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*Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Order, please!

Before we begin today's session, I just want to bring Members' attention to the new copy of the *Standing Orders* that's on your desks. It's an updated copy. For the people who are watching, the updated copy is always on our website as well. There are a few changes there.

**MR. BYRNE:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. SPEAKER:** I'm sorry?

**MR. BYRNE:** I stood in line at 6:30 this morning to get a copy.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, sales are brisk.

I just wanted to make Members aware of that because, as we know, the rules are very important.

### Statements by Members

**MR. SPEAKER:** Today we're going to hear Members' statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Mount Pearl - Southlands, Conception Bay East - Bell Island, St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, Ferryland and Bonavista.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

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

This past week, community leaders and volunteers tuned into the City of Mount Pearl's Facebook page for this year's virtual version of the Best in Mount Pearl Awards. While COVID-19 may have prevented us from celebrating in the traditional manner, it in no way took away from the pride we all felt as we listened intently to the amazing contributions of this year's nominees and award recipients.

I would like to offer my sincere congratulations to all of this year's nominees and finalists, including the following award winners: Impact in Music, Arts and Culture Award recipient, Christine Hennebury; Environment Award co-

recipients, Collision Clinic and the Rotary Club of Waterford Valley; Community Group of the Year, the staff and volunteers at the Parish of the Good Shepherd; Citizen of the Year, Wanda Tiller; and Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Jim Bulger.

Thank you all for the contribution that you have all made and will continue to make in our community. While Mount Pearl may be well known for amazing services, programming and community infrastructure, it is truly our people that make us great.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I stand today to recognize a young constituent of mine who for most of her life has been a volunteer in many capacities. I speak of Rachel Moss of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, who is a Grade 12 student at Prince of Wales Collegiate and who exemplifies the definition of volunteerism.

As a member of the Lions Clubs' Leo organization, she has taken on many projects that assist Leo clubs internationally. She continues to participate regionally and provincially in public speaking in both official languages, particularly around the issues of murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls.

In her spare time, she enjoys tutoring children in French at her local library in reading and writing. Rachel has spoken about volunteerism and philanthropy as a keynote speaker at the Janeway Foundation's AGM, as well as the Leo international virtual classroom. She is thrilled to be speaking at the New Voices virtual symposium on January 19, 2021.

I might note that in 2013 Rachel, along with her sister Julianne, were awarded the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award by then Governor General David Johnston in front of their schoolmates at Beachy Cove Elementary.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking Rachel and all young volunteers in our province for their service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows.

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

Today, it is my pleasure to recognize Port au Choix's oldest resident, Yvonne Ploughman (née Gould), who, on Tuesday, December 8, celebrated a milestone birthday of 100 years.

Mrs. Ploughman has experienced so much change in here 100 years working hard as a homemaker and raising her family.

Her son, Ben, is a celebrated and multi-talented folk artist. Mrs. Ploughman loved many activities that kept her busy, from knitting to playing bingo or having a game of cards. She was a very active member of St. Theresa's Church until she moved into the retirement home.

Given the global pandemic, her birthday had to be celebrated differently. With long line ups that were socially distanced, local residents visited with Yvonne through the window at Northern Retirement Home in Port Saunders, just to let her know they were there to celebrate with her on her very special day.

Mrs. Ploughman was dressed to the nines and sliced a large cake with her son at her side.

I ask all hon. Members to show our appreciation as we send a celebratory message to Mrs. Yvonne Ploughman of Port au Choix on the occasion of her 100th birthday.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I'm delighted for the opportunity to congratulate Clarence and Anne Molloy of Portugal Cove South on their retirement. Molloy's Transportation and Courier Service was in business for 52 years when they retired March 31, 2020.

Clarence started the business in the fall of 1967. At the age of 21, he became known as the friendly, reliable taxi man. Clarence and Anne have worked tirelessly over the years to provide a quality service to their customers on the Southern Shore.

Together, they raised five children and operated a successful business serving the residents' taxi and courier requests from Trepassey to St. John's. For many years, they provided a six-day passenger and courier service Monday to Saturday, leaving their home in Portugal Cove South at 7:30 a.m., travelling to Trepassey to pick up passengers and then en route to St. John's and returning every evening. Anne delivered freight along Route 10 for many years throughout St. Mary's Bay.

I would also like to congratulate Clarence, who was a member of the Town Council in Portugal Cove South for 45 years.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating Clarence and Anne Molloy on their retirement.

**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 Jevon Marsh of Bonavista on being selected as the 2021 Rhodes Scholar earning him a prestigious scholarship to the University of Oxford worth more than \$100,000. Conceivably, the first within the District of Bonavista. Only 11 Rhodes Scholars are selected each year from across Canada.

This prestigious scholarship does not happen by chance, it only goes to those with intellectual

gifts and an exceptional work ethic. Jevon, the son of Wayne Fisher and Sharon Marsh, was an honours graduate of Discovery Collegiate in Bonavista in 2014. Jevon received a Master of Science degree in Chemistry from Queen's University after completing his undergraduate degree at Memorial.

At Oxford, Jevon will pursue a doctorate of philosophy in inorganic chemistry with a focus on the development of potential treatments for children with rare brain cancers.

The residents of the District of Bonavista and the province are very proud.

I ask the Members of 49th House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Jevon Marsh of Bonavista on being a Rhodes Scholar and wish him much success as he endeavors to alter the course of rare brain cancers in children.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

**Statements by Ministers**

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour.

**MR. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, today is a day to celebrate a made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador success story, and not just a local success story, an international success story.

It is my pleasure to congratulate the team at Avalon Employment Inc. on earning the prestigious United Nations International 2021 Zero Project Award. Avalon Employment was up against 475 international competitors and other organizations in a global competition and was selected for its innovative impactful solutions that removed barriers to employment.

Zero Project was established in 2008 to support working for a world without barriers for persons with disabilities – meaning zero barriers.

Avalon Employment is being recognized for its new employment transitions for individuals with autism pilot project, which our government is very proud to support. The project provides the services and tailor-made supports for people

who are seeking and keeping meaningful employment.

Despite challenges created by the global pandemic, more than 30 participants have worked in the pilot project to date, which Avalon Employment is delivering in partnership with supported employment organizations in Clarendville, Gambo, Deer Lake and Labrador West.

As Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour, I've had the great pleasure of meeting with the people whose personal mission is to make this province a better place to live and to work. Their dedication and passion is energizing and inspiring. It is also effective.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Avalon Employment are the highest example of this work ethic in full flight. The award will be presented at the United Nations in February 2021; Avalon Employment will be attending virtually.

Hearty congratulations to the chief executive officer, Sean Wiltshire, and the Avalon Employment team, including: Shelley Andrews, Bernadette Conway, Bernadette Doyle, Ashley Hammond, Christina Higdon, Krista Hinks, Megan Marshall and Madonna Pike, on this great and prestigious award, along with all of the members of the board.

A job well done. Please keep up the great work.

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

This is fantastic. I join the minister in congratulating Avalon Employment Inc. on earning the United Nations international 2021 Zero Project Award. This is an amazing accomplishment.

