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Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear Members' statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Ferryland, Bonavista, Terra Nova and Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

MR. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, today I recognize and congratulate a strong, young woman from my district who was recently awarded the Loran scholarship worth \$100,000.

Lydia Hardy of Rencontre East – as all locals say round counter east – was one of 36 recipients chosen this year for the scholarship. Founded in 1988, the scholarship is awarded to undergraduate recipients who show character, service and leadership.

Lydia is a tireless volunteer who has given her time and work to mental health issues, human rights, environmental issues and also community development. Through huge support from her community and her guidance counsellor at school, she won the award. She is – and the people of the community are – Rencontre proud.

Mr. Speaker, she also believes that you don't win anything without a fight. Overcoming adversity and indifference is nothing strange for her as she personally faced many challenges. Her advice is "to keep fighting, even if you don't know what you're fighting for."

Mr. Speaker, her plan is to study neurobehavioral science and then continue on in the field of medicine. She's hoping to start her post-secondary studies here at Memorial University.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Lydia Hardy and in wishing her the best as she continues her journey to success.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this House to recognize the St. Shott's Recreation Committee. On February 15, I was honoured to attend a community supper in St. Shott's. St. Shott's is a small town in my district with 58 residents. I was so impressed with such wonderful community spirit, and to see a small town with such a big heart and so much passion to do good for their area.

This group organizes many activities such as dart tournaments, card games, dances and community suppers, Christmas activities for all ages, fitness programs, et cetera. They also organize the annual St. Shott's weekend that is held every August and has an annual memorial Christmas mass for their deceased loved ones. They host a fundraiser each year for the Trepassey Lions Club Sick Fund and are currently in the process of preparing Come Home Year 2022.

The same people have served on this committee for the past 15 years, and some for over 30. Present committee members are Anita Molloy, Sylvia Molloy, Joanna Finlay, Elizabeth Molloy and Marie Gibbons. This committee is to be commended for their accomplishments.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating the St. Shott's Recreation Committee.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It gives me great pleasure to celebrate Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) Terry Stead's 38 years of exemplary service to our nation.

Lieutenant Colonel Stead was born in Little Catalina in 1962 and joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1979 at the ripe age of 17 years old. His career highlights included service in all three battalions of the Royal Canadian Regiment, the Royal New Brunswick Regiment and the Royal Newfoundland Regiment.

He saw operational deployments to Cyprus, Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia, Afghanistan and Israel. His appointments included command team positions in all levels of an infantry battalion up to the rifle company as both sergeant major and officer commanding a dismounted infantry company.

In 2014, he was appointed as commanding officer of the 5th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group, the largest reserve unit in Atlantic Canada. Lieutenant Colonel Stead's training included basic parachutist, advanced winter warfare instructor, advanced small arms instructor, advanced reconnaissance patrolman, United Nations military observer and army tactical operations, to name a few.

He received numerous awards for outstanding merit and exceptional service, to include the Queen's Jubilee Medal and commendations from the chief of defence staff and commander of the Canadian Army. In 2010, he was recognized for outstanding service to the military and inducted as a Member of the Order of Military Merit.

I ask the Members of the 49th House of Assembly to join me in issuing a sincere thank you to Lieutenant Colonel Stead for his outstanding service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

MR. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to pay tribute to a fallen comrade from the District of Terra Nova.

Mr. Sidney Matthews was a Korean War veteran and a royal Canadian Army member who served as a peacekeeper. Sadly, he passed away on June 8 at the age of 90.

Comrade Sid was a founding member and charter member of the Legion Branch 48 in Port Blandford. For over 60 years he was instrumental in building the Legion. In 1964, he nailed the first nail; he served the first beer and he was the first bartender. In 1966, he was elected as its treasurer and through the years he held numerous positions, including president.

During his 60-plus years, Sid remained faithful to his community volunteering and was recognized on many occasions: Lifetime membership award; 50 year gold service medal; 55 year gold bar; Branch 48 service medal; 55 year certificate of appreciation; Canada 150 Award, and charter member and founding member award

On July 1, 2018, a dedication stone was unveiled with the names of Sid's fellow veterans and friends from the community of Port Blandford. As the last surviving Korean War veteran, Sid was proud to be part of this unveiling. Mr. Sidney Mathews name will now be engraved on the dedication stone.

I ask Members to honour Sid for his years of service to our country, province and community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, today I would like to recognize an everyday hero in Grand Falls-Windsor, Terri-Lynn Barry.

Terri-Lynn's involvement with such programs as Welcome NL and Ride Don't Hide are combined with her role on the Central Health Advisory Board and Central Health and Addictions committee. As director of youth and community employment services and the manager of the Youth 2000 centre, Terri-Lynn has become a valued leader in our community.

During COVID-19, Terri-Lynn delivered hundreds of hampers where needed, including Kids Eat Smart food hampers, all the while delivering virtual programs so could kids could

remain engaged. Whether she is teaching children the fundamentals like baking, reading to kids in the evening or giving our youth a safe place to go when they feel lost, she is an asset and we are so lucky to have her in Grand Falls-Windsor.

I have had the pleasure of working with this amazing individual this past year, and I ask you now to join me as we honour Terri-Lynn Barry, a true hero for our youth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to announce that our government and the Transition House Association of Newfoundland and Labrador are partnering on a dedicated, province-wide domestic violence phone line that will go live next week.

The Transition House Association's membership consists of 10 provincially-funded shelters in the province. These shelters are staffed by highly skilled and compassionate individuals whose mandate is to counsel and assist women who are facing violence.

The Domestic Violence Help Line will have a single telephone number for the entire province. The service will detect the region from which the person is calling and route the call to the closest transition house. The caller will then be able to immediately speak with a trained professional who will assist them directly, or connect them to the appropriate service or organization in the community, including our women's centres, Violence Prevention NL organizations, or medical and/or policing services.

I am also pleased to say this new phone line will have full texting capabilities.

Mr. Speaker, more information on the Domestic Violence Help Line, including the new toll-free number, will be released in the coming days as soon as details are finalized.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking our transition houses and all women-serving organizations for the tremendous work they have done and continue to do as we make our way through COVID-19.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I would like to thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of her statement. Mr. Speaker, we, on this side of the House, join the minister in thanking the Transition House Association in partnering on a new Domestic Violence Help Line.

Mr. Speaker, we all know too well the very public and tragic cases of domestic violence that have occurred in just the past few years. These have raised public awareness and help to shine a light on this issue. Anything we can do as a society to combat domestic violence is a step in the right direction.

Women's advocates and groups have been lobbying for a dedicated service for months – and, indeed, years – to have this resource to combat domestic violence. It is very unfortunate, however, that we are three months into the COVID-19 and the minister is still unable to provide specific details or even the telephone number.

Government has been too late on this issue, and the lack of leadership is not lost on women's groups in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. I also thank the minister for her commitment to helping women who are subject to domestic violence.

Snowmageddon and COVID-19 have exacerbated the danger faced by those enduring intimate partner violence. The presence of an understanding voice and a source of needed information will be a beacon of hope for those feeling hopeless.

I commend the minister on her work with transition houses and women-serving organizations. This Help Line is another small step on the long road to equality.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Normally, Mr. Speaker, around this time of the year I stand in my place and recognize Public Service Week in Newfoundland and Labrador, but things are different. Today, I sit in my spot to provide thanks in a different way.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have postponed Public Service Week until such time as we can safely undertake the activities that make the week a highlight of the government calendar.

But this does not in any way lessen the need to recognize our public service, and so today I do just that.

This year, more than ever, has demonstrated the talent, commitment and sacrifices that public service employees make for the people of this province.

Amidst the challenges of COVID-19, public service employees rose above and tirelessly gave

of their professional and often personal time during what has been an especially difficult period. Mr. Speaker, it has been nothing short of professional excellence.

I know I speak for every Member when I say that we look forward to thanking you in person for your hard work and dedication. But until that time, I ask all Members of this Legislature to join me in reflecting on how members of the public service support us each and every day in serving the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and to express thanks for the work that they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

On behalf of all Members of the Official Opposition, I would like to thank all public service workers for their ongoing efforts and to wish them well during this Public Service Week.

While the activities are postponed, we do not need to postpone recognizing the hard-working and talented individuals who helped to administer our government services, provide policy advice and help individuals through their greatest challenges.

To all our public service workers, I offer a heartfelt thank you. I would also like to acknowledge the great challenge which the public service has overcome during this ongoing public health emergency. Working from home has its challenges and the public service has risen above them to provide critical and important services to the residents of this province.

I look forward to the time when we can host the Public Service Week activities and properly thank our public service for their efforts.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, I remember my time as a public servant when Public Service Week brought the annual softball tournament and the beginning of summer hours – lighter days indeed.

This year I am proud to have the opportunity to recognize the tireless work of our public servants who have gone above and beyond the call of duty to keep this province running during what are exceptional times. Their dedication and professionalism has ensured our programs and services were delivered during this pandemic.

We owe them a debt of gratitude. Keep up the great work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

MR. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Last week, the Minister of Health told us that lack of PPE prevents our hospitals from getting beyond 75 per cent bed occupancy.

Is this a health care crisis?

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

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

It is a challenge, there's no doubt about it. We are a little different than other jurisdictions and perhaps a considerable way ahead.

I'm pleased to report to this House we've had a considerable delivery of both gowns and masks over the weekend and I've been in discussions with staff today to encourage further increase in activity within the RHAs to get to our 75 per cent level by the end of Level 3.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: The question was: Is this a health care crisis when you can't get beyond 75 per cent for the foreseeable future?

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

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

The restoration of normal function is predicated on 75 per cent activity at the end of Level 3. If and when we go to Level 2, we will set new targets and likely that will see a further approximation to full occupancy.

We have still not yet safely decided on what margin of beds we need to keep in reserve against the second wave, but there will be a further increase in RHA activity over the course of the next level.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Many thousands of patients and their families who can't get access to health care think that this is a crisis.

Now, we asked the Minister of Health when did he learn there was no stockpile of PPE and he did not answer.

When exactly did he learn there is no stockpile of PPE exactly?

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

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

I can't give an exact date. What was left in the stockpile when I took office was 300,000 masks in various state of disrepair, some of which have been repurposed.

The facts of the case are that stockpile had been left on the vine since 2009-2010 and been parked in a corner and left. Our proposal now is when supplies allow, for us to build a stockpile, a buffer into the supply chain so that we're not faced with that situation again.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: The minister must have missed the point of the question.

When did he find out about this?

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

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

I cannot recall; I shall go back and check with my notes and briefing notes. The facts of the case are we inherited a situation where all that was in the cupboard in Carbonear, as I recall, was 300,000 masks, and that happened before my time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Well, Mr. Speaker, we'll look forward to the minister addressing that when he reappears in the House tomorrow.

Business leaders warned last week that we are on the precipice of a wave of irreparable economic disaster – and I'm quoting that – and asked for immediate action.

Where is the plan?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, there was a letter that was addressed private and confidential that came to me last week. Many of those business leaders that signed that letter were people that we worked very closely with during this pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, we're all aware of the challenges that this province has faced even prior to this pandemic. The oil and gas industry, which represents nearly 30 per cent of our GDP has been challenged, not by the pandemic as much as the result in the collapse of oil pricing.

We continue to work with the federal government; we continue to work with other provinces as well, making sure that we can position the oil and gas industry into its place where it can actually create revenues for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has been able to work with the Bank of Canada and others to make sure that we continue to borrow in Newfoundland and Labrador. There is some \$200 million in the contingency fund, Mr. Speaker, that is part of the recovery plan for the economy in Newfoundland and Labrador.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

Perhaps it's just me, but I didn't hear an answer to the question, where is the plan.

Now, maybe the Premier can answer this one. Wayne Myles signed the business leaders' letter. When the Premier's own appointee as chair of the biggest government profit centre, the Liquor Corporation, warns of economic disaster, does the Premier lose any sleep?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The people that would have signed that letter, Mr. Speaker, were a couple of things. One, they wanted the province to ignore Level 2 and move immediately into what would have been Level I; that is something that we would need to work with public health officials. There were a number of things in terms of the request in that letter but moving to Alert Level I right now, Mr. Speaker, all we need to do – and I say to the Leader of the Opposition I'm not so sure if he's ignoring what's happening around the world, if he's looked at what's happening in Florida, Texas, California, Arizona over this weekend as people open up their economies, you must do it very strategically.

I would say there's overwhelming support from the people of our province to make sure that before we move, we must be prepared to respond to a surge, if it comes. We've only been at this program with the Alert Levels for a number of weeks. We will move but only (inaudible) –

MR. SPEAKER: The Premier's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We know that times of high stress and economic instability increase rates of domestic violence upon women.

Why has it taken the minister well over 100 days into this crisis to implement a simple province helpline to support women of domestic violence?

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

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

Most of us would assume that it would take overnight to put in a phone line such as this. That's not the case, Mr. Speaker. There were a

number of factors that needed to be considered, one in particular being the texting capability. Given this day and age, we need to have texting capacity and, of course, we need to have trained staff to work with the system. Women who will be at their most vulnerable will be calling in to this helpline, so we have to ensure that all factors were put in place.

It is essential to understand that this won't only address the immediate needs, but this line will be used post-COVID-19 and we wanted a service that would be in the best in of the most vulnerable in our province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, this should have been done long ago, and it may very well be a case of too little too late for many vulnerable women who have been in isolation over these number of weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard from women and women's groups throughout the province who believe that the silence of the minister has been deeply felt on important women's issues.

How can the minister stand idly by as women are struggling and trying to cope with issues like the lack of affordable child care for example?

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

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

Affordable child care is a very important issue in this province, and I want to ensure this hon. House and the hon. Member that I have worked closely with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in the beginning days of the COVID-19 pandemic when our government provided some \$5 million to help those early childhood educators and those who were using the child care services but would not be having the service available to them. I will

continue to work along with my colleagues on this side of the House on that same issue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, as we transition through this pandemic and continue to confront economic and social issues, it is vital that we address the structural inequalities that exist.

What plan does the minister have in place to address these inequalities and to ensure that women also have the opportunity to recover and thrive?

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

MS. HALEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for her question. It's ironic when we have the chief medical officer leading this pandemic a female. We have three CEOs of our regional health authorities, Mr. Speaker, female. Our dean of medicine is female, as well as many of the front-line workers of essential services are female.

