



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 4

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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Wednesday

October 12, 2022

The House met at 10 a.m.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

Admit strangers.

### **Government Business**

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Good morning.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1:

THAT notwithstanding Standing Order 63, this House shall not proceed with Private Members' Day on Wednesday, October 12, 2022, but shall instead meet at 2 p.m. on that day for Routine Proceedings and the conduct of government business;

AND THAT, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall then adjourn the House at midnight.

**SPEAKER:** Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the resolution?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 5, An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund.

**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 said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

### **Committee of the Whole**

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!

We're now considering Bill 5, An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund.

A bill, "An Act Respecting the Establishment of the Newfoundland and Labrador Future Fund." (Bill 5)

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

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Chair.

Again, we had a good debate in the House yesterday afternoon about this particular

act, but there are many questions that we continue to have. The least of not is the fact that in order to fund this Future Fund, we're going to be selling off assets. We all realize that when you sell off an asset, it's a one-time thing and unfortunately, for whatever reason, government has not seen fit to tell the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador what assets they're considering selling off or when they are considering selling them off or, in fact, whether or not there's a deal already been struck to sell off the assets of the province.

The introduction of a Future Fund at this time would imply that decisions have been made or are in the process of being made to sell off assets of this province and, again, no transparency. We have talked on numerous occasions in this House on the whole concept of transparency, especially when it comes to the people's assets because, ultimately, we all agree that the assets of the province are the people's assets, yet the almost \$5-million report prepared for government under direction of what assets to be sold off and when or how remains a secret.

It is a secret to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It is a secret to all of the MHAs on this side of the House who represent a significant portion of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. For whatever reason, government does not seem willing to allow the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to have any inclination of what's in that report that, basically, talks about selling off our assets.

I don't think I am the only one that has a concern with that. I think the majority of people in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador have a concern with that. If we are truly going to be open and transparent and conduct business here in this House of Assembly, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, then surely we should have access to the information that we need in order to make a sound decision and to vote yea or nay based on the

information. Information is key and, unfortunately, we do not have that information.

We have no idea, other than the fact that the Future Fund, the principle of it is based on one of the things in addition to royalties, which we knew there's a clause in there that talks about the percentage of royalties, but there is nothing in here that describes how assets will be sold other than a dollar figure. We have no idea what we are talking about in terms of the plan for the sale of assets.

So with all due respect to Members opposite, you know, that's a carte blanche, giving you a blank cheque to sell off all the assets of the province without ever coming back to the House of Assembly to discuss it or ever talking about it because we have no idea what is in the report. I find it disturbing that a government, in 2022, can refuse to disclose to the people of the province, who elected them, exactly what they are planning on selling off or how they are going to do it. That is a big, big issue here in this Future Fund. How are we going to talk about the sale of future assets when a report is there, it's been there now for a more than a year, I suspect, and nobody is allowed to see it?

There are big concerns with that. There are lives that could be impacted by that. The Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, for example, provides over \$200 million a year in revenue to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Is the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation on the chopping block? Is it being sold? Is there a deal already done? We have no idea.

Other entities have been mentioned as well, but, again, we, sitting here in the House of Assembly, representing the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, have no idea what's being talked about or what's being offered up or why it's being offered up, what the rationale is, what the dollar value is; any of the details around it.

It's just not right – it's just not right. I don't care what political stripe you are, whether you're Liberal or NDP or independent or PC, keeping information, hiding information from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, a failure to disclose, that is just not the way to do business in 2022. It might've been okay in the time of Joey Smallwood, but it's not okay in 2022. That time has passed and I think the people of Newfoundland and Labrador want their government to be open and transparent. They want the government to tell the people exactly what your proposals are.

We can all banter back and forth and debate. That's what this House is about, debate. But it's very difficult to debate when you're not given the information or you're not being told what's included in the sale or what assets are being proposed, or the simple fact that you have a \$5 million report that nobody is allowed to see. That's the fundamental principle here.

So we're going to turn around and have a Future Fund and we're going to have proceeds from the sale of assets make up part of this fund. But, again, I go back to the fact that you are not allowed, as a people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, to know what's being proposed. You're not allowed to know what's in that report.

That, to me, is fundamentally flawed. If we're going to have a sale of assets, I'd like the minister to tell me today what assets are on the table. What assets are you talking about selling? Where's the description? There's nothing here other than the sale of assets. Surely, somebody opposite must know what assets you're talking about, because you wouldn't put it in a *Future Fund Act* unless there's already a plan in place to sell off assets.

So I'm just curious as to what assets are being sold. When will we know? When will the Rothschild report be made public? When will the people of the province know

what assets are being sold? Will the people of the province that work with those assets, or work for those assets, like the Liquor Corporation, when will they know if their jobs are on the line? When will they be told?

When you talk about the sale of assets and you put it in a bill, in legislation, that implies that you've already made the decision. You've already made a decision that you're selling off assets, and you've made that decision without any input. You've made a decision based on, who knows, maybe the report that you have that nobody else is allowed to see.

So, again, a fundamental problem with that. If we're going to be open and transparent, what assets are you talking about when you mention the sale of assets in this piece of legislation? Is there a list? Do you have items in mind? Surely, you didn't include it in this legislation without some kind of plan. I mean surely there's a plan. If there is a plan, how come the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador don't know about it? How come the people of Newfoundland and Labrador cannot share in that plan, cannot be informed of the plan?

Does anybody else see a problem with that? Because I certainly do. I certainly believe that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are the owners of these assets and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve to know what their government is thinking about selling off, because once they're gone, they're gone.

Let's not repeat the mistakes of the past. Let's make sure that openness and transparency are the words of the day and the words of this Chamber so that the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador know exactly what is being sold and when it's going to be sold and the people who may be impacted by those sales.

Clearly, part of the thing in my question today is what assets have you identified that

are to be sold that you could bring forward legislation that talks about the sale of assets to put into a Future Fund?

Thank you, Chair.

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

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I appreciate the opportunity. I will say there's so much incorrect in what the Member opposite just said that I don't even know where to begin to correct so much.

First of all –

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

**S. COADY:** Pardon me?

I was interrupted, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** I will say that this legislation, the Future Fund, to correct some of the misunderstanding around what the Member just said, this legislation is to capture really a portion of non-renewable resources, resource royalties so that we can put it into a Future Fund. That Future Fund will be used to pay down debt in the first instance so that we can have a more sustainable and self-sufficient future for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Member opposite is conflating a number of issues when he talks about the Rothschild report and he talks about what assets are we selling. This legislation –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Chair.

This legislation merely allows that if – if – an asset is sold – if an asset is sold – instead of it going to general revenues where it goes today, it could go to the Future Fund. So if, for example, we sold a building or we sold something, instead of it going to general revenues, it would go into the Future Fund. This act is merely allowing that to occur.

The discussion around assets, around what assets, if an asset, that is a different discussion. This is merely an option of capturing that revenue so that the government of the day won't go off and spend that money without due consideration to putting it down on debt, or saving to ensure that we have a very strong future here in the province.

I spoke yesterday about this and I want to again acknowledge the Member for Lake Melville because he spoke about seven generations. I did use a quote yesterday, I think it was very apropos, that really did speak to the fact of making sure that we are responsible to future generations, that we are responsible for paying down our debt.

So I think the principles of what we're talking about here, how we're capturing some of the revenues from our non-renewable resources, putting them into a Future Fund and making sure that we pay down, using that Future Fund, especially now, to pay down debt, to lower our cost of borrowing, to really substantiate some of the work that we've been doing on building a stronger, more financially able future. I think this is what we have to do in this province.

I said yesterday, again, that this is part of a strategic plan that we have on financial management. This is one of the few times, I don't know if it's but the only time the province has had a strategic plan on financial responsibility of making sure that we – and it's three-part plan as I outlined yesterday. I won't repeat myself, but it's a three-part plan. We have exercised a number of points in that plan. We are

making progress. We are really starting to see some benefits of some of this implementation of the strategic plan.

Another piece of that plan and effective debt management is the Future Fund. It's taking some of the monies that we receive, as a province, from non-renewable resources – non-renewable resources – things that future generations don't have access to and taking that and putting it aside, putting that in a fund so that it can grow.

As I said yesterday, this fund, the Future Fund, very importantly in the first 10 years can be used to pay down debt – can be used to pay down debt. The mechanism for doing that is you take the money from the Future Fund, you put it in your sinking fund and then you pay down debt. Very important, Chair, that we are disciplined enough to do that.

Imagine – imagine if 20 years ago we had been disciplined enough to set this up. We would be in a tremendously better place, at least \$3.2 billion and that's just in principle. Then when you put the compounding interest on top of that, we could be a \$10 billion fund.

Imagine – imagine the strength of this province if we had a \$10 billion fund to pay down on debt, to lower our cost of borrowing, to secure our future for ourselves.

This legislation is about that. It's not about other things, don't conflate, don't try and make it more so that you can stand up and pontificate about what may or may not be something the government may or may not be thinking.

It is about what the legislation allows, capturing the non-renewable resource, capturing a portion of that – I tabled the regulations and I can read them into the record if so desired – capturing the non-renewable resources, 2 per cent of an amount of non-renewable resource royalties

received, up to \$250 million. It goes up to 75 per cent of the amount of non-renewable resource royalties received that exceeds \$2.5 billion.

Now, I can tell you in times past there have been moments in this province when we were collecting an enormous amount of money. I can go back to – let me just think – 2009, Chair, we collected, as a province, \$2.5 billion in offshore oil royalties; not one cent put away – not one cent put away.

Do you know what was done? It went into general revenues and disbursed. Now, imagine if we had some discipline around that in 2010, \$1.9 billion.

Now, on average in the last five years, so in 2016, we had \$573 million. From there, we had about \$1 billion. So in the last number of years, except for this year, in budget we weren't anticipating \$1 billion, but for the last number of years it has been \$1 billion. A tremendous sum of money and we should be disciplined enough to put some money away in a Future Fund to help pay down debt to secure a stronger future for this province. We should be disciplined enough. It's too bad we weren't disciplined enough back in 2009 when we had \$2.5 billion.

So when I hear the Opposition trying to make political points on this it is frustrating for me because, of course, –

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

**S. COADY:** I won't be interrupted, Chair. This is an important discussion –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**S. COADY:** – for the people of the province.

I will say, again, this is very important that we start to pay down this debt. We are spending \$1 billion a year on interest. We just throw it out the window, Chair. We give

it to the banks; here, have \$1 billion. We need to pay down on our debt. This is one way of securing an amount of money, for the next 10 years, to pay down on our debt plus other things that we may be doing under the strategic plan that I talked about.

We are also capturing, should there ever be a sale – right now, if there is a sale of an asset that goes through tomorrow, it goes to general revenues. It goes into general revenues, Chair.

Now, I'd prefer to see, and I think the Members Opposite, if they were financially prudent, would say I'm going to capture that money, put it into a fund and start growing the interest on it and pay it down on debt, start paying it down on debt.

Now, I think that this is going to be a very important point going forward that we have to get our fiscal house in order. This is one way of doing it. Again, I'll say that we have a full plan of all types of measures. We have already passed pieces of Legislation in this House, changes that I have asked for that everybody supported – everybody supported it. The reason why they supported it, it makes good financial sense.

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

**S. COADY:** It makes good financial sense. This makes good financial sense. We need to start recognizing, in this province, if we can have the discipline to say that we are going to take a percentage on the lower – if we are only taking in \$250 million in offshore oil royalties, it will be a smaller amount of that because, of course, we are already needing some of that offshore oil royalties for what I'm going to call our base budget.

But if we get up to \$2.5 billion, which is where we were at peak oil – where we were when the previous government was in place. If we are at peak oil, capture 75 per cent of it and put it away. Make sure you pay it down on debt. Allow compound

interest to work its magic. Make a stronger province.

I will keep saying it until I'm blue in the face, literally, blue in the face where I'm going to say we need to be a stronger, smarter, self-sufficient, sustainable province. It's the reason I stand here today. It's the reason I put myself forward in politics to make sure that we have that as a goal –

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

**S. COADY:** – that we are working towards that, Chair.

I listen to the Opposition trying to, you know, make political points out of this when they should be saying we should be doing this. This is something we should be doing. This is important to the people of the province. This is important for future generations. It's important that we pay down our debt. It's important that we free up and make sure that we lower that cost of borrowing so we can free up those revenues to put it in the needed, necessary programs and policies for the people of the province.

They should be celebrating the fact that we are bringing it forward. They should be working with us to make sure this happens. They should be celebrating that we are saying that the discipline is required. Instead, they want to make political points.

Well, I'll allow them, Chair, they can stay here for the next month and make political points on this, but I can tell you the people of the province will see through it. The people of the province understand that we need to pay down debt. We need to have financial discipline. We need to get to that stronger, smarter, self-sufficient, sustainable province and this government is doing everything to make sure we do.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That was quite the rant but, coming from me, I appreciate that and I don't shy away from it. I think it's great, I think we need more of that in the House. Whether I agree with what she said, that's a separate thing, but I do acknowledge a good rant and I appreciate it.

Mr. Chair, when you listen to this pontification, and the Opposition, I look around here and there's no one got any horns. We all look pretty normal. But if you listen and you close your eyes, you would think on this side of the House that we're the next thing to the devil. We're the Opposition – we're His Majesty's Loyal Opposition. We have a role to play. I know the Premier and I know the Minister of Finance and all the Members opposite don't like to be questioned. I get that, but the reality is that's our job.

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

**B. PETTEN:** That's what we're put in this House for. The people of Conception Bay South and Port au Port didn't vote for us to come in here and rubber-stamp and agree and clap every time the government stands up. I guess I say sometimes, and I say it with the utmost respect, it insults our intelligence.

So I said this to the Premier and I'll say it to the Minister of Finance today: There's a lot of good heads on this side of the House, a lot of good minds, a lot of good thoughts. We have a lot of great ideas. But when we say collaborate – and it's always said we'll collaborate, we want to collaborate, we want to work with government, we want to work with the Opposition, and my door is always open. Sure, doors can be open, phones can be on and we can be here all day long. So if you're not going to listen or agree, or even give a second thought to what we say, why are we wasting our time? That's what it comes down to. It's utter frustration.

We talk about this Future Fund. Nobody disagrees with the Future Fund – absolutely nobody. Alberta had the Heritage Fund out there and back in 2009, 2008, 2010, 2006, 2007 – I can't remember when the revenues started spiking up. You look back in time, you say back in those times that probably wasn't a bad idea, in hindsight. Keeping in mind there was a lot of schools falling down, the roads needed major work – that stuff still got to happen; that stuff is not cheap – hospitals, you name it.

But there's no one here in this House saying that that shouldn't have happened. The only problem is none of us was here then. None of us was here then on this Official Opposition – not one. I was in a different life. I was nowhere near Confederation Building. A totally different life. On the tail end I might have been, but I was nowhere in this to make any decision on that. I was sitting on the sidelines, like most Members of this House were – not all, but most.

I use this example a lot of times, and it irritates me to a degree. I don't spend my time – I've been in this House for a long time, as long as yourself, Mr. Chair. I alluded to this as an example. I don't get up and blame Members of the House for the Upper Churchill or any decision that happened from a Liberal administration since Confederation. Why would I do that? They're not responsible.

Their party may have been, under that banner. Things change; party philosophies sometimes change. The party shifts to the left, the right, the centre. It goes with the electorate. We're seeing a shift happening now in national politics right through.

So when I sit here – and we got important jobs to do. I listen to those rants and I appreciate those rants. A lot of it is not factual and it's not fair commentary. To make it seem like we're against the Future Fund, that's absolutely inaccurate. It's not right. My colleague, our critic, the Member for Springdale - Port au Port spoke. I heard



him on VOCM this morning. I heard him on the news last night. We support the concept.

Do we think that improvements need to happen to this legislation? Of course, we do. But we're not allowed to say that. For some reason, we're offending government when we come up with solutions or suggestions, or could you do this better or could you do that better. Maybe we want to do an amendment. It's utter disgust. Where do you have the right to speak on this? Does anyone on this side of the House have a right to speak on any legislation here? Is this an autonomy?

The last time I checked it's not, but I'm beginning to feel that way. If I sat down, closed my eyes and put myself in another place and listened to what's been said here by a lot of the Members in this House, I feel that way, and it's not fair. It's not fair commentary, Mr. Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** It's not fair commentary whatsoever.

I'll listen to any Member –

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

**CHAIR:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** – when they get their opportunity, they can get up as well. I'll listen to any Member and they can rant; they can rip me up. I have big shoulders. That's never bothered me, but be fair about it. Be fair.

You get up here and I'll have my times here, and I know it don't always sit well with government opposite, but be fair about it. I'll sometimes use my humour to try to enforce a point, and that's fair enough too. That's fine.

Sometimes, even the Liberal government decides to take liberties of the parties, tries to take liberties for some of my comments on carbon tax, and I found that quite humorous actually and I compliment them for doing it. There's a lot more in the archives if you want to dig up. Feel free.

But one thing in my time – and I'm probably going to speak more on this Committee, Mr. Chair. I was thinking driving in this morning, when I look at this bill, we all agree with the Future Fund, but it's the way things are coming out lately. You have a \$500 payment which is \$200 million to come out to everyone last week. Now the week we get the Future Fund. We still haven't got a fall fiscal update.

But on the check box, the list of things to do, they're checks. You're checking a box; you're getting it done. Okay, one more done, that's another one and that's another one done. But it's balancing the scales, because when you get the Future Fund, most people would feel good about a Future Fund. It's a feel-good feeling when you're going to put your money in a bank and you're going to save money and people are going to say, well, b'y, we're finally on our feet.

But it's like a smoke and mirrors effect, Mr. Chair, because we're not on our feet. Two short years ago, two or three years ago the former premier wrote the prime minister, didn't think we could make payroll. The former minister of Finance painted a really bleak picture of not meeting payroll. We were that bad.

I don't see where things have turned so much in the last two years. They've improved, no doubt, based on our oil, that PC governments were accused of spending too much and we we're too supportive of the oil industry and we were not in favour of the green economy. But now all of a sudden, as of yesterday, the government are on our side. They don't like the carbon tax anymore either.

So where are we really when we look at it? Where are we really? We're about a government that's looking for good news to balance the scales of public opinion. So you put the Future Fund, you put the \$500 in this one; you're balancing her out a bit. Where's the fall fiscal update? That may help them too. They're doing everything backwards. It's like government by the seat of your pants. But then when the Opposition on this side offer suggestions, we're ridiculed. You're actually ridiculed, you're laughed at, you're mocked – you're ridiculed.

And I have to be honest with you, and I can spend a lot of my 10-minute intervals on this going on that story, and I don't think I'm wrong when I say that. That's not what we should be doing; that's not what the public wants. I know government gets there and they're in power there now and they think that's fine. And all governments do it, not just this government, it happens over time. It happens when you're in that bubble.

I'm not in that bubble, Mr. Chair. I'm in the real world and people out there telling me, do you know what? That is a good idea; the Future Fund is a good idea. I like the fact I'm getting \$500. I don't know where they're getting the money, but I'm getting \$500.

But they'll ask the question of, how can we afford this; where are they getting the money to? And I'll go, excellent question. That's what we'd like to know. And we're going to come out and we're going to ask those questions, and we're going to continue to ask them and continue to ask them and continue ask them. Do we get an answer? We may never get an answer. But that's our role. And it's incumbent on government to give answers, otherwise they answer to the public. And I guess the court of public opinion will decide on their fate.

But we, as the Opposition here, have that job to do. And we're going to continue to do that job every single day we get an opportunity to stand in this House and

represent the people who elected us. But not only the people who elected us, Mr. Chair, the people of the province. Because as roles – and we all play roles here, as my colleague for Stephenville - Port au Port is the shadow minister for Finance. He has an important role in our caucus, but we all do collectively. We're all residents of this province; we all care about this province. We don't have a problem.

It's not like us against them on the Future Fund, I say to the minister. We agree on the Future Fund, but we don't agree with certain concepts of the Future Fund. Better still, maybe we will agree if we get enough answers to questions given. But to stand up in your place and rant and rant and rant about how terrible the Opposition are for questioning government about a Future Fund and what we did wrong 13 years ago, when nobody on this side of the House was here, it's offensive.

I will get in my place and I'll stand up and I'll speak. If she wants to be here until next month, I'm good for that. We're good.

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

**B. PETTEN:** I have no timeline. If anyone wants to question my resolve, go right ahead, but I don't give up easy, Mr. Chair.

On that note, I look forward to future speaking this morning, this evening, tomorrow and next week. Whatever it takes, I will speak.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

I know the Member opposite is good at speaking on his feet. He's always eloquent

and he oftentimes adds a bit of levity to the discussion. I think that's important in this House of Assembly.

Allow me to say a couple of things based on some of the nuggets I was able to glean from what he said. I will say on the financial update, it will be one of the earliest times that we'll have a financial update in this House of Assembly. We plan to have this in the next couple of weeks. We will be bringing forward our financial update. We have indicated that we're having a good year in terms of our revenues.