When people ask: What jobs can a person with autism do? With the right supports, any job they want.

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

**MR. P. DINN:** We must continue to support organizations like Avalon Employment Inc. who help people with disabilities obtain job experience without any barriers.

Even though the minister has already done it, I'm going to name this executive again because they really, really achieved something amazing here. Congratulations to the chief executive officer, Sean Wiltshire, and the Avalon Employment team: Shelley Andrews, Bernadette Conway, Bernadette Doyle, Ashley Hammond, Christina Higdon, Krista Hinks, Megan Marshall and Madonna Pike, on this prestigious award.

People do matter!

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

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

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I would also like to thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We congratulate Avalon Employment Inc. on receiving this very prestigious award. They are a shining example of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians taking their rightful place on the world stage by developing innovations that transform people's lives.

Most importantly, we stand with Avalon Employment and all others who work tirelessly to reduce barriers for persons with disabilities and strive to make ours a truly inclusive society.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

Today in this hon. House, I would like to congratulate Ms. Niki Legge, the department's director of Mental Health and Addictions, on receiving the International eMental Health Innovation Leadership Award from the eMental Health International Collaborative. She, along with the province, was recognized for being leaders in the delivery of e-mental health and addictions services.

The award is presented annually for leadership in the global e-mental health landscape embodying innovation, implementation and forward-thinking. Ms. Legge has been integral to the development and execution of the mental health and addictions services in this province. We are looked upon as an example of how these initiatives can be delivered in an effective manner and reach the people that need it most.

One of the initiatives Ms. Legge was recognized for was Bridge the gApp, the go-to online resource for mental health and substance use information and support. This work is impacting people, not just here but across the country, as this program is now being considered by other provinces and territories throughout Canada.

We are lucky in this province to have exceptional staff in the Department of Health and Community Services. Recognition of the work by Ms. Legge and her team is well-deserved. Her compassion and innovative forward way of thinking is helping save countless lives and supporting all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

The Official Opposition caucus joins with the minister in acknowledging Ms. Niki Legge on receiving the International eMental Health

Innovation Leadership Award from the eMental Health International Collaborative.

Bridge the gApp is a valuable resource that many depend on for their e-mental health services. It is programs like these that were able to remain fully operational through the COVID-19 pandemic, reaching residents in all areas of the province. We must continue to find and fund new programs that help support the mental health of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

It is people like Ms. Legge and her team that have helped make Newfoundlander and Labradorian a healthier and better place to live.

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, and I would also like to thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of the statement.

We are all aware that the pandemic has resulted in a far-increased demand for mental health services while simultaneously complicating the logistics of providing that support to all who need it.

As a result, our New Democratic caucus would like to take this moment to congratulate Ms. Niki Legge on receiving this hard-earned award. We'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize the professionalism of the staff at Health and Community Services whose tireless work and devotion has been the bedrock of our response to this pandemic.

Congratulations to everyone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Education.

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

Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to recognize in this hon. House today, and congratulate Jevon Marsh of Bonavista who was recently named to the Rhodes Scholar-elect class of 2021, earning him a prestigious scholarship worth more than \$100,000. Awarded annually, this scholarship recognizes individuals who have demonstrated a strong propensity to emerge as a leader for the world's future.

Jevon holds a Masters of Science degree from Queen's University and a Bachelor of Science Honours degree from Memorial University. He is passionate about using chemistry to tackle some of the greatest challenges in cancer research, and he is a recognized Canadian scholar and invited research scholar throughout Europe.

As a passionate mental health advocate, Jevon helped pioneer a peer support program and scholarship at Memorial University and has also helped refugees settling in Canada. He wishes to further his research in chemistry at Oxford University, developing therapeutics for children with rare brain cancers.

The Rhodes Scholarship is a life-changing opportunity for exceptional young people with the potential to make a difference for the good throughout the world.

I congratulate Jevon and hope his time at Oxford University enriches his life, solidifies the foundations for his academic future and opens doors to new and exciting opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of the Legislature to join me in congratulating Jevon on becoming the Rhodes Scholar-elect for the 2021 class.

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

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

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

I would like to thank the hon. minister for the advance copy of his statement and recognizing our young intellectual giant.

Mr. Speaker, as noted in my own statement a few minutes ago, I am delighted and so proud to offer congratulations to Jevon. The Rhodes Scholar valued at more than \$100,000 is the pre-eminent award in the country. It is the culmination of hard work and exceptional academic ability.

Jevon is the son of Wayne Fisher and Sharon Marsh, who are so proud of Jevon's accomplishments. His family is very humble and grounded in their community; a testament to all the values of family we have come to expect in rural Newfoundland. I actually played ball hockey with Wayne years ago and can personally attest to the strength of character and his family. In fact, Wayne could run miles around me.

Allow me to also recognize and thank the staff and administrations of Matthew Elementary and Discovery Collegiate in Bonavista who provided Jevon's K-to-12 schooling. They are a dedicated group. Bonavista, the home of NHL players Adam Pardy and Michael Ryder, can now boast as being the home of an intellectual scholar, a Rhodes Scholar.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all Members of the House to join me in congratulating Jevon Marsh of Bonavista on being a Rhodes Scholar and continuing his path to emerge a leader of the world's future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. J. DINN:** Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. On behalf of the Third Party caucus, I join the minister and the Member for Bonavista in extending our congratulations to Jevon Marsh for his accomplishment in the Rhodes Scholarship.

Jevon is typical of the many exceptional young people in our school system with whom we, as teachers, often have the privilege of working. We wish to thank him for his work, so far in his cancer research and advocacy for mental health,

immigrant outreach and strengthening research relationships between Canada and the European nations.

Going forward, we hope that his endeavours at Oxford prove to be fruitful and fulfilling. We're confident he'll make a difference in this world.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

Despite assurances from the former minister that the project was full steam ahead, the Liberal's signature project at Canopy Growth, involving a secret numbered company 80521, has been shuttered without producing a single leaf or the promised jobs.

Does the Deputy Premier agree this sole-source deal would have benefited from more transparency with a public competition?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

We could get into semantics about the signature project. Sometimes I look at the Corner Brook hospital as probably being the signature project for this government.

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

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I'm sure we could have a debate about this.

The reality of yesterday's announcement is one that wasn't just made in Newfoundland and Labrador; it was made across this country. Essentially, we have a company, Canopy, that

got too big too fast. Yesterday, we saw bad news in Alberta, New Brunswick, Ontario, Saskatchewan and Newfoundland and Labrador. Not long before that, it was also in BC. The company has admitted that they had to downscale because of a changing market.

The good news for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is that contrary to what sometimes comes out, not one nickel of taxpayers' dollars will be lost in this matter.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Canopy, regrettably to them, I'm sure, is now still on the hook for paying fattened fees to Liberal insiders. It now joins the list of failed Liberal marijuana projects announced with much hoopla, millions of taxpayer backing. Biome Grow in the West Coast already cancelled their agreement with the province.