I'm very proud of the leadership role that they have taken, Mr. Speaker, and I will continue to work along with them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. EVANS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, the Child and Youth Advocate issued a statement of concern about the unacceptable delay in establishing an inquiry for Innu children in the child protection system. Additionally, this government still hasn't implemented all the recommendations for Inuit children in care.

Why does this government seem more concerned about the historical racism reflected in a statue, Mr. Speaker, while they continue to procrastinate on addressing institutional racism, especially when it is impacting our Indigenous children in care?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, certainly we have not been procrastinating, Mr. Speaker, when you look at the two different inquiries here. The Child and Youth Advocate this morning with her statement – we were given two options, or there were two inquiries that would need to be done, two reviews. One, working with the Nunatsiavut Government. They were prepared to work with the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate to do the investigation, the review of Child Protection Services, and that report has been made public.

The second was the Innu inquiry, Mr. Speaker. So we work very closely with both Sheshatshiu and Natuashish and leaders within the Innu Nation to put in place an inquiry. First and foremost, it was important that the federal government would be involved. There was a lengthy process on the terms of reference. Secondly, was to put in place a commissioner that could actually lead the inquiry. We need to be able to work with the Innu residents to make sure they had the appropriate commissioner in place. That is a work that is ongoing now.

I can assure the Member opposite that this provincial government is committed to making sure this inquiry is done, but we must be able to work with the (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: The time for an answer has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Earlier today we learned the details, or some of the details, on the essential worker wage top-up.

One of those details being that the employer will apply on behalf of the employee.

I ask the minister responsible: In the case of businesses that have gone out of business, how will the employee apply for this top-up?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, and I thank the Member for his question.

Obviously, this is a program designed to help the lower income essential workers in our province, Mr. Speaker. If there is a situation where an employer is gone out of business, we certainly won't see those employees disadvantaged because of that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Applications for this top-up won't be available until July and up to the end of July. We all understand the importance of our low-income essential workers.

When will they be expected to receive their cheques?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and, again, I thank the Member for his question.

This is a program where we will work with employers to get the money into the hands of the employees as quickly as possible. We obviously need to rely on the employers to apply for the program. We have provided 10 per cent of the amount provided to the employer to cover their costs. So as employers get the information to government, it will be processed as quickly as possible.

The application time, as the Member has pointed out, will start the first week of July. We expect the applications no later than the end of July,

and as quickly as they can be processed by government, they will be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We've seen issues with the commercial rent program whereby businesses would have preferred to apply for the rent themselves as opposed to going through the landlords. In this particular case, you have employers administering to the employees.

Looking at this, and given that these top-ups will take deductions such as EI, CPP, personal income tax and the like, what would the actual essential worker receive given he will be receiving \$1,200?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The 10 per cent provided to the employer is to cover the employer's cost of the CPP and EI deductions and so on. So, for the employee, Mr. Speaker, this is obviously a taxable benefit. Their contributions to those programs would be deducted from those amounts as well.

To specifically say what an employee would receive is almost impossible without knowing their personal deductions. Each employee would have a different amount of personal deductions, but it is a taxable benefit.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Given that we've had the luxury of looking at what other provinces are doing, is this similar process being taken with other provinces?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Different provinces have provided a different program across the board, Mr. Speaker. Part of the reason our province – it had taken so long to get this program approved by the federal government. They provided the parameters in which we had to operate, such as the \$2,500 salary maximum. We negotiated that up to \$3,000 on a monthly basis.

It was initially intended for health care workers. They provided additional parameters there, broadened it. We've gone with the most broad parameters we could, which is Canada's Public Safety definition of essential workers, Mr. Speaker. We've tried to broaden the benefit to as many people as we could.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, many parents are reporting a very wide discrepancy in teacher-student interactions over the course of this pandemic. Government had no plan to assure that there were minimum benchmarks and standards of teacher-student interactions to ensure achievement of these core outcomes and to assure that students who needed more assistance received it.

What grade would the minister assign to government's effort?

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the question of my colleague.

Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of this pandemic we were certainly thrown into a situation here that we had absolutely no time to plan for. Given the fact that we had an education system to continue to operate here, we did the best that we could, given the time constraints we had.

Mr. Speaker, I tip my hat to the educators. They've again – putting the resources in place on the connectivity was a struggle. We want to ensure that we have a plan going forward for September and, certainly, that plan would have all students back in the schools.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: In keeping with the plan for September, Mr. Speaker, this morning the CEO of the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District, Tony Stack, was in the media suggesting there are challenges in the school system he does not have answers to. We still have no plan or even basic information for September coming.

When is government going to release a specific plan for the new school year?

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, discussions and planning with the school districts, the NLTA, Public Health officials have been well underway and we're working towards having a plan in place as soon as possible. I've also been in contact, Mr. Speaker, with the Federation of School Councils. The English School District is beginning consultations with school councils, chairs and parent representatives this week.

A plan will be provided; an approach and guidance for school districts to put into operation, given the particular status of the pandemic come September. We are focusing on having a full return to class come September and we'll take the advice of Public Health officials as we get closer to that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Stack also revealed this morning that children may have to find their own way to school in September and the district is still

waiting on the information from the department on provincial assessment, curriculum and graduation requirements.

Again, when is the minister going to release a plan for September?

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

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, my hon. colleague brings up a good point with regard to our busing systems. I'd like to be in a position to give concrete facts here today, but this all depends on where the pandemic is in September.

Our plan, Mr. Speaker, we'll hopefully have in place sometime towards the end June. Our plan is to have the full student population back in classes in September. We will take the advice of Public Health officials as we approach September.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, a constituent of mine, Leah Hollahan, is a parent of two children in the K-to-12 school system residing in Southern Bay. She has been advocating many years for improved Internet service in her area. Ms. Hollahan states that if online learning is a tool for her children's education, it should be an essential service. When Google Classroom was in session this past year the screen was freezing up and delayed.

Will government provided funding to provide equitable access to technology and Internet for our students?

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our public school system, Mr. Speaker, is based on equity for all students. It's a fundamental part of our education system and one that we're all

working to achieve during this extraordinary time.

The school district, Mr. Speaker, distributed hundreds of devices to students this school year and we found options to address connectivity issues such as portable Wi-Fi devices, iPads with data cards. Our plan is have the resources put in place for all students. We realize that there was an issue with resources this year and I think most of us sitting here as Members today know that we have a connectivity problem in the province as well. Hopefully, that will be addressed at the same time, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Minister, are you buying all the PPE that is available in this province from local companies?

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

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

We work closely with TaskforceNL, for example, to make ourselves pretty well self-sufficient in face shields, for example. We have prototypes of gloves and gowns with Health Canada awaiting final evaluation.

In terms of supplies locally, any supplier that has contacted our department has had their inventory assessed and, if suitable, we bought it. If it's not suitable, we haven't.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Our understanding is that – fair enough – the department has bought specific pieces of PPE off individuals, but on small amounts, even though these same providers have massive amounts that could be provided.

Again, I ask: Why would you not procure all of the PPEs that are available locally from these companies? When you're providing small proportions of it, why not buy it all? We're in a pandemic, as you had mentioned, and you had mentioned earlier that the cupboard was bare when you started. Five years ago was an opportunity to replenish that cupboard.

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

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

The key around PPE and these resources is whether or not they pass Canadian, or now even European, standards to allow them to be used safely in our facility. The worst situation we could find ourselves in would be to provide health care staff with PPE that was not fit for the job. Those large batches of PPE of which we had been made aware, a significant number of them have turned out not to meet the appropriate standards; therefore, we will not spend public money on it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister table the list of PPE purchases in the last four months, detailing by supplier, quantity and the amount?

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

MR. HAGGIE: That may be something of a challenge, Mr. Speaker, in the sense that we're getting a significant proportion of our PPE at the moment through national and through federal supply lines. I have no way of knowing directly

where that comes from. What I do know is that these have been inspected at their point of purchase or at their point of delivery and have been certified by the federal government and our agents as fit for the purpose.

I cannot go back with any certainty to identify precise sources for this equipment. I simply know that it's fit for the job and will protect the people who need it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Opposition House Leader for a quick question and answer.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: Has any monies been forwarded to TaskforceNL to procure PPEs for Newfoundland and Labrador health care?

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

MR. HAGGIE: I am aware that funds have been provided to seed their local manufacturing, Mr. Speaker, but as to whether or not money was given to them for advanced purchases, I would have to go back and check. I can do that.

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance has promised to deliver a budget before Interim Supply runs out, barring any unforeseen event. I note that the impending election of a new Liberal Leader and premier is not unforeseen. A second wave of COVID-19 is not unforeseen, nor is the possibility of a non-confidence vote on a non-collaborative minority government budget unforeseen.

In order for a budget to be debated and passed, or an election held before we run out of Interim Supply, a budget ought to be presented to the House by the end of July.

I ask the Minister of Finance: Will he commit to presenting a budget in ample time to allow democracy to run its course?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

After three years of promises, government has yet to launch an inquiry into Innu youth in the child protection system. Serious events have transpired including the recent death of an Innu child in care, which, as of today, prompted the Child and Youth Advocate to issue an unprecedented statement of concern calling government's foot dragging unacceptable.

I ask the ministers responsible: Enough is enough, will he order this long-promised commission struck immediately?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I believe the Premier previously addressed this in Question Period. This is a commission that has taken some time, due to the fact that it requires three partners. We've been working with the Innu communities, as well as the federal government.

We are moving forward with this. One of the things that we do need is a commissioner put in place, and that is something we have been working with the Innu on; but, again, as the Premier stated previously, this is something that will happen in 2020.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The term Discovery Day ignores the fact that Indigenous people predates European arrival to our province. My wife's family have hunted and trapped in Labrador for thousands of years as many other Labrador Innu and Inuit.

I ask the Minister Responsible for Labrador and Indigenous Affairs: Given that Indigenous organizations are asking for this, will he consult with Indigenous communities and governments and do away with Discovery Day?

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Sure, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

Again, this is a topic that comes up and it's one I've had conversations with multiple people about. It's something that – again, with Discovery Day coming up very soon – will continue to be a discussion item and one that should be a discussion item; however, I'm unable at this time to commit to such a plan, but what I will say is it's something that our government will be willing to consider and have multiple and further conversations with interested parties.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Thank you for the promotion, Mr. Speaker. Does it come with pay?

Mr. Speaker, speculation as to what courses will be taught in the 2020-21 school year is creating anxiety and concern for teachers. Teachers have informed me that at recent staff meetings they were told to be prepared to teach or help teach something else if a particular course was not going to be offered in the fall. As one teacher noted, he and his colleagues never really know what's expected of them.

I ask the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: What, if any, courses

are going to be dropped or what changes to the provincial curriculum are being considered?

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the question coming from the hon. Member.

Mr. Speaker, again, our plan is to have students back full-time in class come September. We're looking at doing a full curriculum and having public exams next year. Mr. Speaker, the school staff are delivering professional learning to over 5,000 teachers within the English system this year. Certainly, as you can appreciate, this is a huge undertaking.

Again, Mr. Speaker, our plan is to be back in class and no changes in the curriculum.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. J. DINN: Mr. Speaker, in order for parents of school-aged children to fully participate in the opening of the Newfoundland and Labrador economy, it's essential that the province has a fully functioning education system that can operate under public health directions in September.

I ask the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development: As the government spends the COVID-19 contingency fund, how much of the fund is government putting aside to support the public education system so that students and parents are not disadvantaged?

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're certainly focusing on having a full return to class instruction this fall, but we are also very aware that we must ensure, if needed, that remote learning can be delivered to all students.

There's considerable work, Mr. Speaker, underway to determine what is required for September to support enhanced digital learning for both students and teachers. We want to ensure that no student is disadvantaged, Mr. Speaker, and that teachers are fully equipped for digital learning regardless of the situation with the pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

MR. OSBORNE: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: We'll revert to Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker – one of the benefits of not being able to stand in your place.

Mr. Speaker, pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling four orders-in-council relating to funding pre-commitments for the fiscal years 2020-2021 to 2024-2025.

MR. SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to move the following resolution: Be it resolved by the House of Assembly as follows:

WHEREAS the Lieutenant-Governor in Council appointed a tribunal under section 28 of the *Provincial Court Act, 1991* to make recommendations on the salaries and benefits of judges and the chief judge; and

WHEREAS the tribunal submitted its recommendations to the Minister of Justice and Public Safety on June 6, 2019; and

WHEREAS the *Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Court Judges Salary and Benefits Tribunal Report* was tabled in this House on June 25, 2019, as required by section 28.2 of the act; and

WHEREAS the House of Assembly is required to approve, vary or reject the report; and

WHEREAS government has decided to ask this hon. House to accept all the recommendations of the tribunal as contained in its report of June 4, 2019;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House accept the recommendations of the 2018 Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Court Judges Salary and Benefits Tribunal; and

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the recommendations of the tribunal be implemented effective April 1, 2017.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I give notice to move the following private Member's resolution:

BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the government to table and bring to debate and concluding votes the 2020-2021 budget prior to any general election.

It's seconded by the Member for Windsor Lake.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, the private Member's resolution put forward by the Member for Port au Port and seconded by the Member for Windsor Lake will be the private Member's resolution that will be debated this Wednesday, June 17, here in the House of Assembly.

MR. SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I present a petition here signed by residents of the Bay of Islands and some from your own district, Mr. Speaker, to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to direct the province's health care authorities to develop and make public a plan that not only returns our health care system to normal operations, but also deals with the significant backlog in appointments, surgeries and other procedures.

I raised this issue many times, that the biggest concern that I'm hearing is health care. There are a lot of people that are in need and there is a lot of anxiety. I know my colleague the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and myself were trying to raise this and had some questions, but we were rejected. It's great to see that the Opposition, after rejecting us, brought up these health care issues, Mr. Speaker.

They are major concerns. There are a lot of people I know that need heart surgery, some waiting for some testing, some wondering about the cancer testing. This is significant. I've been dealing with the minister on it, and he's well aware of it and trying what he can.

Mr. Speaker, last week I know I was told by the Leader of the Opposition that it was a publicity

stunt that we're trying to raise questions. I had a few calls over the weekend and I say to the minister, next time you go to St. Mary's Anglican church, a few of the people that you met there would like to speak to you about this publicity stunt, that they're so concerned about their health care. If you think health care is a publicity stunt, Mr. Speaker, there are a few individuals can't wait for you to come back to have a few words.