I will say this, Chair, and I reminded everyone yesterday, normally you get a financial update sometimes around the end of November or early December. So it would be taking up a little bit extra time, making sure that the numbers, because they're projections, of course, to the end of March. But I'm happy to provide that.

I'm going to say this, Mr. Chair. However the financial update or when it comes forward, I would argue and debate that we need to do this whether we can afford it or not. This is about having the discipline to ensure that we capture the revenues of non-renewable resources.

So whether we're having an incredibly good year or we're not having an incredibly good year, the amount that we have to put in the fund is based on oil royalties, it's based on our economic generators of non-renewable resources and it's according to how much we're gathering. That's why it's incremental steps that we're putting in there.

But I will say, Chair – and I'm sure the Member opposite would agree because he said no one disagrees with the Future Fund. That's music to my ears because it is essential, in my opinion, that we have that discipline. So if we're having a very good – and I've already said that – financial year, a good revenue year, that may mean we'll have extra monies to put into the fund and the legislation does allow us to do that.

I will say if we're not having a good year, then we have to put less money into the fund. That's why we have it on a sliding scale. The less money we take in, in royalties, the less we have to put towards the fund. But it's about the financial discipline of ensuring that a portion of non-renewable resources goes to the fund, and it goes to the fund in the first 10 years to pay down debt. Following that, there are some other options that you can spend with the money. I take the point yesterday; a Member opposite did suggest some strengthening in that area. I think we need to strengthen in that area. I think as we move forward there's always that opportunity.

I will say today it's incredibly important that we start to have that discipline to take a portion of non-renewable resources – we're having a very good year in our oil and gas revenues, we're having a good year in our mining. We need to start putting that money aside to pay down on debt to ensure that we are taking care of not only today by paying down debt, lowering the cost of borrowing, but also building for tomorrow.

I think yesterday I used a quote, and I wanted to use it again, but I can't seem to put my hand on it – quote: "Let us be the ancestors our descendants will thank." I think future generations will thank us for this. As I said, and I know it's a sensitive point for the Members opposite, but if we had started this at the beginning, we would have possibly as much as \$10 billion in that fund now with the power of compound interest.

Imagine what we could do with that. Imagine if we had that money to pay down on debt or in extraordinary circumstances. A Member opposite mentioned about what Alberta was able to do during the pandemic, they were able to take some money. Norway was able to take some money out of their sovereign fund and assist because they were in the middle of a pandemic.

That is what we're talking about here today in this House of Assembly. I suggest that if everyone is supportive of the direction of a Future Fund, that's what we need to focus on.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Chair.

First of all, before I get into my 10-minute discussion about Bill 5, I feel it's incumbent that I have to address the Minister of Finance and Treasury Board's description of our questions and our discussion of this important bill as an attempt to make political points. That is offensive, Mr. Chair. That is offensive and it's too bad that the Minister of Finance is frustrated by our questions and our discussions. Welcome to democracy.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Chair, I'd just like to review some of the important elements of this bill that we, in the Opposition, have some concerns about. But before I do that, I just want to describe for the people who are watching just some of the important points about this bill.

It establishes a Future Fund. For the record we believe in the concept in the Opposition. We believe in the concept of the Future Fund. So we are not disputing that, but what we are disputing are some of the elements of this legislation.

First of all, when we look at the intent of this legislation, and the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board has indicated that it's to pay down the province's debt, to pay unexpected expenses, to pay expenses related to our share of the offshore decommissioning costs and, in essence, it's

to lower the cost of borrowing and to relieve debt burden. It's all about responsible debt management.

We agree with that, Mr. Chair. We have no problem with those concepts and those concerns, but what we do have concerns about are a number of things. First of all, what assets are being sold? What assets of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are going to be sold?

Now, the Minister of Finance, when we raised this earlier, my colleagues raised it, she said, well, it's if the assets are going to be sold. Well, presumably the legislation intends for the possibility that assets will be sold; therefore, it's a legitimate question for us to ask. What assets of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are going to be sold?

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** That is a vital question for us to ask and we are asking it.

This is a concern because we know what happened with the hidden Rothschild report, that cost the people \$5 million and we still don't know what's in it. So how do we know if the right assets are going to be sold, Mr. Chair? Do we know that they're going to get the best price? These are all legitimate questions that we have to ask and we should ask as responsible Members in this House of Assembly, because I need to remind and we need to remind the government here that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador own these assets. So will the government, if they do plan on selling off these assets, will the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have all the information that is available about the assets which may be sold? So this is important information that we need to have; it is about having information about our assets.

Mr. Chair, one other factor that we're concerned about is with respect to who makes those decisions. We have heard from this legislation that it is Cabinet who will make these important decisions. We need to understand that this is very important. The fact that there is vast legislative authority and power that is given to Cabinet. They are the ones that will decide what amount of offshore royalties, for example, will be deposited into the Future Fund. It is Cabinet; it is a group of people – perhaps 12, 13 or 14 – that will be making this important decision.

What concerns us, in the Opposition, is what oversight is happening here – what oversight with respect to it coming back to this hon. House of Assembly. There is no oversight by the House of Assembly with respect to this legislation. So we're going to have a dozen or so – a handful of elected Members of the House of Assembly in Cabinet making these very important decisions without that proper oversight.

Why is that a concern for us, Mr. Chair? It is a concern for us because we have talked about accountability and transparency. Now, those are nice terms but if they're not put into play, they are meaningless. But accountability and transparency are central; they are vital to democracy. We have to have those principles in play. They are what will measure government's performance. So the merits of any legislation, it has to be accountable, Mr. Chair. It has to be transparent. It is vital.

Why is it vital? It is vital because it guards against the possible misuse of power. It guards against the possible misuse of public funds. So we cannot allow that to happen. We have to ensure that there are protections in place and so, therefore, we need to have these principles, not just lip service paid to them. We need to have accountability and transparency to hold a government responsible.

They have to be responsible to the people, and that is the problem that we have with what we've heard with this legislation. We do not see that that has happened. We do not see that people are going to have the information that they need to have, with respect to the handling and the transfer of potentially very vast amounts of money – of the people's money. I need to remind them.

The other concern that we have had, and as my colleagues have indicated, is we really don't know what the fiscal reality of our province is. Yes, we hear from the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board who says we're doing it earlier than most. That is not the point. The point is that you're pushing through this legislation before the people know what the fiscal reality of our province is. We don't know. Perhaps they know and haven't revealed to us that they're projecting a surplus and it's going to be a surplus that is going to allow for this fund to take place, but government has failed to show us this reality.

So, Mr. Chair, these are some of the concerns we have. They're legitimate concerns, they're legitimate questions, there's legitimate debate going on here to question these actions and decisions of this government and we're not going to be stopped in doing that. We're not going to be told that we're trying to make political points. Really? Imagine that. Because we are exercising our right to free speech and to speak.

I see the minister is shaking her head there now. I mean, surely we're allowed to raise these concerns. This lack of transparency, Mr. Chair, should not only worry us in the Opposition, it should worry all of the people of the province because this legislation is not being open to scrutiny.

Thank you.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much, Chair.

I will address a couple of points that the Member opposite did make. One of them was around accountability and transparency. She was talking about whether or not there is appropriate accountability and transparency. I will say to the Member opposite that the board of trustees will have to ensure that the performance of the Future Fund is transparent and public. That's a requirement under the *Transparency and Accountability Act*. They will have to table three-year activity plans and annual reports. The annual financial statement of the Future Fund will be audited by the Auditor General and it will be tabled here in the House of Assembly. That is the requirement of the board of trustees. I will say it is the same requirement that we have for the sinking funds that we've had in place for many decades here in the province.

As I addressed yesterday, not for paying down on debt, you don't need to come to the House of Assembly on that, but any time if you're utilizing funds of the government, it would have to go through a budgetary process. So, for example, and utilizing the example, we just did a rebate to the people of the province because of the cost of living. We're providing \$500 for those under \$100,000 in income. We had to come to the House of Assembly to ask for an appropriation for that.

So that is the normal checks and balances. So the House of Assembly will receive all the reports. The Auditor General will review the reports. In 10 years' time, if there is something that you're spending money on, you have to do an appropriation. Those are the kinds of checks and balances that we do have in this House of Assembly.

Thank you, Chair.

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

As I was walking home yesterday and reflecting on the event of the days, I was trying to think what I could compare it to, and I was thinking of Julius Caesar. Not the play by Shakespeare but that timeless classic by Wayne and Shuster *Rinse the Blood off My Toga*.

There's a line there where Flavius Maximus is doing the investigation and he's speaking to Brutus and he is saying: Who's that guy standing next to Cassius? Cassius looks; is he a suspect? No, but that guy next to him is. He said: But that's you. I know, but can I be trusted? That's what this comes down to, Chair. It comes down to a question of trust, and that's what's being asked of us over there, in many ways: Can I be trusted?

I've heard the comments that we're conflating the issues and that we're basically trying to confuse the issue, but here's what it comes down to. We've had the Greene report, which recommends selling off the public assets, and recommends setting up a Future Fund and a committee, and then we have, hot on the heels of that, the Rothschild report and now this legislation. It is hard not to conflate the issue, Chair, because it comes down to a case of trust. If it's not transparent now, our concern is what chance do we have of transparency once public assets have been privatized?

I will go back to what Noam Chomsky said, that the standard technique of privatization is to defund, make sure things don't work, people get angry, you hand it over to private capital.

Let's think about the last few weeks, the last few months in this province and we've seen that with a lot of our public services and goods. It's basically if you didn't know, but the strategy was playing out.

Now, I would be inclined, I guess, to support the Future Fund if there were some

questions and a few things answered instead of talking about how the Opposition is playing politics.

Well, both sides are good at that. All you have to do is look at the entourage of people going around delivering pamphlets about the \$500 rebate this weekend past, if you want to talk about politics.

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

**J. DINN:** I think both sides are pretty good at that. So let's not have a case of the pot calling the kettle black.

The minister speaks of seven generations responsible to the future and being responsible to future generations. Yet, we have seen from this government a number of short sighted one-offs. When it comes to decisions, however, Chair, to address some of the problems facing our province, because that's what seems to be the Future Fund, we have had opportunities to address some of the systemic problems right now; the social determinants of health and we've raised them here.

Minimum wage put off down the road; guaranteed basic income committee, haven't gotten anywhere with that, no pronouncement whether we're going to proceed with it; housing, we have a housing crisis, no long-term solution to that; no long-term solution or plan to deal with public transit; no long-term solution to deal with climate change, as such, even the opportunity to look at just transitional legislation, fall by the wayside, but here we are now suddenly concerned about future generations.

I've got more to say on this and I'm not going to speak much longer. But I will say this, if it's about building trust, then reach across.

One of the things that you've heard from both the Official Opposition and the Third Party and independents has to do with the

sale of public assets: Give us some insights. Secondly, if I remember correctly, the Greene report calls for an independent external committee to oversee this fund, not the one that you're proposing right now. Third, I think it needs to be answerable to the House of Assembly. Those are things that would go far if it's about working together and building trust, that would go far towards meaningful collaboration.

Yes, it's important to pay on the debt, but it's also important to deal with the other things that are facing our province at this point in time.

And by the way, I've had my fair share of consultation. Usually it involves an hour or so in the week leading up to the budget to get: Hey, is there anything that the Opposition or that the Third Party would like to say? We have that hour and that counts for consultation.

Now, in previous roles, I can tell you consultation is more than an hour. We have, when asked here, sent emails to ministers as to where we think we need to go. They don't always get responded to and often they're ignored. That's fair enough. That is the right of a minister to do that, I guess.

But, please, to get up there and say that we are guilty of playing politics when you're pointing the finger at least three of them are pointing back at yourselves. So keep that in mind, please.

For us, show us, how can we make this committee an external committee, make it answerable to the House of Assembly? How do we frame this in the terms of an overall just transition plan? Because you've always got a plan there to fund green projects and give us that just transition plan and give us some reassurance regarding the sale of public assets.

The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands made it clear yesterday, each one should be debated. But give us something here.

Because once we agree to this we're now at the mercy of the legislation and legislation that might not be totally the best and in the best interest of the people.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR (Trimper):** The hon. the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to stand and have a few words, also. I was listening to the speeches here today, and for the minister to say that we should be jumping up and down and what are we doing playing politics with this here.

I just have to remind the people why I, personally, and I know the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands was with me, the Opposition House Leader was with me when we went out with the sugar tax, when there was a stalemate here in this House.

So I came up with a solution, the Minister of Finance was there, the Opposition House Leader was there, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands was there, I was there, and the Government House Leader was there. We went out and here's the deal that we struck at the time. The sugar tax would go into educational programs, we picked three or four, give the million dollars to go out to the schools, to go around the province doing educational programming. That was the deal. That was the commitment we all made.

That is the commitment we made and the deal was that it would be line item of what organizations the money went to for educational programs.

**P. LANE:** New programs.

**E. JOYCE:** New programs, no existing government program.

Here we are now, it was sent out in the budget, \$7 million of that for a Physical Activity Tax Credit. That was never supposed to be.

I just want to explain the tax credit. You have to spend a certain amount of money to just get the credit back. You have to spend a high amount of money just to get the \$150 back.

**P. LANE:** And who can afford it?

**E. JOYCE:** And who can afford it?

So the people who right now are struggling, if you go out and spend extra thousands of dollars, you may get \$150 back, and they're trying to survive.

So when the minister stands here and says that we're playing politics; that we should be jumping with joy. I have to remind you of this because this is why we have to ask the questions. This is why we need confirmation of how this is going to work, because I was there. We were out there. Minister, you made that commitment. So please don't question any of us on this side of this House of Assembly who wants to say we need more information.

And when you say you have to stand up and you have to build trust among the Members, it has to be trust. It has to be trust. But when that happened last year, and when I read this here, and there was a commitment of no new programs, it was why I'm standing here today asking questions.

**P. LANE:** And the helmets, too.

**E. JOYCE:** The helmets were another good example.

What's the extraordinary? I saw the minister last night on the news talk about cataract surgeries for the West Coast. I was taken aback. I was actually taken aback and wondering: Here we are now going to build



and get money for a Future Fund and there are 800 people on the West Coast waiting to get cataract surgeries on the wait-list and the minister stands up publically and says there's no wait-list. I'm just astonished.

I could give you the phone number, Minister, to call to get the numbers. I can give you the letter. For the minister to stand up in this House and say they could do surgeries out in the hospital. There's a letter from Western Health, they haven't done them in Stephenville, and you guys say trust me. Blessed Lord.

I mean, there's no doubt getting a rainy day fund is a good idea, but all of a sudden we're saying okay, we can decide if we need to spend it. We don't have to bring it back to this House of Assembly. That is wrong. It's wrong.

If you want accountability, if you want people on this side of this House to be involved, if you want to say we're going to do this as the legislators in this House and all the Members involved, have consultations; come up with the best way that we can do this. Because I'm sure, and I've said it before with other issues, if the Minister of Finance sat down with the Opposition, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port and the Third Party and said how can we do this here to make sure it's ironclad, that it's put there for what we intended to do, I guarantee you you'll come up with a piece of legislation in this House and there'll be three people speaking, maybe four.

I know the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands may not speak, but I would. But I'm sure the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands would speak on it. So there'd be five speeches – maybe four because when we speak we usually have a collaboration – and we would have a piece of legislation here in this House that would protect the funds and the future of the province for the money that goes in.

Now, people would say: Is that too much to ask? Is it too much to ask to have collaboration, to come over and say let's sit down, let's work this out? Like I said in the speech I had yesterday, who knows if this government now – it might be four years, it may be two years, it may be three years – is ousted and a new government move in, who knows that they're not going to follow and they're going to, oh, we got extra money here; let's use it. We don't have to bring it back to the House.

So this is not protection from this party in office now, although we need it. This is not protection from the party in office now; it is for the future. So if we're going to look at the future, put in a Future Fund for the future, shouldn't we put in safeguards for the future? Wouldn't that make sense? Wouldn't it make sense that if there is going to be changes no matter which party is in power, no matter if there is a minority government or not, that what you need to do is to bring it back to the Legislature to make any changes or spend any of the money?

I mean, that is not an unreasonable request, I say to the minister. It is not an unreasonable request. Sometimes what happens – and I have seen it over the years – is that government knows better than anyone. Sometimes that happens because you get in your own shell and the government knows better than anybody.

So I say to the minister, why don't we just sit down, put a bit of water in all of our wine here, and let's try to work something out here. But whatever is worked out has to be in the legislation.

I know the minister said yesterday that I asked for regulation and she said that we got 10 years. I didn't ask for regulations; I asked to have it in the legislation. Because the regulations can be changed at a whim. Whoever gets in your role can change it. So that can be changed. I asked for legislation to be strong, not regulations. I just want to clarify that that is what I asked for.

Here we are, again, debating something that I am sure that if we all sat down – not even all of us because we trust those people. We trust the minister, the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port and the Member for St. John's Centre; we trust them. If they came out and said, b'ys, look, we got something here that we all could agree to. We would say, okay, we'll go through it. But if we feel confident that it was collaborative and that everybody was involved, that you're speaking for everybody with different views, this would be gone now. We wouldn't be here today; that would have been done yesterday. It would have been done.

So when the minister stands up and says we should be jumping up and we should be proud of it, I say to the minister and I'll say it very honestly, if you want the future taken care of, deal with the people here who can work with you to make sure no matter who gets in government, the future is taken care of for this fund. It is not a hard request; it is really not. When people come up and say, you sell off assets and you are talking about – it's right in the bill. This is not something that somebody just dreamt up and said, well what if you're doing this. It's right in the bill.

So why can't you explain or work with people here to say what are we dealing with? What are we talking about with the assets? How much would the assets be and then when you say we can put them together to equal \$5 million, what are we talking about? No one in this room – the Cabinet may know, I don't know – has any idea of what you are talking about with that, yet we have got to say, trust me.

I go back to the sugar tax, with the tax on sugar and the amount of blowback you got on that. And now when I see this here, \$7 million in Activity Tax Credit, when the people of the lower end right now are struggling to even put food on their table, that is why I'm asking the questions here in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

It's always a privilege to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the members of Topsail - Paradise, my constituents and I'm sure every Member in the House does the same. Listening to the debate here today, I'll start right away by saying, yes; the concept is a good concept. I agree with the concept. There are issues that have been discussed here that I won't go into detail, because I think they have been discussed in depth. For example, the not seeing the regulations right away; not knowing what assets will be sold off; not having a fiscal update in advance; and, of course, there was some comments made about having an independent board overseeing this fund. That's all been talked about, and I am sure the point is getting across on that.

In a lot of respects we're speaking a bit blind here in that we don't know some of those details. So you will forgive us for asking questions that government may already have the answers to. I just want to bring some reality to this, of where we are.

When you're a small kid, out selling newspapers or got a little job to do – I know our parents would always say to us, you know, put money away. Save some money for a rainy day. Save some money for something you wanted to buy, and that works well when you have that opportunity to save money. But we know in this province, and you can cast blame, you can go back to Churchill Falls, you can talk Muskrat, you can blame it everywhere, but of course we're talking about today and, in a lot of respects, we're talking about the future in a Future Fund.

But recently we heard a lot on this sugar tax, and we've heard a lot on the \$500 cheque that was given out. You listen to the media outlets because they're out there listening to people on the street and asking them what they thought about it. I'm sure everyone in this House of Assembly has heard from constituents on what they thought about it. I guarantee you, you heard some of the comments, people who are well off, they're not turning away the cheque. They're taking the cheque, yeah, sure. Why wouldn't I take a cheque?

But there are a lot of people out there in dire situations who take that cheque and are paying down on their debt, paying down on their debt right away. Or I think it's been touched on as well, we have people out there who do not have housing. There's no housing. This is current: there's no housing.

We hear about all the units out there that are going to be renovated. We hear about all our immigrants coming in, our Ukrainians who have no place to stay. We hear about the maxed out food banks, people can't afford to eat. We hear, oh, if you can't buy Pepsi go to the alternative to the left on the shelf, which is costing more. We hear about the cost of gas, which is affecting everyone. We hear about the lack of public transportation.

There are people out there who can't even think about a rainy day fund because they are concerned about the next day. They get out of bed, they're not thinking about how much money I can put away. They are thinking about how can I pay off my student loan? How can I afford this? People need help now.

You think about Fiona that stormed through here, all those people affected. They look for help now.

It's a good point by the minister when she talks about back in 2009, 2010 and quotes the billions of dollars. No debate, I wasn't here, I got no debate. We were doing well

when times were good and when times are good it is an opportunity to put away some money, if you have it.

But let's not ignore the fact that a lot of good was done back then, as well. Money put into infrastructure, health, education; money wasn't just squandered. But I do go back and say, you know, yes, if you have the money, if you can afford to do it, yes, put it away, but many families in this province are not in that position.

