the House of Assembly, with the statutory officers, to make a plan for the worst-case scenario.

We're allowing extension only for six months or the end of the next sitting, so we're trying to make it so that we're being as prudent and responsible as possible. Now, I understand you have some concerns – the timeline is one of them – but I'll get you better answers, because we're in the midst of trying to determine how best to address your concern.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you.

I appreciate it, Minister, and you probably didn't see that question coming.

I guess when you say this was determined by consultation with the House of Assembly, I'm assuming you mean through the all-party Committee. I'm guessing that's what you mean. I don't know, but as I'm not part of the all-party Committee, neither is my colleague, then this is new to me. Maybe you guys all got together and discussed it and you were fine, but I wasn't part of it, so this is all new information to me. I just want to say that.

Again, all I'm getting at – I'm not trying to create problems here. We still have an hour or two, or to 5:30 anyways, and I'm not going to stay here until 5:30. That's not my intent either, but I just want to clarify, if I'm voting on something, I want to understand what I'm voting for. That's my responsibility.

I guess the point I'm trying to make, though, is that if when we come back in three months from now, if that's what it is, if that's part of this same sitting and then the legislation is saying the powers end at the end of the next sitting, that means you could have the power to do this for the next year. It might not have been the intent. I'm talking about how it's written. That's the only question I'm asking.

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

**MS. COADY:** First of all, no. That's incorrect, okay?

A sitting is basically based on the calendar that you have before you. Currently, our calendar says June 4, right? Our current calendar is June 4. We are completed this sitting. Our next sitting – again, I have to remember the calendar – would be roughly November 1 to, I'm going to say, December 4. The dates could be wrong. That's the next sitting. At the absolute maximum, it would end on December 4. That's the absolute maximum, okay?

We don't know how long this pandemic is going to go on. So let's pretend that we don't get back in this House until the 1st of November – taking worst-case scenarios – then this bill sunsets on December 4. I'm seeing a nodding head by the Clerk. It would sunset on December 4. This is probably the only bill we have that would absolutely sunset, right? It gives the people of the House and the people of the province comfort that we actually do – it's temporary, it literally goes away. So walking down the path is – the worst-case scenario is this bill is completed on December 4, based on the current calendar. Am I being clear?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible.)

**MS. COADY:** Okay, good.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Minister, I appreciate that.



Again, I just want to say for the record, this is not an attempt to be disruptive in any way, but I'm voting for something and I just want to understand what I'm voting for. This is the first time I've seen this so I have to ask these questions.

If that's fine, I have no problem with that. My only concern is that this sitting, despite what's on the calendar, this sitting gets pushed ahead because we can't sit until June and then that extends the timeline even further down the road. That was my sort of concern the way it was written.

I'm told that's not the case. The Clerk says it's not. Perfect, excellent, glad to hear it; 100 per cent not a problem at all.

Minister, I guess the only other concern I have, I suppose, is the fact that – and I understand these are House bills and so on, House of Assembly act type bills and so on, refer to statutory offices of the House and the House of Assembly itself and so on. I'm just curious if anybody can provide me with any rationale other than it's an act that governs the House, so you threw them all in there. If that's the answer, fair enough, that's the answer, but I'm just wondering why would you need, for example, the Elections Act, 1991? What possible purpose could there be to extend any time frames in that? That's what I'm wondering.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I again remind the public, and I know the Member opposite understands this, the House of Assembly is the exclusive jurisdiction of the – really the Speaker would be the – and it doesn't come to the Premier nor to the House Leader or anything of that nature, I just want to make sure everyone is clear on that, in the public, because I understand the Member opposite would be.

In consulting with the House of Assembly and the statutory officers, they looked at all the worst-case scenarios. Allow me to give you a worst-case scenario. If I should catch COVID and I was unfortunate enough not to survive

COVID, my seat would be then vacant. There are timelines within the legislation that would require action to happen. So an abundance of caution. These are difficult things to talk about, but in the abundance of caution, you have to capture that in legislation. Please, God, I don't become sick; please, God, these things don't happen. I hope no one here gets sick. But you have to be responsible and prudent when you're looking at these – across a large group of legislation to say if the worst case happens, what do we do with that? So that's why it's captured there. There could be other reasons, but I know that that would be one.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**MR. LANE:** Thank you, Minister, for that explanation. I really do appreciate it, because maybe these discussions happened, as you say, with the House. They didn't happen with me, so I don't know, right? I can only go by what I know. Information that's not shared and I'm not asked, then I can't comment on some of this stuff. So I do appreciate that answer.