I know the Member for St. John's Centre said he works well here speaking to people back and forth. Obviously, that person never represented anybody from rural Newfoundland and Labrador, because when you deal with people in the rural parts, a lot of times it's different trying to find out who your specialist is, how you're going to get in. It's easier than running over to the hospital, running to the minister. I don't think you realize about rural Newfoundland and Labrador, because it's different.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you, everybody in this House works differently, but I can assure you one thing. The anxiety of health care for people with heart surgeries or with diagnostic testing is real. I call upon the government to work as fast as they can to get something in place, to get a plan in place so that these people can have peace of mind.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, in a speech last week, one lady with her hip and the family – this is before the restrictions were lifted. One family asked her mom not to move, sit on the couch, because if she broke her hip they couldn't visit her. That's what we're down to. This is real.

So I call upon the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to find some way to start this emergency surgery that's needed. I have another person here today who gave me a consent form that I'm going to present to the minister. I just urge the government to work on this as soon as they can.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands raises a very topical and very important issue and, certainly, it's one we in the department have been hearing about expecting this. We tasked the regional health authorities some while ago now to prepare a plan, both to restore, in a graduated way, to normal functioning as the alert levels change, but also then one to address the backlog. Indeed, I have a meeting with the Medical Association as well for next week, I think, virtually to discuss that, among other concerns.

What is happening is there is an increase in both testing procedures and in-patient work across each of the regional health authorities. The priority for this is determined solely by clinicians. As the capacity increases, so the ability to do more will also increase.

It is more than ever now a time where primary care doctors, their patients and the specialists all need to get on the same page about individual cases so that no one is overlooked. I would encourage physicians and nurse practitioners to do this.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

WHEREAS many students within our province depend on school busing for transportation to and from school each day; and

WHEREAS there are many parents of school-aged children throughout our province who live inside the Eastern School District's 1.6-kilometre zone, therefore do not qualify for busing; and

WHEREAS policy cannot override safety of our children;

THEREFORE, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to eliminate the 1.6-kilometre policy for all elementary schools in the province, and in junior

and senior high schools where safety is a primary concern.

Mr. Speaker, we brought this petition forward a number of times. I know my colleague for Conception Bay South has also brought this petition forward, it's timely. It's always timely when we talk about the safety of our children.

In this particular instance of busing, this is in areas where there is nowhere for them to walk or wait for a bus in a safe manner, especially when you have snow on the ground and the roads are smaller again. If there's anything we've gotten out of COVID is the huge, huge need to be concerned for safety.

I heard the minister responsible for Education earlier today speak to that next year it's expected to have full classes, no changes in curriculum. I believe the Member with the Newfoundland and Labrador English School District spoke on the news earlier about a hybrid, potentially. Regardless, the fact of the matter is kids will be in some form of school in September. The minister noted it's a complicated issue when it comes to enhancing digital learning but I would challenge that providing safe school busing is probably not as challenging or complicated.

I will ask for the coming school year that this is on the agenda and that we are looking at ways in which all children can get to and from school in a safe manner.

Thank you.

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

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member, I guess for his heartfelt petition, because that's certainly what it was, Mr. Speaker.

I don't think I need to make a further statement, other than the fact that the safety of our students is paramount – it really is.

Having said that, we, as the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, have one of the best busing policies in the country. We will

continue to monitor the busing system; but, again, I certainly concur with the Member about the safety of our students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Whereas there is a growing urgency for brush cutting in several communities in the District of Harbour Main, specifically in Conception Harbour and Roaches Line, Route 70. These roads are of high volume traffic with significant moose sightings that pose a serious threat to motorists. Brush cutting maintenance on these roads must be carried out as soon as possible to ensure the safety of the people that use them daily.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately take the necessary steps of conducting and maintaining brush cutting operations on the Conception Bay Highway, specifically Conception Harbour and Roaches Line, Route 70, to ensure motorists safety and to improve the sightlines for the driving public that use these roadways each day.

Mr. Speaker, I rose in the House of Assembly with a petition on this very issue of brush cutting last year, December 5, 2019, with respect to areas of Conception Harbour, Roaches Line and as well Hodgewater Line, Route 71. Mr. Speaker, I'm disappointed, to say the least, to report that although the minister gave assurances at that time that this important issue would be addressed, little has been done in all this time.

Mr. Speaker, in fact, the minister rose in the House of Assembly when I brought this petition forward last year and stated in response to my petition, which I presented on behalf of the people in these areas, he stated that he was going to actually please the Member opposite. Well, Mr. Speaker, I can advise you that the Member is not pleased. This work, he indicated, had been

added, and that would be to the contract. That was on December 5, 2019.

I followed up, Mr. Speaker, on December 16 with a letter to the minister regarding brush cutting for Conception Harbour and Roaches Line and I asked for an expected time frame. Again, sad to report, little happened. My understanding was that work was commenced in the Roaches Line area, but I'm advised it was only approximately one kilometre which was completed and then it stopped because of snowfall.

Mr. Speaker, no work at all was started in the Conception Harbour area. Mr. Speaker, this is of grave concern. The Conception Harbour area, it has clearly been stated that there are many moose sightings in this area. The area needs to have the brush cutting taking place. Those who travel through the community would have a better chance of being able to avoid a collision. In fact, Mr. Speaker, a collision occurred in this very intersection of the Conception Harbour area. We attribute that – at least the residents in the area say it was caused because of the inability to have appropriate sightlines by the vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue and this needs to be addressed immediately once and for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Works, for a response.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the petition.

The hon. Member mentions a few dates and they're all, I think, December. We did add that work to a contract last year in December. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we do have to stop cutting brush once the snow falls. It's not practical to do so. If we do continue to cut brush once there has been snow accumulation, what we find is work is not of a good quality and you end up with brush that's two or three feet high and it just doesn't work.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to inform the Member, talk about immediacy. We do not cut brush in

this province until after, usually around the end of August due to the *Migratory Bird Act*.

The Member wrote me an email a few days ago. I explained that to her, that there are no brush cutting tenders that would've been let as of yet, simply because it's not something we've done as a department under this administration or previous administrations. Brush cutting is a fall activity, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to again this year invest some \$2 million in brush cutting in this province and we look forward to getting those tenders out early in the fall.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Adult Dental Program coverage for clients of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug Program under the Access and 65Plus Plans were eliminated in the economy-killing fee and tax-adding budget of 2016. Low-income families and low-income individuals, particularly seniors, are struggling with the cost of living and struggling to meet some of their basic needs. Many seniors and low-income individuals and families can no longer access basic dental care, and those same individuals can now no longer access dentures, leading to many other digestive and medical issues.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call on the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reinstate the Adult Dental Program to cover seniors and low-income individuals and families to better ensure oral health, quality of life and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, this, I believe, is my fifth time presenting this exact petition. And while we see this administration continue to pass out funding and increases for certain demographics of society, this one demographic continues to be ignored.

This is not acceptable, Mr. Speaker. It's not acceptable that somebody is afraid to smile. It's not acceptable that someone is prevented from getting a job because they're afraid to smile, they're afraid to speak. It's not acceptable that people are malnourished because they can't chew their food. This is a modern province. While we have our challenges, when it comes down to the fact that we are ignoring people's basic needs, such as access to dental care, I think that's something we should all hang our heads in shame.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services, with a response.

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

The Member opposite raises an important area of concern. There's no point in going back to discuss the financial situation of the budget of 2016. Quite frankly, it can be summed up in the words it was a disaster that we inherited and we did have to make some awkward choices.

Our Dental Program is in the middle of what other programs across Canada look like. We are better than five and not as good as another five. We would love to be able to expand that, but there are dentures being provided. There are emergency services being provided for dental care and there is a small allowance for annual dental care for those eligible individuals, Mr. Speaker.

In the fullness of time, would I like to see this expand? Yes, I would. But until and unless we can solve our fiscal problems, we have to spend within the limits of our budget and we are in the middle of the pack, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, residents of the Exploits District have a great concern from the result of the 24-hour emergency service cut to the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre in Botwood. All residents feel that the 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. service does not adequately and efficiently address the emergency requirements of this district, affecting both patients and residents to receive adequate care when needed.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to restore the 24-hour emergency service to the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre immediately.

Mr. Speaker, in 2016 the Liberal government stripped the 24-hour emergency service from Botwood, giving them 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Stats show from October 2018 to October 2019, 7,833 visits were made to the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre in Botwood. Another 4,620 visits were made to the Central Newfoundland Health Care Centre in Grand Falls-Windsor. This is a total of 12,453 people of the Exploits District needing 24-hour emergency service.

Mr. Speaker, this is still an ongoing concern and the people are interested in getting this 24-hour emergency service put back. Before that, there was millions of dollars spent to upgrade the lab and X-ray service at the Dr. Hugh Twomey Health Care Centre and they decided to cut that service. Doing this leaves added burden now on the Grand Falls-Windsor hospital. People have to leave in the nighttime to get to Grand Falls-Windsor, adding stress and time to patients, staff, problem areas and lineups at the Grand Falls-Windsor Health Care Centre.

Mr. Speaker, this is not good enough. They can take the stress off there by replacing the 24-hour emergency service in Botwood. Not only that, last week the minister blatantly acknowledged that he was taking the testing hub from Grand Falls-Windsor and putting it in Gander with no justification only that he can. He's going to protect his own area of Gander.

Mr. Speaker, services can't be taken from the Exploits District or the Grand Falls-Windsor -

Buchans District just to satisfy the minister's need.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I would suggest that investing \$20 million in a state-of-the-art facility at the Hugh Twomey centre is indicative of an interest in supplying services to the area of Exploits.

The issue of the emergency department that he references, those numbers that he gave were people who did receive care. Central Newfoundland Regional Health Centre is 20 minutes away by ambulance from Botwood. The issue of the need for 24-7 emergency care, I have said, will be revisited when the new wing opens and we see what staff is available and what the out-of-hours demand is.

Currently, it seems to be of the order of two patients a week presenting there outside of hours. That was the last time I looked; those figures may be a little out of date. I'll look again and see if the update would provide any more light, Mr. Speaker. I would argue we have gone out of our way to make sure that Exploits has the health care it needs.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There have been numerous concerns raised by family members of seniors in long-term care throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly those suffering with dementia, Alzheimer's disease, other cognitive debilitating conditions, whereby loved ones have experienced injuries, have not been bathed

regularly, and not received proper nutrition and/or have been left lying in their own waste for extended periods of time. We believe this is directly related to the government's failure to ensure adequate staffing at those facilities.

We therefore call upon the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to instate legislation which would include mandatory establishment of adequate ratio of one staff to three residents in long-term care and all other applicable regional health facilities housing persons with dementia, Alzheimer's disease and other cognitive debilitating conditions in order to ensure appropriate safety, protection from injuries, proper hygiene care and other required care. This would include the creation of a specific job position in these facilities for monitoring and intervention as required to ensure the safety of patients.

Mr. Speaker, I have presented this petition I'm not sure how many times now – an awful lot – on behalf of the group Advocates for Senior Citizens' Rights. I did commit to them that I would present it again this sitting of the House of Assembly, which is what I'm doing. For the next three days after, I certainly want to talk about health care, education and daycare. I'll be presenting petitions on all three of those topics in the next three days because that will be my only opportunity, unfortunately, to bring these issues forward on behalf of my constituents.

Back to this particular petition, as I said, it's been raised numerous times. The issue here is not about the staff or the quality of the staff or anything like that, it's about the fact that there's not always enough staff available to deal with residents. Perhaps on paper it may look good but if you're not calling people in and replacing them when they're off sick or when they're on holidays or you're using this approach of not to replace the first sick call, then you're impacting the seniors. In particular, these are the most vulnerable seniors of them all. I encourage every Member to go to the Facebook group, Advocates for Senior Citizens' Rights; you will see hundreds and hundreds of postings from people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador with seniors, with loved ones in long-term care who have experienced some of the things that have been indicated here. Again, they believe

primarily due to lack of available staffing at all times.

I certainly encourage the government to take a look at this. The federal government now, they learned through COVID – we know what’s happened in long-term care homes on the Mainland. We’re lucky that didn’t happen here, of course, and they’ve done a good job through the COVID-19, but during regular times, there’s certainly an indication that there’s not enough staffing at all times to take care of our seniors and we must make sure we do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, second reading of Bill 25.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Works, that Bill 25, An Act To Amend The Social Workers Act, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 25, An Act To Amend The Social Workers Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Social Workers Act.” (Bill 25)

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

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

My speaking notes are so old that it says, I stand in this hon. House to commence debate, but I’m quite happy to continue from a sitting position.

I think it would be remiss of me, however, if I didn’t note that originally I had intended to bring

this piece of legislation forth during National Social Work Month and also to acknowledge the work that our health care providers, in general, have done for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador over the last three to four months. They have risen to an occasion which is truly a generational kind of issue, and I really can’t say enough good things about them.

If you ever wanted a motto for the health care system at a time of challenge, it is: improvise, adapt and overcome. I think that has been the motto in the way they have worked over the last little while and, indeed, continue to do so as they deal with some of the issues we’ve heard about today, bringing back some sense of normalcy to one of our busiest public sectors.

The rationale behind this is that in this province we have social workers in a wide variety of departments. In actual fact, if I’m not mistaken, one of my colleagues may address the fact that her department has more than anyone else’s, and it’s not health care.

They work in public service. They work in the private sector. They work with children, adolescence; they work with their families. They work with seniors and their families, both in acute-care settings and in long-term care, and, indeed, they are instrumental in helping support seniors in their decision-making about how to be cared for and care for themselves at a time in their life when they need a little bit more than they can do totally by themselves.

They also work in the education system. They work in the justice system. They have an immense body of counselling skills. They use these skills for support of individuals who find themselves going through these various services for whatever reason.

Mr. Speaker, social work has been a regulated profession in this province since 1992. The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers is the regulatory authority. It’s responsible for licensure and it’s responsible for regulation of social workers in accordance with the *Social Workers Act*, which is now what we’re setting to amend.