Can the minister or the Deputy Premier give an update on the deal involving the Chris Hickman-led Atlantic Cultivation, Auxly Cannabis Group?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Again, I have to put this on the record to clarify some of the factual inaccuracies that are put out by the Member opposite, which seem to be pervasive.

The fact is there was no taxpayer money in this or in anything right here. In fact, we have one of the better structured deals across the country. I give the credit for that to the staff and workers within the various departments that have handled this file. The reality is that just a few years ago when we were talking about legislation, we had to ensure that we had a stable supply. A deal was reached with Canopy, which saw that attained. We hoped to have a production facility here, but the reality is the

market is oversaturated right now. There's tons of competition.

I am glad to say, when we talk about other outfits, that I've had multiple people just in the last 24 hours reach out and say: We're going to be there to ensure that the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are met.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, the Liberal government must be the first dealer in the history of the world not to make money on weed.

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** In March, I asked Premier Ball – they liked that one.

I asked Premier Ball in the House – this is on a more serious note now – whether Nalcor bonuses would be paid again this year. He said he would be “taking those bonuses back” – his words. Last week, we learned of \$3 million in bonuses paid.

I ask the Deputy Premier: Why didn't the Liberal government act to take back these bloated bonuses?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

The reality is that when I look at this department, which I came into in August, one of the things that I have had to deal with – something that was actually brought out on our watch – was something called the sunshine compensation list. It's something that usually comes out in June of every year, where we talk about how taxpayers' dollars are spent. It was something that wasn't done under previous administrations. We're happy to have it there so that taxpayers know exactly how their money is being spent.



The first time that I saw the list would have been a couple of weeks ago, where I did see the fact that the 2019 bonuses for Nalcor executive were quite exorbitant, in my opinion. What we are doing now is taking action to ensure that this will not be continued into the future. There's still work to be done, but that's something that we are willing to do. It wasn't done in the past. In fact, this stretches back a long time, including when some of these contracts were done well before my time in this House.

Again, I look forward to moving forward to ensure that we protect taxpayers' dollars.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Mr. Speaker, as far back as 2016, the Liberal government asked Nalcor chair, Brendan Paddock, to take action on these bloated bonuses.

As a Member of the Liberal Cabinet, why did the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology tolerate these bloated bonuses during every one of the previous four years?

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I remind the Member opposite that the contracts for the majority of people at Nalcor were signed under the former administration.

I will say to the Member opposite, we have written repeatedly to the board of Nalcor regarding these bonuses, we've said that publicly, we made comments about what we felt was not appropriate payment of bonuses. We are now moving forward and we're actually taking an extra step of bringing it into legislation.

I thank the minister for bringing this forward to this House.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. CROSBIE:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's strange that the government has announced an intention to deal with those contracts by way of legislation, which could have been done five years ago. Perhaps the Premier should have words with his friend, Brendan Paddock, who is responsible for approving them.

In 2019, Nalcor executive bonuses were valued at \$3 million. That's the same amount the Liberal government took from the mouths of the poor when they slashed the Adult Dental Program in 2016.

Given the government's repeated failures to take action on bonuses, why should the public believe the government now?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

The fact is I'm glad to see some unanimity in this House in the fact that nobody wants to see these bonuses paid out, especially as it relates to performance because a lot of that performance relates to the creation of Muskrat Falls. A project that I would note the Member on the opposite side continues to cheerlead and says that in fact it is a good project.

If we want to talk about scale – we talk about the \$3 million in bonuses – I would have to point out that the project itself, sanctioned before my time, has cost taxpayers all over this province billions and billions and billions of dollars. So, again, the question I have for the Member on the other side is: Why do you support the project that has taken billions from the mouths of taxpayers?

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

It's great; they must have rehearsed that last billion. That's pretty good. They had a bit of time in the last few weeks away from the House.

The minister, he's talking about – we're talking about bonuses. Why doesn't he bring legislation forth today and let's debate it next week? We're not going anywhere; we're ready to debate it now.

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

**MR. PETTEN:** You're bringing a motion forth now and we know after an election that motion doesn't mean anything. It's meaningless. It's smoke and mirrors, Minister. We all know the difference.

The day after Husky was awarded over \$40 million from the Oil and Gas Industry Recovery Assistance Fund they laid off 75 people.

I ask you, Minister: How can you permit this to happen? For the remainder of the fund, will you include a clause that ensures companies will not lay off any more workers?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I think before I address that question I have to come back to the lengthy preamble that the Member talks about when we talk about smoke and mirrors. The reality is that we are going to take the appropriate action.

Now, if we listen to what the other side said, their action was to tear up the contract. What they don't realize is that actually would cost the taxpayer more.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I hear some heckling from the other side – some heckling, some chirping. I would call it the peanut gallery, but that would be an insult to peanuts all over the world.

The reality is that the other side created Nalcor, signed the contracts and have never done a single thing.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. A. PARSONS:** Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

That's pretty insulting, shameful behaviour from a Minister of the Crown. I think we all should expect more. The people of the province deserve better than this and we deserve better than this on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker.

He's had five years. He's been sitting there for five years. All of sudden he had this – it's shameful. He's totally –

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

**MR. PETTEN:** Yes, I won't reuse the word he used. He's disgusted. Where's he been for the last five years? Give us a break.

One of the benefits of the West White Rose Project is that it will work with the SeaRose. Without completion of the West White Rose Project what will happen to the jobs on the SeaRose, Minister?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I'm glad to talk about the announcement that we made last week. What we did was we invested \$41.5 million of the \$320 million federal fund into a project that we hope to see continue on.

As I've discussed many times in this House, the oil industry worldwide has taken a battering. Again, these companies are all reviewing capital expenditures, not just here in Newfoundland and Labrador but around the world. We're seeing multiple projects shut down. What we have done here is given life to this project. We're giving jobs to people in the province and –

**MR. DWYER:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I say to the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue: How about those jobs that are going to be coming back to Marystown? You're welcome.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

Unreal. We've seen this Liberal track record. A failure in getting people back to work on the West White Rose.

What's your plan to get people back to work on the Terra Nova, Minister?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

The reality is that we are taking action on all the files as it relates to the offshore. Every operator has come to us and we're working through the projects, but these are not simple matters, these are complex ones. If we did not take the time to put into this what we would do is just throw away all of the money. In fact, we've seen the requests from the other side that any time a dollar came in they would say throw it all out there, without knowing any of the repercussions.

We realize the importance of Terra Nova, we realize the importance of all the partners that are involved in that and we are working diligently with them. We've spoken to them every single day in fact, trying to find a solution, but it has to be the right one for the operators as well as for the taxpayers of this province.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, these words are words, words, words, but they're cold comfort to the many people in my district and in the districts across the province who have lost their jobs.

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

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** To quote the current Minister of Justice, who recently stated in the House of Assembly: "We do not direct a police force. Nothing any good comes out of when a government interferes with the police force." His words, Mr. Speaker. Yet, a meeting with the police chief was initiated by his government to discuss an ongoing criminal investigation involving a Cabinet minister.

I ask the minister: Can an apparent act of political interference such as this be justified?