The final question I have on this, Minister, is – and then I'll be done with all of it, actually. The final question I have is in terms of any extensions that would be made to any of these acts for whatever reason that might be, can we have some assurance – and maybe it'll just happen anyway – but can we just have some assurance that if there's going to be an extension to any timelines in anything related to this, that all Members are made aware of the fact that you have extended timelines for a certain thing, whatever it is, and the reason why you've done it?

When I say all Members, I don't mean the all-party Committee. I mean all Members, including the two independent Members, so that we are kept in the loop with what's going on.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

There is a requirement of publication of a variation. Under section 7(1), if it's in for

government – and I'll use the Department of Natural Resources. If we have to vary a requirement for an audit, for example – and I've used this example to Members opposite, so that's why I'll use it again. If we have to vary a requirement of an audit, then it would have to be published on the government website and in the Gazette. And for issues in the House of Assembly, it would have to go on the House of Assembly website and, again, in the Gazette. So there would be publication of any variation.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Where to start? A couple of little things. To jump off on some of the things that my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands had mentioned, I do feel a little bit more comfortable with the fact that perhaps we can capture mental health illness in one of the regulations identified under 43.39 (g). However, I would like to point out, once again, that we're missing a bit of a group of individuals. Even though we are in a pandemic right now, people will still break their legs. People will still have a gall bladder attack. People will still have heart attacks and strokes.

If we take the anxiety or mental illness associated with COVID-19 and we put it on someone who's already at risk for a heart attack or already at risk for a stroke, then that individual cannot specifically say I was ill due to COVID or I had to take time off due to COVID, but the circumstances in which that individual became ill and was hospitalized or had to take time off work, even though it may not be directly attributable to COVID-19, that individual is not protected.

That individual does not have paid sick leave. That individual will not be able to go to work. That individual will not be able to avail of any federal programming or services. We will have an individual who is going to face an incredible hardship who will have less resources upon which to draw because, quite likely, if they are in a family unit, that entire family unit will also be having some difficulties.

We are going to have a situation where individuals will get missed. Again, I have also

not had an enormous amount of time to review this as well. There may be an opportunity to provide something in the regulations that will help capture these individuals. That would be an utter shame to see someone who would have had maybe an illness anyway or has an illness that has been a result of additional stress or anxiety or hardship that has befallen them as a result of COVID-19. That is not a direct relationship and that will be very difficult for that individual to access any additional programs and services. I think that is a bit of a gap in what we have provided here and I would like to, if at all possible, address that in the regulations.

I would also like to thank the minister and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands for addressing the issue of clarity of the next sitting. I feel a bit more comfortable about that. I think we have all heard of the timelines that we are looking at. Three months is what is being said publicly. If we want to think this through a little bit, this is a highly contagious disease. If we are not prudent, we can very well have this flare up yet again, so prudence would suggest that after the last case is identified and that individual healed, then it is safe to go out. We are on the front of this, not the back end. We have not seen the last case and, in fact, we haven't seen the first hundred cases, so this will only get worse before it gets better, so that is a prudent move.

Now, there are some questions for you, one of which includes the Nalcor timelines. Nalcor has a number of timelines that it has, and I noticed that the Nalcor act is not in this legislation, so I would have some questions around that.

One in particular that comes to mind – and, again, this much time to look at it – the explorations and bids, exploration wells. They have a specific timeline in which they have to expend X number of dollars associated with their bids. Realistically, no one is out doing that now because we're not capturing a whole pile of people out on a seismic ship, because we all know that a whole pile of people piled in a little ship is not a good idea right now. I think that one also needs a little bit of clarification.

The last thing, I think this is something that we've all been talking around for a while and I think I want to make this very, very clear. I understand the House of Assembly Act and the

Elections Act, both are included in the Schedule just in case the most horrible thing happens and we lose a Member or two. Any manner of these things could happen and it would be a travesty if we lost anyone, but it would be worse still if then we were forced to have an election because we hadn't changed our timelines.