In broad-brush terms, the association is responsible for acting in the interest of the

public and to do so by establishing and maintaining standards of professional conduct, knowledge and skill amongst its member; ensuring competency of social workers; protecting the public interest; and promoting, increasing and improving the knowledge skill, efficiency and proficiency of its members in all matters related to the profession and practice of social work in the province.

The association's mandate is potentially around, in this element, ensuring that social workers are qualified to do the job and that they provide services to the people of the province in accordance with standards of professional and ethical excellence that really cover social work as a profession at large.

The *Social Workers Act* amendment here, Bill 25, does a couple of things. It's actually to remove the term "association" from the name so that the name would henceforth be the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers, to better reflect its public protection mandate.

If you recall, we had similar amendments in the Nurses Act when we amended the name of the Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador to the College of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador. The title college is now generally accepted in the public domain as being one that is involved with standard setting and regulation, whereas by and large associations have had a more advocacy-focused role and that certainly, in the case of the registered nurses, led to some confusion. I think here as well, the college would also like to clarify that they are a regulator and a licensing body responsible for public protection and standards, rather than necessarily an advocacy group on behalf of social workers.

The second thing the bill wants to do is update the definition of social work. The logic behind that is that the scope of practice – they are a self-regulating profession; their scope of practice has changed since the original act. As a result of that, they find themselves needing to update, refresh their definition. Whatever the changes here were during discussions with the social workers, we have not removed its responsibility

for public protection. That will not change, nor is it the desire of any party to do that.

The amendments around the definition of social work clarify that when individuals provide service using the skills and training that they have, when they use what they're taught to do they are actually doing social work. I think that needed some clarity around reference to their knowledge theory and skills that they accrue over the course of their degree and subsequent training.

It also clarifies that these skills do not necessarily reflect those that are unique to social work in the sense that others may possess them, such as counselling skills and these kinds of things. Basically, it says that if you practice from a social work perspective, then you are doing social work as reflected for the purposes of the act.

It also amends clarity around managing programs, so that when you're employing social work skills and training that also is a managerial responsibility within the definition of social work. The amended definition also reflects the role of social work in the policy sphere of health policy in general. It aligns with the interpretation of the definition by the association when they responded to inquires.

There are a couple of other elements here that were timely. What it was trying to do was align the requirements for licensure under situations pertaining to a pandemic that would remove any barriers should we find ourselves in a situation challenged to deal with a workload that the existing licensed body of social workers couldn't cope with, as it were.

There was, however – particularly around the definitions I've just mentioned – a suggestion or a requirement that the bill would come into force at the end of September. That would fit with the delay in proclamation that we had when we amended the Nurses Act back last year. It requires some administrative changes. It requires some publication changes, specifically around materials that would bear a logo or their name and, obviously, this would be best done in a managed transition.

Whilst in a sense they may appear to be housekeeping, from the view of the social work community they are viewed as very significant indeed; particularly in their recognition of the regulatory role of social work college and also in enshrining, I think, a little more clearly what the contribution is that social workers make in their everyday activities around the support they provide to people in the province. They are a very important part of our health care system, our education system and our justice system.

This was a very collaborative process. It's not something that we came up with in the department and pulled out of a hat. This was driven by – in the same way the RNU were keen to have their amendments last year, this is very much a parallel process where the social-work community sat down on frequent occasions, as they could in face-to-face circumstances in those days, to help draft the bill.

It has broad support across the social-work community and certainly the association, and what hopes to be the college very shortly, would have no doubt in standing up and supporting this. Indeed, there had been a hope, when this was originally presented, that social workers may actually have been present in the gallery to show their support. Unfortunately, they are not able to be here because of the chief medical officer of health response to COVID-19.

I think it's another episode in legislation where we're ever greening and updating our legislation to make it current and relevant to today, rather than necessarily kind of stuck in the past, as it were. I really don't have an awful lot more to add at this stage. I've only used a fraction of my introductory time, but I think I would look forward to comments from my colleagues on either side of the House.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will metaphorically take my seat once again.

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

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 25, An Act to Amend the Social Workers Act, this is a very big part of the public sector, obviously, and it's a very important role in

carrying out a system of care, as opposed to any kind of silos or anything.

I think with the changing of the name from association to college, it's more coming in line, I guess, with a national standard. As the minister pointed out, it makes it more current and relevant as a regulatory body. The regulatory body is setting standards and regulations, and it's a self-regulating profession. There needs to be some checks and balances in there to make sure, I guess, that vacant positions are becoming filled in a timely manner, because as we know our social workers are working with the vulnerable of our society, from seniors to youth, and they have to keep the public interest at heart as well.

It's a fine balance, and I very much respect social workers. When they go into that profession, it's a level of care that you're willing to provide. A lot of times I think it goes over and above anything you learn in theory, because not always does theory relate to the real world. So it's a system that we'd like to see probably more acknowledgement of what's going to happen in the workplace and stuff like that, because as we know there are many challenges in many different areas.

Like I said, social workers obviously are an integral piece of our system of care. They deserve government support to bring their professional expertise to the residents of the province. Social work being defined in the act differentiates these professionals from other types of counselling. So to work with society's most vulnerable social workers' counselling is needed, and this is most times the initial consultation that brings confidence to the client that they are entering a system of care that is actually willing to help.

These changes, as we see, are definitely necessary. When it comes to the board itself, it's setting forth instead of having a president-elect, the president-elect will be considered then the vice president. Then when that term of vice president is ceased, the vice president moves into a two-year term of president. Then consequently after that mandate, turns into a two-year term of past-president. Which I think is a good part to the system, for the simple fact that you have the same people looking at the

regulatory process for six years and know what goes on there and then the more people that come into the system are more apt to know where the college at this time, once we pass the amendment, will know to go forward with their legal system.

So it's welcome news. Like I said, it includes the reference to social workers with not only their knowledge and theory but their skills. A lot of times these are tertiary knowledge of how you grew up yourself, probably, that you bring to the table that can make the difference in somebody's life.

As the minister stated, this is one of the busiest pieces of our public sector, for the simple fact they deal with the vulnerable in our society, from youth to seniors and people living with disabilities, anything like that. So it's definitely some welcome changes to the act. They are necessary to go by more a well-developed system, I guess, that brings them more inline with a national standard. It's something that we, as the Official Opposition, are willing to support.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I enjoyed listening to the comments from my critic, actually, the Member for Placentia West – Bellevue. I do agree with lots he had to say, certainly, when it comes to the checks and balances that should be in place for folks that work in this profession.

Mr. Speaker, it comes down to accountability. I believe we've never been in a time before in our province more than where the people of the province expect that accountability across departments, but perhaps none more so than when we talk about things. I'm going to speak for a moment through the lens of child welfare, that's in my department.

My colleague, the Minister of Health, said he believed I had the highest number of social workers, but I will say to him of the 1,600 registered social workers, I believe I am in a

close second to health. I think he's beat me on this one item here.

Mr. Speaker, today we're talking about sort of a minor change here to Bill 25, a bill that would amend the *Social Workers Act*. Basically, we're changing the name from Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers to the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers.

This bill proposes to change the name to better reflect its public protection mandate. The association, Mr. Speaker, carries out a critical role of protecting the public by licensing social workers who have the necessary education, training and competencies to practice in this province. Changing the name to the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers will help to better identify their role.

The bill also proposes to update and clarify the definition of social work, including adding a specific reference to social work knowledge, theory and skills. Clarifying that managing programs when employing social work skills and training is social work and acknowledging the role of social work in the health policy sphere.

These amendments, Mr. Speaker, it is hoped, will clarify any confusion regarding the association's role as regulator and will update and clarify the definition of social worker to avoid confusion as to the application of the act.

In our province, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers is the legislated authority responsible for the regulation of social workers who work throughout our province. Mr. Speaker, when we look across Newfoundland and Labrador, where do social workers work? We see them in hospitals, in schools, in child welfare, mental health, addictions, housing, palliative care, corrections and policy development, so just like we've been hearing this afternoon.

Social worker is a profession that does work with some of our most vulnerable. They work often in very, very difficult circumstances. People look to them often when something is very broken, when they need support.

Mr. Speaker, NLASW holds all social workers accountable for offering the highest quality professional services to their clients, specifically the NLASW standards of practice outline the practice requirements for social workers in our province to ensure safe, ethical and competent professional practice.

Many times since I've been in the Department of CSSD – it'll be three years next month; time goes fast, Mr. Speaker – I've been on my feet commending and applauding the difficult work of social workers, but there's another side as well and that's why it's important that we talk about and that we have in place the checks and balances. Because while we may have nine of every 10 social workers that are out there that are going above and beyond, sometimes for various reasons – and you know we all make different career choices – sometimes we might have somebody in that field perhaps that were not meant to be. They might have been meant to be somewhere else. That's why it's very, very important that we have standards of practice in place, Mr. Speaker, that hold folks in this profession today, in particular that we're talking about, to the highest standard in the areas of competence, documentation, confidentiality, ethical decision-making, advocacy and social policy, professionalism and accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned at the beginning the 1,600 social workers that are registered with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers and one-quarter of those who are currently working in my department. We also have social workers over in Housing that do very valuable work out in some of our eight community centres that would be around the province and that work with very vulnerable families.

The mandate of CSSD – it's a large social department – is to support individuals, families and communities around this province in achieving improved health and social well-being and reduced poverty, and to ensure the protection of children, youth and adults from abuse or neglect. We would have children on one end with child welfare that would work with social workers and we also have the *Adult Protection Act* which is housed in CSSD. We would also have social workers working with – sometimes there are adults that may lack

capacity and need supports, et cetera. The department promotes the values of inclusion, diversity and healthy active living and are working for the well-being of all.

Mr. Speaker, CSSD could not carry out its valuable work for the people of this province without the skills, knowledge and professional practice of social workers. Each and every front-line child protection social worker in my department and also the staff managing these programs are required to be registered with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers as a condition of employment.

Mr. Speaker, I'm going to say that again because we are only, I believe, the third or fourth province in the country that requires this. They are required to be registered with the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers as a condition of employment. What this does is it ensures that CSSD social workers are held to a very high standard from the moment they are hired, and so they should be. No disrespect to some of my other colleagues across departments but I say it all the time, it's not roads, it's not water and sewer, it's not infrastructure, it's lives. It's very important decisions dealing with lives every day that folks in this profession would be doing.

We are one of only four provinces in Canada – I misspoke when I said three – which requires regulatory registration for child protection social workers. This means that CSSD social workers must meet the strict requirements to be a registered social worker and they are held accountable to meet the professional criteria set by the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers.

Mr. Speaker, I will also say social work is not easy work. It takes patience and compassion. It takes a dedication to helping people, families and communities. People who enter this profession, they do so because of their strong commitment to help others, and I've seen this first-hand. I often say to social workers when I travel around the province, it's a work of heart.

I've had the opportunity to be in Central, to be on the West Coast, to be in a number of communities in Labrador, Mr. Speaker – some very remote communities where the work is

extremely challenging, some places where we have social workers that fly in as teams, two weeks in, two weeks out – yet people step up for this job all the time and, actually, instead of focusing on the challenges, they focus on the reward they receive from helping others. I've always been impressed with the level of commitment that I have seen as I have visited many of the offices throughout the province.

In each of these visits, Mr. Speaker, I make a point. Once the business is done, whatever reason I'm there to visit, I usually pull the social workers into a boardroom; sometimes I meet individually with social workers because I want to hear from them. I want to hear what their challenges are and I want to hear what we can be doing in the department, Mr. Speaker, to better support them.

Every day, I have a great executive team that works extremely hard and I should give them a shout-out because they have certainly worked hard through COVID.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. DEMPSTER: Most of the people in CSSD would be considered essential workers, Mr. Speaker. But still, every day when I sit with the executive in the department, they are giving me a view through one lens. That's why it's always been important for me, right from day one, that I get out into community when I have the opportunity to also sit and speak and talk with the social workers. They give me another perspective; they give me another view, and when I come back into the department, sometimes I ask different questions based on those conversations.

Let's just leave it at that. Each time I get out and I talk with them, I'm always left with a very profound respect for the people who have chosen this profession and the stellar job that they are doing serving the people of our province, Mr. Speaker.

Social workers throughout Newfoundland and Labrador strive to promote and demonstrate excellence in the profession and practice of social work, but as I mentioned, sometimes it only takes one. When you're on a team, Mr. Speaker, nine can be doing a great job and it

only takes that one sometimes. It is unfortunate, but it can taint the whole team. That's why I say when – I was going to say when they fail or if they fail, but they are only human as well. When social workers fail to meet the standards expected of them, the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers is our check and balance – that's what we're talking about here this afternoon – through its complaint and discipline process, designed to professionally and objectively review allegations against professional social work practice.

We get them sometimes, Mr. Speaker. We have around 350 social workers in my department that are spread all across this province and while the majority are doing great work, periodically we do get a complaint. One thing I can tell you is that when a complaint is received, there are levers in place and there are checks and balances. There are things that get pulled. There is an investigative process that happens on a number of levels within the department, and sometimes we see that the Advocate, when things are made public, she does her own investigation, but any time we get feedback within the department on an area that someone has a concern about, we start to dig and investigate into that very timely and we take it very, very serious.

The purpose of this process is to provide clarity regarding professional obligations and responsibilities. Mr. Speaker, it's all about holding them to a higher standard and to ensure social work clients have their right to skilled, ethical and professional services affirmed. Social workers are expected to maintain the public trust in social workers and the social work profession.

People trust them, Mr. Speaker. They are held at a very high standard because of the type of work they do. So our social workers, they are not to discriminate against any person due to culture, religion, social economic status, gender, age, sexual orientation or disability. They are to carry out their work with honesty, reliability and diligence.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers is the organization which holds social workers in our province accountable to meet these expectations. While the majority of

social workers will meet and exceed these expectations, it is the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers in its regulatory role that is able to address those that do not. I cannot underline how important that is.

I want to say I am pleased to stand – I feel like we're on all the COVID couch those days, because after seven years of saying I'm pleased to stand and support, I am sitting, but very happy to support Bill 25. I believe it will strengthen the overall accountability of the social work profession in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and that's very, very important, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank my colleague for bringing forth this piece of legislation and thank him for the opportunity to speak to the bill today.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's a pleasure to speak to this bill as well. It's been covered by previous speakers but just to clarify what this amendment to the act is doing. It's essentially changing the name of the Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Social Workers to the Newfoundland and Labrador College of Social Workers. It's updating terminology used to describe the executive members of the board of directors and it's also to clarify the roles and responsibility of the board of directors and the college.