You think about the Health Accord, the social determinants of health. You think about mental health, we talked about mental health and how the social determinants of health affect that, people with no housing, people who can't get food; people who have no transportation. These are people in need now – in need now.

So I try to simplify it and look at how would you run your own household? You pay for what you need now. You pay for what you have. In a lot of respects people cannot pay for what they need now.

The minister said the money will be used for needed programs in the province. That's what the money will be used for. No argument there, yes, that's great, but programming is needed now in a lot of respects.

So, again, speaking blind, I'm sure once we see the fiscal update, the financial update, we may have a different opinion on where we're going.

Again, I go back, I think of the late Mike Critch, VOCM news service, I think it was he who coined the phrase: details are scanty.

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

**P. DINN:** More at 11.

But you know it's true, our details are scanty in this. There are a lot of questions to be

asked and we get up and we ask these questions on behalf of those people we represent. Sometimes we get up and we ask questions that we probably don't think are legitimate to ask, but because our constituents want us to ask them, we ask them, because the greatest thing you can have is information. You have to have information.

When I look at the bill and I read through it, and most of the general public will read it, they don't know if it's fit to eat really, so you sort of got to bring it down to reality. The only way to do that is look at what they do every day, what their everyday life is like. I guarantee you many of them – savings plan; many of them don't have savings plans. They don't have it. They can't do it. They're spending the money, taxes, and I feel for them, because I get the calls. I get the calls from elderly people who cannot afford the transportation to go and get their regular dialysis treatments. This is what we're talking about when we talk about budgeting money.

Again, I go back, if we have the money to put away, I don't have an issue with that, if we have it, and how we do it. But, again, I agree with the concept, would like to get some more information in terms of where we stand, how the money will be utilized. As we know, most of the details come out in the regulations and the policy. Hopefully we'll have a look at that.

But I'm sure when we look at the general public out there, I'm sure many of them are saying, yes, a good concept; I wish I could do that. I wish I had an extra few cents to put away, every paycheque. But we know a big portion of our population are living from paycheque to paycheque and a good portion of our population is on income support.

Now people will say our income support numbers are declining, but that's because we're an aging population, they age out and they go on Old Age Security. But at the end

of the day, we have people out there who are suffering now and need programs and services now.

If we can address all that, if we can address what's needed today and still have money to put away, go for it. But I don't think we're in that position just yet.

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

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

**S. COADY:** I thank the Member for Topsail - Paradise for his eloquent words. I thought he gave a very good synopsis of some of the issues that he has concerns around in this legislation and I'd like to address those concerns, if I may, and give him kind of an overview of why some choices were made.

I appreciate the synopsis and I also appreciate the fact that he's pointing out it is difficult for people today. We are in a situation where there is – we have difficult cost-of-living challenges in the province today and that's why this government has provided almost \$500 million in supports back to people, because we recognize that.

It is difficult, and that concept of the Future Fund is difficult when you consider that you'd like to take all the money and provide it to the people of the province today. But we do have a responsibility to our future generations for non-renewable resources and we do have a responsibility to pay down debt.

I think the Member opposite said he is supportive of the concept. The thing about it is it will be challenging, it will take discipline and it's not just on good years that you have to put this money away. That's why we've made a sliding scale of how much you have to put away and on years when you're not taking in the royalty revenues that you had normally received, that you don't have to put that much towards the Future Fund.

But we do have to pay down this debt. I know the Member opposite knows this because he spoke eloquently about that. The question is: How difficult will it be to be able to have that discipline?

So there are a couple of other points that I want to address. He raised four key elements. One is around the financial update and he said: How can we make decisions today when we don't have that information? But I would say to the Member opposite that we should do this even in the tough years.

If the financial update that we will be bringing down very soon – and I have said this publicly, as has the Premier – does show favourable revenues this year but the legislation is for many, many, many, many years – it's not just for this year. Sometimes we're going to have tougher years. This was a good revenue year. That's why we've been able to assign some money back to the people of the province. That's why we've been able to invest it in those programs.

But even in tough years, we have to pay down our debt. The Member opposite I know, when he had or if he has a mortgage, would want to pay down the debt on the mortgage, not just the interest. We're paying down interest. We're not paying down our mortgage and we must. The people in the province understand that we're throwing away a billion dollars a year on interest costs.

So whether we have the financial update or not – and it will be early; it's going to be imminent. So within the next few weeks we're going to have a financial update in a general sense. I named off all the dates for financial updates. Generally, it's either late November or into December. So we're going to be early and we're going to show more revenues. But that's this year. This legislation is for many, many, many years. But it's the financial discipline that we have

to have to be able to allocate some of the non-renewable resources.

The second big thing he talked about was the board of trustees and should it be independent or should it be as we've described in legislation. The rationale here is it's very similar to how we set up our sinking funds. The province has sinking funds that are attached to debt and we have a board of trustees that manages those sinking, is paid down on debt. We have expertise inside government on this.

So we can capture that same expertise that we have inside government. We're going to have, as the legislation indicates, one external member, but we won't have any additional costs. If we go out and set up a separate arm's-length, independent board of trustees, it's going to cost us more money. It won't be linked then to what we're doing internally to help pay down debt. It'll be external.

Now, the board of trustees still have to come to the House of Assembly with their reports. They still are going to be audited by the Auditor General. So it's just going to be with the principles of the board of trustees, in a general sense, will be people who are currently managing our sinking funds. They have the expertise to do that.

So I say to the Member opposite, I know he doesn't want to incur additional costs. I know he knows that the board of trustees must come to the House of Assembly with all the reports. He knows that the Auditor General has to review the financial statements. All those are checks and balances. So I hope he understands and appreciates why that is.

He asked about the regulations. I will say I tabled it yesterday. All the regulations contain is that sliding scale of how much money that needs to go into the account every year. From a low side of things, if we take in \$250 million in royalty revenues, using that as an example, \$250 million in

royalty revenues, it'll be 2 per cent of that that would go in to the fund. A lower amount and that's because it's so entrenched in our budgeting process to use the proceeds of these non-renewable revenues that at that point it will be really challenging for us – for any government – to be able to find that money.

On the top end, if we're having a really good year and we earn \$2.5 billion, we're going to capture as much of that as we can. That discipline is going to be there. Instead of spending it in one year, we'll capture it and pay it down on debt. That's discipline and it's important discipline. Spending money is easier – being a leader when you have less money, when you have to be very financially disciplined is important. I know the Member opposite understands. So the only thing in the regulation is that information and that's been tabled.

He asked about assets. We don't know which assets are being sold. This legislation is not trying to capture that. All we're saying is, today, should government sell an asset, it goes to general revenue. Now we are saying, should government sell an asset that's over a certain value, it shouldn't go to general revenues. It should go to the Future Fund. That's all.

We can have debates, discussions, arguments in this House about assets and should there be an asset sold or if there is an asset sold. That's a good debate and an honest debate, but all we're debating here is whether or not we put it in general revenues to be spent in one year or do we put it in the Future Fund and pay it on debt.

The final point – no, I think I have covered the four points and I appreciate the very important and sincere debate and discussion around the legislation. I thought the synopsis was very valuable and I thank him for his contribution.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

The next speaker is the hon. Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, we can all agree that everyone in this House, on both sides, got into politics because of the future that wasn't there. I think most of us have children and most of us understand the situation that this province is in. The idea of a Future Fund, obviously, makes a whole lot of sense. Mahatma Gandhi said: "The future depends on what we do in the present." Our present, right now, is in turmoil and we know that, and that doesn't mean that we shouldn't invest in our future. We need to do that. But we need to do it transparently.

Now, what people at home don't realize is the acoustics in this building are fantastic. So as we sit here and we listen to people talk about trust and transparency and accountability, when it's not their turn to talk, you can hear the whispers and you can hear Members of government saying, we're governing. Or we can hear Members of government saying, they think we're still in a minority government. What that means to me is that they're not listening to us. It means to me that they don't even care what we have to say.

The purpose of government is to enable people to live in happiness, safety and prosperity. We are here for the people that we govern. We're not here for the people that are governing, and there is the disconnection in this House. We need to understand what we are doing for the people who we are trying to look after.

Future funds have existed all over the world for a very long period of time. The reality of it is they work and they work well. But what are we compromising when we get into a Future Fund for this province? We're giving something up.

I heard the minister say last year it would have represented \$100 million. Well, I'll ask

her, where would we have gotten that money? What would people have done without? What about the people who are doing without, right now? We know they are out there, lots of them: mental health crisis; people aren't eating; they aren't eating healthy, if they are eating. There is all kinds of stuff, housing, all of these issues. That \$100 million obviously helped do it.

The minister boasts about the \$500 million that government put back in to help people in crisis. Well, I guess if we utilized that \$100 million, we would have only had \$400 million to help them. That is pretty simple math. As bad off as we are right now, what would we have done?

So it's not about whether or not we support this, because people on this side of the House obviously think it's a good idea. We have said it publicly. We have said it standing on our feet in this House, which is, as my hon. colleague mentioned earlier, our democratic right to do and that is what we are put here to do, to represent the people that put us here.

We need to understand where this is coming from. This isn't about the Rothschild report, as the minister mentioned earlier; nobody has said that. Although, we should see the Rothschild report. The reality of it is, if there is a plan to sell off assets, that can be disclosed without disclosing the values. The whole purpose of not putting out the Rothschild report was the fact that government said that if we disclosed the values of the Rothschild report we're compromising our position.

You can disclose your plan without disclosing the values; it is open, honest, transparency and that is what people want. That is not the people of this House, Mr. Chair. That is the people of this province and the people of this province deserve it. They deserve a future where they understand why government is spending money and how they are doing it.

Now, we talk about royalties and stuff and, listen, there is no one bigger on the offshore oil and gas than I am. I'm hoping – I heard the minister say mining earlier – that mining royalties are included in this because we haven't spoke about it. And do you know what? We're on the cusp of greatness with mining. If we can find the power to supply to the mines, it's a great thing. It brightens our future immensely.

But we cannot sacrifice today. I understand the mess we're in, but we need to understand, if we sacrifice today, there is no future. The Member for Lake Melville said it really good, seven generations; I'd like to think about 10 generations and we've got to start doing that.

But we need to discuss amongst the people in this House what the best plan is. Is it too much money? Is it not enough money? Is it going to be annually? Is it going to be spread out based on three or four years of royalty regimes so we understand better what we're paying?

Nobody on that side of the House wants to listen to any of that and it's important that we listen. My colleague for CBS said earlier, we have a lot of good stuff to offer and certainly it's no good if nobody is listening.

Therein lies the problem with this government since day one: we talk about trust, then we get a sugar tax; we talk about trust, then we get a helmet law; we talk about trust and we have all of these things happen that we trusted. The people of Newfoundland trusted and guess what? When it left the House, it came back entirely different. So, yeah, these questions are important. They're very important and it's important for government to listen.

The biggest question for me is what is it we're compromising? Now, we know what the calculations are and we know it's going to be put away for the future. We also know that it's going to be a Cabinet decision. Regardless of what this board is, in 10

years or under extenuating circumstances, Cabinet has the ability to make a decision. That's not right. At the end of the day, Cabinet shouldn't have that authority; it should come back to the House of Assembly. It's very cut and dry.

At the end of the day, if Cabinet can make those decisions – and it's okay for the minister to say no, that's not how it works. But last Thursday we seen a \$200 million giveaway that was announced in the morning, then they brought it in and held it over the heads of this House in order for us to pass it. The reality of it is, had we debated that prior to making an announcement there probably would've been alternatives put out there that people probably would've liked better.

I don't know about people in this House but I can tell you that \$200 million, I've had numerous people call me and say: I don't want the \$500. I've had numerous people call and say: We should have cut the sugar tax. We should've done something about milk. Government doesn't listen to that. So if we don't listen to the needs of the people, how do we know what the people need? Therein lies the problem again with government: it's all about listening.

Now, a Future Fund, there's no question, we have to start paying for our debt. It's probably one of the most important things we can do right now, but we have to do it the right way. Some of that means that the power has to come back to this House to be debated by the people that were put here. It's okay to say it's going to come back for budget and all of this, but we don't know who's going to be in power. We don't. At the end of the day, it's an awful lot of authority for someone to make a decision and then come back to debate it and hold it over someone's head.

I've heard two ministers discuss here this morning about minority versus majority government, if Cabinet makes the decision and you're in a majority decision, guess

what? You can debate it all you want; you're still going to pass it. So it is up to Cabinet, regardless of what you think and the people of this province need to understand that. We should have measures in place in this bill that prevent that from happening. It's simple.

There are things that we could have done and ought to have considered, certainly when we look at royalties and new business start-ups and should new business start-ups pay more. It's revenue that we don't have. It's new revenue. Should they pay a little bit more? I don't know, maybe it's a good way to offset what we're getting right now.

There are different things that we should be looking at. And guess what? A lot of those ideas are over here. As a matter of fact, I think two of the independent Members slept at a Super 8 the night before last because they came in here yesterday and they were really smart. They offered up a lot of good stuff.

At the end of the day, if we listen and we decide that we're on the same page, we don't have to agree on everything. We don't have to like each other's politics, but everybody in this room are here for the same reason, and we have to live up to those obligations. Time and time again we don't do that.

Now, Mr. Chair, I'll say this, the idea of a Future Fund is imperative. There's no question. We need to start looking at debt, but the idea of collaboration, trust, transparency and accountability is far more important, because if we don't get that in this House, it's going to be the same old, same old. Every time we refer to the past, we just forget about our own past and that's been happening.

This government has been in power for seven years – seven years – and they don't talk about one day of it. There have been lots of issues in that seven years, instead they reflect back on 2009, 2000-whatever.



We've had lots of opportunity to do these things.

Now, I'll take my chair.

Thank you.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Chair.

I'll just take a quick moment just to point out a portion of the act, just in an address for the last couple of speakers.

Section 8(1)(b) "the Consolidated Revenue Fund for one or more of the following purposes, subject to there being an appropriation provided under the *Financial Administration Act* ...."

I just wanted to point that out because it's in the act, that it's subject to an appropriation under the *Financial Administration Act*, which means that it had to have come to the House of Assembly in a budgetary – I just wanted to make that point, 8(1)(b).

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I next recognize the Member responsible for the District of Ferryland.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Chair.

It's certainly a great pleasure to stand in this House again in the fall sitting and be able to represent the district and the province as well.

We certainly do agree with the Future Fund and the ideas behind it. It's certainly something well thought out and it will take discipline to do it, but there are clauses in

this that need some tweaking and we need to question that in the House of Assembly. That's our job. We were elected here to do that. There are 40 people elected in this House of Assembly to make decisions, not 14 to go into Cabinet and make the final decision.

We're all here with some input to offer to this. It's offered but it's never listened to. I just listened to the Member for Terra Nova say the same thing.

I have a lot of trust in the individuals over there, I certainly do. I speak to them not on a daily basis, but on a weekly basis. But when you see stuff that happens – and we're dealing with stuff with housing and all kinds of issues that we're dealing with in our district. And we'd like to see some of that legislation changed and tightened up because it doesn't make any sense sometimes. Common sense is not there. This is why we're trying to ask these questions. That's why we're bringing out these issues and getting it there.

Trust, accountability and transparency, that's all you hear. Collaboration was the big word when we first started in here three years ago. That's certainly gone out the window; it has never happened. You did \$194 million or \$200 million you were saying as a number that you came out with last week to give all the residents of the province that qualified some extra funding to help them through tough times. There was no collaboration or no talk about where it should go or how it should be. You just threw it out: \$500 to people with a salary under \$100,000.

Anybody ask any questions where else it could be used, or maybe it could be \$1,000 for half the amount of people that are there. They need it a lot worse than somebody that's making \$80,000 or \$90,000. And I'm not saying they don't need it, because everybody appreciates it. They do; they appreciate \$500. If somebody gives you \$500 today, you'd take it. But it could be

spread somewhere differently or some other options.

Again, no one talking about it, where it should it go. You make the decision. That's why we're asking these questions. That's why we're picking out the fine points of this to make it better for the public. We certainly agree with a Future Fund, there's no doubt about it. We certainly do agree with it. But it's got to be extraordinary events. So 14 people in Cabinet are going to make the decision on extraordinary events. Now are you telling me that doesn't have to be tweaked a bit? Don't have to be tweaked. No, it's all perfect. Definitely not perfect. We wouldn't be over here questioning it if it wasn't. Not even close. Like the trust factor, we'll give you all that. We'll give you the trust factor. You throw that out there all the time, trust.

ATV regulations: Where did that go? Didn't go the way it's supposed to. Not even close. Sugar tax: Did that go the way it's supposed to go? Definitely not. Definitely didn't. So there's our trust. So now you wonder why we don't trust. Is there a reason we don't trust? Oh, sit down, put our hands in our pocket and agree and rubber-stamp it and sign it and away to go. Not going to happen, not on our watch, I can guarantee you that. It isn't going to happen. Definitely not.

A financial update – you're in control. You're making all the decisions. It's going to come in a couple of weeks. That's pretty convenient. The House is going to close in three or four weeks. It'll be done right after we close, probably. No debate going to happen on that. You have the control; bring it in next fall before we start. Wouldn't that make a lot of sense? Then we can debate it.

No, but we'll bring it in after so we can go home and you can get your news story and happy story; can't question anything. Wait until it's all done and you're all gone home. It shouldn't happen. You got control. You had seven years here to put out the financial update, when you want to do it and

you're still going to do it after everybody is gone home so you can get your photo ops, as we say.

It is just so disappointing to come in here to be elected and you think you are going to make a difference and you've got no say at times. You've got your majority government. You can do what you want, but we're going to stand here and make our points, very articulate and good examples that we gave. It is important for the people to hear this; that we're not just going to let it rubber-stamp. It is important that we get it out there because it just hasn't happened right now. Not in my mind. It just hasn't happened. It just rolls over and rolls over. Again, individually, when I speak to people, I get very good responses and I've got a lot of trust and a lot of faith in people. Probably that's my fault, sometimes.

As individuals, I appreciate all the help I get but sometimes, as a group, the answers that we're getting or the collaboration that we're getting is not happening. I don't think there's anybody over here can say that. As a group in decisions that you made – you just put out \$200 million and we didn't get anybody call us – not saying call us but discuss it in the House of Assembly. Maybe there are better avenues we could do with it. Who knows what it'll be? Who knows? It could be for more housing units – \$194 million. How much more roads could you pave with \$194 million? They got the minister over there who is getting questions and petitions every day on paving and maintenance and all that stuff – \$194 million – I don't know what the cost is. Well, last year I heard that it was \$300,000 every kilometre. Well, that could pave a lot of roads.

Now, certainly the people that got the \$500, they do need it. The seniors need it. The price of fuel right now – you're not looking at it right now in the month of September, October. It is going to get cold here now in December. To bring it to reality, these are the people that do need it. There's no

question. They need the help. Maybe they need more of it and there are other people that don't need it. That was a discussion that could be had and it wasn't had. There was no collaboration on it whatsoever.

So it's very disappointing when you sit down and you come in here and you get elected and you see this come out and everybody said, well, they could've done this. There are lots of ways you could have done it. I am not saying it's not good. I will not say that. I am not saying it's not good but there could be other ways that it could've helped other people in different areas and you have to sit down and look at it.

So when you're going to have control of this Future Fund and you're going to decide between 14 people instead of bringing it back to the House of Assembly to discuss, then there it becomes an issue in my mind.

That's the kind of stuff that, as an Opposition, we're bringing it out and asking these questions and they're very important. I look over and I see heads rolling and every time you ask a question, well, you always got to be right and we must be always wrong. That's the way it seems sometimes. That's why we get perturbed over here because it's never a suggestion that you take that – it seems like you look at it and go, maybe we'll do this. Maybe we'll do it, but maybe we won't because we're the power and we got majority. We can do what we want.

So that's the disappointing part for me personally, when I got elected, because you come over here to make your voice known and maybe help the situation. We can't help. Somebody said here earlier: We got a lot of good, smart people over here as well that could offer suggestions. I'm not saying you got to take them but you could listen to them. But it's too late.

They came out with a big announcement last week, \$194 million, and it's the same as us. We just hear it when it comes out on the

radio or comes out at your news media, whatever it's going to be. So that is the disappointing part of being in here and trying to represent your district and your Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and not having any say in any of it. Not even a discussion on it. That's where we're trying to go with it. That's why we're asking these questions.

So hopefully we can sit down and get some more – we'll certainly ask more questions, there's no doubt about it. We're certainly going to ask more questions and, hopefully, we get the answers that we're looking for. I will say with the \$5 million they just spent on Rothschild, again, you're not throwing out the numbers of where it's to or what they're worth.