In spite of that I have to admit that in the last year, I have become hypervigilant to politics. That has made me extra cautious. It has made me look at things in different ways. It has moved me outside of my nature. What I would be very, very disappointed in is if this legislation that we are proposing today is being used for political gain or political manipulation.

I will say that I have not seen any of that in the workings I've had up until this point. The joint panel is working well. I feel that all our voices are being heard. Our ideas are being respected. We come together collectively and make decisions and I must say that is working well, but I have to look forward and recognize that is a possibility and I want to be absolutely certain that we will not see the legislation that we are implementing today be used for political gain or political manipulation.

Again, I do not feel that is the case, but it is not our peers in the House of Assembly that will judge us for that; it will be the public that will judge us if we use this legislation for means or for purposes that we have not addressed here today. Otherwise, I think this legislation is reasonable. I would like to see our concerns be addressed.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Allow me to try and address your concerns. You mentioned about offshore exploration and how are we're going to deal with that. Under section 3 of the act it talks about, "A minister may, on the advice of the Attorney General" – so with legal involvement – "temporarily vary a deadline or time period prescribed ...." We will

have to take each of these considerations under review and make a determination as to whether or not a timeline will need to be changed.

I think you're raising a very valid point. Likely we would have to make some accommodation for the fact that we are in a pandemic. We'll take these under advisement and allow the officials to look at each – I don't want to make a declaration today, but we'll take them under advisement as they come up and, of course, with the involvement of legal to make sure that we are being as fulsome in our review as possible. I do believe that there will be changes required, based on the fact that we're in a pandemic. That was to answer your first one.

The second one was about the concern about whether or not politics plays in the inclusion of the House of Assembly in this act. I can say that from a government perspective, having the ministers and Premier captured in the operations of government was most important, obviously.

There was a discussion with the House of Assembly saying: do you need to be captured? I think in consultation with statutory officers it was determined that indeed they felt – and that's why you see the House of Assembly legislation listed and not all legislation listed. You're granting to a minister the opportunity to say there will be a six-month deferral of a timeline – not elimination of a timeline, deferral of a timeline.

Again, that prudence that you talked about, speaking with the House of Assembly, the Table Officers and trying to determine should we capture then, again, the House of Assembly, because we don't know what we don't know. That was the concept there. You will note in the legislation that the decision doesn't rest with government. The decision does not rest with government, it really is a House of Assembly decision as to whether or not and your statutory officers that will make that decision. It will not be government, it will not be a minister, it will not be the Premier. It is the statutory officer. I'm looking to the Clerk who's offering you the same assurances that I'm offering you.

So politics cannot play a role because it will be the statutory officers who will ensure that what they're doing is the responsible thing to do. I'm

looking around making sure I'm seeing nodding heads when I'm saying that so that you can have the same assurances.

**CHAIR:** Seeing no other questions, shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those again, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clause 2.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

For everyone's clarity, clause 2 is actually referring to Part I, Hydro Corporation Act, 2007.

So seeing no questions, shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBER:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

**CLERK:** Clause 3.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 3 carry, referring to Labour Standards Act?

The Chair recognizes the Minister of Service NL.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Mr. Chair, I'd like to introduce an amendment to –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** No.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** No?

Clause 4. Okay, sorry.

**CHAIR:** Okay. Seeing no questions, shall clause 3 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

On motion, clause 3 carried.

**CLERK:** Clause 4.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 4 carry?

The Minister of Service NL.

**MS. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Okay, we'll try again.

I'd like to introduce an amendment, Mr. Chair, to clause 4 of the bill.

That it is amended by deleting proposed paragraph 19(6)(b) of the Residential Tenancies Act, 2018 and substituting the following: a statutory declaration of the tenant.

Mr. Chair, this amendment would replace the requirement in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2018 for a tenant to provide a signed affidavit as proof of loss of income with a requirement to provide a statutory declaration.

Mr. Chair, this is in relation to the discussion we had earlier about trying to ensure we can put forward a method that would allow social distancing to the best of our ability and enable an individual to be able to support their request with the fact that their income has been affected by COVID-19, but they will be getting additional government support and that they can prove this to the landlord.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

We're going to recess shortly to review that amendment to see if it's in order or not.

### Recess

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

We've had an opportunity to review the amendment and the amendment is found to be in order.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**CHAIR:** Seeing no speakers, all in favour of the amendment, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 4 carry with the amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 4, as amended, carried.