These changes, to some, may seem miniscule but they are very important. Ensuing the act is updated is important, just as the profession of social work is extremely important.

Social work, as has been touched on, is a profession. It's concerned with helping individuals, families, groups and communities to enhance their individual and collective well-being, so they serve a huge role. They help people develop skills and they, as a result, require a unique blend of skills and knowledge. The Minister of Health and Community

Services, I believe, mentioned that it's unfortunate that we're not speaking to this during National Social Worker week because it's a good opportunity to throw a bouquet and applaud the work they do in a wide variety of ways.

I actually had the benefit or the opportunity of working the front lines in the social work department through my public service career: twice during two work stoppages and, of course, once through 9/11. It was extremely eye-opening. I don't think the general public has a good understanding of what some of our social workers go through on a daily basis and some of the clients they have to deal with who are in dire need and in extreme situations.

Our social workers deal with quite an array of areas. Just think about it. Many deal with long-term care issues. We heard about some of that today in a Member's petition. They have to deal with our elderly and the families of our elderly in specific situations. Primary health care: Social workers are involved in primary health care on a daily basis. Family service agencies: Dealing with family issues, and family concerns and family court. Think about it. I mean really, think about your own family, but then you're dealing with multiple issues of other families that need a skilled, and knowledgeable and independent individual, professional individual, to help them out.

Child welfare: The Member for Torngat mentioned – Torngat?

MS. DEMPSTER: Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

MR. P. DINN: Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, right, mentioned that earlier as well, talk about child welfare; investigating concerns around family violence, investigating child abuse and neglect, going in and taking a child from a home. Really, think about it. Then recruiting a foster home and foster parents to look after this child in an interim period. I can't do that. I had the opportunity, like I said, to be on the front lines for a couple of times, during a couple of work stoppages and 9/11, and that was only for a short period of time. Our social workers do this on a daily basis.

They also deal with issues around mental health, psychiatric hospitals and school boards. Some of the most stressful jobs in the world to have – and I hesitate to say this because I'll never hear the end of it from my brother – but one is teaching, and up there with that is social work. Social work as well up there in the top of the list.

Dealing with correctional facilities and correctional institutes; helping offenders, young and old, to rehab back into the community – huge, huge responsibility; helping some to readjust to the community. I think of the movie *The Shawshank Redemption* when one of the long-term occupants of the prison was released and just could not deal with being out in the real world as I'll call it. You have social workers that have to deal with that.

When you're dealing with the schools – and our school, our education system has changed. We have more and more children of special needs. We have social workers who are in the schools dealing with children with aggressive behaviours, children who are not showing up for school, children who have family problems at home, children who come to school to get a lunch, really. You have social workers who deal with those individuals as well.

The department I worked many of my years with, Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, of course deals with welfare administration, income support. To see some of the individuals who come in to see a social worker on that and the situation they are in – and you're following policy and following regulations and here's the most I can give you – I don't know how their heart works for this. I don't know how their heart can't break every day when you look at some of the individuals you have to deal with, but you have guidelines to deal with it.

Really, it really takes a special person to become a social worker. To become a social worker, when you go in and you want to help people – and it's a strong commitment that was said earlier as well. You need a strong commitment to help people. Just on the other side of that, when you talk to social workers – and I mentioned earlier about stress – it's not an easy occupation. I think unless you're involved in it on a daily basis or see it on a daily basis, you do not realize what they go through.

Depression, anxiety, emotional issues are substantially higher as social workers. They have issues with their poor psychological well-being if they're there too long and it's stress related. They have issues with their physical well-being. They are important. This legislation is good in making it more accountable in how we help clients and how we deal with the board or the college now. I think, at this time, we also need to take a closer look at what we do for social workers.

Social workers, I guarantee you, need supports. Because you say to yourself: What are they getting out of it? Most, being the professionals they are, will say satisfaction. If I could take one child out of an abusive environment and place he or she in a loving home, then that's satisfaction. But I would suspect there are a lot of other negative issues they deal with in order to get to that one file that gives them satisfaction.

In addition to this here going ahead, I think it would be also prudent on our part to look at what supports we give our social workers, what toolbox we give our social workers, what we can do to help them in a proactive manner to be the professionals they are and to do and provide the services they can to the wide, wide variety of clients that they help. Again, they're helping individuals, they're helping groups, they're helping communities and they're helping them all to be more than they can be.

We certainly, on this side, have no issue with this bill going forward, this act to amend. I just hope that in future discussions we dig a little deeper into what we can do to assist our social workers in the job that they do on a daily basis.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Bennett): Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Health and Community Services speaks now he will close the debate.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker

Just for the sake of *Hansard*, and for the record, I will be supporting this bill, to change the name and the other couple of changes that are associated to it.

I certainly want to recognize, as others have, the great work that social workers do in our province.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I really feel privileged here again today to represent the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and say a few words on this bill. I wasn't going to speak, but I felt like I had to. I have a daughter who's a social worker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. K. PARSONS: I think when we talk about social workers in this House of Assembly that it would be a great opportunity for me to get up and acknowledge the great work they do.

I see it first-hand, and I see the passion that a lot of our social workers have. Like my colleague from Paradise mentioned, it's such a wide variety of work in which they do, from taking care of our elders in seniors' homes to in hospitals and in everyday life when it comes to taking care of the most vulnerable people in our society. So to make any changes that will make social workers' lives a little easier or to give them the tools that they need to perform their duties, it's important.

First when my daughter told me she wanted to be a social worker, I was trying to talk her out of it because I said, no, you're way too soft to be at that; that's not the type of job that I think you should be involved in. As he became a social worker and I watched her over the last number of years do her job, I'm very proud of her and very proud of the job that she does because I do realize that it takes a special person and it takes a person that is a very caring person. I have to say, she's a very caring person.

I just wanted to say today to all social workers in our province, we appreciate – it's a hard job it's a very difficult job. The Member from Paradise also mentioned the duties sometimes that they have to do. When you're dealing with family care and you're dealing with abusive situations and where children are involved, when there are drugs involved or domestic abuse and whatnot, sometimes that's the person who has to go and make the hard decisions. The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair mentioned some of that also.

It's very important that we, as a government, be there for those people and be there to make sure that they have the supports that they need in order to carry out the work that they need to carry out.

I was there a couple of times when they came down to my daughter's house; I was speaking to a lot of social workers. There are a lot of young social workers in this province. I know, as a social worker develops, it seems like their career develops also. When you're becoming a social worker, sometimes it's hard to get into what you want to do, so you start off in the most difficult jobs there are, and the younger they are.

I tell you, the people that I have seen involved in social work, that I've been around, are all dedicated and they start right at that front-line work. I always remember when my daughter had an opportunity to work, that's where she wanted to work. They're eager. A lot of our young social workers in this province are very eager and they want to work, and I commend them all.

Like I said, I just wanted to give my support to all the social workers in this province and I really want to say thank you for the great job you do. Sometimes the appreciation is not there when you're dealing with hard situations, but as long as your heart is there, that's all that matters.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I won't belabour this. This is an excellent bill. This amendment brings the *Social Workers Act* into current times. It reflects their roles and responsibilities appropriately, and it reflects the changing nature of their work. I would just like to go on record as saying the New Democratic caucus does support this bill. We laud the work of social workers here in the province, and any opportunity we get to help them ease their burden in a lot of the work they do, we wholeheartedly support that.

Thank you very much for this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, and you will have our support in passing this bill.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

It's great to hear the contributions from Members opposite, including a nice personal touch from the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis.

I look forward to any questions in Committee, as long as they're simple ones, and I commend this bill to the House.

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

The motion is that Bill 25 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 (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Social Workers Act. (Bill 25)

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

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

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Social Workers Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 25)

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 25.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. SPEAKER: All those against?

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Bennett): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 25.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Social Workers Act." (Bill 25)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. DWYER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

In clause 1, it reflects the expanded role of practice for a social worker. In some cases, individuals who are social workers may also practice a different type of therapy.

How does the college regulate an individual who may be trained in more than one discipline?

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

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

The college only regulates those people who are practicing social work in the context of social work. Anything outside of that would fall outside their mandate.

So if, in the hypothetical posed over there, a social worker was acting outside of the scope of social work, then it would be outside the mandate of the college to regulate that specific activity. They may have an interest if it for some reason brought the profession into disrepute indirectly, but they only regulate social work as defined in the act.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. DWYER: The legislation reads: "Where the vice-chairperson, for any reason, does not assume the position of chairperson under subsection (3), a chairperson shall be selected as provided for in the by-laws."

Is the minister able to outline what this process is?

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

MR. HAGGIE: The by-laws are the property, as it were, of what is currently the association. I would have to go back and check exactly what it is. My understanding is that would be a

collective decision of the board of the association as it currently is. That would not change under this. The by-laws are a separate body which are written under the framework of this legislation, or the previous act anyway.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. DWYER: In the briefing, we were told that an individual is elected to the position of president-elect where they spend two years, then they serve as president for two years and then past president for two more years. This bill will change the office from president-elect to vice-president, but the succession plan, planning rotation will no longer be contained in the legislation.

Previously, it appeared in section 10 of the act but it appears to be removed. Is the succession plan schedule contained in the regulations or the college's by-laws, and why is it being removed from legislation?

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

MR. HAGGIE: That's a general trend across legislation is to leave the regulatory, the by-law piece outside of the act.

One of the challenges with the *Social Work Act* and with a couple of other acts is we've had to come back into the House for this body, whereas if you looked at say another self-regulating profession, there's an umbrella piece of legislation then there are regulations which LGIC or the minister would proclaim and then by-laws written under that. That is the logic behind this. It would still be encoded in the by-laws which are the property of the college.

From our point of view, we have no firm stance one way or another on whether these terms should be two or three years, for example, if they wish to change them. The plan they have there used to be certainly a very well established way of establishing continuity over time.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

MR. DWYER: Due to COVID-19 there have been some delays, obviously. The date contained in the draft legislation was September 30, 2020. The bill is supposed to come into force on September 30, 2020.

Given that this legislation was supposed to be debated in March, will it still come into effect on September 30?

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

MR. HAGGIE: This delay was to accommodate the association/college's request to do the administrative work behind it. I have not heard that that has changed. Absent that, I would stick with the date there.

CHAIR: Any other questions to clause 1?

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 34 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 34 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 34 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 Social Workers Act.

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 25 without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you.

I move, Mr. Chair, the Committee rise and report Bill 25.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 25.

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 the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 25 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee has considered the matters referred to them and directed him to report Bill 25 without amendment.

When shall this report be received?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper Order 4, second reading of Bill 27.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the hon. the Government House Leader, that Bill 27, An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act, be now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 27, An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act." (Bill 27)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to speak in the hon. House again today to introduce amendments to legislation within the mandate of Service NL. Mr. Speaker, my department provides a wide range of services to residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, including licensing and inspections related to public health, public safety and environmental protection, as well as the provision of vital documents.

It regulates the health and safety of employees in the workplace in Newfoundland and Labrador, and also safeguards consumer interests. Through the Motor Registration Division it performs driver testing, issues driver licences, vehicle registrations and other photo identification cards. It is also responsible for achieving safety on public highways through a number of program areas.

Mr. Speaker, Service NL was created with the aim of consolidating, to the extent possible, the licensing, permitting, inspecting and regulating functions within government and providing a single window access point to the public for those services. The authority to carry out its functions comes from over 150 pieces of legislation, standards and codes of practice.

So, Mr. Speaker, one of these pieces of legislation is the *Personal Property Security Act*. It regulates the creation and registration of security interests in Newfoundland and Labrador, such as an enforceable legal claim or a lien in collateral that is placed against a loan. As an example, a consumer may borrow money to purchase a vehicle and that lender typically registers a lien on the vehicle. If an individual defaults on the loan, the lender can repossess or take the vehicle back. Once the loan has been

paid in full, the lender then releases their interest on the vehicle.

In other words, when an individual secures a loan, assets are placed against the loan which gives the lender the right to repossess all or part of the property if the borrower stops making loan payments. This practice allows the lending industry to reduce the risk on a loan, which in turn allows for a lower interest rate and borrowing costs. It is a mutually beneficial agreement in that the borrower can take advantage of lower financing and the lender has security that the debt will be repaid.

Back in 2007, amendments were made to the uniform *Securities Transfer Act*, another piece of legislation under the mandate of Service NL. This act provided for uniform laws for the transfer of all securities and focused on facilitating the electronic transfer of those securities. Securities are defined as financing or investment instruments which are bought and sold in financial markets, such as bonds, options, shares, stocks, warrants, just to name a few. As a result of the changes to that legislation, there were unintended consequences to the *Personal Property Security Act*. These unintended changes altered the description of collateral, thereby reducing the options of what can be used as collateral in a security agreement.

Mr. Speaker, section 11 of the *Personal Property Security Act* provides a list of what can be considered collateral. Prior to the 2007 amendments, it stated: by item or kind, or by reference to one or more of the following: goods, document of title, chattel paper, security, instrument, money or intangible. When the changes to the uniform *Securities Transfer Act* were made in 2007, the description in section 11 of the *Personal Property Security Act* was changed to “by item or kind as ‘goods’, ‘chattel paper’, ‘investment property’, ‘documents of title’, ‘instruments’, ‘money’ or ‘intangibles’”

The insertion of “as” before the list of categories and the removal of the final clause including the “or” indicates the collateral must be one of the categories listed. It reduced the options of what can be used as collateral in a security agreement by changing the description. Because of the amendment, acceptable securities have been

limited specifically to only goods, chattel paper, investment property, documents of title, instruments, money or intangibles.

As a result of this unintended consequence, the province is the only Canadian jurisdiction with such legislative wording. Amending section 11 of the *Personal Property Security Act* would ensure the original spirit and intent of the legislation is upheld.

The proposed bill will realign Newfoundland and Labrador with other jurisdictions, thereby achieving the original objective of harmonization of the legislation throughout the country. It also addresses the return of the words “or another person on the secured party’s behalf” at the end of the subsection to align with other jurisdictions in the country.