I worked in a car industry. When you send a vehicle to an auction, you're hoping to get the highest price you can for it. Now, that might be worth \$5,000 to her, it might be worth \$10,000 to him, depends on what you want. So it's not just a number that it's valued at; it's valued at what the person wants to pay for it. That's the issue and that's why it's nice to get out there. It might be worth \$100 million; it might be worth \$200 million to someone else over a ten-year period. But you can't hide the numbers; that's the problem. We'd like to hear them and the people of the province would like to hear them. So hopefully we'd be able to get to some place here that we can get those numbers and be able to look at them.

Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Thank you to the Member.

I next recognize the Minister of Finance and President of the Treasury Board.

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I did hear in the Member opposite's time a question regarding extraordinary circumstance that is, for those that are following the legislation, under 2(d). It's

defined as materially impacted or is projected to materially impact the province's fiscal situation. Now, there are definitions in accounting for material so using those standards – we have to use those accounting standards.

The Auditor General would certainly use them and that would be the requirement of this legislation. The Canadian auditing standards defines materiality as an amount that could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial statements.

So there are standards, there are requirements. It's not as loose as the Member opposite seems to think it is. These are requirements and standards under accounting rules.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

I next recognize the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Chair.

I know that Gerald and Donna Linthorne are watching out in Bonavista this morning and I want to try to frame what we're discussing today for their benefit and all those viewers that would be in Bonavista and the province, to the best of my ability.

I would say that everyone is on board with the realization that we need to reduce our debt. We need to tackle our debt. I think that should have been a constant years and years ago. For the benefit of the Linthornes that are watching, to give them an idea of the debt, then we know that in 2016, our provincial debt grew by \$2.3 billion. In 2017, it grew by \$950 million. In 2018, it grew by \$1,070,000,000. In 2019, it grew by \$700 million. In 2020, we had a reduction in our debt of \$940 million, but the Linthornes will recall that's when we had the 2019 Atlantic

agreement where \$2.5 billion was realized to the province, so savings.

But what happened the following year? The following year in 2021, our debt increased by a little over \$2 billion. In 2022, our net debt increased by \$540 million.

Now, the Linthornes are going to say what exactly is the Future Fund going to do in order to address the debt that we have that is rapidly building up? That's a good question. They're going to say what is the Future Fund going to do in 10 years' time that we're going to pay on it or utilize it to pay on our debt? If they ask right now if we have any extra revenue right now, in 2022, why don't you just pay it on the debt? That is a fair question for the Linthornes. Why put it in a savings account when we have to borrow every year in order to finance the operations of our government and our province?

If I were an individual and I had to borrow money in order to put in my savings account because I never had enough in my income coming in, then I would question that logic. The only thing that would be for the Linthornes to understand is: What is the revenue or what is the return on my savings account?

I would assume, as the minister has stated, with the expertise that would be behind her in her department, what is the expected return on the Future Fund when we put our money in there knowing that we've got to borrow to do so?

Gerald and Donna watching now are saying they'd love to know the answer to that, Minister, when you speak again. What is the estimated return on this Future Fund, while our debt continues to accumulate now and why don't we pay that now?

So we do that as private individuals, I would say if I were going to get a greater return, I suggest even personally doing it. I would suggest doing that but I really want to know

what I am going to get in return for that to occur.

A couple of things that were mentioned in the – I don't want to harken back too much to the Greene report but I am assuming that's where the Future Fund gained prominence in our conversations in the House.

The Greene report mentions two things and I just want to throw out a couple of things. They mention an external advisory group. The minister just spoke up in response to the Member for CBS and said that in the external group it's going to cost more and if it's going to cost more, why would we do that?

The Member for Terra Nova talked about trust. Trust was coming up all over the House, because if we look in our history, we haven't made the most sound financial decisions in this Chamber that represents the population in our province, and it went on for decades. So I would assume that when Madam Greene put it in there and her committee, it was to make sure that there were not going to be any decisions made that would adversely affect our coffers and adversely affect the population of Newfoundland and Labrador, the residents we serve.

What would the cost of an advisory committee be to make sure that we have that security of decision making in making sure that the funds are expropriated the way that we intend them to be? So that would be a question, I'm not sure as to what the cost of the advisory committee, if it were external, would be. I know we're realizing savings now because we're going to piggyback on the existing one.

So everything we talk about in this document is talking about non-renewable resources. We would love, on this side, and we spoke about it for years, we would like to see a focus on our renewable resources like the fishery. The fishery brings in \$1 billion.

We believe, on this side of the House, and I'm sure the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands does as well, the fishery should be bringing in between \$3 billion and \$5 billion. If we realize that with a good sound plan that would be apparent, that maybe sometime we could discuss that in the House, if the government raises it, then maybe that is going to help us out with achieving our debt.

The extraordinary circumstances, I know the minister had stated that when we're talking about decisions that's going to be made by Cabinet to exercise the expenditures of money from this fund, then there's a whole lot of significance to materially impact and what the standards would be on that. I'm not too sure what they would be.

I know from a layman's sense, when I would read it in there, I would think that it rests solely with Cabinet. But there are safeguards, according to the minister, there would be standards inherent in the wording "materially impact." What those standards would be, maybe restrictive of Cabinet deciding when they use these particular funds that would be there.

So the trustees, the minister will speak to that as far as what cost it would be and why they wouldn't be external, as Madam Greene had suggested.

I would say when we look at Madam Greene when she wrote in the Premier's PERT report she had mentioned the word "green." She had put in the word "green" when she talked about the Future Fund. She has used the word "green" – green initiatives and that's why I guess she bridged to the Future Fund.

I would say, in our legislation, we do not have the word "green" show up. The only thing would be is that if we were going to fund strategic priorities recommended by the minister – that is in section 8 – Madam Greene would have had to fund strategic

green priorities recommended by the minister.

So I often look at that and say, why did we drop the word “green” from the PERT and not have it in this legislation when I think that the intent of the Future Fund, when she suggested it, was to finance future green initiatives. I just wonder if it was a conscious effort to leave the word “green” out of the report and I look forward to the minister’s response.

Thank you, Chair.

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

**CHAIR:** I thank the Member and I thank the Linthornes for watching.

I next recognize the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

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

I want to say that I agree with what the Member for Bonavista was saying. I share his concerns. A couple of things – I don’t want to be too repetitive in what I have said yesterday but when we talk about the assets, first of all, I think it is important to be fair about this – when Members here are talking about the assets, it’s because assets are outlined in this bill. I think it’s fair to say that this is really not a debate about what assets are going to be sold. In fairness, it’s really not. But the fact that assets are mentioned here, presents that segue to go down that road, but in fairness this bill is really not about the sale of assets per se.

But I would reiterate my point and I am sure that other Members would agree, over here for sure, that there ought not to be any comprehension of the sale of assets, of public assets, unless it is going to be debated here in this House of Assembly on the individual basis. Whether that be hydro assets; whether it be oil and gas assets; whether it be Marble Mountain; whether it be the Liquor Corporation; whatever the

case might be. Before we go down the road of potentially selling any of those assets, if they are on the list and I suspect they were on the list, then it ought to be debated in this House of Assembly.

Government should not – I am not sure if it has the power to do it, legislatively. I’m not sure what legislation – for example, the Liquor Corporation, there is legislation covering that. So I’m not sure that government could just outright sell everything off anyway, without having to come to the House of Assembly. Maybe they can, I’m not certain, but I would certainly say that I would not support the sale of any government assets and Crown assets without a thorough debate in the House of Assembly, and knowing what all the numbers are and if it makes sense.

To be honest with you, I’m not quite where the NDP are in terms of you can’t sell anything. I’m not there, but where I am is that I want to know all the information and whether it makes sense, and thinking about all of the potential impacts on the province and on the people that would be working there, and everyone that would be impacted before I would even entertain it.

I would say, just from the perspective of not having the information but just as a gut feeling, I think selling off the Liquor Corporation is a bad idea. That’s just my thought. But I would want to see the numbers and understand everything. That’s why people are talking about assets, Minister. That’s the reason. But this bill is not really about assets.

What it is about, of course, is a Future Fund. I will restate, as other Members have stated in this House, on this side of the House as well, that I’m certainly in support of the concept of a Future Fund. I believe everyone in this House of Assembly is. I believe the people of Newfoundland and Labrador would be in favour of a Future Fund, generally speaking. I don’t think that’s an issue either.

The issue that I have is more around – and it's not even the concept of money going in per se, because I agree with the sliding scale and all that stuff. I think that it makes sense to me. The only area I'm challenged – and the Member for Bonavista spoke about it, and I would agree with him, and this is where I'm challenged. I'm trying to make it as simplistic as I can. It would be like if I borrowed \$100 from the Member for Labrador and then I said: Okay, how much do I have to pay you for loaning that money? He says: Well, you pay me \$50 for a loan of the \$100, but I'm going to give it to the Member for Exploits and invest it. I said: Well, how much am I going to get a return on that? You're going to make \$30. So I just took a net loss of \$20. That doesn't make sense. That makes no sense to me.

So putting it in a much larger scale, it would not make sense to be borrowing money for general operations while at the same time taking borrowed money to invest in a fund that's not going to return the same amount – well, if you're only doing the same amount it makes no sense anyways. It would be a wash. Unless you're going to make more money over here, it makes zero sense.

So if we had balanced budget legislation, as an example, which I thought I heard was coming – I could be wrong; the minister is shaking her head. If we had balanced budget legislation and we could say that we were balancing the budget without borrowing money and now we've got this surplus money as a result, then it makes sense to me that you could do it. But if we're not balancing the budget and we're having to still borrow money and go deeper in the hole over here to invest money over here, it just does not make any sense. So that's where I'm challenged and maybe the minister can explain this.

The other fundamental issue I have – and I do have a couple of amendments that I will be bringing forward when we get to the appropriate section, I would say, upfront. The area I have a problem with is this whole

concept of Cabinet deciding where to spend the money and to set the priorities. That's where I have a fundamental issue.

Now, the first one talks about the extraordinary circumstance, and we've talked about this. So the Cabinet is determining what an extraordinary circumstance is. While I do appreciate the minister saying there are parameters in place based on accounting principles and the Auditor General and all this stuff, I understand that. So I understand that it's not as simple as just blowing money on whatever you want. I get that and it was a bad example, I will say, to talk about the people who needed cataract surgery as being extraordinary. It is extraordinary for them, but it would not apply to this situation based on those parameters. I understand that. I just want to make sure you don't think I don't understand because I do understand.

But nonetheless, while you are restricted to some degree, the Cabinet still decides based on those parameters. All we are saying is: Why not simply bring it to the House of Assembly? We do it for Interim Supply. We've had emergency debates in the past if it was something extraordinary. By definition, if it's extraordinary why not bring to the House of Assembly?

If what you're doing is correct – I'm saying you, but if what the government of the day is doing is correct and it's needed and it fits within those parameters, then I'm sure that all Members of the House would have no problem voting it through unanimously and we'd move on. No different than we all voted for Interim Supply in the past and emergency funding in the past. We all voted for those things and it all got passed. You have the majority anyway, in this case. But it would be a different government, I understand.

But if government got a majority, it's going to go through anyway. Why not have the process of bringing it to the House of Assembly?

The other one that's not an extraordinary circumstance – and this one is even more troubling to me – and that's the one where the minister – my colleague for Bonavista talked about that, about the strategic priorities. Not a strategic green priority. I never picked up on that part; I'll give him credit there.

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

**P. LANE:** He is a smart man. But strategic priorities as deemed by the minister. And I have a real big problem with that one.

So now we're not even into the extraordinary circumstance anymore. We're not into any parameters. We're into the minister, on a whim – and I'm not talking about this minister, because we're talking 10 years from now, I think. But the fact that a minister, one person, and I guess supported by the Cabinet, are going to determine what's a strategic priority.

So any government at any time can say we think it's a strategic priority to invest money in this or that or something else, and it's just going to be done. Here we are expecting the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to be putting all the money into this fund. No doubt there are still needs out there. So if we're going to go down this road with this financial discipline, we're going to be putting money here because we know it's the right thing to do, but there'll still be needs out there not getting addressed. But then on a whim, the government of the day and the minister of the day can say this is a strategic priority and just go ahead and do it.

Again, that is wrong. If there's a strategic priority in the minister's mind, bring it before the House of Assembly and let all Members decide, if that indeed is the case, and let everybody vote on it and have their say.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Thank you to the Member.

I next recognize the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

I appreciate the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands for his synopsis of his concerns. And allow me a few moments to address them.

First of all, what the Member opposite was referring to is what is referred to as a spread – the difference between what you are borrowing from money and what you're earning from money. And based on our modelling from the officials within the department it's very small-c conservative; it was 2 per cent. So just to let you know that the modelling that has been used by officials in the department was a 2 per cent spread. What that means is that if you have to borrow for that money – and if borrowing at, say, 4 per cent, we will earn 6 per cent.

**P. LANE:** You're still making money?

**S. COADY:** We're still making money. So that was part of the discussions and thinking about going into this because, again, the power of compound interest. I keep saying that it is so important; the power of compound interest for us will really and is why – and I'll address in your number two, around extraordinary circumstances. You are correct; there is a definition of that.

But if you are going to spend the money – so I am going to refer to again 8(1)(b). So let's just say there was an extraordinary circumstance. Let's say it is a pandemic. If it is a pandemic and the government of the day says, oh my gosh, we don't have enough revenue, we need to take money out of the Future Fund; you still need to have an appropriation from the House of Assembly.

So 8(1)(b) reads: "the Consolidated Revenue Fund for one or more of the



following purposes, subject to there being an appropriation provided under the *Financial Administration Act ...*” So they still need an appropriation from this House of Assembly and you would see that normally in a budgetary process. Sometimes in extraordinary circumstances with a request for Supply, as we did last week.

Your third point – and I listened intently to your concerns around strategic priorities. I was glad that you pointed out that we’re talking about something that could take place in 10 years. Maybe we do need to tighten that. It is something that will take place in 10 years so maybe we could consider that maybe that should be more tightened. Again, it is subject to an appropriation from this House of Assembly.

So let’s just say I think there is a strategic priority of – I’m trying to think of one – we’re going to do a green project and I say we’ll advance money from the Future Fund to do that; it is still subject to an appropriation from this House. You’ll still get to discuss it and debate it. The appropriation would have to come from this house. But I do agree with you; it is something to consider. Maybe we need to put more around that parameter as we move forward. But again, it is not subject to today; that is at least 10 years out, but it is something for consideration for sure.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I next recognize the Deputy Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise, report progress on Bill 5 and ask leave to sit again.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

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

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Deputy Chair of Committee of the Whole.

**P. TRIMPER:** Thank you, Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

**SPEAKER:** The Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, report received and adopted.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now recess.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved that this House do recess.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

This House do stand recessed until 2 p.m. this afternoon.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Order, please!

Today in the public gallery I would like to welcome Krista Stephens who is visiting us this afternoon who is the subject of a Member's statement.

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for Districts of Humber - Bay of Islands, Lake Melville, Bonavista, Baie Verte - Green Bay and St. John's Centre.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, I recently had the pleasure of joining family and friends of Trevor and Mildred Bennett at their home in Irishtown, as they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary.

Trevor and Mildred were married on August 18, 1952, in Daniel's Harbour. They met when Mildred moved to Daniel's Harbour in her second year of teaching.

After working as a teacher for a number of years, Mildred went on to nursing school and began working with community health for many years; retiring in 1990, after

spending the last 13 years with the VON, from a career she truly loved and dedicated herself.

Trevor was born and raised in Daniel's Harbour and was self-employed for many years and, with Mildred by his side, owned and operated the Benfield Motel in Daniel's Harbour. He also served as the MHA for the District of St. Barbe from 1979 to 1982.

Commitment, respect and love are important foundations for any marriage, and Trevor and Mildred have certainly shown that over the many years they have been together. They have five children, 10 grandchildren, 10 great-children and, recently, they welcomed their first great-great-grandchild.

I ask all Members to join with me in extending congratulations and best wishes to Trevor and Mildred on reaching this wonderful milestone.

Thank you.

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

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

**P. TRIMPER:** Thank you, Speaker.

Today, I am pleased to recognize former Labrador MHA and Cabinet minister, Joe Goudie, on his recent induction into the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Born in Mud Lake, Joe is well known throughout our province for his career at CBC Radio; as the first Labradorian to serve in Cabinet during his distinguished provincial political career from 1975 to 1985; for his craftsmanship in the art of canoe building; and so much more.

Joe has worked diligently to promote all things Labrador including its culture, heritage and beauty. Many decades ago, he formed the Labrador Heritage Society and

was involved in the creation of *Them Days* magazine, a quarterly publication preserving the stories of Labradorians.

His vast knowledge and expertise continues to benefit other cultural and heritage institutions today, including Parks Canada and Mealy Mountains National Park Reserve, the Trapline Marathon and the Great Labrador Canoe Race.

You do things you are comfortable with, things that you wish to do – all of a sudden, there's that reward. You're grateful for it, thankful for it, never planned it, but it's a really special feeling to receive it.

Speaker, I ask this House to congratulate our colleague and our friend, Joe Goudie, on receiving our province's highest honour.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Speaker.

At the Relay for Life in Bonavista on September 10th, which raised over \$55,000 for Daffodil Place, Joanne Tremblett told her powerful story to cancer survivors. Joanne was 14 years of age, 34 years ago, when she had many visits to a local physician with general complaints.

After considerable time and a stay at the Janeway, she was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease, stage 4. Joanne and her family wept upon hearing the diagnosis, and resigned to many months at the Janeway. Joanne, at 14 years of age, began aggressive chemotherapy with much pain and, strangely enough, she vividly recalls the stress of hair loss and mentions how far we have come with wigs today.

The staff at the Janeway, in particular 3C Ward, she described as "Angels in White." Between treatments, she was granted a wish from Children's Wish Foundation to

Disney with her family, which brought so much joy.

In 1989, it was determined the cancer was in remission. Joanne decided to become a nurse and today works as an RN at Bonavista Hospital, with twin girls and a loving, supportive husband.

I ask the Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating Joanne Tremblett's perseverance, strength and courage in her journey with cancer.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

**B. WARR:** Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the late George Kelly, a well-known and respected mayor who passed on August 4, 2022. George was a strong advocate for Burlington, especially during his 26 years serving as mayor and councillor.

Like many communities in the mid-90s, Burlington was faced with the economic downturn caused by the cod moratorium and the declining forest industry. Although it was clear that Burlington was struggling financially, George Kelly turned things around. Burlington has become a thriving, prosperous community, with a growing tourism industry and a bright future.

I developed a personal friendship with Mayor George back in the late '80s while operating a building supply operation in Springdale. George was a fierce negotiator when shopping for lumber and plywood for the next community project. He personified the quote, "take care of the pennies and dollars will take care of themselves."

George has given his family and his community an incredible legacy of love and support, along with a generous and giving heart.

I ask hon. Members to join me in extending sincere condolences to George's wife Doreen and son, Scotty, and all residents and friends of the Baie Verte Peninsula.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

Amelia Earhart said: Each time we make a choice, we pay with courage to behold the resistless day, and count it fair.

At a time in her life when most people would be content to play it safe, Krista Stephens, who joins us in the gallery, chose to follow her heart, launch out into the deep, and complete her education.

After a 26-year absence, Krista enrolled in Adult Basic Education to complete high school. Encouraged by her success, Krista registered for Academy Canada's Office Administration and Technology Program.

At 42, and the oldest student in a class of mostly 20-something year olds – the age of her daughter – Krista felt totally out of her comfort zone. She faced very serious health, financial and personal challenges, and questioned her decision to advance her education. However, with the encouragement of her teachers, Krista chose to continue her education, driven by the desire to get off income support permanently and join the workforce.

Recently, Krista Stephens received the 2022 Council of the Federation Literacy Award from Newfoundland and Labrador as part of International Literacy Day.

Krista is a constituent in my district. Her courage is an inspiration to me and to all those who seek to behold a resistless day.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

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

**A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise today in this hon. House to mark the passing of a great Newfoundlander and Labradorian, Mr. John Crosbie Perlin.

Mr. Perlin died this weekend at the age of 88 years old and it will be difficult to summarize his life in a few short words here today, because as one of his relatives put it this week, he "received every award you possibly can."

A member of both the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Order of Canada, Mr. Perlin was known as philanthropist, championing causes from the development of the Fluvarium to Quidi Vidi Rennie's River Development Foundation, the Duke of Edinburgh awards, to Rising Tide Theatre and many, many more.

Mr. Perlin's relationship with the Royal Family is well known. He served as the Canadian Secretary to the late Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and served as an advisor to many Newfoundland and Labrador's Vice Regal representatives. He coordinated and oversaw many royal visits to this province, and one of his last public acts was to offer public commentary on the passing of Her Majesty just a few short weeks ago.

Mr. Speaker, with all of his accomplishments, it was the recent award of him being awarded the Honourary Life President of the Royal St. John's Regatta Committee that may have meant the most to him, Mr. Speaker. He dedicated over 70

years of his life to supporting the association and to be recognized in this way was truly special for him.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to have called John a friend during his prolific life, and while our province feels a bit smaller today knowing that he is no longer with us, the legacy he left is enormous and he will never be forgotten.