**CLERK:** Clause 5.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 5 carry, Temporary Variation of Statutory Deadlines Act?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 5 carried.

**CLERK:** Clause 6.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 6 carry, Commencement?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 6 carried.

**CLERK:** The Schedule.

**CHAIR:** Shall the Schedule carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, the Schedule carried.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic.

**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 Bill 33 with 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 with amendment, carried.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Great co-operation of the House today to pass that bill. I thank my colleagues.

I move, Mr. Chair, the Committee rise and report Bill 33.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 33.

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!

Are we ready to proceed?

Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

**MR. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 33 with amendment.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matter to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 33 carried with amendment.

When shall this report be received?

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**MS. COADY:** Now.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time presently, by leave.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, third reading of Bill 33.

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

**MS. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 33, An Act Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic, be now read a third time.

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the said 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 Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic. (Bill 33)

**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 Respecting Certain Measures In Response To The COVID-19 Pandemic,” read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 33)

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

**MS. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, I want to thank everyone in the House today for their co-operation, their safety, because they’ve been – we’ve been trying to be as careful as we can be. I thank the Table Officers for making sure that we were the required distance apart – and having some really nice moisturizing care sanitizer, it’s actually quite nice. So I want to recognize them.

First of all, I think, on behalf of all of us, we’d like to thank the Premier, Minister Haggie and, of course, the chief medical officer for outstanding leadership during this very difficult time. I’m reassured knowing that the three of them are doing the utmost for the province. I think that if we could take a moment, as the House of Assembly, and recognize them for those efforts, I think it would be important, Mr. Speaker. I know all ministers are working very, very hard as well and I know that the civil service is doing its utmost and rising above and beyond what you could ever expect. They’re all heroes.

I will say that the many, many people who are in essential services, who are in uniformed services – the nurses, the doctors, the lines people, people from Newfoundland Hydro and Newfoundland Power, those that are in grocery stores supporting all of us during this pandemic – are our heroes. We can’t thank them enough. We can’t recognize them enough.

I wanted to take this opportunity on behalf of the House of Assembly and I think all of us. I know my colleagues that are watching, the MHAs that are watching, I want to say to them I thank them for their service, their help, their availability during this crisis, because they have truly risen above and beyond any call of duty. We’re truly blessed to be in Newfoundland and Labrador

and we’re truly blessed to care for one another. That’s the only thing that we all can say at the end of day, Mr. Speaker, is that we are working to care for one another.

I heard the other day someone say, pretend as if you were infected and that you don’t want to share it with anyone. I thought that put it in a different perspective for me. So I’ve been doing everything, including running around today with a pen and kind of with a cleaner, making sure that we were being as cautious as we could be, because if you think you are infected, you certainly don’t want your loved ones, your family, your friends or anyone else infected.

Mr. Speaker, please tell to the people of the province to stay home, stay safe, stay well and pretend that they have it and their family is infected and they don’t want to give it to anybody else. That way we will all ensure that we bend the curve on the pandemic and really flatten – I know people are using flatten the curve but bending the curve, flattening the curve will be so important.

There are people around this world, Mr. Speaker, that are truly suffering and we are suffering in different ways. I know I have a family member in hospital. I can’t go visit. It’s difficult for family, but we all know it’s to the benefit of everyone that we stay away.

Mr. Speaker, I will say before I close this House on behalf of all of us – I think I can say that – thank you to those that are serving and those that continue to serve and for the leadership that we have. Do you know what? Newfoundland and Labrador will be stronger, will be better because of the way we care for one another. We’ve risen through world wars, we’ve risen through downturns in the economy, through the closure of the fishery and this will be another moment for Newfoundland and Labrador to rise again and we will – we are. My only message is to be safe to everybody.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, at 5:22 on a historic day, I move, seconded by the Member for St. John’s East - Quidi Vidi, that this House do now adjourn to the call of the Chair.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Hear, hear!

**MR. SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that this House does now adjourn to the call of the Chair.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

It's been a different type of day here in the House, but we're in different times. Again, I'd like to thank all the Members of the House for their co-operation in making this session a productive and safe experience for everyone. I'd like to thank the Table Officers, the Sergeant-at-Arms and other people that has made the broadcast possible as well.

Again, thank you very much.

This House now stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

On motion, the House adjourned to the call of the Chair.