Mr. Speaker, it’s incumbent upon us, as a government, to ensure that legislation is meeting the needs of our residents. It is also incumbent upon us to address corrections that are required when we are made aware of any inaccuracies. In this particular case, the unintended consequences resulted from the 2007 amendments; they came to light as a result of a court challenge.

Mr. Speaker, we continue with our efforts regarding better services and better outcomes for the people of our province. An important aspect of these objectives is our continued focus on ensuring our legislation is both modern and effective. Legislation should be easily understood and interpreted. When it comes to matters such as personal property, security and an interest in collateral, we can easily see the significance in making sure it is clear and cohesive.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that the bill we have introduced today will achieve just that in terms of the *Personal Property Security Act*. I look forward to the debate and from hearing from Members on all sides of the Legislature.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

For the second time today, it's a privilege to be here on behalf of the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis and the beautiful people in the District of Cape St. Francis.

Mr. Speaker, I was a former critic for the Department of Service NL and the minister is right when he first named off all the duties of Service NL. Like I always say, it seems like they have you from the time you're born to the time you die and everything in between.

I know last week we debated a bill here in the House of Assembly when it came to automobile dealers and safety on the road. At that time, I had the opportunity also to speak on the bill, and I just want to go and say a little something.

I want to congratulate the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's because she was the previous minister of Service NL and while I was critic she did such a fantastic job making sure our roads were safe and stuff like that. I don't care what colour you are, red, blue, orange, whatever it is, we all have to be here for a reason, to make sure that our residents are safe. I think over the last number of years we've done that in some of the changes we've made.

Now, when you look at the *Personal Property Security Act*, I have a lot of notes, Minister, of what you outlined. I'm not going to go into the detail like you did, but I'm just going to hit a couple of points.

Making this language of section 11 consistent with the rest of the Atlantic provinces and the rest of the country, I believe it's a part of what we're planning on doing because we were a little bit different. It's also just correcting some cross-referencing in sections of the act.

When we talk about, like I said earlier, Service NL, they do handle a lot. When we talk about security guards and security and stuff like that, we also can talk about Service NL because that falls under there for regulations and stuff like that, but this is a little different. This is financial security, what we're talking about here today. The act is used to regulate and create registration

of security interest on personal property for the province.

What we're doing here in this act today is we're dealing with two different groups. We're dealing with creditors and debtors, and we're talking about collateral and the security of making a debt payment. I would imagine that most of the people in this province and most of the people in this House of Assembly at some time had to go get a loan and sometimes a signature. If you're buying something which costs money, a new car or something like that, they'll see what your debt is like and they'll also look and see what assets you have, whether it's a home, whether it's a piece of property, whether you have some investments or something like this, or you might need somebody to sign a loan for you and they put up whatever they have. So this is what we're talking about here today.

There are all kinds of different titles when you talk about personal property in this. The minister went through all kinds of them, like the document title, investment properties, instruments, money and intangibles. The officials in the department, when they discussed the security interest, the officials described it as a lien or collateral that has been pledged to obtain a loan. So that's what you need to obtain a loan.

I know most people in this House will understand that a lot of legislation that comes through this House sometimes is considered, we call it, housekeeping. I wasn't here in 2007, but the minister was. I would imagine back then in *Hansard* it was described as purely technical and there were no implications or impact and effect on any other legislation. Now, people do make mistakes and, obviously, there was a mistake made at that time because it did affect this act.

Back then, like I said, it was brought in to be purely technical changes they had, and pieces of legislation do change. The language sometimes – what happens in one piece of legislation affects other legislation, and I think that's exactly what happened in this case.

What officials found out, that this was done – and it was unintended consequences of these amendments and the changes to the language that were done in 2007. It wasn't until 2018,

when there was a court case and the judge looked at this – and he even reviewed *Hansard* at the time and looked at the *Personal Property Security Act* and said there should be some changes. I think that's first when the department became aware of the changes that needed to be made. It wasn't just picked up by officials in the department; it was actually picked up in a courthouse. Since then, the department also indicated that they're not aware of any cases which this did impact in the court of law.

We're making a change here today. It's not to make it wrong or right I guess, it's just to correct what needs to be done in case this comes up and can have some effect on courts down the road. It's more on a financial side than anything else that the securities are worried about. It's just making sure the proper regulations are in place and people play by the rules, and they know what they can use when they're putting out trying to get a loan and what they can use to be able to obtain that loan.

That's the basic gist of it. I had some notes wrote down that the minister already went through and I'm not going to go through those again. This is just based on what happened in a court case in March of 2018 where the judge referenced section 11 of the act. He suggested then that someone should review that section, and I guess the department did review the section. The changes you see here today, which are very small, will be made so that the act is back to where it was previous 2007.

So it's the same act. The wording has gone back to what it was 2007 in this act. Like I said, the changes were made and they were unintentional. No one thought there would be any consequences to it, but sometimes when you do change one act, it does have an effect on another.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a very exciting piece of legislation. I'm sure it's exciting to people who work in securities and personal property securities. Previously, I worked in financial services and I had become intimately familiar with the federal *Bank Act*. That was very exciting at the time, and I know this is kind of linked to that. I know it's kind of difficult for the average person to wrap their head around the changes required in this piece of legislation, but certainly very important for our financial system.

So what are we talking about here today? Security interests: enforceable claims on collateral that have been pledged usually to obtain a loan. And the person with a claim, they have the right to repossess all or part if the borrower doesn't meet their obligations. That could be paying back a loan.

This act, overall, provides a set of rules to govern rights of creditors and debtors when personal property is used as collateral to secure payment of debt. That's my understanding of it. This includes every transaction which in substance creates a security interest without regard to its form and without regard to the person with whom has title to the collateral. Security interests are created through attachment. So that's a very important part of this piece of legislation. Not the changes today, but the act overall.

Value has to be given to the interest. The debtor has rights in the collateral and they have to be enforceable against third parties. Overall, this regulates the creation and registration of security interests in all personal property within Newfoundland and Labrador. But that also excludes liens, interests and annuities, insurance policies and interests in land. So it does not include any of those things. Very nuanced and complex.

Then one element in the changes today is around the description required on the financial statements related to the personal security. The debtor must sign a security agreement that contains a description of the collateral sufficient to enable it to be identified or the secured party must have possession or control of the collateral.

On the financial statement, they're supposed to go into as much detail as possible around the

description of the asset. In some cases, for example, you just put equipment, but then which equipment. So they have to go into as much detail as possible.

I do support, obviously, the change. It's very important that we make the language consistent with other provinces, particularly when you're dealing with something that is not in most people's everyday lives. Obviously, it is very important that we correct the cross-referencing error that was noted. Overall, I support this legislation.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

First of all, I would just like to go into a little bit of background regarding the *Personal Property Security Act* legislation. This legislation, as has been noted previously, varies somewhat by province and territory, but ultimately there are certain basic concepts that are common to all provinces and territories. Just looking at the PPSA, we know that it serves a very important function, this legislation does. I guess we can look at the role for creditors first of all.

Creditors, when considering whether to grant secured credit, they need to have confidence. They need to know that they're confident as to their positions with respect to the collateral that's involved. As I've indicated, every province and territory has legislation in place to provide an orderly system to give that confidence and that protection, if you will.

Every province and territory has this kind of legislation to recognize the interests that people will have in personal property collateral. Every province and territory sets out rules to determine priority disputes among competing claims with respect to the same collateral. This law is important because it allows lenders or creditors to grant credit, knowing where they will stand with respect to the collateral in terms of competing claims.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is important because it applies to every transaction that creates a security interest – in essence, every transaction. If the transaction's real purpose is to create an interest in personal property, to secure payment or if it's the performance of an obligation like a debt, then it is classified as a security interest and, therefore, the PPSA will apply. That's the background in terms of the *Personal Property Security Act* that we need to understand. Credit transactions are a very important and normal part of every business. Practically speaking, the PPSA system provides potential creditors and buyers with a high level of protection, so that's why it's so important.

A lender can search the registry that's in place, the PPSA registry, before granting credit to determine whether there are other existing borrowers out there competing. Purchasers of goods can search the PPSA registry to also determine whether the goods that they're interested in are subject to a security interest. That would take priority over them. So it's really important because you determine who has priority over collateral.

I guess the main thing with respect to this legislation, the PPSA, it gives knowledge and it gives the people the ability to make informed decisions and to have confidence. This knowledge allows creditors and buyers to make informed decisions, business decisions, with the confidence of knowing where they will stand in the event of a default by the debtor. There's no question that the *Personal Property Security Act* legislation is very important.

With respect to this particular amendment, we look at why it is being presented. I guess there are a couple of things I'd like to point out regarding what I think are relevant in terms of drafting legislation. We do know that it's important to construct legislation that gives legal effect to government policy. It's important, as well, in drafting legislation to ensure that we communicate the law clearly to the people who are affected by it, the officials who administer it and the judges who interpret it. Drafting legislation is a very critical, important role.

The meaning of the law is, in essence, what the courts determine it to be. We see in this, with respect to this amendment, the officials became

aware of the unintended consequences through a court case in 2018. That court case was an appeal and it talked about the language in subsection 11(1). In essence, the appellant court judge reviewed the *Hansard* and concluded that the changes were not meant to change the intent, which is important. Although the case was upheld, the judge ruled that some of the difficulty with the case related to the language of the act.

The meaning of the law, again, is what the courts determine it to be. The role of our courts, as we know, is the final authority on the meaning of legislation and is one of the most important components of the rule of law. Some key principles, when we're looking at statutory interpretation: one, we know that different words mean different things; secondly, every word has a meaning; and third, words are to be given their ordinary grammatical meaning. Those are some of the key principles when one is assessing statutory interpretation. These principles have many implications for legislation drafting.

That is why I think we're here today. We're looking at the amendments which are proposed in Bill 27 and all it's really asking is that we reinstate the original wording as it was prior to 2017. It's a correction, if you will – it's an amendment or a correction – and the purpose is to reflect what the intended meaning of this legislation is to give us the clarity that we need and to be consistent across jurisdictions.

In view of that, Mr. Speaker, I am in support of this amendment to correct that error and I conclude on that point.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I commend the Member for Harbour Main on her legal view on this. I am going to cast my professional view on this and provide a bit of an economics perspective on it all.

I would like to point out that the Minister of Health and Community Services has repeatedly said that there's nothing like a good court case to improve the law, and I think this is an excellent example of this. What we are seeing is we have corrected some unintended consequences that we did not realize were the case until we were challenged by a court case. What we see is these unintended consequences highlight a need for due diligence in our legislation.

As a slight aside, there is a story that's often told in economic theory when a community was trying to rid their community of rodents and passed a law to say: if you kill a rodent, you bring the tail to us and we will pay you – thinking that all the rodents would go away. What actually happened was someone started a rodent farm just outside of town and would harvest these rodents for their tails. So we had a whole bunch of tailless rodents in a farm and people getting paid for the tails they had cut off. That is an unintended consequence of legislation.

What we see here is we have another unintended consequence, albeit not quite as dramatic, but it is a recognition that even when we try our hardest, quite often we can possibly get legislation incorrect. So when we talk about correcting these unintentional consequences, it's a testament to our need to regularly review our legislation and take the due diligence to ensure that we avoid these unintended consequences, but we also must ensure that our legislation matches with any changes that are happening elsewhere in society.

For example, when we were going through the expansionary period, just before the housing market bubble collapsed, we found that a lot of people were getting what they called NINJA loans, which is no income, no job, no assets loans. For some reason, the legislation was not strict enough and it allowed individuals who were not capable of perhaps paying their mortgage, were able to get a mortgage.

What happened as a result of that was there were major regulatory changes in both Canada and the United States that tightened that regulation to ensure that such financial catastrophe was mitigated; that we wouldn't find ourselves in a situation where too many people had too much

debt, they were no longer capable of paying for that and our financial house was built on a stack of cards, making an untenable situation. What we saw as a result of that was the financial collapse in the United States due to over mortgaging.

It is vital that our legislation backs the requirements that are happening in the rest of the world. As we reflect on this legislation, it's important to capture any deregulation or new regulations that arise in our financial industry. What you've seen in Canada is an increase in the stringency of evaluating individuals who are getting mortgages. Your ability to get a mortgage is tighter; your down payment is a little bit higher. There are much tighter regulations to avoid a potential collapse again. We think that is an absolutely important thing, and that's what we are doing, in effect, in this piece of legislation.

One of the other things we are doing is also providing consistency across provinces. That's going to enable us to, perhaps, integrate our legislation a little bit better, but it also enables individuals who are moving across provinces and engaging in this type of business across provinces to have at least similar pieces of legislation so it's a little bit easier to maintain their work and work environment.

I did note – and this made me go look up the actual *Personal Property Security Act*. I notice that we have some interesting definitions here. If I was to teach an introductory economics course right now, one of the first things that I do is I define things, because the way in which you define things dictates the way in which those things will be used and how a theory works and all of those good things. If you quickly go down through section 11(b), you will note “instrument,” but it's not defined. So I, of course, ran over to the act, knowing full well that they were not defining a piano, but wanting to know exactly what we were talking about when they talk about instruments. I find that has a reasonable definition of instruments in here.

Also – and this is something that will probably come up as we go into Committee – I found that “intangible” was quite an interesting thing and I'm not quite sure what they mean by this. It says personal property that's not goods, a

document of title, chattel paper, investment property, an instrument or money. So I'm not quite sure what intangible means, but I'm very curious to find out and perhaps the Minister of Finance can answer that once we move to Committee. I think that is certainly an interesting piece. I'm not sure if everyone else is on the edge of their seat waiting for that answer as well, but we can perhaps all guess what that might be.

Beyond that, certainly this piece of legislation brings everything into line. As we had hoped, it does address those unintended consequences and it aligns our legislation with that across a number of other provinces. At face value, we support this and I look forward to our discussion in Committee.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, I have no problem with this piece of legislation. Just for the record, I just wanted to say that I do support the legislation. Obviously, there was an unintended error that occurred and we're simply just fixing that unintended error here today. It makes all good sense. There's nothing earth-shattering about this naturally, but the implications are important nonetheless. So it's important that we fix this here today.

I will be supporting it.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, if he speaks now he'll close the debate.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker

I thank all Members who spoke to this and some of the discussion that has taken place. I think it highlights the importance of what happens here.