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, the preamble of the question is so false from anything I've ever seen. I unfortunately have no response. That the Member opposite would actually come in here today and talk about an issue that's been adjudicated by the RCMP; it's in our past.

We did not – we do not direct the police, Mr. Speaker. It's shameful that she would go down that line of questioning.

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

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

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, there's no shame in asking legitimate questions. We're asking a question about a meeting that the RNC chief was asked to attend. That meeting was requested by the former premier in March about a breach of trust and Cabinet confidentiality.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Did any current Members of the Cabinet know about this

meeting? Was the former minister of Justice involved in arranging this meeting?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

I will speak as the former minister of Justice and the Member referenced by the Member opposite. One thing we need to address is fact versus fiction. What is fiction is that there was any meeting requested of the police by anybody sitting in this government or before, including the former premier. That is simply not true.

What I can say is that I absolutely was not at any meeting that was held last year. I can tell you where I was in most of early 2020 and that was sitting in Port aux Basques.

Thank you.

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

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

**MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, media has also reported that the RNC chief met with the former premier regarding this alleged leak of confidential Cabinet documents because he believed this could take down a minority government.

Does the Minister of Justice believe it was appropriate for the RNC chief to be acting to protect a minority government from falling?

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

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

It's really good to see the Member opposite gets all of her research from the CBC. There was a meeting, from what I've read, between the former premier, at the request of the chief of the RNC. That meeting happened. There was a subsequent investigation.

I can explain to the Member opposite what the process is here. There was a warrant sought from

– the information went to the RNC, the RNC went to the RCMP. The RCMP then went to a court and asked for a warrant. The judge in the matter actually seen fit to issue a warrant, there was a warrant issued followed by a subsequent investigation. That investigation has concluded, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

When it comes to asking this government questions, it's like the old Shaggy song: "It Wasn't Me." But that's the way it is, I guess.

Minister, the president and CEO of Central Health resigned, but is still working from New Brunswick. The vice-president of medical services is in Ottawa; the director of medical imaging also lives in Ontario.

Minister, why is health care of our citizens in Central Newfoundland being outsourced?

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

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

Ms. Robichaud has a stellar record in Central Health and the full support of the board chair, with whom I have spoken on several occasions about her performance.

I would like to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to give a shout-out to the senior team at Central Health and, indeed, all of their staff, particularly the Public Health staff in Harbour Breton, with their recent hard work, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**MR. FORSEY:** In 2016, the Liberal government stripped the 24-hour emergency service in Botwood, recently cutting lab services in Grand Falls-Windsor. For five months now there has been no CEO on site.

When will the minister give due diligence to the health care in Central West, or does he even care?

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

**MR. HAGGIE:** Three quick responses to that, Mr. Speaker. One, there is a fully competent CEO in place in Central Health, with full confidence of the board. Secondly, there is no diminution of lab services at any location in Central Health and, indeed, I would argue that some of them are going to be supported and enhanced vis-à-vis, for example, the point-of-care rapid test for COVID-19 that's currently being deployed in Harbour Breton.

In terms of the 24-hour emergency service in Botwood, currently the need there seems to be four people at most on a busy night from the entire area after hours. We will look at those figures on an ongoing basis, Mr. Speaker. We have said that if there is a need, we will be in a position to re-examine it once the new facility extension for \$20 million at Hugh Twomey is opened.

Thank you.

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

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

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

There are many abandoned dwellings collapsed and posing a safety issue in unincorporated areas in the District of Bonavista, which takes away from tourism. It impedes economic development.

Since this question was last posed in the House, can the minister update us on legislative considerations being entertained to assist in these matters?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities.

**MR. BENNETT:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

I can assure the Member opposite that our team is working diligently to get the legislation in place for 2021. There are a number of issues being addressed to update the legislation and make it more modern. We're working very closely with our partners at MNL and PMA and taking in all their feedback as we develop this legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, working with government, the Mainland and Three Rock Cove cell service committee raised their own money to construct a cell tower for the area. Now, Bell is telling them that older cellphones and prepaid phones will not work. Many people, including seniors, use these phones for themselves and their children.

I ask the minister: How did you let this happen and what are you going to do to fix it?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

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

Absolutely, I'm aware that there are communities in the Member's district that did receive funding under the cellular program, in a partnership with Bell, to provide cell service in rural areas throughout the province. I do know that some of them have been delayed because Bell has had equipment issues; something we've tried to work with them but it would be on the supplier side.

I am not aware of the issue that the Member has brought up, but what I can say is that would concern me as well. It is something that I will

bring to Bell because it is not something that we would obviously be supportive of.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. PARROTT:** Mr. Speaker, I've heard this government say multiple times with regard to education that no student will be left behind. I've requested a road plowed in my area so a five-year-old little girl with a disability could attend school.

The minister told this House that people choose to live where they live. He told the Child and Youth Advocate's office that they cannot turn a plow around on that road, which is absolutely false.

What is the minister going to do to accommodate this little girl?

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

**MR. BRAGG:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question.

I guess I'd say I stand by my words of where people choose to live. We all choose to live where we do in most of our life. The onus would be on the parent –

**MR. PARROTT:** (Inaudible.)

**MR. BRAGG:** If the member opposite would give me a chance to answer the question, Mr. Speaker, I could give him an appropriate answer. If you're good, Sir – I didn't heckle you and I'd appreciate it if you don't heckle me.

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

**MR. BRAGG:** We have a number of roads in this province, Mr. Speaker, classed as Class 4, Class 5, Class 6 roads that we do not go on. We do not go on because it's not suitable for our equipment.

When someone chooses to build a property or live on one of these roads, they must realize the service is not there for them. The same thing would happen if it was ambulance or fire service, Mr. Speaker. We cannot plow every section of road in this province. There are over 10,000 kilometres right now we're responsible for. People have to be more caring and cognizant of where they –

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, northern and Indigenous populations are especially vulnerable to COVID-19. Both Dr. Tam and Dr. Fitzgerald have identified these populations as a priority for receiving the vaccines. Yet, we now learn that people will only be vaccinated in the Health Sciences at St. John' and worse – much worse for us – we're also being told now that we will have to wait months after the initial vaccinations for our vulnerable people to receive the vaccine.

I ask the minister: What's your plan for our vulnerable populations to receive vaccinations in the priority that was originally identified for them – I repeat: The vulnerable populations in the priority that was originally identified for them?

Thank you.

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

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

I appreciate the Member's advocacy on behalf of a group we have identified as amongst the highest priority for vaccine delivery. We are currently in the situation where we are testing the vaccine delivery system. The constraints around where the Pfizer vaccine goes are based on the ultra-low freezer, Pfizer and the Public Health Agency of Canada's requirements that

we do not redistribute that vaccine beyond its point of arrival.

Once this system has been tested, and when the Moderna vaccine arrives particularly, hopefully by the end of this month, these groups on the North Coast will be the priority.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

When government announced expanded coverage for insulin pumps in September's budget, we were told that it would be a universal program for individuals over 18 with type 1 diabetes. Mr. Speaker, I have a constituent who is 29 and has type 1 diabetes since age seven, yet he has been denied and now has to come up with \$6,000 to replace his old pump, on top of the money for ongoing supplies.