I would ask all Members to stand with me as we recognize him in a moment of silence.

(Moment of silence.)

**SPEAKER:** Please be seated.

The hon. the Acting Leader of the Official Opposition.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement. The Official Opposition joins the Premier in expressing our deepest condolences to the family and friends of the late John Crosbie Perlin. We also join the Premier in celebrating the life and legacy of this extraordinary individual, whose contribution to our province was remarkable.

John was raised by parents who were not just role models but giants in terms of the magnitude of their contributions to the province. John picked up the torch early on and became a giant himself, especially through his work as a former Canadian Secretary to the late Queen Elizabeth II and private secretary to the Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador.

No one did more to honour and promote the monarchy in the province than John did throughout his life. As others have said, it is fitting that he lived a life and lived to see Her Majesty honoured in her jubilee year and celebrated worldwide the year of her passing, and he witnessed the transition to our new Monarch.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, we pass along our sincere condolences to his family and friends.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement. Many in our office shared our memories of Mr. Perlin earlier this week. He was a welcoming presence to Government House who was always eager and willing to share his knowledge of this province's relationship with Buckingham Palace. We join his family in mourning and stand in this House to honour his public service.

Thank you.

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

Further statements by ministers?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, we all hope that we are never in a situation where we have to deal with a fire in our home. Unfortunately, it does happen, but everyone can take steps to be prepared in the event we are faced with a fire.

This is Fire Prevention Week in Newfoundland and Labrador and marks the 100th anniversary of this recognition. The theme this year is "Fire won't wait. Plan your escape." During this week, residents, families and educators are encouraged to learn more about the simple but important actions they can take to keep themselves and those around them safe.

Speaker, it is important for everyone to plan and practice a home fire escape so that everyone in your household knows what to do if the smoke alarm sounds. Given that every home is different, it is important to know the fire escape plan for any home in which you are staying. Ensure to consider the needs of all members of the household and include them in the planning so that everyone knows what to do and where to go.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking our dedicated firefighters across this province for their service and contribution in their communities and for the support they provide to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Fire Prevention Week is a reminder to take the necessary steps to protect yourself and your family and to take the time to make a plan to stay safe.

Thank you.

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

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement today. I want to join the minister in recognizing the very important Fire Prevention Week 2022. The theme "Fire won't wait. Plan your escape" is a statement that hopefully each and every person adheres to throughout the province.

We cannot thank our firefighters enough for their dedicated service. They risk their lives to ensure our safety and we must do our part to ensure we are part of the plan to reduce fires as well. As a firefighter, I see first-hand the risks these people are willing to take.

We are all urged to install smoke alarms on every level of your home, inside bedrooms

and outside sleeping areas. Test your smoke alarms monthly and discuss your escape plan with family members. It may seem simple, but it's very important.

Most importantly, it's extremely important the minister listen to local fire departments and ensure their concerns are heard and do the utmost to ensure that they are armed with necessary equipment to respond to these emergencies.

I would like to ask every person in the province to recognize the importance of firefighters every time the siren is heard. Fire Prevention Week is a reminder to be proactive.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We applaud firefighters who rush into situations that many would run from. However, many communities are still working with outdated fire trucks and other equipment, hampering their ability to respond to emergency situations. That's why we call upon the government to make an investment to ensure that our firefighters have the equipment they need to do their jobs safely and effectively.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** Speaker, last evening Newfoundland and Labrador airlifted 177 people –

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

**G. BYRNE:** – fleeing the ravages of Russia's criminal invasion of a peaceful nation; the third such airlift by our province. For many Ukrainians, this was truly a bittersweet moment. In front of them, lay the opportunity to live in peace, to regain a sense of hope and to experience new beginnings as our neighbours and as our friends. Behind them, however, many had no choice but to leave family and friends to the realities of the ugliness of Putin's criminal ambitions. This is why we say, and say without any reservation, the doors of Newfoundland and Labrador shall never be locked to such a warm and courageous people.

Speaker, over 1,000 Ukrainians have now chosen Newfoundland and Labrador as their preferred home.

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

**G. BYRNE:** While some 500 were ushered here throughout humanitarian airlifts, 500 chose this place after arriving first in other parts of Canada or directly from Ukraine. All 1,000 Ukrainians chose this place. They came because of our groundbreaking initiative, our Ukrainian Family Support Desk. They came after talking with Ukrainians already here or in other parts of Canada. They came here because of the reputation our province has so deserved and earned. They came here not by our words or promises; they came here by our actions. They came because of the incredible welcome that the people and the employers of Newfoundland and Labrador have extended to them.

Speaker, I am pleased to report to the House that amongst this group of 830 Ukrainians who landed before last evening, three-quarters have already gained

successful long-term employment in the province with the remainder actively pursuing specific opportunities.

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

**G. BYRNE:** The average stay in temporary accommodations is now just 28 days, down from an earlier benchmark of 34 days, and none have required accommodation in provincial social housing. Ukrainian children are in school with the help of additional teaching resources and additional supports such as child care have been successful. In fact, a Ukrainian-led child care facility is actively in development.

All this is to say, we stand with Ukraine, Mr. Speaker, we stand in a pursued vision, a successful vision of a more prosperous and diverse province.

Mr. Speaker, this is a government that will never say good is good enough. If you believe any of this to be impressive, with the help of everyone in this House, let me assure you there is much, much more to come.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. The Official Opposition would like to welcome each and every Ukrainian that has decided to build a new life here in Newfoundland and Labrador. You are welcome and you are wanted. The perseverance and courage that it takes to leave home, travel across the world and start over is truly inspiring.

We are honoured that, though there was no choice for them to leave their home, they did choose to come to our humble Island

and build a life. From across Europe and other places in Canada, these fine people saw what we see in our home: peace, community and a sense of belonging.

Each time we hear the words of our fellow Ukrainians they speak of the unending gratitude to their hosts and for the warm welcome they had received in our province. It is clear that they are beyond grateful. We, too, should be grateful to have such a rich and diverse people join our own and build a better future together.

Speaker, on the note of gratitude, we, too, must show ours. We owe the people that we brought here the opportunity to find meaningful employment, have a home and build a family. They are owed a duty of care so that they may flourish and find meaning in our community.

Government must now hold up their end of the bargain and not just offer promises that find newcomers wishing they had gone somewhere else. Five weeks in a hotel may sound better than six and 75 per cent employment may sound great, but that means one-in-four newcomers have not found meaningful employment and are still waiting in the hotel while government figures it out. Additionally, many new mothers are finding it near impossible to either find or afford child care so that they, too, can participate in the workforce.

Speaker, there was a bright future for Newfoundland and Labrador and we have just welcomed some of the most resilient people on earth to our home. It is now their home and it is up to us to make sure that they have what they need.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Leader of the Third party.

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement. We also welcome those who are fleeing their homes because of the war in Ukraine. But many who arrive here are taken back by the lack of available public transit.

We encourage this government to focus on people, especially our newcomers and invest in the services that will benefit them and all of us. One hundred and ninety-four million dollars could have gone a long way in creating a regional transit system and reducing transportation costs not only for newcomers, but for all people of this province.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Liberal carbon tax increase will raise home heating oil costs for 44,000 families in this province. This past spring a Liberal minister said: We need to stick with it come high or low.

I ask the Premier: Yes or no, will the carbon tax be charged on home heating oil in 2023?

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

**A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member Opposite knows that was a pre-existing carbon tax applied by the federal government through a provincial program. As we discussed here yesterday, we are making sure that our voice is heard and been advocated to the federal



government that we don't think that it's responsible, right now, to put an extra burden on the people of the province who are still on furnace fuel.

I have written to the Minister of Environment, federally, to ensure that he understands our position and we will continue to advocate for it.

It is not our initiative. It is not our carbon tax. It is a federal carbon tax and if they initiate the backstop that is on them.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Yet, the Premier and his government supported this carbon tax and this federal Liberal initiative for years. Now, all of a sudden, we see an about-face. Now they don't support it. Well, it's too late, Mr. Speaker. Now the tax is going to be charged on people of this province. They need to answer for that.

The Liberals previously touted their made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador solution, but with their scheduled Liberal carbon tax increase home heating fuel will increase by 20 per cent on top of what we already have.

Will the Premier table a letter from the federal Environment Minister confirming the cost of home heating fuel will jump by 20 per cent?

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

**A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I will be happy to table is a letter I wrote the federal minister ensuring that he understands (inaudible).

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

**A. FUREY:** In there I did outline, Mr. Speaker, the burden that this would place on the people of the province. I don't believe it's right. I don't believe it's the right instrument at this time.

As the Member opposite knows, the previous carbon plan was due to be renewed now, that's why we're having a discussion with the federal government. I don't agree with where it's going right now, Mr. Speaker, frankly. The instrument is not right, right now, given the time.

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

**AN HON. MEMBER:** (Inaudible) is in the air.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. FUREY:** It's not in the air. It's not our instrument, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** It's not our instrument, Mr. Speaker. I don't believe it's appropriate given the inflationary pressures that exist, the price signal that's existing, Mr. Speaker, but we'll continue to advocate on behalf of the people of the province.

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

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

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

Do you know what I find offensive? Since 2015 we've been opposed to this carbon tax. We believe in climate change, but we don't believe in carbon tax. This same administration with different premiers, a few different faces, have supported it. Now, all of a sudden, they're backed in the corner, home heating fuel is going up by 20 per

cent, all of a sudden, no, we don't like it anymore

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

**B. PETTEN:** That's not the way it works. They're responsible. Go talk to your Liberal cousins, they're responsible. It's too late now to say no, we see the difference. It's not on, Mr. Speaker, not on. They owe an explanation to the people of this province.

Speaker, home heating fuel has increased by 50 per cent since October of last year. Six Liberal MPs from this province support increasing the cost of home heating fuel by 20 per cent. The Premier said that Ottawa has our back.

Premier, do you stand with your six Liberal cousins or do you stand with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

**A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will tell you where the federal government has had our back and that's cleaning up Muskrat Falls. Can you imagine if on top of the home heat –

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

**A. FUREY:** – they had to pay for the additional electricity costs, Mr. Speaker, a burden placed on us by the people opposite, doubling electricity rates.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. FUREY:** Doubling electricity rates.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Got nothing to do with it.

**A. FUREY:** No, b'y, who is it to do with then?

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I'm not going to have people screaming across the floor.

The hon. Premier, you can finish your answer if you want to.

**A. FUREY:** I'd like to table a letter, Mr. Speaker, that I wrote to Minister Guilbeault explaining the province's position with respect to furnace oil and the current – the current – revision of the carbon tax.

I can't speak –

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

**A. FUREY:** Pardon me?

I can word count it for you, Sir, if you like. You might have a problem with that.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Obviously, we've hit a nerve, Mr. Speaker.

Maybe the Premier can give us the response from the federal minister so we can see what they're saying back because obviously no one is listening to them, and they never listened to us. Maybe if were to go back in time, we wouldn't be in this situation.

Speaker, it took a bad poll for the Liberals –

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

**B. PETTEN:** That's true; you should have listened to what we were telling you.

It took a bad poll for the Liberals to wake up and realize the damage the carbon tax was doing to our seniors and families.

Will the Premier –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** Works on both sides, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Acting Leader of the Official Opposition.

**B. PETTEN:** Will the Premier axe the carbon tax on gasoline and diesel?

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

**A. FUREY:** This is not my tax, Mr. Speaker; it's a federal tax. We've made our position known. I can repeat myself again: given the inflationary pressures, given the price signal that exists currently, I don't believe that this incentive is appropriately applied to the people of the province at this time, Mr. Speaker.

That is a federal program, Mr. Speaker. I hope the federal minister listens. We've been making our point to him, Mr. Speaker, and we'll continue to do so.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Mr. Speaker, they're no longer passengers on the bus, they're driving the bus straight over the federal Liberals. We've got 23 bus drivers across the way, good to see.

This Liberal government –

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

**B. PETTEN:** It's true.

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

**B. PETTEN:** This Liberal government –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** Mr. Speaker, it works on both sides.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Yes, it works on both sides and I've addressed both sides.

Take your seat, please.

That's enough chatter back and forth. I can't hear the questions and I can't hear the responses.

The Acting Leader of the Official Opposition.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you for that, Mr. Speaker.

The Liberal government doesn't care about struggling families including the education of our children. We've heard from substitute teachers that finds a new SmartFind fill-in system violates the collector agreement and ignores the need of individual schools.

I ask the Premier: What consultations were conducted for this new system?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker.

The NLESD introduced SmartFind in an attempt to free up principals and vice-principals time in seeking substitutes. It has done this. It is an opt-out system, so all substitutes are regarded as available that day and unless there has been some prior commitment made, the choice is random.

It is working very well. Principals and vice-principals have freed up their time to deal with administrative matters within the school. It is being tweaked and there are

further software revisions going out, which will enhance the service from the point of view of both the substitutes and the schools, Mr. Speaker.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Do you know the one word that wasn't said in all the minister's response: children. The children are the ones who are suffering under this, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're asking about. I mean, the teachers have concerns, but the children suffer ultimately. Maybe the minister could refresh that next time around.

Speaker, the Liberal government is not listening to substitute teachers that want to provide best education to our students. Remember the students, Minister. With this program, students could see five different substitute teachers in a week.

Does the Premier – because the minister don't seem to understand – believe this is the best practice?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** To continue my previous answer, Mr. Speaker, this is about ensuring that there is a teacher in the classroom for our students each day when needed.

What is happening with the latest revision is that those teachers that already have a part-time, 0.5 or less, attachment to a school will be given a preferential call if there is a requirement for a substitute that day and they are qualified. Other than that –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker, for the protection.

Other than that, this is randomized to ensure that all substitutes in whatever pool, when qualified, have equal access to the teaching time and that the students have the teaching they need.

Thank you.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

Challenges in health care and now challenges in education, and the only thing that remains the same is the minister.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** The Liberal solution to climate change is carbon tax. The liberal solution to better health outcomes is sugar tax.

So I ask the Premier: Now that you've changed your mind on carbon tax, which you can't control, will you cancel the sugar tax, which you do control?

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

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I appreciate the question, I will say, again, and I will talk about the Canadian Pediatric Society, speaking about children today. I'm going to quote from them, "The excessive consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) has been strongly associated with weight gain, chronic disease development, and dental caries. Recent research has correlated the raising of taxes on SSBs with decreased

consumption in some jurisdictions. This policy could have significant positive impacts for public health.”

It is not just this government that is saying it, Mr. Speaker; it is many, many learned organizations that are responsible for the health of this country. I hope the Member opposite realizes how important this is.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, the Premier and the minister, now, think that taxation will increase the health of the population. I would argue if that were the case, based on the last seven years, and the amount of tax increase that this government have provided to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, imposed on them, we should have the healthiest population in the country.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** But we're nowhere near it.

As the cost of living continues to increase, the government sits idly by and doesn't want to address a sugar tax, which I would suggest the Health Accord made no mention of.

I have said it before, so I will ask the Premier: Do you know better than your own Health Accord?

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

**A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I have said here many times and will continue to reiterate, it is about changing behaviour. We lead the country with respect to heart disease, stroke, diabetes, obesity. We're continuing to try to inform people to make the right decision.

We hope to make no money on this tax, Mr. Speaker. What I will say is that we are trying to take sugar out of the beverages, Mr. Speaker. The Member opposite was taking nurses out of Labrador, Mr. Speaker, and that is not describing a good health system.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** I'm so happy that the minister brought out about taking nurses out of the system. Perhaps he should check with his former minister of Health. Perhaps he should check with the current Minister of Seniors who talked about, in 2016, taking \$500 million out of health care and told the health authorities to do it.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So I ask the Premier once again: Will you turn around and cancel your sugar tax?

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

**S. COADY:** The thing that we will do is axe the sugar, Speaker. I will say that I'm going to refer again to the Canadian Cancer Society who's very supportive of the thrust from this government, this initiative that we've taken. They say: "Actions like these will help prevent more cancers and reduce the number of people diagnosed with the disease."

Not unlike what we've imposed, and the Member opposite I'm sure would be in a concurrence with this, with the tax that has been imposed on cigarettes. We now imposed a tax on sugar to drive changes. It's about choice.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**S. COADY:** It's about choice. Even the World Health Organization has said we also cut health care costs and increase revenues to invest in health services; we can reduce suffering, save lives if governments tax products.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** As the Linthornes say in Bonavista, show us the data.

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

**C. PARDY:** Show us the data; provide one study where taxation is going to significantly curb the sugar consumption and table that.

Speaker, the carbon tax has a trickle-down effect, whether it be the cost of transportation for substitute teachers to educate our children, the cost of groceries or the cost of essential goods, it makes life unaffordable.

I ask the minister responsible for poverty reduction: What does he say to those who have to choose between food and fuel?

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

As I think all of us know here, there are difficult choices that families are having to make right across the province when it comes to the cost of living. For this administration, we are providing support when we can, where we can. Starting last

March with the income support payments, increases to the seniors and low-income supplement, to the recent \$500 payment that will go to all tax filers.

So we are listening, we are hearing and we are responding.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**C. PARDY:** Mr. Speaker, what the government has done so far is not going to help Sandra Cooper in Bonavista. What we need are changes in policy and programs.

The Liberal carbon tax will continue to increase the cost of living and force more families to use food banks.

When are the Liberals going to help people who can no longer afford to feed their families?

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Speaker, again, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

I will continue on. In terms of looking at the issues that families are facing, we are responding. We are increasing the minimum wage. We are looking at other alternatives. We are reducing the price of fuel. So it goes without saying that where we can act, we are acting, and we will continue to do so.

In terms of the longer term, we are looking at our income support program. We will be increasing income support rates on November 1. We are looking at the economic and social well-being plan for the longer term, so that we address the social determinants of health and we respond with effective policies on a go-forward basis.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, it was the Liberal government that cancelled the most successful poverty reduction program in the country.

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

**C. PARDY:** From 2006 to 2015, just when the Liberal government came to power.

I ask the minister: How many more children have had to experience poverty because your government dismantled the poverty reduction program?

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Speaker, again, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

I don't think it is fair to say that the Poverty Reduction Strategy was dismantled. We are actually spending the money that was invested in that program over the past five or six years. So that money is still being spent in terms of it's supporting children, supporting families.

What we are doing right now is taking what we learned through the Poverty Reduction Strategy, bringing in the social determinants of health discussion as part of the Health Accord, to develop a social and economic well-being plan for the province that will address poverty, which will address food insecurity, which will address income and other aspects of supports for families through the next decade or longer.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, it must be said again: the most successful program in the country.

Speaker, yesterday, it was reported that a gentleman who arrived from the Ukraine three weeks ago now regrets coming to Newfoundland and Labrador. He says the cost of living is too high and jobs are too scarce.

Why is this government failing individuals such as this gentleman just weeks after their arrival?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, of the 1,000 Ukrainians that are now in Newfoundland and Labrador, the reaction has been remarkably supportive and thankful and grateful. Just as we are to them for all that they contribute to each and every one of us.

I would point out to the hon. Member that I, too, listened to the interview from a journalist who interviewed these gentlemen in question, where it was indicated that he had been here for three weeks, was actively pursuing employment and had received much support.

I would beg all Members of this Assembly to make sure that we project truthful, right messages, that we support our Ukrainians, but we also foster and endear support amongst all of us for the efforts of the Ukrainians and those such as the Association for New Canadians.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, I'll give you a truthful message. Yesterday when I spoke to this gentleman he said, and I quote: I have no home, no job, no child care, no doctor, and likely no future in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Minister, that's a truthful statement. When will you live up to the promises that you have made to these individuals coming to our province?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, I'm struck with the provocation to be defensive, but I will not. I will speak the truth to this House. There are 1,000 Ukrainians that now have chosen to call Newfoundland and Labrador their home. Three-quarters of those who arrived here prior to last night, three-quarters have gained successful employment. We now have housing. No one is in social housing. They have earned income to get market-driven housing.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, yes, we will work with this person, with this Ukrainian. We will embrace him. He and his family have been here for three weeks and I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that his future is going to be very (inaudible) –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, it's one thing that we have look at here today. This is more than a wakeup call. Photo ops at the airport is one thing. Another thing is to provide proper supports.

I ask the minister: How many Ukrainian newcomers are currently without child care?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**J. HAGGIE:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I'm pleased to announce to the House that it is likely that 400 extra after-hours child care spaces will be available in the metro area in the not-too-distant future. The application is currently with the NLESD and I cannot see any reason at the moment why there may be any barriers to that. Obviously, the due process will unfold. We have increased the number of child care spaces in metro.

There is, as the minister referenced, discussions between the Ukrainian community and the department about having a child care specifically to foster a Ukrainian culture as well as teach English as a second language. We have added eight additional teachers of English as a second language to the school district infrastructure in town to support them.