A couple of the Members had indicated when they spoke, that as a result of the court challenge

the judge actually went back and read *Hansard*, and as the judge read *Hansard* it was clearly articulated – more so in the discussion that had taken place in this Legislature than it was in the words in legislation – what the intent of the legislation was. So needless to say government won the court case or the challenge but it was highlighted the need to clarify in legislation the intent, even though government had won the challenge in court.

What is said in here is important. I often think of a former member here, Roger Grimes, who constantly – one of his mantras were: words are important. It is important what's said in here.

As Members were speaking, the various Members and their different backgrounds, I started looking around the Legislature, and we've got a diverse background. I know one of my critics across the hall has a background in administering health. We've got a farmer. We've got teachers, people who are involved in unions. We have an economist here. We've had people who their profession were taxi drivers, in this Legislature.

So we bring a very diverse background which is, I think, part of what makes this place important. If we were all physicians or we were all teachers or we were all lawyers, you wouldn't have that same background to draw on different opinions or a different way of looking at something that we debate in the Legislature.

So not only are the 40 of us very privileged to be here to represent the people we represent in the province, but the background that you bring represents everybody in the province who shares that background with you. So it's important, when we debate in this Legislature, the words that are used and what we bring to the table. It is the reason, when this issue had gone to court, that the judge had gone back and read *Hansard*.

There are three areas of the law. In this Legislature we make laws, the law enforcement enforce the laws that we make and judges interpret what that law was supposed to mean. In between there, while it's not an official component of the three areas of law, the lawyers will argue on one side of what a law means or on another side of what a law means. Even when that's being debated in court and a judge is

looking at what legislation means, that debate back and forth will often look at *Hansard* and what's said in this Legislature as a decision is made and a judge interprets what was intended to happen in this Legislature.

Anyhow, it is the word housekeeping – I mean, that's essentially what this is, is housekeeping – to fix a piece of legislation to what it was intended. And the debate that had taken place around that legislation clearly articulated what was intended. But the words could have been interpreted one way or the other in debate. In a court setting the judge had ultimately – what essentially saved the day was the debate that happened in this Legislature and the full intent of what the legislation was intended.

So again, I wanted to thank all Members who spoke to this legislation and appreciate what you've contributed.

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

The motion is that Bill 27 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 To Amend The Personal Property Security Act. (Bill 27)

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

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

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill "An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act," read a second

time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 27)

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 27.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Bennett): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 27, An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Personal Property Security Act." (Bill 27)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

The proposed changes stem from a March 2018 court case. When was the department aware of this issue?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I thank the Member for the question.

I believe it was as a result of the decision that had gone to court. Again, the judge had looked at the discussion that had taken place in *Hansard*, but I believe it was that particular situation that highlighted the fact that the wording could potentially be viewed – either way, the judge looked at *Hansard* to determine which way the wording was intended. But that is what highlighted – before I conclude, I wanted to thank the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's as well. Much of the work on this piece of legislation was done by her when she sat in Service NL.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Why has it taken so long for these changes? Once it was recognized in 2018, why are these changes occurring only now? Why didn't they occur earlier?

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

MR. OSBORNE: I will ask officials in the department. I'm guessing at this stage that a jurisdictional scan was done to determine what was put in place. I know that was done, but I'm guessing that's part of the reason for the delay. I think this legislation was initially introduced by the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's some time ago, when we last sat, several months ago.

Part of it was the jurisdictional scan that was done. Justice and Public Safety had reviewed what was there, what was in place in other departments and, I guess, the recognition from the court system that maybe greater clarification in the wording was needed. But once I hear back on our trusty BBMs from officials, I'll tell you the answer from the officials.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: I know that in the briefing the department officials stated that they weren't aware of the impact on any other cases. Was this brought up in other court cases, when it was going through court?

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

MR. OSBORNE: It's my understanding it was only the one situation. Between 2007 and 2018, there was no challenge to this particular wording. I understand from the deputy minister that because of the large legislative agenda in Service NL, we didn't feel it was a threat as a result of the recommendation from the justice that maybe we clarify the wording because we did win the court case. It wasn't one of the hot top priorities, but it did need to be done. Because of the large legislative agenda, other items got done sooner.

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

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much.

I'm just wondering when these proposed amendments will come in effect.

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you.

I would say once this legislation passes and the Lieutenant-Governor proclaims them, and they're gazetted, they'll come into effect. So it shouldn't take long.

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

MS. COFFIN: I know we're all really curious about this. Can you tell me what the intangible is defined as? I'm racking my brain on trying to figure out what that might be and I know it might be just a catch-all.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Service NL.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you.

No, it's a good question. I think it would things such as patents or trademarks would be intangibles.

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you

So that's something that has a stream of income associated with it. This is lovely, thank you.

The other question that I would have would be: are you satisfied that we have this bill in line now so that we won't find that there are any other inconsistencies? We're up to date entirely?

CHAIR: The hon. Minister of Service NL.

MR. OSBORNE: I would hope so, so I will give a cautionary yes. I would guess that the minister of Service NL back in 2007 would have said yes as well. Obviously, based on the debate in the Legislature, the intent was what was ruled in court, but there are always errors or omissions that are picked up.

Again, the three legs of the legal system: the legislators, the law enforcement and the people who interpret the law, the judges, there are times always which is what makes this place – we'll never be out of business because we'll always need to make amendments to law.

CHAIR: The Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I guess one final question here would be: in the interim up, until we pass this, are you aware of anyone who might have had any negative financial impacts as a result of the law not being changed yet?

CHAIR: The hon. Minister of Service NL.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you.

No, I'm not. In fact, there was only one challenge and government felt strong in the case against the challenge because government knew the intent of the language in 2007. Obviously,

the judge, in reading *Hansard* and looking at the intent – the intent was what the decision that was made in court was. There was never an intent to change the intent in 2007; it was to harmonize the bills.

CHAIR: Any other questions to clause 1?

Seeing and hearing none, 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 Personal Property Security Act.

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 27 without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I move the Committee rise and report Bill 27.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 27.

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. Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate, the Chair of Committee of the Whole.

MR. BENNETT: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and directed me to report Bill 27 without amendment.

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 Bill 27 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time.

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We could press on with more government business and conclude for this sitting this evening, but I would suggest Members opposite would like to have their Question Periods and Orders of the Day in the next number of days; therefore, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that we do adjourn.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to speak to that motion. I do understand what the Government House Leader is proposing. I don't have a problem with us carrying on in terms of having more Question Periods, which is obviously the motivation for the Official Opposition and the Third Party, and I don't blame them. There are a lot of questions to be asked and answers that should be received on behalf of people. I'm certainly not objecting to that process whatsoever, or saying we should just barrel on through the legislation so we can shut the House down early, so to speak, in terms of the days we would be sitting and not have that opportunity for a Question Period. I have never had an issue with that.

The amendment I brought forward, that was supported by my colleague for Bay of Islands, on sitting on Wednesdays, that was exactly what we were saying then. We weren't suggesting that Wednesday mornings we would be taking up time that would interfere with the legislation or say we'd barrel through the legislation so we would not have Question Period – quite to the contrary. We had suggested, Mr. Speaker, that on Wednesdays we would be open and it would be Address in Reply so that Members could stand and speak to issues important to their

districts, issues that they are having raised to them by constituents.

So in the same spirit of that, right now we're talking about shutting the House down now. It's only 4:30, the House is supposed to be open until 5:30. We want to shut the House down because we don't want to proceed with legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I don't have a problem with not proceeding with legislation, but if we have an hour here now on the clock, I don't know why we cannot take this time to call Address in Reply so that Members, if they so wish, can stand and speak to issues that are important to them; issues that are important to their constituents. I know I have things that I want to raise. I know the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands has issues that he wants to raise.

I've been contacted by, I don't know how many people in my district and throughout the province who have major concerns about health care, about the major backlog that we now have in our health care system. We all realize we're in challenging times and so on, but even if we were to get back to normal with our health care system and our health care authorities, even at the best of times there are extended wait times for a number of procedures.

Albeit the government, I will give them credit, there have been a number of procedures which they have reduced wait times on. They've done a great job when it comes to mental health services, as an example, and I give full marks for that. There are a number of other procedures that they've reduced wait times, and I commend them for that, but there still is a number of things, Mr. Speaker, in our health care system where people are waiting, and now they're going to have to wait even longer. People want to know, what is the plan going to be to deal with the backlog in the health care system; not just to deal with the ongoing on a go-forward basis.

There are people that were diagnosed, Mr. Speaker, who found out perhaps three months ago they had some kind of a growth in their body and now they're worried to death. They're waiting to get a test to find out, is this growing any bigger? What could it be? What is my

diagnosis? And they're waiting on this. Now this has been an extended period of time.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, I've had people in my district the same thing, waiting on heart procedures and so on. As time goes on their heart conditions are getting worse and worse and worse. There are people really concerned about, will I ever get to have my procedure before it's too late?

So these are things, Mr. Speaker –

MR. SPEAKER: I just want to remind the Member that it has to remain relevant to the adjournment motion.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To bring it around to that, I think the point I'm trying to make is that we have a motion on the floor to shut down the House an hour early. What I'm suggesting, Mr. Speaker, is that I do not agree with that motion because we have a number of important things, like the issues I've been raising, that we want to speak about, and I'm suggesting we should be going to Address in Reply.

I don't know why the Opposition parties would be against it, I really don't, to be honest with you, because, at the end of the day, they're still getting their Question Period. I'm not saying that we're going to stop here now and all of a sudden we're going to go into legislation. I'm saying let's go to Address in Reply.

I'm sure there are Members on this side who are getting complaints from people that they want to talk about health care. I'm sure they getting the same calls as I'm getting, Mr. Speaker, from people who have children in the K-to-12 system who are really not happy with the way things went this year. There are people who are worried about what the K-to-12 system is going to look like next year; how we're going to address that with technology in some parts of the province we just don't have the Internet capability.

People who have children with special needs, who at the best of times, at the very best of times, have all kinds of challenges, Mr. Speaker, with their children and getting an equal education for their children. Now, how are we

going to deal with it when we're going to be having all these challenges around COVID-19 and trying to do things virtually and so on? How are we going to deal with the busing issue with COVID-19? How are we going to deal with the food issues in the cafeterias and stuff like that, if we open up the schools?

I'm getting calls as well about child care. We have significant concerns with child care because now businesses are opening so more and more people are going back to work who need child care, but the child care operators are at reduced capacity. They can't handle the same number of children. What are they supposed to do with their children? What is the plan to deal with that?

Then a lot of daycares are saying, well, I'm operating at a reduced capacity so in order to keep my doors open, I'm going to say to the parents who can't even get a seat, who need one, I'm not going to give you a seat, but you're going to have to pay for it anyway in order to keep our doors open.

Some of these families are families who have been impacted by COVID-19 and so on, and their finances have been impacted tremendously. They don't know how they're going to do it, Mr. Speaker. So these are things that we need to talk about.

I presented a petition in the House of Assembly today, Mr. Speaker, about long-term care, which I've done numerous times. I'm still getting calls from people who have concerns about long-term care. It's not about the staff at the long-term care facility. They're doing the very best they can, Mr. Speaker, but it's an issue around lack of staff. Not having those staff there at all times, not replacing people when they call in sick or holidays or whatever. Then you have seniors who are not getting the care that they need, they require and that they deserve. I'm having lots of people reach out to me about those issues.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to, for the sake of doing so, stay here. According to the clock I have 52 minutes, if I wanted to, to debate this motion, but that's not my intent to stay here until 5:30 and to take the full hour. I'd like for other Members to stand up and talk about these

important issues, but at the end of the day these are important things.

The Government House Leader said to me there last week – she was saying you need to find opportunities. You have opportunities, she said, to bring up these important issues. I said, well, where are my opportunities? The only opportunity I have, really, is I can do a petition, which I've done and I'm going to do. Or I can take advantage of the opportunity I have now to raise these issues, and that's what I'm doing.

Now, this is not a publicity stunt, I will say, Mr. Speaker. I don't care if there's anybody listening from VOICM or CBC. I don't want to see this on the news. I don't care if it's there or not. I could care less. But what I do care about is the fact that I have people in my district that are contacting me about these issues and they want them discussed.

That's all I'll have to say. My colleague for Humber - Bay of Islands may or may not want to say something and perhaps there are other Members who do. Again, I just want to put it out there for all Members in this House, and I want to put it out there to the Opposition Members in particular, from my perspective this is in no way trying to take away from your opportunity to have additional Question Periods. That's not what I'm suggesting.

I'm saying that if we have downtimes now – we have an hour and we could be in the same boat tomorrow and the next day because of this reduced agenda – why not go to Address in Reply? Why not have Address in Reply on Wednesday so that all Members, including Opposition Members, can have the opportunity to raise these issues that your constituents wanted raised?

That's the gist of it, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, if I'm going to be voted down, that's fine, but it's important to get these issues out there.

I'm going to take my seat.

Thank you.

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

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to spend just a few minutes to talk about this today and concur with my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands.

Mr. Speaker, again, I'm not trying to be difficult in this House, but it's my opportunity to bring up issues that people ask me to bring up and mainly it's the health care. I'll just give you a good example why. Can I confirm this 100 per cent? No, but I just know the way the procedure works.

I ask the people opposite, the Members opposite – and this is why, Mr. Speaker, that I'm so concerned about bringing up stuff in debate – is there anything that we can do in this Legislature, any act we need to pass, any funds we need to approve that would help speed up and to get surgeries back on track?

I'll give you a good example. When this ban came in, not allowing people in the province, I am confident – and I'll tell you why I'm confident. I am confident that it didn't go through the vetting process. Because if it had to go through the vetting process, we would have heard that you would have someone out in the public asking questions about the restrictions allowing people into the province.

I'm confident that that statement was made that we're not going to let people in as of, whatever it was, June 1 or June 2, but it didn't go through the Cabinet process.

MR. SPEAKER: I just want to remind the Member that the matter that he's speaking of is before the courts and we have the tradition of sub judice in here where we don't usually talk about matters that are before the courts. I just caution. I don't think he's said anything out of order, but I just want to caution him at this point on that matter.

MR. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

But my point is that if we're going to get ready for the minute we get the PPEs which now we say we have, is there anything in this Legislature so we can't slow it down by not having any legislation that we need changed or any funds that we need to put in place? That's the idea.