Minister, why is this young man being denied life-saving equipment?

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

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

The Member opposite is correct, this is a universal program and it will be means-tested. If the Member has particular details of a case who has not been treated appropriately under this program, I would be happy to investigate it. This is a clinical decision as to whether or not these people are eligible for the pumps.

The program is in the process of being set up, Mr. Speaker. I'd be happy to facilitate that discussion.

Thank you.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the demeanour of the House is certainly suggestive of an impending election. Speaking of, I was pleased to attend a seminar with Equal Voice NL, a multi-partisan organization dedicated to electing and supporting women to all levels of political office.

When myself, the Leader of the Official Opposition and the Premier met with them, a key concern from Equal Voice NL was that snap elections are a deterrent to women and discourages them from becoming candidates. The Premier can resolve this by letting everyone know in advance when he plans to drop a writ.

I ask the Premier: Will he respect the electorate and announce when he will call the election?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I have great respect for Equal Voice. I was involved with Equal Voice, both locally as well as nationally in Ottawa when I was a Member of Parliament. They do great work.

We need to attract more women to politics. That's why we made an attempt with the *Standing Orders* of this House to try and make this House of Assembly more family-friendly. I'm very glad to have seen Alexander join us on occasion; unfortunately, he's not here today.

Mr. Speaker, we have legislation in this province that is required to be followed. That legislation does set specific dates for elections. When there is a change in leadership it does say that during the year, following that change in leadership, there will be an election. Everyone should know that there will be an election before mid August of 2021.

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

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

**MS. COFFIN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and what I determined from that convoluted answer is, no, he won't tell us.

Mr. Speaker, privatization of public services is wrong. I remind the Liberal government that when they privatized cleaning services in this building it resulted in workers being paid minimum wage, getting paid in cash and not having access to benefits or pensions. This practice continues today. We hear that further privatization of public service jobs is on the table.

I ask the Premier: Is it his intent to find efficiencies and cost savings on the backs of hard-working individuals who deliver our public services?

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

Of course we're not going to try and balance the budget on the backs of hard-working individuals. We're going to do our very best, Mr. Speaker.

What we have been speaking about and what we have been working towards is transformation and modernization of government, which I think is in everyone's best interest, Mr. Speaker. I take the advice of the Member opposite who raises concerns.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, we are doing our utmost to find solutions to our fiscal situation in the province by considering how can we offer services better for the people of the province? How do we transform and modernize the services that we are offering to the people of the province?

I ask for her assistance in doing so. I ask for all of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to engage in that conversation. I know that we're doing an awful lot in the health care system as well. I know they're out there seeking opinions as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Residents of Labrador are required to fly to St. John's for anything that's outside of the scope of a general practitioner. This shortcoming in our health care system disproportionately impacts residents of Labrador who face ever-increasing costs to have the same level of access to health care as those residents of the Island.

For those who have complex needs, these costs increase. The Medical Transportation Assistance Program barely covers the cost of more than one trip a year. Residents of Labrador demand better.

I ask the minister: Will he immediately introduce a fair system that does not discriminate against Labradorians and removes barriers they face in access to health care services?

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

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

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

We have a generous medical transportation system allowance as it were, or benefit, in this province and I would argue there is discrimination in favour of Labradorians. They get \$1,000 up front for their airfare in recognition of the difficulties and the expenses that they have leaving their communities to come to the Island for health care.

We also, however, have a very vibrant virtual care system, which is currently changing the face of how primary and specialty care is delivered. I will continue, however, to listen to the Member opposite's concerns to see if we can do even better.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the City of St. John's 2021 budget reduced Metrobus service. This decision will



negatively affect pedestrians, those with mobility issues and those who depend on public transit to get to work, buy groceries, get to medical appointments and so on. It will certainly have a negative impact on the residents of my district.

Part of the problem lies with the provincial government, which collects roughly \$400,000 annually from Metrobus in the form of a road tax for driving on roads maintained by the city, not the province.

With this in mind and the fact that this money could be better used to maintain public transit, I ask the Minister of Finance if she will exempt Metrobus from the provincial road tax so that it can maintain service to those who need it.

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**MS. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

I can't speak to what the decisions of the City of St. John's are regarding Metrobus, but I can say that late last evening I did receive a letter from the mayor of the City of St. John's asking for us to review the current road tax and its applications. We will certainly do that as part of the budgetary process.

Thank you.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### Tabling of Documents

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

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

I'm pleased to table the COVID-19-related contingency as at December 2, 2020. This is a follow-up to the table that I previously tabled concerning same.

Thank you.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further tabling of documents?

Pursuant to subsection 9(1) of the *Transparency and Accountability Act*, I am pleased to table the 2019-2020 Annual Performance Report of the House of Assembly Service.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**MS. STOODLEY:** Mr. Speaker, I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Pension Benefits Act, 1997, Bill 54.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**MR. A. PARSONS:** I give notice, Mr. Speaker, that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Energy Corporation Act And The Hydro Corporation Act, 2007, Bill 55.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Conflict Of Interest Act, 1995, Bill 56.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I give notice that I will move the following resolution: That notwithstanding any Standing Order of this House, that Bill 54, An Act To Amend The Pensions Benefit Act, 1997, shall be deemed to have been read a first time; that notwithstanding Standing Order 84, in particular, if it is the pleasure of this House, that Bill 54 be read a second time, referred to a Committee of the Whole and read a third time on the same sitting day; and that notice shall be deemed to have been given and moved under Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Thursday, December 10, 2020.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

**MR. SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**MR. FORSEY:** The Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council has put forth a proposal, *A Home for Nature: Protected Areas Plan for the Island of Newfoundland*, that claims a large portion of the Great Northern Peninsula. The areas included have great cultural and economic significance to the people of the region.

This proposal was put forward without consultation of the residents of the Great Northern Peninsula and has potential affects on traditional ways of life. The proposal was developed without a full constituted committee of 11 members established by government. The proposal does not follow the principles of open and public consultations, which is a basic requirement of any committee seeking changes to existing legislation.

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 outright reject WERAC's proposal presently put forth for their consideration.

Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here of 1,269 names that was given to me by the people of the Great Northern Peninsula and they wanted me to present it in the House, which I will do for them.

WERAC, the Wilderness and Ecological Reserves Advisory Council, on October 1, submitted a Protected Areas Plan to government. WERAC was appointed by government to come up with the Protected Areas Plan. The people of the Great Northern Peninsula feel that the proposal encounters a vast area of land and will interfere with the activity in the area.

People of the area have asked for public consultations regarding this issue, but this wasn't granted. Yes, it was introduced during the pandemic and WERAC was unable to have public consultation. The people feel that the online engagement was unfair and deserved a more in-depth consultation.

During the pandemic year, Mr. Speaker, people were concerned more with COVID affairs than they were with what WERAC was proposing in their proposal. They feel that this should have been delayed for a longer time so that consultations could be done and more discussion could be had.