Thank you.

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

**J. WALL:** And we are also dealing, Mr. Speaker, at the same time with the shortage in child care providers in our province. That goes unsaid.

Speaker, there is a shortage of housing in our province, as we all know in this hon. House. How many Ukrainians are still living in hotel rooms that cannot find proper housing?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** Mr. Speaker, housing, obviously, it is a very element of successful resettlement. What I indicated to the House earlier is that the average temporary accommodation stay for Ukrainians coming



to Newfoundland and Labrador is now 28 days.

I just ask the hon. Member to understand the housing dynamic. If someone were to arrive, say, on September 15, which many, many did – in order to secure market housing, they would have to sign a lease by September 30. So within that two-week period, some didn't. So we do have a period of time where the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Association for New Canadians is supporting them with temporary housing. This temporary housing stay of, on average, 28 days, almost all now are successful in (inaudible) –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, the fire that resulted in a state of emergency in Central Newfoundland could have been disastrous for many families. An access to information request shows that no crew for water bombers were available 28 times between July and August.

Why didn't the minister hire enough water bomber crews?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I stand here and I am very proud of the efforts by our team in Central Newfoundland this summer.

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

**D. BRAGG:** The work that these folks did went above and beyond the call of duty for

most anyone. We had air support in from Quebec. We had people in from PEI. We had people from Nova Scotia. We had boots on the ground and if the Member wanted to know – there were some reasons – just think of this: COVID. We had a crew with COVID for a day.

Now, this water bomber fleet that are the best at what they can possibly do. I have had the opportunity to fly with these folks. They are second to none, the best our province has ever seen. I can't thank those people enough. The Member Opposite should thank the people for the work they did this summer.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, we are proud of the work that the crews did, too.

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

**P. FORSEY:** We are proud of that given what they had to work with, what government provided.

At least 28 times this summer, planes sat on the ground because crews weren't available. To ensure we are prepared for next year's serious wildfire, will the minister conduct an independent review of our water bomber capacity?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**D. BRAGG:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I can't say enough; the expertise of the crews that we have on these water bombers. In our province we have a fleet of four water bombers. In Nova Scotia, there is none. In New Brunswick, they have little ones that take water down in the pontoons underneath. PEI has none. The next closest response to us is Quebec.

We are at where we need to be. This was the first year in years that we have had to bring in outside foresters to help us. For the last number of years – and the Member should ask for that – how many times we went out and we assisted the other provinces. We went as far as going to Australia, Mr. Speaker. We went to Australia with our team; that's the type of people we have and the commitment we have to our forestry.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Speaker, the Greene report recommends selling off public assets. The Rothschild report lists – I assume it does – an evaluation of the public assets to be sold. The Future Fund legislation contemplates depositing the proceeds from the sale from public assets into the fund.

So I ask the Premier: Which front-line public sector workers should be worried about having their jobs axed?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

We have engaged, under – as I have said in this House – the strategic plan for financial responsibility. We did engage Rothschild to do a full review of the assets in the province. They have a global reputation; we wanted to have their view on the assets that are held by the people of the province. It was very important to do so. We have received that report; we are reviewing that report.

The Future Fund, Speaker, as I have said multiple times now in debate, only contemplates any sale of any asset. It is about where the money goes. So if you sold any asset – if we were to sell any assets, it would go to the general fund versus the

Future Fund. That is what we're trying to change, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The time has expired.

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

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Suicide rates in my district continue to be much higher than the rest of the province due to government inaction to right past harms. Yes, rates fluctuate year to year, but the minister's response yesterday was bureaucratic and tone deaf.

So I ask: What real action will this minister take to end socio-economic marginalization of our Indigenous communities in Northern Labrador? And, as I said yesterday, we will accept the return of the freight boat as a small start.

Thank you.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I take some exception to the question that the Member posed. I believe that this government has been very open to listening to the communities of Northern Labrador. We have developed a partnership with the communities. The action plan that was put forward by government, Mr. Speaker, had all Indigenous communities as partners in the development of that plan. The feedback from those communities and the development of the plan was very positive, Mr. Speaker. The plan has been funded in this year's budget; further funded in next year's budget.

I would ask the Member to allow that plan an opportunity to start working because I believe it will show results.

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

**J. DINN:** Speaker, it's wonderful that the minister feels government has been listening. It really matters whether the people in the district feel they've been listened to.

Speaker, last week, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development said that the repairs needed to get 120 Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units currently in need of major renovations that are out of service will be carried out in short order.

I ask the minister: Has the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing commission hired the additional staff required to complete these repairs before winter?

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

**J. ABBOTT:** Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

Currently, we have 272 units that are vacant and are currently ready for occupancy or will be in – quote, unquote – very short order. We're also in the process of repairing roughly 34 units in and around the Avalon to make sure they're ready in the next three to six months. At the same time, we are working on restoring housing units up in Labrador West and elsewhere in the province.

So we're very active and we have the budget allocated to make sure those units are in place – quote, unquote – in very short order.

Thank you.

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

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

Premier, on July 7, 2022, you stated to doctors: "If you have issues, reach out directly to me." Premier, your word is your bond. You made a commitment. There were three specialists who reached out to you, left their number. I wrote and gave the numbers also. There was a callback but it was from an official, not you, Premier.

Premier, the Minister of Health and Community Services gave 3,300 cataract procedures – 3,000 to the two clinics in St. John's. The minister stated there is no wait-list in Western Newfoundland. This is categorically false. Western Newfoundland can confirm, as the intake officer has the number, over 800 on the wait-list.

**SPEAKER:** Move to your question, please.

**E. JOYCE:** Premier, live up to your commitment and call those specialist to get this matter resolved. Your word, Mr. Premier, is your bond.

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

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

First of all, I'd like the Member to show me the quote where I said there was no wait-list because I didn't. What I did say, Mr. Speaker, is that 97 per cent of surgeries in Western region are done within the national benchmark, whereas only 32 per cent of the surgeries in the Eastern region are done within the national benchmark.

Furthermore, Mr. Speaker, Western Health has about 17 per cent of the population over 65, which has the greatest demand on cataract surgery, but 64 per cent of the allocation of the cataract surgery cap.

We did increase the cap at a larger proportion in Eastern Health, Mr. Speaker, because the patients in Eastern Health, 68 per cent without getting the surgery within national benchmarks, deserve an opportunity to do so.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** I'll just let the minister know there's not even an intake worker in St. John's doing those numbers. Just to let you know, one phone call you can find that out yourself, but I can give you the number if you want it.

Premier, the minister stated as he just said, 97 per cent are within the national benchmark. That is false also. The minister refuses – refuses – to acknowledge wait-list one, where people never had a consult. He refuses to accept it. The intake worker who has the numbers is paid for by the Department of Health and Community Services through Western Health. It's paid for.

Also, the minister quoted that they can do the surgeries in the hospital at Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital. I'll read a quote from the note from the hospital.

**SPEAKER:** Move to your question, time is expiring.

**E. JOYCE:** I ask the Premier on behalf of the residents who are calling me from your district, would you please, please, on behalf of the seniors, please meet with these officials and these specialists to get this matter resolved. Premier, I'm pleading with you on behalf of the seniors.

**SPEAKER:** Your time has expired.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

What I will say is that while Eastern Health has 56 per cent of the population over the age of 65, they only had 35 per cent of the allocated surgeries.

Mr. Speaker, what we've done here is a one-time increase, this year, which would bring the number in the St. John's region to about 48 per cent, still far below the 56 per cent of the number of people over the age of 65. Next year, it brings it to within that, but it is one time. The year after it goes back to the previous numbers, where out of 3,500, 2,269 are in Western Health and only 1,231 in Eastern Health, with the largest majority of the population in the province. There's something unfair about that.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### **Tabling of Documents**

**SPEAKER:** In accordance with subsection 44(1) of the *House of Assembly Act*, I am tabling the report from the Commissioner for Legislative Standards entitled the *Tibbs Report* dated September 14, 2022.

Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

### **Notices of Motion**

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that

this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, October 13, 2022.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Speaker.

The reasons for this petition:

WHEREAS affordable, reliable and safe child care is a necessary component of a functioning society, especially one that expects to reduce poverty, create employment, decrease outmigration, increase in-migration, all of which are essential for a growing economy; and

WHEREAS accessible child care is as vital and important for a growing economy and flourishing population.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately take the necessary action to ensure that accessible child care is just as much available as it is affordable.

Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador is facing a critical situation when it comes to accessing child care in our province. There is a serious shortage of child care spaces. Women are ready to return to work, but cannot. Women who are either leaving maternity leave or want to go back into the workplace after years of absence in the home cannot.

Why is this, Speaker? Because they can't get child care spaces for their children.

Speaker, I have been hearing, as have my colleagues in the Opposition, from women throughout the province who are desperate and who feel devastated by this situation. I want to give you one example today, but I'll have many as this session goes forward.

One woman wrote me, just yesterday, saying: I put myself on every child care wait-list from Conception Bay South, St. John's, Mount Pearl and Paradise that would take infants, and I still have not received a call for a space, despite following up dozens of times.

Speaker, she started this process when she was 12 weeks pregnant. This was back in 2020. She put herself on the list in 2020, yet she was told by many centres that you're looking at, earliest, 2023-24 before you see movement on this wait-list.

Speaker, we all must acknowledge – government must acknowledge that this is devastating a lot of people that want to return to the workforce. She also indicates – and she is convinced that there are a lot of people that have lost their jobs – women who have lost their jobs are in significant debt; they're on the brink of losing their homes due to the lack of child care.

She said she is so concerned – and this is one of many examples that I have to give. These are people that want to return to work but cannot.

Speaker, we need to get action from government on this. This woman and others need a solution today so that they can return to work. What immediate plan of action will the government be implementing to help parents in this situation?

Thank you.

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

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker.

WHEREAS there are approximately 2,500 students currently enrolled in four elementary and one intermediate school in Paradise, with an additional 3,300 students enrolled in intermediate and high schools in neighbouring communities; and

WHEREAS the population of approximately 24,000, Paradise is growing every year with some school-aged groups doubling in size over a 10-year period; and

WHEREAS there is no high school in Paradise and hundreds of students are being transported to nearby communities to attend school; and

WHEREAS nearby intermediate and high schools are beyond maximum capacity and seeing class sizes escalate to unmanageable levels;

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: To urge government to see the urgency for the need of a high school in Paradise and plan a course of action when this will be implemented.

Speaker, the data provided by the Newfoundland and Labrador Eastern School District is 10 years old or more. They projected the increase in students in the Paradise area. We see the population of the Town of Conception Bay South increasing. In Mount Pearl, we know that the Galway development is having an impact on the school numbers in Mount Pearl.

The average school size on either side of Paradise, when you talk high school, is in the 34- to 35-student capacity. That is huge; some higher. That has a major effect on being able to teach our children, teach our youth. It also has a huge impact on our professional staff, our teachers. It also has a huge impact on programs and services that these schools can offer the students.

So with this and it has been predicted for such a long time – and this government deferred it in their 2016 budget, a high school. I looked at it as a long-term commitment. We are long term now. In fact, we are probably beyond it.

To look at our students, the value of giving them a good education, ensuring that they can get an education within their community and to ensure that they have all the benefits of all the programs and services that could be available with a properly managed school and population, then I really urge government to look at this and hopefully, in this budget, there will be some money allocated to a high school in Paradise.

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

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

**P. FORSEY:** Speaker, the list for a number of people in need of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing in the Central area has increased in the past couple of years. This leaves people in vulnerable situations and, most times, out in the cold while waiting for a placement.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to upgrade and increase the number of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units in the Central area.

Speaker, in the past couple of years, we're getting more calls. I know in my office and I know at other offices that people are looking for housing. They are looking for housing units; emergency housing units. I know in the past couple of years, especially with COVID, people struck on hard times and they were looking for housing. I can remember one person in particular; he was living in a shed, and trying to get housing for that person was unreal. I know it was an emergency case, but there was always somebody went ahead and that sort of stuff.

So we definitely don't have the units in Central Newfoundland that's required. Right now, we have some units that certainly need upgrades. It wouldn't hurt to have a new building in there but even if we had the upgrades done to the older buildings, with the apartments, that we can get people in there, especially we have a lot of single parents, a lot of single moms with children now needing housing.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly would like to have this addressed and more housing units in Central Newfoundland.

Thank you.

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

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

I'll read the prayer of the petition. The background to this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS our environment must be protected and the *Environmental Assessment Act* must be followed to ensure the safety of our environment for future generations; and

WHEREAS the World Energy GH2 has submitted a plan to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to build wind turbines in Western Newfoundland; and

WHEREAS the company director has stated publicly that the government told the company to register only Phase I of the project; and

WHEREAS the company director stated that they need the three phases to make the project viable;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the hon. House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reject Phase I of the World Energy GH2 project and complete an

environmental impact study on the World Energy GH2 project as one to ensure the complete project is evaluated and the environmental study is not circumvented.

Mr. Speaker, I stand again on behalf of the constituents of Humber - Bay of Islands. These here are all over the Humber - Bay of Islands. There's one here in Cape St. George, Benoit's Cove and Benoit's Cove again. I stand here and the minister stated publicly again in this House that there will be no project splitting, but in the draft copy it says only if the company decides it's viable. So they can circumvent the system.

I spoke to the minister and I know the minister was looking at it. What we need in the regulations, what we need in the guidelines I say to the minister and to the people listening, is that you have to put the word "shall." There's no doubt that they're going to go with the three phases. That's publicly stated. They were told, yes, we're going to go with three phases; it's just that once we get the buildings we're going to go with the next one. So there's no doubt they're going to go with the three phases.

If the minister, which I have no doubt that he does, believe in the words that he says, that there will be no project splitting, all I ask is make a commitment in this House that when the final guidelines come out from him, that it say: We shall ensure that there's an environmental impact study on Phase II and III. One simple word on the guidelines, one simple word in this House, Mr. Speaker, and I will go back and say we're going to get our chance.

Right now, all the hearings that are happening are all out in Port au Port, there are none down the Humber - Bay of Islands area, because we're not being looked at and there's no application in for that area – absolutely none. So everybody is saying, well, it's not happening to us because there are no hearings. There's no \$10 million given to the towns like was just given out in Port au Port – none of that.

So I'm asking the minister to make that commitment publicly, put it on the record now that, yes, they will have the word "shall" do Phase II and III with Phase I as one project.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change for a response.

**B. DAVIS:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity. I thank the hon. Member for the petition.

As I've mentioned – I think this will be my third if not fourth occasion since getting back to the House – I look forward to receiving the petition. On August 5, as I've mentioned before, we announced that the environmental impact statement would be issued for World Energy, or has to be issued for World Energy. During that time frame guidelines were developed. The hon. Member understands that.

My staff have been speaking to the proponent and assured the officials in my department that all aspects of the project, in order to make it viable, will be included in the environmental impact statement. I can't be any clearer than that. They've assured us that's the case.

What I'm saying to you is that I assure this House, as God as my witness, that they will be making sure that every piece of legislation is going to be followed with the environmental assessment. Absolutely no project splitting will occur during this project, guaranteed.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Speaker.

The background of this petition is as follows: An extension was approved to the Robert E. Howlett highway on March 25, 2014. Environmental assessment, design and engineering of this project was completed and continued residential and commercial growth has increased traffic flows to the Southern Avalon.

Therefore we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to reinstate the approved extension to the Robert E. Howlett Highway to improve and ensure the safety of the travelling public to the Southern Avalon.

Speaker, I drove this road every day, until the last few weeks, because there was some construction in Mount Pearl, but I drive the Gushue pretty well every day coming in. So that was done under the previous administration, as I said, in the PC administration on March 25, 2014. It was squashed since then – I'll say along with the school that was already approved in 2015, squashed by this Liberal government as well. So there was an extension of 9.6 kilometres that had passed environmental assessment in 2015, and the project was taken off the books.

We need to get that back on. I mean, I heard it on the news this summer and it wasn't from my district, coming from Mount Pearl. I heard the mayor from Mount Pearl on complaining about the traffic congestion going down through Park Avenue and trying to get on the Gushue backed up. Even today, some calls that people were stuck in traffic had to turn around and come back out and go down the Harbour Arterial to get to Confederation Building.

So it's something that should be looked at by the government. They have an overpass going across there and it hasn't been finished. It's just something that the government should look at and get fixed, because there's big traffic congestion that happens in the area, and taking the people



from Mount Pearl and bringing them up to the Goulds bypass to join on. So it's something that hopefully the government can look at and see through.

Thank you.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Many roads within the District of Bonavista still have destructive potholes, no different than what it was in the spring of 2022 sitting of the House of Assembly. Over a 20-kilometre stretch on one of our two main routes, Route 235 serving our historic district remains untouched. Residents are perplexed why these destructive potholes would remain through the tourism season into the fall leading to vehicle damages.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to immediately assure that there will be no destructive potholes on either of our two main routes, 230 and 235, after July 1, 2023. With ingenuity and an improved master plan, we feel that there ought to be no destructive potholes remaining in the entire district after July month going forward.

Now, the most astute listeners in this House will say that this sounds familiar. I just wanted to reply to the minister's response to that petition yesterday. The minister's response was that he would challenge me in filling in a pothole as being a very simplistic view. I would say most of the residents in the District of Bonavista would hold it in a very simplistic view filling a pothole in the road, and nothing that's too advanced.

Let me give you a few operational situations about the District of Bonavista. TI in our district continues to do the following. We

have four depots on our peninsula, five counting Clarendville. We remain open, the upper two. So the lower ones closed in Amherst Cove, which is the Bonavista closest, Port Rexton, which moves further up the peninsula and Southern Bay which is closed.

We have 12 employees that fill in potholes. When they go down the Bonavista Peninsula, 12 of them get in their vehicles and they drive down the peninsula. If you do the math on 12 employees travelling one hour to and one hour back, you'll find that you've got 24 hours of person work hours gone in travel each day. I would hope that the good plan that the minister suggested is forthcoming will make sure that we do it right. We'd probably look at a depot that's down the lower part of the peninsula and keep them open, that they're closer to the potholes to be filled in the future.

If there's equipment that's needed, I would say let's find that equipment and let's put it in their hands so these fine workers in TI can do it, and they're not spending 24 work hours a day in a vehicle travelling to potholes.

The last note, I visited a contractor. Someone said one week he could fix all the potholes in the district. He said two weeks.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Your time has expired.

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

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

#### Orders of the Day

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 16, Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise again in this House.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2, be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2" (Bill 16)

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

As everyone in this House knows, and indeed everyone in the province knows, our government has announced close to \$500 million in targeted short- and long-term investments associated with lowering the cost of living. Of course, we've been saying this since March of 2022 how important this is to the people of the province.

We've been able to do things like what we announced last week, which is a one-time cheque of up to \$500. We've provided a home heat rebate, which is up to, again, \$500. I remind people who haven't applied to get your application in by the end of November to get your \$500 rebate for the home heat. The \$500 cheque, of course, that we announced last week to help with the cost of living will come automatically.

We've also done the temporary elimination of the retail sales tax on home insurance. We did a 50 per cent cost reduction on the registering of passenger vehicles like trucks and taxis for one year. We've provided a permanent 10 per cent increase on Income

Supplement and Seniors' Benefit. Speaker, one of the other things that we did was temporary lowering of the price of gasoline and diesel at the pump by 8.05 cents per litre. We have now one of the lowest provincial gas taxes in the country.

I can tell you that for provinces like Quebec the gas tax is 19.2 cents; in Nova Scotia it's 15.5 cents; Saskatchewan, it's 15 cents; and in Newfoundland and Labrador, 7.5 cents. The only one lower is Alberta at 4.5 cents.

Speaker, this bill today, basically, is to extend the temporary lowering for the full fiscal year. The original bill that came before the House was until January 1, 2023. That was the temporary lowering of the price of gas and diesel at the pump by 8.05 cents per litre, including HST, and that was temporary until January 1, 2023.

Speaker, we certainly would like to continue and that's what we're proposing in this bill today. It's a very simple bill that tax reduction for gasoline and diesel be extended until March 31. So we would have the remaining of the fiscal year, March 31, 2023, as was announced in the Speech from the Throne.

Speaker, it's a very simple change of date; that is what changes in this legislation. So instead of the lowering of the gas tax expiring on January 1, it will now expire on March 31, which is the end of our fiscal year.

On that I will take my seat. It is fairly straightforward. I think everybody in this House would be supportive of lowering of gasoline tax to continue until March 31, 2023. Of course, anything we do further than that is a separate budget issue and would have to go through that budgetary process.

Speaker, I will say that this will cost Treasury about \$14.3 million so it is not insignificant. This is a lowering of revenue.

As I have said in this House in the last number of days, we are having additional revenues this year and so we are able to absorb this.

Thank you very much.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

Again, we rise in this House once again to talk about taxation. It seems like we spend a lot of time talking about taxation when perhaps what we should be talking about is more of this tax relief or cancelling taxes, which we would all be glad to hear.