That's the whole idea is be prepared. So when it's time, when there's an opportunity, when we have all the necessary equipment that we can just start. If not, we have to come back in this Legislature. To keep the Legislature open just to ask questions and the cost, the amount of money that we're spending, staff is in here, people from outside St. John's coming in, staying, accommodations, the rental cars, now we're going to keep it open for Question Period yet we're not going to extend the debate time in this Legislature.

With the deficit that we have and the serious issues and the concerns that we have around the province, and we're not going to bring this in so we can extend Question Periods for the next couple of days? I've never seen it before in this House. Never seen it, with such a pandemic in this province, an opportunity – Mr. Speaker, when I'm bringing up health care concerns, this is not a criticism on the ministers. I could look at ministers across that I have been dealing with on issues on this and they have been helpful.

The Minister of Education, child, youth and family services has been good. The Minister of Health; the Minister of Industry, trade and rural development, they have been good. The Minister of Municipal Affairs, I have been dealing with. But the big thing that I'm hearing, there are a lot of other issues – like school, are we going to open? I know the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, the minister, is working hard on that and I have confidence that it's going to be done. We work well together on all this.

Mr. Speaker, health care is the one issue that I hear on a regular basis. I'm sure I'm not the only person in this hon. House who listens to that. Again, I'll say to the Minister of Health, he's been open, he's been speaking to it, he's been trying, but I have to push it to see what we can do to speed it up.

Now the PPEs is not the issue. We have enough PPEs now. It's not the issue; it's to bring it up to 75 per cent. So what is it we can do in the Legislature to bring it up? Because when you hear of a person telling their mother don't get off your couch because we can't visit you in hospital if you break your hip, that's sad. I'm glad to report, by the way, the person I was speaking to about blind in one eye, he did get in

to see the specialist last Thursday. I'm proud of that. He did get in to see; waiting about two months to get in, but he finally got in.

Mr. Speaker, I know there's another case that came to me that a person is waiting to get a pacemaker. He can't walk. Another person I was speaking to has two blockages, 100 per cent. I know when I was speaking to the minister – and I'm not putting words in the minister's mouth one bit – sometimes there's a disconnect between the patient, the GP and the specialist, to make sure the information is to the point that if his condition got worse, bring it to the specialist's attention so we can get this up.

These are the concerns that I'm hearing on a regular basis. Every day I'm bringing in a new one, sending it off to the Minister of Health, saying: look, can you look into this to see if there's anything that can be done. I'm not the only Member here doing that.

I'll use education; a lot of people are concerned with what's going to happen in September. I know the minister is working with them, but these are the questions that are being asked us and this is our opportunity to bring it up in the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to prolong this anymore, but I have to say – and I'll say it once again – I've been in this Legislature, and sometimes we had some very ruckus sessions, we had some filibusters that I was a part of, but we always try to be a bit fair to people with people's concerns. So when myself and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands brought up concerns last week that we wanted an opportunity to ask a few questions on health care, we were denied. We were denied an opportunity to bring up questions on health care.

People who I know back in my district, know that when I'm trying to be reasonable, which is usually very often, if I'm trying to be reasonable and all of a sudden I get shot down by bringing up major concerns of people in my district, I will find ways to do it. I will find ways to do it.

Mr. Speaker, people are talking about grandstanding. I'll say it again, if people call me grandstanding or I'm trying to railroad this House of Assembly, for someone who's dying

and can't get an operation, can't get a specialist on his eye, someone told their mother to sit on the couch, another person today needs a pacemaker put in, can't get up the steps, another person with 200 per cent blockage; if you're saying I'm hijacking this House to bring up these concerns, I'm guilty as charged. I'll hijack it every opportunity I get, if I'm not given the right to bring up these concerns. And I make no apologies whatsoever in this House for doing it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the opportunity for us – and I hear this on many occasions from people opposite and in the Opposition, this is all new to us. This pandemic is new to us, it is. To everybody it's new; everybody is learning as we go. The only question I have to ask, if the government is saying this is new to us on a regular basis, things change, we adapt, why can't we adapt to allow the Opposition to ask more questions in this hon. House now that we're here? Why can't we let the Third Party ask a few extra questions and why can't you let the independents ask a few more questions?

If everything here is all new and we're in a pandemic, why can't we just change things in this House to accommodate everybody? Because I can tell you I'm sure I'm not the only person, and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands is not the only person in this House who are hearing those concerns. We should have an opportunity to express our concerns, to voice our concerns.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not saying that every concern that I'll bring up or my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands will bring up or the Opposition will bring, but it's the comfort of people knowing that you're raising their issues, that it's going to be heard. So we can find some resolute into helping those people, find some reason that we can say, yes, we're going to bring it up. We're going to see what we can do, we're going to raise your concerns. If nothing else, the anxiety of sitting at home saying what's next. At least we're raising the concerns, Mr. Speaker.

I understand the backlog, I understand the emergency cases, I understand all that, but if people know we're trying to get this open, we're trying to now see how can we get it to 75 per cent operation, it does decrease the level of

anxiety. If I can decrease the level of anxiety for the people who are affected through health care, I can assure you that we're doing our job for everybody. I don't mean to be obstinate in this House. I don't mean to be hard headed in this House.

I was talking to the Member for St. John's Centre today about rural Newfoundland. In rural Newfoundland it's different from when you're in here, because a lot of times you don't even know who your specialist is and all that. We agree, it is different. It is different. So that's why sometimes the only opportunity you have is the House of Assembly to raise these concerns and to ask questions on behalf of them.

We all agree that some people may operate in their district different from the way I operate and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands operates, or any Member here, the way we do business for our constituents. I know the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay has to drive nine hours just to get to every community; if he just drove, don't stop, nine hours. So I'm sure he does it different from what – it takes me 45 minutes from one point to the next when I leave my house. So you do business different than we do, you have to. You wouldn't be able to visit every community everyday like I can.

This is the kind of thing, Mr. Speaker, when you're raising your concerns, you're bringing up the concerns of the people in the best way you think you're going to get results.

Mr. Speaker, I've always said, and I'll finish on this, that I've been privileged to represent the Bay of Islands for a number of years – now it's the Humber - Bay of Islands for a number of years. They expressed their confidence in me, Mr. Speaker. They know if I have an issue and I think I'm right on the issue, and they know if they have an issue and I'm going to bring it up, I'm going to continue to bring it up. They gave me that confidence, so I have to represent them to the best of my ability.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to this House and when you're denied the opportunity to speak, there is no one in this House that's going to find a way to make sure I don't speak, I can assure you that. So it's always better, let's co-operate, and when it comes to health care, I will find a

way to speak and raise the concerns of the people of Humber - Bay of Islands in this area.

I say again, Mr. Speaker, before I close, I've been dealing with a lot of ministers since this pandemic, no problem, all good. I can tell you sometimes you may not get the answers you want, but you get the respect of getting an answer and you can pass it on. I have no problem with that whatsoever. My concern is when it comes to health care I think we have to find a way to address if there's anything we can do in this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, so that there's no further delay. The anxiety level is very high for all of us.

I'll close on that, Mr. Speaker. I thank you for the opportunity to speak on this. I'll say to the people of Humber - Bay of Islands that when I deal with the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, he has the same concerns that I have and it's not that we're working in tandem, it's just that we're hearing the same concerns and this is our only opportunity to bring it up.

For the people of Humber - Bay of Islands, I can assure you that I will continue to raise the concerns to the best of my ability. I thank the Minister of Health for every day sitting down listening to my concerns about it and giving the opportunity to see what he can do and I'll be asking him every day. He knows it, he knows the way I am, that every day that I see him I'll be asking what can we do, how can we speed this up, is there anything we can do to help out. To give the Minister of Health concerned, he has a lot of weight on his shoulders but I'm sure he don't mind me pushing for this to continue because that's what we're elected to do.

I know someone – I think it was the Minister of Finance – brought up Roger Grimes, back here when Roger Grimes was in this House. When Roger Grimes was a minister and we had concerns in our district, Roger Grimes used to say: Do what you got to do for your constituents. Write me; it's my problem how I deal with it. You write me; let them know that you're fighting on their behalf. Don't worry if you're going to upset me; they're the ones who elected you. Roger Grimes always said that. What we're doing here, we're raising the concerns of the people who elected us.

Mr. Speaker, I'll just stop now but just to let you know if I get another opportunity again, I will raise these issues and concerns. I wanted to thank the ministers and you know who you are, that I've been dealing with and helping out along the way. I thank you for that. I know it's difficult times but I can tell you through these difficult times, working with a lot of ministers here, there have been a lot of accomplishments made in the District of Humber - Bay of Islands.

I just want to recognize that. This is not all back and forth; this is just concerns that I've raised. There is a lot of dialogue there, Mr. Speaker, with the ministers and some ministers have taken the time to phone people that I asked them to; they did. There are some concerns that I had through a few businesses; they were called by staff or the ministers themselves, so I have to recognize that.

This is not a confrontation between myself and the government right now. These are health care concerns that we were asked to raise – and I will. I make no apologies. I will raise it every possible opportunity I can. Because if I didn't do that, the confidence that the people of Humber - Bay of Islands put in me, I would be neglecting my responsibilities and duties.

I've been at this now for almost 30 years, 29 years. I have no intent to stop now representing the people of Humber - Bay of Islands because for some reason I was denied an opportunity. And my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands who tried to straighten this up last week, denied an opportunity to speak and ask questions on health care.

As I said earlier, and I'll say it once more before I leave, Mr. Speaker, before I end my speech here, I'll say to you, if I'm accused of co-opting this House, accused of hijacking, if I'm accused of a publicity stunt to raise the concerns in this House and to the ministers here involved, guilty as charged, and I'll continue to do it as long as the great people of Humber - Bay of Islands put their confidence in me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The Government House Leader, does she wish to speak to this motion?

MS. COADY: Just for a quick moment, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: I think there are other speakers, and I think if the Government House Leader speaks she maybe closes the debate.

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to echo the concerns of the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. I think what we have here is we have been recessed since the beginning of March. Normally, our House of Assembly would sit through March, April, May and well into June. So this is not about having ample time for Question Period. This is about our responsibility to the people of our province and of our district.

That is irrespective of our political stripe or lack of affiliation whatsoever. There have been a great many things that have happened and have been enacted since the House has risen that we have not been able to address, and I do believe that everybody in our province deserves many of these concerns to be addressed. Not only are we talking about health care wait times, but we are also talking about a variety of other things that we would normally do.

Throughout the course of March, April, May and June we would normally pass multiple pieces of legislation and we would have a budget debate in addition to Question Periods, in addition to ample opportunities to raise a variety of different points. What we have now is, at the end of this week, the next time we are expected to sit is November. That leaves us a very long period of time before we can address anything that might have been a concern that happened in April.

I do believe that the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands raises quite a valid point in suggesting that we need more time to debate the issues at hand that are vital to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. I do recognize the importance. I will stand by him and advocate for more debate in the House. In fact, if we were to propose additional sittings of the House of Assembly, I would encourage that because I imagine that through March, April, May and

June we have missed an awful lot of legislation and an opportunity to pass a great deal of legislation that many people may well be waiting on.

I do believe that we, the Members of the House of Assembly, that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve ample time to address their issues and concerns in the House of Assembly. That ought not to necessarily mean changes to our Standing Orders, but it does mean that we all have ample opportunity to bring up the concerns of the people of our district and question the actions and decisions of government.

I can appreciate where everyone is coming from. I can also tell you that the room right now feels an awful lot like when I taught a class from 4 to 5 on Friday evenings, and at about 4:45 I guarantee you it was very difficult to capture anyone's attention. However, this is important, and one of my favourite things to do is at 4:46 give them a question that will appear on their final exam.

So this is rather important. I do believe that this is going to be a final exam question. I would encourage us to try and accommodate as much opportunity for debate on the issues that are important to us as long as we possibly can.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

That was a good 40 minutes of discussion, debate. I really appreciate hearing the concerns again of the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, Humber - Bay of Islands and now, of course, St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

Mr. Speaker, we could continue into the evening if we so wished, that is the option of the House to do that, but I would say that we have been very diligent and we've worked very hard to ensure that we had legislation before this House and we wanted to make sure we had Question Period.

Before I ask you to move to the question, I would ask for me to be able to read first reading of a bill, so that we have that first reading made forward so that we can continue on with business. We wish to do so, Mr. Speaker.

Am I allowed to do first reading of the *Animal Health and Protection Act*?

MR. SPEAKER: Does the minister have leave?

MR. JOYCE: There's a motion on the floor, so I'm assuming that you (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: No, I think the minister is asking for leave to –

AN HON. MEMBER: We have to do the motion first.

MR. SPEAKER: No, the motion is to adjourn. My understanding is that as soon as a motion to adjourn is voted on and accepted, then we adjourn. We don't deal with any other business.

The minister, my understanding, is asking for leave of the House to do this before we vote on the adjournment motion. That's my understanding.

MR. JOYCE: I have a few words on their request.

MR. SPEAKER: I don't think this is a debateable sort of request. It's either you grant leave to do this or not. We don't usually have a debate on that type of request for leave of the House.

MR. JOYCE: (Inaudible.)

MR. SPEAKER: Is the Member on a point of order?

MR. JOYCE: I'm just trying to get clarity. Is the Government House Leader asking leave for the House to bring first reading on a bill on bees so that we can continue the House tomorrow, and we can't bring up issues on health care? I just need clarification on this.

MR. SPEAKER: The minister has asked leave to do first reading on a bill. The question before the House is, does she have leave?

Does the Member have leave?

MR. JOYCE: Again, I'm asking (inaudible).

MR. SPEAKER: It's not a debateable item. The Member either has leave or not.

I'm going to ask once again, does the Member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

MR. SPEAKER: Hearing no objections, the minister has leave.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries and Land Resources for leave to introduce a bill, An Act To Amend The Animal Health And Protection Act, Bill 39 and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. minister shall have leave to introduce Bill 39, An Act To Amend The Animal Health And Protection Act and that the bill 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: A bill, An Act To Amend The Animal Health And Protection Act. (Bill 39)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 39 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Now we're back to the Government House Leader.

It is moved and seconded that this House does now adjourn.

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.

This House is now adjourned until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

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