The vast areas – concerns of economic development, cultural way of life. The people feel the use of their area for cabins, ATVs, mineral exploration and forest development will be altered or stopped due to this proposal. Before the government accepts the proposal put forward by WERAC, more in-depth community and public consultation is required so that all individuals have a fair voice in the matter, to help with a balanced approach for all concerned, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

**MR. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, the COVID-19 pandemic has placed particular demands on workers in certain sectors, including those on the front line in hospitals, nursing homes and those

ensuring the integrity of the food supply or providing essential retail services.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Essential Worker Support Program provides a temporary wage top-up to essential workers employed during Alert Level 4 and 5 of the COVID-19 pandemic and have a maximum gross monthly income of \$3,000. While the workers have met the criteria for regular hours worked and regular income earned, many are being penalized because they took vacation pay, received a bonus relating to previous year's work or maybe worked overtime to ensure that essential services continued to operate. These essential workers met the criteria for regular hours worked and regular monthly income below \$3,000.

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 consider basing the eligibility criteria for the Newfoundland and Labrador Essential Worker Support Program on regular hours worked and regular monthly income received.

Mr. Speaker, I've had several conversations with the minister about this and I know they're reviewing this program. These are people who basically went to work every day, as we know when most of us stayed home, to provide a service. This program was introduced, a good program, but because of bonuses they received they somehow or other weren't eligible, they went over the \$3,000 limit. I think that needs to be looked at and reviewed.

Clearly, we've had a lot of discussion today about bonuses and I can assure you that the bonuses paid out to the workers in my district were nowhere near the dollar values of the bonuses paid out to Nalcor. At the same time, because of those and other things like vacation pay, they've gone over the threshold of \$3,000. I would hope that we could see fit to make sure that this program is adjusted so that the workers that have been left out can be compensated accordingly and take advantage of this program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MR. PARROTT:** Mr. Speaker, the reasons for this petition and the background are as follows: The Town of Port Blandford wrote the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture requesting a temporary moratorium on cutting permits for Southwest River during the final year of the department's Five-Year Operating Plan; and that the department would hold public consultations with the town and other considered citizens on the next five-year operating plan for 2022 to 2026.

Therefore we petition the hon. House as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to cease cutting permits –

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**MR. PARROTT:** – and have public consultations prior to further cutting on the Southwest River Valley.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I'm having trouble hearing the Member present his petition. I ask Members for their co-operation.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

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

Mr. Speaker, so we're clear, we should not be having this conversation today. The previous minister and the previous MHA both failed the people of Port Blandford. It's led to protests; it's led to legal action, unrest, arguments and disputes within the community that never ever should've happened. The Town of Port Blandford is not asking that they cease harvesting in the area; they're asking that they cease harvesting on the Southwest River Valley and do not affect the viewscapes, because these viewscapes are integral to their tourism business.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard every excuse and I'm sure if the minister responds to this he's going to say it's because of commercial viability, yet they

haven't cut in four years. They're going to talk about ant infestations and they're going to talk about forest fire control. I will tell you this: The Town of Terra Nova, the Town of Charlottetown and the entire Eastport Peninsula are all trapped by the Terra Nova National Park. Not one bit of cutting happens in Terra Nova, so if there's a concern over forest fires and ant infestations, we should be talking about cutting in the national park, which is not going to happen.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Port Blandford have been very successful with regard to their own growth. It's really quite substantial. In 2016, in the census, when the majority of rural communities were seeing a decline in population, the Town of Port Blandford had increased its population by over 20 per cent. While other communities have seen drops in property values, Port Blandford's continue to grow. The town's municipal revenues have increased by 41 per cent since 2014. That's even with a 0.5 per cent drop in their mill rate. This year alone, two new tourism businesses are being constructed and eight new residential homes. That's significant for a town the size of Port Blandford, Mr. Speaker.

Just this year the community opened a new marina, which received \$1.4 million from the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Port Blandford is not a fishing port. I'll say it again: Port Blandford got \$1.4 million from the Department of Fisheries and it is not a fishing port. This speaks volumes about how much the federal government supports tourism in the region of Port Blandford. It tells you exactly where they think they're going and that they want to support it.

The primary reason to determine where and when to harvest in Southwest River Valley comes from a need to protect the viewscapes. These people do not want forestry to die. There are people who work in the forestry industry who live in Port Blandford. They want tourism and forestry to thrive together. You will not see cutting on the Humber Valley river.

Mr. Speaker, I respectfully request that the minister visit the town on his way home during daylight hours and have a look specifically at what they're talking about. I think it's a very easy decision for him to make.

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

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

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

I'm very pleased to present my first ever petition and I will read it:

WHEREAS many residents of Lake Melville and elsewhere in Labrador must travel to Newfoundland for specialized medical services; and

WHEREAS due to geographic and demographic challenges, Medical Care Plan, MCP, beneficiaries can access financial assistance through the Medical Transportation Assistance Program, MTAP; and

WHEREAS there are several aspects of MTAP that require revision from financial, logistic and humanitarian perspectives;

THEREFORE the undersigned call upon this House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately implement changes to the MTAP that would reduce financial hardship for those who need to travel for medical services, including: allowing applicants to avail of a private residence at a government rate versus staying at a more expensive hotel; allowing applicants to be reimbursed for total kilometres driven versus after 1,500 kilometres incurred; recognize that those driving from Lake Melville require at least two nights' accommodation before arriving in St. John's; recognize the increased cost of air travel in the coverage provided by the program; and not penalize an applicant if they have received support from a community-driven fundraising event or other charity.

Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to deliver a petition on behalf of your constituents. I must say, of all the different programs that my office supports and helps, from a response and from a constituent perspective, MTAP is the number one.

I just heard during Question Period the Member for Labrador West ask the Minister of Health and Community Services about whether the

government was interested in taking a look at the MTAP. I heard the minister say that he felt it was a generous program. Well, Mr. Speaker, I would like to spend the rest of my time just explaining about some of the challenges of this so-called generous program.

Yes, we appreciate it. I think it's about a \$3.4 million fund, but, Mr. Speaker, let me just give you a couple of examples of why I'm raising this petition. First of all, from the perspective of somebody who needs to drive from, let's just say, Happy Valley-Goose Bay to St. John's, right now the program will not recognize. They believe that you can drive from Happy Valley-Goose Bay to St. John's, spending only one night in a hotel before you arrive here for your appointment.

I have a woman that I know and she's fighting cancer. She and her husband were refused recognition of them staying at an additional hotel in the Labrador Straits. We would not come up with the money to pay for a second hotel night on a three-day road trip, just as an example. Another one, when people come here to St. John's, there are many family and relatives, they would like to stay with them. Why wouldn't we give them, say, \$53 a night for them to stay with family and friends? Instead, we allow them to charge government \$129 at an approved hotel? Where is the financial wisdom in moves like this?

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I've had some folks who have had money clawed back from their program because the community took it upon themselves to raise money to support somebody fighting cancer and took that money away from what they would have been obligated to receive under the MTAP.