But this bill, as the minister has pointed out, extends the tax reduction on diesel and gas to March 31, 2023. The previous gas tax on diesel was at 16.5 cents a litre and the tax temporarily reduced it by 7 cents a litre, effectively making the gas tax rate right now at 9.5 cents a litre. When HST is considered, the saving works out to about 8.05 cents a litre.

For gasoline, the previous tax was 14.5 cents a litre. The tax is temporarily reduced by 7 cent per litre so the gas tax rate is now 7.5 cents per litre and when HST is considered the savings would be 8.05 cents per litre.

Of course, all of these reductions were because of the increase in the carbon tax. So it is going to be interesting to see where we go with a 20 per cent increase coming in carbon tax and what's going to happen. But, again, today we're talking about extending this to March 31.

In the spring of the year when we debated this we asked to remove the sunset clause. We asked that the sunset clause be removed so it wouldn't end so government would have to come back to the House

when they felt the temporary gas relief could end. Because, unfortunately, inflation does not have a sunset clause. It doesn't decide to shut down at any given date and that's been a problem.

So now we're back here to extend this, which is a good thing. But as I just said, we don't really know when the price of gas will go up or down. So having no sunset clause allows the government to come back to the House when it needs to, when the price of gasoline goes down and we can make that adjustment.

But let's talk about the impacts on the general person: 8.05 cents a litre, if you fill up a 65 litre fill-up, that's about a savings of \$5.23 per tank. If you burn two tanks per month for seven months it's a total of \$73 in savings; four tanks, \$146; and 10 tanks, \$366. These are for daily commuters. So it's significant savings.

It is important to extend this and obviously we're going to support the extension. Again, we'd like to see the sunset clause removed, though, so to say that it will continue to be in place until such time as we see gasoline prices significantly reduced. And, of course, as I just stated, we do not know what the impact of the new carbon tax will be.

That's essentially what I will say, Mr. Speaker. We will support the extension, but we would like to see it continued on.

Thank you.

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Yes, we are back here now discussing the extension now of the reduction in fuel taxes. They did mention when it was brought forward that why didn't you make it to the end of the fiscal year, which at the time was discussed. But this was going to end in January, now we're moving it to March.

Yes, this is a great move in the sense that, yes, it does help a group of people for a very short period of time. But we have to look at the longevity of what are we going to do after March 31, because I don't think that we're going to be out of the situation that we're in when it comes to the cost-of-living crisis. What are we going to do after March 31? Where is the plan? Where are we going to move next when it comes to these measures? How are we going to help people more permanently?

I look at my colleague for Torngat Mountains, her gas is frozen at over \$2 a litre and for them that is their life because they are in isolated communities. They are traditional communities that live off the land and practice Indigenous ways. For them, this whole past summer, their gas was frozen at over \$2 a litre. What relief was for them? Eight cents. Right?

So we have to look at the longevity of how we are actually going to help people in the long term. After March 31, that's not very long away. In the world of things, that's almost tomorrow.

So where are we going to go after March 31? What is the plan to help people in the long term? Where are we going to move after this? That's what my question is: Where is a permanent solution to help more people for a longer period of time because right now temporary measures are that, temporary?

This is where we have to have the bigger conversation of what are we going to do to help people like my colleague from Torngat Mountains or many other rural, isolated places where their way of life is completely dependent on, right now, fuels.

So this is where we have to have the bigger conversation of what's actually going to happen. Where are we going to go? Temporary is the thing – it's temporary.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board speaks, she will close debate.

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

**S. COADY:** I think everyone is in favour of this. So I believe the House is ready for the question.

Thank you.

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

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

**CLERK (Barnes):** A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, No. 2. (Bill 16)

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** It's now. Sorry, in my head I was on to the next bill.

**SPEAKER:** Now. Okay.

On motion, a bill, "A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, No. 2," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 16)

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I move that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act.

**SPEAKER:** Can I have a seconder for that, please?

**S. DEMPSTER:** Seconded by the Deputy Premier.

**SPEAKER:** Thank you.

It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2." (Bill 16)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Chair.

Yes, I'd certainly like to talk to this bill. It's good to see it's extended, no doubt about it. It's something that all of us have heard from individuals and residents across this province in our districts and outside, talking about the cost of living and talking about how the cost of gas and diesel has severely impacted the cost of a lot of things in this province.

Given where we are, given where we continue to see prices go up, the prudent thing is to extend this relief on the gas tax. I'm thinking going to March 31, we probably should be looking a little more forward than that because I suspect, come that date, the price of gas will still be well up there.

As we know, this bill extends the temporary gas tax reduction on diesel until March 31. Just to give you an example of what we're talking about with prices, when you talk about diesel, the previous gas tax on diesel was 16.5 cents per litre. That tax, of course, was temporarily reduced by seven cents per litre, so the gas tax rate on a litre of diesel is now 9.5 cents a litre.

When HST is considered, the savings is about 8.05 cents per litre. The previous gas tax on gasoline was 14.5 cents per litre, and of course that tax is temporarily reduced by seven cents per litre. The gas tax rate on that is now 7.5 cents per litre. So when you consider HST there, you're talking about a savings as well of about 8.05 cents per litre.

So it doesn't come without a cost, as the minister indicated. The cost to the province

of this temporary tax reduction on gas from June to December inclusive was about \$44 million. But I would argue that the benefit to the consumer and to those most vulnerable in our society, and those who are in need, is you can't put a price on it. I think they are very happy with that and would certainly like to see more done.

In the spring when we debated the legislation, we had asked to remove the sunset clause; the date for which government would have to come back to the House when they felt temporary gas relief could end. So inflation, as we know, doesn't have a sunset clause; it's up and down. We try to predict it; we try to figure out where it's going. No one has a crystal ball on that so I understand that. As I said earlier, the March 31 deadline, I suspect we're not going to see any huge drop in the price of gas by then, so we'll probably come looking back there.

Put it in real figures when we look at an individual who has a car. As we know, many individuals and residents in this province probably don't have a vehicle, don't have transportation. There's not adequate public transportation. But if they're lucky enough to own a car, and you take the tax savings here of – you're looking at diesel and that – 8.05 cents a litre, times about an average 65 litres in a tank, you're talking about a savings of about \$5.23 per fill-up.

I'm not even sure if that will buy you a carton of milk, I'm not quite sure, but it's there. I mean, I look at the prices of stuff now. It's amazing. At a time you could go in – you were doing well enough that you'd go in and pick off the shelf what you want, but I do find myself starting to look at prices now. The price of a two litre of milk is up there. So that's a savings.

Let's say you fill up your tank twice a month, seven months – you're saving about \$73.22. Many of us might look at that and say insignificant, but you know what's troubling here? To many it's not. To many, that \$73

over a seven-month period means a lot to some people.

That puts it in perspective when we look at this. When we talked earlier about the carbon tax on gas, how much that would help families right now. We look at the \$500 cheques that we're giving out. If there was a little bit more prudent way of looking at that and a more responsible way of looking at that, then those in most need would have seen the lion's share of that money. Just think of the dollar figures I just said: \$73 over seven months. That money would have went so much further. Everyone in this House, I mean what's our average salary? It's all public knowledge. What, \$95,000? Everyone in this House is eligible for that \$500 cheque.

So balancing out a little better and looking at what we do in a more prudent way, trying to put yourself in the shoes of those who need it the most, you do that and I think you'll make a difference. You can make a change in the lives of so many people out there.

Do you know what? I don't always agree with the NDP; in fact, I agree with my brother less. But for the sake of my mother who's watching from home, I'm going to say –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** And the Linthornes.

**P. DINN:** And the Linthornes who are watching from Bonavista.

I do want to say the suggestion of taking \$10 million or so of that money and putting it towards housing, that's not that far fetched. That's realistic.

**J. DINN:** This is in *Hansard* now.

**P. DINN:** Yeah, I know this is in *Hansard*, but I'm talking about looking at the money and planning it out in a way that benefits those in most need in the province.

Everyone likes to get a cheque, especially if it's free and in the mail. We all talk about government federally and provincially and the taxman or taxwoman, to be gender neutral, the taxperson. We hate to see our money go out the door but, damn, if we're getting anything back, we're so happy about that.

A daily commuter – if you're commuting on a daily basis back and forth to work, wherever that may be, on average you're spending your 10 tanks per month for seven months, that's not unheard of, especially if you're a family with children and you're taking them to soccer, basketball and dance, if you can afford it. But now, again, there are programs out there that can help those who can't, but you still have to get them there.

Every little bit counts. We're supporting this for sure. There's not an issue about that. But I think we really have to start looking. Look, you can say you have a suite of programs, this, this this and this. I look at it as putting puzzle pieces in. You know what, when you do a puzzle, everyone picks out the square edges first. They set their parameters. They pick out the low-hanging fruit; the easiest pieces to put in, the ones that go together and flow together. No one starts putting a piece here, a piece there.

When you talk about a program and you talk about fiscal responsibility and a three-prong approach and that, it has to flow. It has to build. It has to gain momentum building on that. It cannot be here, there, here.

This is a start; this is something that in my mind had to happen. I think we need to see more of this happening. We talk about affordability; we talked about a Future Fund. I understand the Future Fund; I understand what it's there for. How many times did I hear my parents say put away something for a rainy day.

Well, a lot in this province can't put it away. A lot in this province every day's a rainy day

where they're looking and need money put somewhere. So when I look at what we're doing in terms of our taxation – you look at Rethink Your Drink – I know the purpose of it, but is it the piece of the puzzle you want to put in now?

We've heard it in this House, ministers and the Premier quoting the Heart and Stroke Foundation and Diabetes Canada, all these groups. Well, here's something. I've stood up in this House for, well, a couple of years now and spoken to continuous glucose monitoring devices. If you go to Diabetes Canada, who's recognized as the most trusted – this isn't talking about saving money, this is talking about cost of living; I appreciate the leeway. When you talk about that and putting money towards those in most need, these devices, as was mentioned earlier, proper management of that reduces heart attacks and reduces strokes; 30 to 40 per cent of strokes by diabetes; 50 per cent of kidney failure requiring dialysis; 70 per cent of non-traumatic amputations and the leading cause of blindness.

So when we're allowing for money to go back in taxes, and what we do with those taxes or what we do with that fund, we need to look at a big picture and that's not even looking outside the box. How much would it save us and produce more money to allow us to give more tax breaks if we reduced strokes, heart attacks, amputations and blindness? How much would we have back for a small, small investment? That's what we have to start looking at. That's what we have to look at.

We could have been a leader. What's that movie? I could have been a winner. We could have been a leader when it comes to things like that. PEI in June was the first Atlantic province to help subsidize diabetic monitoring devices. The money you would save; the money you would have in your coffers. The money that you could probably put into a Future Fund by reducing those critical illnesses that I know the other side of

the House knows, because they've mentioned it and we can't deny it.

We have huge issues with critical illness. When we look at how do we deal with that, we deal with it through tax dollars. We deal with it through tax dollars or reducing our costs. We throw around collaboration, openness, honesty and transparency, all those lovely words, but if we're really truly dedicated to doing what's best for this province, we have to have good debate, there's no doubt about that. We have to have honest debate. We have to stand up and say what they said over there, that's great, but we also have to be able to stand up and say what they said over there, don't agree with. That goes both ways.

I agree with this and I think we all agree with this. Any break that we can give the people of this province, even if it is seven cents on a litre of gas, or eight cents with taxes in, it may be insignificant to some of us, but it is hugely significant to others out there. There is so much more we could be doing in terms of addressing the big picture, addressing the health outcomes of this province that we can do immediately.

Something as simple as glucose monitoring, in terms of how many paramedics get calls a year to go to the emergency room because someone has had a hypoglycemic attack. That could be avoided and that could be freed up.

This is a good starting point; it's a no-brainer. I hope we see more, but I hope we look at ways in which we can create revenue, make our constituents healthier and a better place to live.

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

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Chair.

Just a couple of minutes on this act. We all agree with it. I think my colleague had just stated that we are in total support of it because it does put more money in people's pockets. Anything that puts more money in people's pockets is a good thing.

The sunset clause that we have now is March 31 of next year. We'll have two or three weeks in the House prior to that and I am sure that hopefully, if the need is still there – which I will suspect that it is – that we can delay that sunset for another period of time in order to bring relief to the residents of the province.

I think it was estimated at that time, and the minister, when she speaks to it can probably – the cost was probably projected at \$44 million. I think when this was launched there was a cost of \$44 million. It would be nice to see if we got an analysis of that as to where we are or whether that projection has changed, whether it's less or whether it's more. That would be nice and a nice piece of information for us to know.

We all know that we have taxation. Nobody is a big fan of taxation but it is necessary – it is. We have progressive taxation where those who make more money pay more, which is the personal income tax. Then we have regressive taxes, which are unfounded and we should stay clear of. Probably we have progressive policies and practices and we have regressive policies and practices.

For those viewing at home, just to put a little explanation to that, I have mentioned two or three times in the past – and I don't think we'll repeat it – when we launched the Oil to Electric program, I've said on a couple of occasions that we weren't sure as to who was going to benefit and which tax holder they were. I think we are now. In speaking to the minister we are now. But we did launch a program that we didn't know who are the earners going to be and who was going to benefit. The fear with that would be those who need it most may have missed on it because they couldn't afford to do it.



That would be regressive at that time, but we've changed and we've seen our way.

I would say the sugar tax is purely regressive. If you read the research on the sugar tax, those who can least afford it are going to be hit harder than those who can afford it. That's that.

Planning is essential. The seven cents that we have reduced here is a good thing. Nothing wrong with that, it's universal. Those who probably struggle to drive to St. John's will get seven cents and those who would contain and have multimillions out there; they will get seven cents, too.

So I look at that and say right across the board seven cents. But the debate is nice when we can have a debate in the House to say, well, some will benefit more than others or are less impacted than others with the seven cents.

The last note I would make is that when we look at poverty reduction that is something that we need to look at our policies and practices to make sure that whatever comes out of government at the time looks after those who would be in the greatest need in our province. If we put that lens on a policy or practice that you're going to put out, I think you'll have most people in support of that.

Let's make sure our policies and practices are not regressive, but they do look after those in our communities who need it most. We know that we've still got a lot of work to do out there by some of the explanations and some of the situations that Members have raised here in the House.

Chair, thank you very much.

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

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

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

I'll be supporting the bill, as I'm sure everybody will. There's nobody in this House of Assembly going to stand up and say that we don't want to cut taxes or extend the tax cut. We all know that the people who elected us, in general, they don't want to pay any more taxes than they have to. As a matter of fact, people complain about taxes all the time, or many people do.

It is important to note, though, as we go down this road – again, I support this – taxes are necessary. There are taxes that I do support, begrudgingly, like everybody else, I guess. But it's a necessary thing. And there are other taxes that you have to question the logic in them and sugar tax being one of those. Carbon tax, to my mind, being another one.

I just don't see the benefits that is being derived from carbon tax, other than more money going into government coffers. I just don't see the benefit.

People, if they drive cars, which most of us do, we really don't have those alternatives yet in terms of electric vehicles. They are just not out there enough; prices are not where they need to be; the infrastructure is not where it needs to be. So really we don't have a choice.

We get to a point where there are all kinds of alternatives and all of the infrastructure is in place, we can all easily go electric and won't impact our daily life other than we're choosing electric versus conventional engine. We get to that point and I still choose to burn fossil fuels, then I should be penalized. Until such a point in time, where those options exist, which they don't now, then I shouldn't be penalized just so that government can just collect more money.

I hear the Premier there earlier, and I've heard it said a number of times and he said it today: it is not our tax, it's a federal tax, but, at the end of the day, the money is going into provincial coffers.

So while we will be extending this tax break on fuel tax, which as I said we will all support, somewhere in the not-too-distant future, I think, we have another carbon tax increase on the way that's going to wipe this out and then some.

So if it's true what the Premier is saying that he does not support this tax, then when that comes along all he has to do is whatever tax is imposed by the federal government, if you will, assuming the revenues are going to continue to go into our coffers, then we can give that money back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in some shape or form as opposed to just putting more into the government coffers.

I don't envy the government, any government, quite frankly, in the sense that no matter what decisions they make there's going to be people who are going to agree and people who are going to disagree. While it's great to do this and to be able to give back to people whenever we can, it's also important to be cognizant of where we are financially as a province of those year-over-year deficits and our provincial debt that's like, literally, growing by billions of dollars year over year.

There will be people who will look at this, and I've seen it when we had this tax break. I had people contact me over the \$500 and there was interestingly – you had all kinds of views on it. There were some people said it's great. There was some people said I'll take it, I don't know where it's coming from. There are some people who said I don't need it. Some people said I'd rather see it go in health care, but there were other people who said, (inaudible) \$500, what do I do next month and the next month and the next month?

Sometimes it's hard to get through to people that this is not the government's money, it's our money, we're paying taxes, that's where the revenue is coming from to do these programs. It would be great if we could start writing cheques to everybody for \$500 a

month, every month, and cut all the taxes, but the reality of it is, is that we cannot operate without taxes.

How are we going to give doctors an increase and have incentives and hire nurses and specialists and teachers and everything else, if we don't have taxes to pay for it? I mean, it's impossible. You can't have it both ways.

Now, obviously, there's corporate tax, there's business tax, there's royalties and we really need to be looking at ways to try to increase revenues. The more revenues that we can bring in to the province, the more businesses we can attract and retain and have them expand, whether it through natural resources or things like tourism or things like IT, whatever the case might be, to bring more people and more businesses in here working, generating economic activity, generating income, for the province, then hopefully we'll have more money to be able to provide the services that our people need and they desperately need, in some cases.

I'm sure everyone has gotten the emails and the message lately about health care. I know I have. It's unbelievable about the emergency departments – horror stories. We all know there are big problems, but it costs money to do it. So we need to find ways, hopefully, to up the revenue to be able to pay for that, plus be able to put money into this Future Fund that we're still debating. At the end of the day, hopefully, have a cost of living that's reasonable for everybody in the province, particularly the most disadvantaged, because there are a lot of people I can tell you in my district that will get the \$500 and will absolutely take it, but do they really need it? They don't really need it.

We're all getting the \$500. Well, I don't know about all of us. I think a lot of us are going to get the \$500. Ministers might not, but if you're an MHA, MHA salary is

\$95,000 a year, I'm going to get a \$500 cheque, I think. I don't really need it.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** You could give it back.

**P. LANE:** I suppose I could give it back. I'll probably give it to charity.

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

**P. LANE:** I probably will.

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

**P. LANE:** Yeah, I'll probably give it to the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands for his shoe project or something.

But at the end of the day, whatever, the fact of the matter is that there are lots of people who are not going to turn down the \$500, but they don't really need it. It's like this break here on the gas; there are lot of people who don't really need it, but are going to benefit. There are a lot of businesses out there and corporations that are going to benefit from the break on gas. They don't need it, that's for sure.

There are a lot of businesses that are making huge profits that are still going to the pumps, and they're going to benefit and they don't really need it at all. So there's certainly an argument to be said that – I know it's difficult – how do you apply a break at the pumps that there's no way to say, okay, this guy went up to the pumps really needs it; this guy here is a millionaire, so he doesn't need it. There's no way you can do that. I understand the logistics.

I also understand the argument that you'll get. People will say I'm the one who's paying all the taxes; I hear that a lot as well. A lot of people in my district are, what you'll call, higher middle class and they'll say: Well, why shouldn't I get a break; I'm the one who's paying for everything? I don't qualify for anything; all I qualify for is paying, paying, paying. So if there's a break, yes, I'll

take my money because is my money. I see the merit in that argument as well, so where you stand, I suppose, depends on where you sit, as the old expression goes.

But, at the end of the day, this will be a continuation of a small break. When this was passed earlier, this year during the spring, at the time I know I did and I think others said why don't we just have it last until March 31 and, for some reason, the government wanted to stick with January 1. Now we're coming back then and we're only doing what we suggested we do anyway, but that's fine. We're still going to do it.

There will be some people who will really appreciate it, and it will be meaningful for, but I suspect there will be a lot of people that this will be passed today or tomorrow and people will still be complaining about gas prices next week, because they're still very, very high and it's not going to mean a whole lot to a lot of people.

I would hate to see what's being done here now be cancelled out by another federal carbon tax increase. I would hate to see that happen. So, again, if the Premier is serious about how he feels about the carbon tax now – he's had this sudden change in opinion on it. He's doing a 180. Then I hope that if the revenues come in for that carbon tax, that new carbon tax, that he says we're going to take that equivalent amount and somehow put it back to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Anyway, with that said, I'll support the bill.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 16 carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 16.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**B. WARR:** Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 16 without amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed that Bill 16 be passed without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**S. COADY:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**S. COADY:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 6, Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act." (Bill 6)

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Today, I bring forward amendments to the *Revenue Administration Act*. The purpose of the updates to the legislation is primarily administrative or technical in nature. This is what I'm going to call routine in nature, if I can use that term, to reflect current practice, improve some tax competitiveness by including new provisions that were not envisioned when the act was consolidated back in 2009 and to incorporate gender-neutral language.