I do not refer to this as a generous program.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Adult Dental Program coverage for clients of the Newfoundland and Labrador Prescription Drug program under

Access and 65Plus Plans were eliminated in *Budget 2016*.

Low income families and low income individuals, particularly seniors, are struggling with the cost of living and struggling to meet some of their most 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.

Mr. Speaker, we, the undersigned, therefore call upon 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 and quality of life and dignity.

Mr. Speaker, I presented this petition on numerous occasions, as have several of my colleagues. It is a very important issue. Mr. Speaker, I have a constituent in his late 70s who's going to have to look at eating turkey dinner this year through a straw because he cannot open his mouth. He cannot open his mouth because he does not have the money to go and have the proper dentures put in, in order for him to eat a basic meal.

Mr. Speaker, the minister has stood up and responded to my petition on several occasions saying that, well, you can go to the emergency department; you can go to this department. Why would we have to reduce our seniors, in particular, many of whom have experienced their working careers, what we now recognize as essential workers?

No, some of those jobs were not real high-paying jobs, but as we've come to realize, they were essential workers. Yet, we now force them to live in additional poverty – in poverty and disgrace. How can we say that we are looking after our most vulnerable when they are afraid to smile, when they can't eat?

Mr. Speaker, we've also heard this administration act in outrage against bonuses, bonuses that were given to Nalcor. It's been mentioned throughout this House on numerous occasions the amount of bonuses that have been

paid each year subsequent to their taking of power have been more to that what should've been put into the adult and low-income dental program.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the minister's response and I look forward to that money being reinstated in the next budget.

Thank you.

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

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

I'm usually a pretty easy-going guy and I want to make sure that pretty important things get added to the House, but this petition is certainly important to me and the people of my district.

I'm presenting again on the Bull Arm Fabrication site, which has become a graveyard for our oil and gas industry as we speak. To see the pictures of Bull Arm today would not be, I don't think, indicative of what was planned to put out there in the first place. There's a lot of good work that has been done out there. We're trying to rejuvenate the local economy. There's a lack of local employment that we could utilize this facility for sure. Even if it was to get rework done on the existing infrastructure that we have.

It's a great asset to the province and it was built to benefit the province. Currently, the only thing it's benefiting is shutting down our oil and gas industry. We don't need a continuing idling of this site. It's not in the best interests of the province.

It also goes to the fact that right across the world now we do understand the global implications of the price of oil. We have to have some kind of plan to come out of this. I believe that these assets are something that can really rejuvenate the economy if we can bring some work to these facilities and, obviously, get the refinery back up and running because time is of the essence. I'm hearing from people daily about these vital jobs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and that we need this facility brought back to full capacity as well.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to expedite the process to get the Bull Arm Fabrication site back in operation. We also request that this process include a vision for a long-term viable plan that is beneficial to all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Furthermore, we except the rework of the existing platforms and new construction of any future platforms, instead of creating a new facility, let's try to rejuvenate the facility that we already have as an asset here in the province and get our people back to work and get the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador going again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'm presenting a petition on gender-affirming surgeries. In November 2019, the province announced that transgendered persons would be able to access chest surgeries through the provincial MCP system. Breast removal and masculinization would be covered for trans males, those transitioning from female to male, and breast augmentation for trans females, those transitioning from male to female.

The province quietly imposed punitive and restrictive regulations for trans females: trans women must be taking hormone-replacement drugs for 18 months; the world standard is 12. These women must have no breast development at all, similar to a prepubescent girl.

The world standard on transgendered health care states that: "The medical procedures attendant to gender affirming/confirming surgeries are not 'cosmetic' or 'elective' or 'for the mere convenience of the patient.' These reconstructive procedures are not optional in any meaningful sense, but are understood to be medically necessary for the treatment of the diagnosed condition."

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to remove the restrictive and punitive regulations regarding breast augmentation for transgender women; allow medical decisions regarding transgender health care to be decided by the patient and their doctor or medical team.

Mr. Speaker, gender-affirming surgery is already fraught with challenges: social, emotional and physical. It's not cosmetic or, as stated, frivolous, but it is, indeed, an integral part of the transition to become a complete person. I've talked to many people who are facing this; it comes with a huge emotional toll.

The easiest thing here is to remove the stress. It's a medical decision. Leave it to the doctor, to the patient and to the person's medical team.

Thank you.

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

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

It is an absolute pleasure to be able to present a petition about maintaining public access of the Quidi Vidi village slipway, launchway. The reason for this petition is the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure has requested expressions of interest for the future of the Quidi Vidi slipway. That is EOI number NLTW-RS-2019-003-Quidi Vidi slipway, which has drawn the interest of private businesses. There is cause for concern that this free public facility could be privatized to the detriment of current and future users.

WHEREAS the cultural identity, livelihood and recreational activity of many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is tied to the sea and it is contingent upon reliable public access to the water to launch their watercraft; and

WHEREAS the slipway in Quidi Vidi village is the last publicly available boat launch within city limits and could be acquired by private owners who could prohibit access via physical or financial barriers;

WHEREUPON we, the undersigned, your petitioners, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure the launchway in Quidi Vidi village remains open to the public use with a minimum width of 10 metres access to the water, free of charge, in perpetuity, regardless of who holds the deed to the land; and

WHEREUPON the Crown land water lot area, the width be maintained between the Plantation wharf and Long Harbour Holdings's wharf with no obstructions to boats in navigational waters.

Mr. Speaker, I have met numerous times with the individuals who have signed this petition and the concerned citizens of Quidi Vidi village and St. John's East - Quidi Vidi. Many of these individuals want to preserve the only access that the people of St. John's have to launch a boat into a place where for hundreds of years they fished quite freely and had free access to Quidi Vidi Harbour. What is now being contemplated is, once again, a privatization of public services.

Mr. Speaker, I met with the Quidi Vidi Village Slipway Committee who has put a proposal in to maintain that as a public access launchway. I have spoken with the former minister of Transportation; I spoke with the minister of Tourism, Culture, industry and innovation and gave them a very reasonable proposal on how we could maintain that as an historic site with appropriate amount of government support without having to privatize these services. Since then, we've had a new Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure who has not responded to phone calls or texts or invitations to even come and see that site.

Mr. Speaker, I have grave concern that this slipway is going to be privatized. When I have gone down to visit this site there has already been a concerted effort to make land. I don't know if you're familiar with what making land is but it's the encroachment of construction onto public areas.

Mr. Speaker, I prevail on this House to abide by this petition. Thank you for the opportunity to present it.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Further petitions?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I call Orders of the Day.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

**Orders of the Day**

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

**MR. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, with leave of the House, I move the following resolution.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Does the Government House Leader have leave?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**MR. SPEAKER:** Leave.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

That notwithstanding any Standing Order of this House, that Bill 54, An Act To Amend The Pensions Benefit Act, 1997, shall be deemed to have been read a first time; that notwithstanding Standing Order 84, in particular, if it is the pleasure of this House, Bill 54 be read a second time, referred to a Committee of the Whole and read a third time on the same sitting day; and that notice shall be deemed to have been given and moved under Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Thursday, December 10, 2020.

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

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

Consistent with Standing Orders 82 and 24, I do not provide consent or leave for this motion.

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

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

Mr. Speaker, there are a few times I've stood in this House when I felt embarrassed for Members in this House, when I felt I didn't want to say that I would hold the labelling as an MHA because of the fact that we weren't co-operating, we weren't doing what was in the best interests of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's only happened a few times, but this is another one of those times.

I'm appalled that we're being held ransom, the House of Assembly, but also the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, when it comes to a piece of legislation that we, collectively, in this House, agreed that we would come back, when the House had closed. To look at an issue that the general public, people who are facing financial hardship – to find a way to amend a piece of legislation to address their particular needs, particularly, as we're getting close to Christmas, particularly when we're dealing with a pandemic.

Mr. Speaker, the fact that we're being held ransom here is an embarrassment. It angers me as a Member of the House of Assembly but, more importantly, as a Newfoundlander and Labradorian who cares about people. It's an embarrassment.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I'm assuming the Member is speaking on a point of order there. Other Members have indicated that they wish to speak as well.

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

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

I agree with the sentiments and the views of the Opposition House Leader. Mr. Speaker, I want to make it quite clear in this House – and I know there's a certain Member in the PC Party that pushed for this. Loyola, I know you pushed for this. The Member for Ferryland has been very adamant on this and I have to give him credit for that.

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



**MR. JOYCE:** I know I asked questions on it and I supported it because I had a lot of calls on it also.

I just want to make it quite clear that there was an issue going back and forth last week about being asked questions in the House; if not, the House is not going to give leave. I want to make it quite clear that speaking on behalf of the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, both of us sent emails around that our two independent votes will not hold up this bill. We would 100 per cent give leave for this House.

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

**MR. JOYCE:** I know how much the Member for Ferryland pushed this, I know how much the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL pushed to get this in the House today. We all agreed we would come back one day to get this done. I want to make it quite clear – and I know the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, I can speak for him – these two independents, myself and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, fully support getting this done in one day.

We agreed to give leave last week and we agreed to give leave today, because there are a lot of hardships with this fund. To delay this and for the cost to bring everybody back again next week, Mr. Speaker, I can honestly say that I haven't seen this done before and it's all over getting permission to ask one question. I know, as independents, we had to go to *Standing Orders* to get it done. I just can't believe it, but I can tell you, the two Members, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southland and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands, fully support it, we would give leave. We wanted this done.

It's not very often do we get everybody in this House to say here's something we can do to help the people out, together, of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I, for one, wish that the Member for Lake Melville would withdraw his statement and give us leave so we can get this done today.

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

**MR. SPEAKER:** I'm sort of asking Members, this is a point of order, I'm assuming, so we're going to keep our comments brief on this.

First, I'm going to go to the Government House Leader and then I think the Member for Lake Melville has indicated that he would like to speak on this point of order as well.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I've never been so put out in my almost seven years in this House, to have the co-operation and work with the Opposition – we had people actually in this building all weekend, worked through the weekend to get this legislation ready. There was a lot of work in getting this legislation; they worked through the weekend.

We actually provided this bill to the Opposition, I think, on Tuesday morning and briefed it. That's somewhat unprecedented. Normally, the Opposition would get a bill a day before we debate it or so. We actually gave the Opposition the opportunity for feedback. I know the Member for St. John's Centre actually provided some feedback to us late last night. We're taking that and we want to work to make this work.

It's just astonishing that a Member would hold up – I've had men and women, families, call me and say we need this security going in – Christmas is one thing, don't get me wrong, it's a hard enough season for people and what we've been through this year. We've been through a very tumultuous year in this province and for us to sit here today for petty reasons, I'm sorry, for petty reasons. To be held ransom over – the Member opposite – I actually, as Government House Leader, today, normally we would cut off petitions, we let petitions run today right through.

The Member for Lake Melville had an opportunity to bring in a petition today. He did that. Let's be clear on what he was asking for. He was asking for us to revert to Wednesday. The *Standing Orders* of this House give independent Members an opportunity to ask a question on a Wednesday.

**MY. DWYER:** (Inaudible) PMR, too.

**MR. CROCKER:** Absolutely. The Member for Placentia West - Bellevue just points out an

extremely good point, Wednesday is also the day, and this week would have actually been the private Member's resolution for the Official Opposition. They could have certainly said to government: We will not come back this week unless this is Wednesday.

This is not Wednesday; this is Thursday. We're here in this House and I implore on the Member: think about the families out there, just think what your move today will do.

I have adults calling me, and many Members of this House do. The Member for Ferryland has pursued this more vigorously than anything that I've seen him pursue in this House. I think he's already been out behind that door speaking to the media, saying that the Official Opposition is going to support this bill today. The two independent Members offering to support this bill today. The Third Party has some issues with the bill.

It costs about \$50,000 a day, Mr. Speaker, for us to be here.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Taxpayers' dollars.

**MR. CROCKER:** Taxpayers' dollars. Because he didn't get a question on a Thursday, he is going to cost the taxpayers of Newfoundland and Labrador \$50,000, \$100,000, \$150,000?

Sir, I can tell you something, there is so much that we could do with that money for the people of this province.

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

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Labrador travel.

**MR. CROCKER:** Yes, right. We had issues today about Labrador travel.

We don't all get along in here, but when 39 of us can agree to do something in one day; 39 of us have agreed that this is important enough for us all to travel today, to come to the city, to do this piece of business. Mr. Speaker, I'm absolutely appalled that he would hold the families of Newfoundland and Labrador hostage.

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

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

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

May I tell all of my colleagues in this House of Assembly: I am sitting here ready to prepare to go through all those different stages of this Bill 54 to get it through today. I was here; I was ready to go.

When I spoke with the Government House Leader and he told me what his plan was for today, I asked that I only have one ability to ask a question on a Thursday, recognizing the unusual circumstances. I asked him for an opportunity for some accommodation. He didn't see any problem with it, was how he paraphrased it. He asked me to put it in writing, which I did. I sent it to him and the House Leaders, and then the email exchange started.

Mr. Speaker, I guess there is a principle here and, yes, the spirit of co-operation is really important, but everybody has an opportunity to speak. The question that I wanted to ask here today, I would argue is as critical, if not more so, than what we're dealing with in this bill today. It could not wait until we go through another season. The rumours and the sabre-rattling around election call are such that it cannot wait. I have it here. If you want, I can read you the question. I was just looking to put it out. It's up to you.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. TRIMPER:** Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I'm really sorry to do this because I think consciously every day about the money that this government is spending. It's unfortunate because I came here today realizing I was looking for one minute and 30 seconds to ask a question and I was not allowed that.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** In terms of a point of order, sometimes a Speaker allows for a few Members to make comments in relation to the rule. But I think the Standing Order in this case is quite clear, that any Member can rise and not give leave. I don't think that we're hearing anything here that will change that Standing Order. So the

Government House Leader does not have leave in that regard.

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

I move that this House do now adjourn.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Oh, oh!

**MR. SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that this House does now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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