As an overview, I'll provide some background regarding the role of the Department of Finance and the minister in

the act. The department is responsible for the administration of provincial tax statutes under the *Revenue Administration Act* and *Revenue Administration Regulations*. Taxes administered include: the gasoline tax, retail sales tax on insurance premiums, mining and mineral rights tax, just to name a few.

The department consolidated most provincial tax statutes into the *Revenue Administration Act* back in May of 2009 as part of the red tape reduction initiative. Subsequent to the introduction of the act, most provincial tax regulations were consolidated under the *Revenue Administration Regulations* effective September 1, 2011.

Through the administration of the tax statutes, various issues have been identified where an amendment is proposed to correct an issue or to update the legislation. There are also some technical amendments in relation to the mining and mineral rights tax being proposed to address issues that were not envisioned when the act was consolidated back in 2009.

Now, as we all know, the mining industry is quite a significant contributor to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mineral shipments were valued at \$6 billion in 2021; an increase of 36.4 per cent over 2020. This growth was largely due to significant increases in iron ore, nickel and copper prices, as well as an increased production of copper and nickel. Total mining related employment increased 17.6 per cent to 8,104 person-years in 2021.

Proposed changes to the *Revenue Administration Act* are required to ensure they remain competitive with other jurisdictions with respect to the mining tax. Now, I'd like to note there are several amendments being made to the act that are beneficial to the mining industry. For example, mining operators that are partnerships, limited partnerships, joint ventures, et cetera, will be able to deduct exploration expenditures incurred by its

members for the purpose of calculating mining tax and mineral rights tax. This, again, makes our jurisdiction more competitive.

Operators will be allowed to deduct costs incurred when setting up additional types of financial assurance for rehabilitation and closure plans. A mine operator will be able to roll over assets used in mining operations into a new mine operator if they maintain substantially the same ownership and continue mining operations in the province.

An eligibility for the corporate income tax credit will be extended to mining operators that are partnerships, limited partnerships, joint ventures, et cetera, so that they can claim a corporate tax credit against mining tax in relation to partner share of the tax payable.

Government supports the growth of the mining industry particularly exploration and amendments to the act make it easier for mine operators to interpret the act, beneficial for both the industry as well as for government.

As mentioned, many of the other amendments being made are primarily administrative in nature, to correct minor deficiencies, remove loopholes identified in the legislation or decrease risk of tax loss.

As with other bills, we're also taking the opportunity to incorporate gender-neutral language into the *Revenue Administration Act*. We have to modernize and improve our legislation on an ongoing basis to ensure that we are following best practice as well as to ensure fairness and equity. The use of gender-neutral language reflects the diversity of our province and will stand the test of time.

Speaker, to conclude, technical amendments to the *Revenue Administration Act* are being proposed to reflect current practice, include new provisions that were not envisioned when the act was

consolidated in 2009 and to incorporate gender-neutral language.

I ask the House of Assembly to support the changes. These are, as I said, technical in nature. Some actually makes some improvements, specifically for the mining industry to make us more competitive and we do include gender-neutral language. I think everyone in this House will recognize that this is an important changes to the *Revenue Administration Act* and I ask for their support.

Thank you.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Speaker.

I believe this is the exact same legislation that was tabled in the spring, but died on the Order Paper. The bill makes, as the minister alluded to, both language changes, housekeeping changes and changes to the technical nature of taxation.

Some of the language changes. The bill makes changes to the *Revenue Administration Act* to modify the gender language, as the minister alluded to, to a non-gender language or gender-neutral language. We're seeing this with a number of the bills which you are debating in the Legislature this session.

The bill also changes the reference to Trial Division to the Supreme Court. This is another language change which has been commonly found when legislation changes come to the House. The Supreme Court was one called the Trial Division, but now has been properly renamed to the Supreme Court, thus we are slowing fixing the many references throughout our whole body of provincial legislation.

Housekeeping changes in this bill ensure consistent tax treatment and address tax administration problems, which have occurred in administering various taxes over time. For example, the treatment of fuel for aircraft, the legislation is being amended to clarify and add the word “delivered” because fuel is indeed delivered to the aircraft and that is the point at which gasoline tax is charged.

Technical: Most of the technical or policy changes, which this legislation is changing, has to do with the mining tax administration. Some also relate to other taxes. The tax rates are not changing but the administration is being adjusted to ensure that mining companies can take advantage of tax credits, that tax isn't collected twice, et cetera. Of course, the details on some of this I'll give you.

Examples from the bill: section 26 of the bill ensures there is parity or consistency in how the gas tax and carbon tax is administered. It will allow a retailer or wholesaler who sells a carbon product that is not taxable to not register for the collection of the tax. Before this, the legislation said that even if a company was selling a tax-exempt product, they still had to register. Thus, it was possible a company had to register but they were never charging or remitting the tax. This will ensure that wholesalers and retailers are not bound by extra red tape. However, if a company rebrands the tax-exempt product to a product which is taxable, they will have to register as they now collect and remit tax.

Mining tax: Sections 29 and 30 of this act amend what companies can use as tax deductions under the mining tax. Any mine operator who decommissions a mine is responsible for rehabilitation. The *Mining Act* outlines the options available to them to do this; however, the RAA outlines which of these options can be used as a tax deduction. Currently, only one method is recognized for tax deductions. This bill will now allow all of the options prescribed in the

*Mining Act* to be tax deductions. Again, this is typical across other provinces.

Minister partnerships: Section 31 of this bill also deals with mining tax as it relates to amalgamations or splitting up of partnerships. It will allow an operation to continue if the business operations are reorganized, if there is no change in the ownership percentages. If there is a change in ownership, the assets will be transferred at fair market value. This change is being included at the request of the industry.

Mining partnership and tax implications: Section 32 relates to the interaction between corporate income tax and the mining tax. For the first 10 years, a mining operation can deduct mining tax paid from the income tax payable at a maximum rate of \$2 million per year. However, this requires that the body that pays the tax is the same. However, problem arises in the case of partnerships, a partnership pays mining tax as an entity, but the corporation behind it pay corporate income tax. Currently, because the names of the body are not the same, the tax credit cannot be transferred to the corporation. This bill will enable a corporation who is in a partnership to deduct its portion, based on the percentage of ownership of the tax paid from its corporate income tax – all good stuff.

Mining royalties, section 33 of the bill, background: In addition to paying royalties to the province, a mine needs to pay non-Crown royalties, like royalties to the explorer who found the resource. These payments to explorers are then taxed by the government with the deductions allowed. This bill will allow exploration expenses incurred anywhere to be deducted from tax charged by the explorer on these royalties they collect.

Section 36 ensures that the RST, the retail sales tax, and the HST are not both paid on the same item, product or service. If RST is charged on something, HST is not charged.

This is relevant to the insurance industry. While insurance premiums are subject to RST, there are some additional charges which are subject to HST. This legislation, again, clarifies that both cannot be charged on these additional charges.

Speaker, those are some of the highlights of these particular changes and we support the changes that are identified here.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers, if the minister speaks now she'll close debate.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

As these are technical amendments, I thank the House for their consideration and we'll move to the clause by clause.

Thank you.

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

The motion is that Bill 6 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 6)

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 6)

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act.

**SPEAKER:** And a seconder for that, please.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Seconded by the Deputy Premier.

**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.

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

Motion carried.

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

#### Committee of the Whole

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!



We are now considering Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act." (Bill 6)

**CLERK:** Clause 1

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 through 43 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 43 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 43 inclusive, 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 Revenue Administration 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 the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 6.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

**Mr. SPEAKER (Bennett):** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay, Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**B. WARR:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 6 without amendment.

**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 6 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**S. COADY:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**S. COADY:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 13, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act, Bill 13.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act, now be read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act." (Bill 13)

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Speaker, consumer protection is a top priority for the Department of Digital Government and Service NL. The *Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act* prohibits unfair and unconscionable business practices and provides remedies for wronged consumers.

Before I get started, I'd like to thank MHA Stoyles who brought this concern to my attention.

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

**S. STOODLEY:** It's unfortunate she's not able to be here today, but I know she had many constituents who were impacted by this. So her bringing this to our attention, we looked at the legislation, we looked at what other provinces were doing and realized there was certainly much room for improvement. That's kind of how we're here today.

I just want to thank MHA Stoyles and to let anyone know watching, we are listening. When there are gaps, we do bring changes forward to make things better for consumers, Mr. Speaker.

**J. HOGAN:** The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**S. STOODLEY:** The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, sorry. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, the act also regulates credit grantors and requires them to provide disclosure statements about the cost of credit to borrowers. In 2016, amendments were made to the act to regulate payday lending. Now to further protect consumers, my department is introducing amendments to regulate high-cost lending.

I should first note, Mr. Speaker, that banks are federally regulated, so we're not talking about banks. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has no authority over loans or credit agreements issued by banks. It's the *Bank Act*, which is a very significant, meaty piece of legislation. Under the *Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act* the provincial government can regulate payday lenders, and now high-cost lenders, to help enhance consumer protection for individuals who may have no other viable options.

High-cost lenders are a subset of credit grantors, Mr. Speaker. These lenders often offer instalment loans at high interest rates, often over 30 per cent. This is a growing sector in Canada. High-interest instalment loans are becoming increasingly common among Canadians with low credit scores and short credit histories. According to ACORN Canada, a community group that advocates for low- and moderate-income Canadians, there has been a 300 per cent increase in the share of borrowers taking out high-interest instalment loans between 2016 and 2021.

There are some differences between payday loans and high-interest instalment loans that I'd like to outline. Payday lenders that meet the conditions of the act and regulations are exempt from the criminal interest rate of 60 per cent. So in Canada we have a criminal interest rate of 60 per cent. These small short-term loans are regulated through the *Payday Loans*

*Regulations* under the same act as we're discussing today.

Through that, individuals cannot borrow more than \$1,500 through a single payday loan and usually, Mr. Speaker, they must pay the loan from their next paycheck. On the other hand, high-interest instalment loans may not exceed the criminal interest rate of 60 per cent. Such instalment loans may have advertised interest rates of 30 per cent per year. Once you add all the fees and the charges associated with those loans and the compounding interest, many of these instalment loans have effective annual interest rates of just below or equal to the *Criminal Code* limit of 60 per cent.

People can borrow thousands of dollars for terms up to several years, Mr. Speaker. Sometimes consumers pay more in interest than they receive through the loan. ACORN Canada has compiled testimonials of people from throughout the country who have had negative experiences with high-cost lenders, people in difficult financial situations due to the pandemic or other factors outside their control.

The business of high-cost borrowing is growing in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker. Information from Credit Counselling Services NL suggests this is the case at all income levels. Individuals with an annual income of \$40,000 and those who are seasonally employed are far more likely to choose a high-cost loan as their source of credit. Credit Counselling Services NL has indicated consumers living in rural communities often choose high-interest lenders as their first choice for a credit source.

We know that financial literacy plays a big part of this in people choosing high-cost credit products. We certainly recommend to anyone looking for credit, look at all the options available to them before turning to high-cost credit, Mr. Speaker.

ACORN Canada calls this predatory lending. Given that growth, ACORN has advocated to the federal government to reduce the criminal interest rate of 60 per cent currently outlined in the *Criminal Code* of Canada. The federal government recently launched a public consultation process on lowering the rate to better protect consumers. The consultation period closed on October 7. This process, I hope, Mr. Speaker, will lead to a reduction in the criminal interest rate of 60 per cent.

In the meantime, we know Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are also availing of high credit products. In Newfoundland and Labrador we have at least 24 actual branch locations of businesses offering high-cost personal loans, and an unknown number of online businesses where residents of the province can obtain high-cost credit. So these are like Cash Money, easyfinancial, Fairstone and Money Mart in Newfoundland and Labrador, Mr. Speaker.

Some of these businesses are also payday lenders. They would have branched out into instalment loans such as Money Mart. They would be regulated today under the *Payday Loans Regulations*. Now, with this change, they would also be regulated under these new regulations in legislation.

ACORN Canada conducted a survey of people who had taken out high-interest installment loans. Over 80 per cent of the respondents said they took out a loan to meet everyday living expenses to pay rent, utilities and groceries. I have and I'm sure every Member in the House has heard from constituents who are in difficult financial situations, especially as the cost of living increases. When people are turned down by banks or credit unions, they may be forced to turn to these high-cost lenders and other lenders.

According to credit counselling services, consumers find themselves indebted to high-cost lenders because borrowing from

these lenders is simple and uncomplicated. Their introduction to the institution is rarely an in-office experience. So people don't walk up to Money Mart, Mr. Speaker, looking for a high-interest loan.

Many times these are purchased when you buy an appliance or an item of furniture. So you might go to a different store when buying a couch or buying a refrigerator and that vendor is offering, as a third party, one of these high-interest loans, Mr. Speaker. You might not understand that what you're buying and the credit of the product you just purchased is underwritten by a high-cost lender. So then within weeks or months, this lender then approaches you offering additional high-cost lending products, Mr. Speaker.

Just to give an example of how much some of these products can cost, so if consider a personal loan of \$10,000 paid back weekly over three years at an annual percentage of 10 per cent, the borrower would have to pay around \$1,600 in interest, Mr. Speaker. If you're talking about 45 per cent interest, they're then paying around \$8,200 in interest charges and that's on a \$10,000 loan. That's assuming they're able to make all their payments in time, when often that's certainly not the case, Mr. Speaker.

High-cost lenders are being used by people across the province, so we do know that it is filling some service for people, especially those unable to obtain financing from banks or credit unions. At the moment, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, we have minimal oversight of these high-cost lenders. So the amendments we are introducing today will provide a licensing and regulatory framework for these high-cost lenders, similar to what we have in place for payday lenders. This is a very important step to increase consumer protection, particularly for vulnerable individuals and those with limited financial options.

These amendments will create provisions to better protect borrowers who take out high-cost loans by establishing a framework for licensing and regulation of high-cost credit grantors. The provisions will apply to every high-cost grantor who offers, arranges or provides a high-cost credit product to a borrower in this province regardless of whether it is offered in person, by telephone or online. So pursuant to this bill, the Lieutenant-Governor in Council will have regulatory authority to set limits on the total cost of borrowing as well as fees or commissions which may be charged by a high-cost credit grantor.

High-cost lenders will be prohibited from charging a borrower an amount that exceeds the total cost of borrowing set out in the regulations. The proposed amendments will prohibit high-cost credit grantors from engaging in practices such as: offering prizes or rewards as an incentive to enter a high-cost credit agreement; suggesting that the high-cost loan will improve a borrower's credit rating if that is not the case; or requiring or accepting payment deductions from their paycheque, Mr. Speaker.

So, in the bill, a borrower will be able to avail of cancellation rights or a cooling-off period, Mr. Speaker. A borrower who signs a high-cost credit agreement may cancel the agreement without penalty within four days of receiving a copy of the agreement.

This is significant as it gives the borrower the opportunity to change their mind. Four days is longer than some other jurisdictions, but it was chosen in recognition of we have a unique geography and the difficult situation people are finding themselves in, Mr. Speaker.

The bill also prescribes the mandatory information to be included in high-cost credit agreements such as the statement that the high-cost credit product is just that. So if you went to a place to get one of these products, it's going to have to state that it is

a high-cost credit product. It has to explicitly state the amount, the term, the annual interest rate, the total cost of credit and what will happen if the borrower fails to make a payment when it becomes due. This will help ensure borrowers are fully informed to the terms before signing a high-cost credit agreement, Mr. Speaker.

If a high-cost credit grantor fails to comply with these requirements, the borrower is not liable to pay the grantor an amount that exceeds the principle. This would be in addition to any other remedy that may be available to the borrower.

The bills provides the Lieutenant-Governor in Council with regulation-making powers. We are going to have accompanying regulations, similarly to the framework we currently have for payday lenders. Some of these details are still being worked out and will be established in regulations, which will be prepared before the bill comes into force.

This is, for example, what the maximum interest rate will be, and other criteria that will be considered high cost, such as determining the maximum total cost of borrowing, prohibiting certain predatory practices, prescribing information to be required on signs and ads, outlining information required to be reviewed with the borrower.

Then a secondary purpose of this bill, Mr. Speaker, is a repeal provision to the act relating to telecommunications contracts. These provisions are redundant. The federal government now regulates these contracts through the Canadian Radio Television and Telecommunications Commission or the CRTC. That's currently in the act, and we're removing that as the federal government now regulates those.

Speaker, while similar legislation regarding high-cost credit lending has been introduced in other provinces, we would be the first Atlantic province to implement a regulatory regime specific to high-cost credit grantors.

We've recently announced that we've changed our *Payday Loans Regulations* to lower the maximum total cost of borrowing from \$21 per \$100 loaned to \$14 per \$100 loaned. Mr. Speaker, we have heard from residents that that's still too high. We have to balance – payday loans are obviously a service that people of the province use, so \$14 per \$100 loaned is the lowest in the country at the moment. We want to make sure that that is available to other consumers in the absence of having other options. So it is a difficult decision to make but that's where we've landed at the moment, and there's certainly always opportunity to change those.

We're limited in our ability to address the rising cost of living for residents of the province. We've taken steps to enhance consumer protection for vulnerable borrowers who have limited options to address their personal financial challenges. These amendments represent another step in our collective efforts to further enhance consumer protection in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I look forward to debating this bill with my colleagues. I just want to thank the MHA for Mount Pearl North for bringing this to my attention. Hopefully these changes will help many of her constituents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

I want to also thank the minister and the Member for Mount Pearl North as well for bringing this forward. It's going to help the province; it's a good piece of legislation. It's going to help a lot of people that are in difficult times right now. We're talking about our vulnerable consumers and high-cost lenders.

In my opinion, some of these most vulnerable consumers, they are preyed upon. Yes, they take it under their own volition to get these loans, but unfortunately, especially nowadays a lot of people are backed into a corner where they have no other choice but to get these loans. They get into cycles, payday loans especially. You get a payday loan, you cycle it out, you make it 13 days and you have to get another one.

Unfortunately, it's a cycle that's very unforgiving for many families across the province and it hurts a lot of people. I'm hoping that this legislation does get put into place; I know I'll be supporting it. I think it's a good piece of legislation for the people of the province as well.

High-interest lenders or high-cost creditors, credit grantors as they are referred to in legislation, are financial companies who lend money with more than approximately 30 per cent annual interest rate. These are currently not regulated in Newfoundland and Labrador. Again, that goes back to the cycle. When you're paying 30 or 40 per cent on a 14-day loan, it's tough to get over that. We encourage them to find some other lender, if possible of course, from the Official Opposition.

One definition is high-cost credit product. This is a credit product, a loan or lease which has a high interest rate. The exact rate will be contained in regulations, but it's expected to be 32 per cent annually and higher. That's absolutely ridiculous and it handcuffs a lot of people.

We're looking for more transparency from these companies as well. We realize that they are operating in the province, but we feel as though it is government's responsibility to ensure they are regulated in the proper way to protect our citizens. That is the main focal point of government and it should be the main focal point to protect citizens. We need to ensure that we do

everything we can today and I believe this piece of legislation does just that.

In 83.15, this legislation specifies that high-cost lenders shall not offer an incentive to a person who takes out a loan. Now, you think about a person who goes to get one of these loans right now and they're sort of on the fence whether they want it or not; it shouldn't be incentivized with a gift, because you have to realize that you're going to have to pay the price down the road.

Again, having somebody backed into a corner like that, and I feel as though they are prayed upon at times, it's not fair to the individual, it's not fair to their families and unfortunately it is a cycle that we have to break and I feel as though we can break.

This legislation gives a person who takes out a loan four days in which they can cancel the loan and repay the amount of the loan without paying penalties or interest. That part of the legislation is absolutely perfect; I like it. I would have liked to see it go even a little bit further, possibly, but four days to go home, sit on it, talk to your family about it and possibly, two days later, come in and realize that you have made a mistake or you went to another lender or you found some family and friends that could help you out in a bind. If you want to retract your application, then you can, without any penalty. I think that is absolutely beautiful.

I would also recommend that anybody who is looking at any of these high-interest loans, go talk to a financial advisor first because it is absolutely debilitating to many people out there and we want to ensure that they do not get caught in the same cycle that I just talked about.

A borrower can prepay the full or partial amount of the loan without incurring a prepayment fee or penalty. That is great because consumers, they shouldn't be punished. I mean, to put up with one of these 30 per cent loans right away, that is

punishment enough. So we want to ensure that if any consumer out there – especially the most vulnerable – decide to do the right thing and can come up with an earlier payment, I love the fact that they cannot be penalized.

Again, I have to say, personally, I am not a fan of these high-interest companies at all. I realize that it is a free economy and whatnot, but I would encourage anybody out there – I can't overstate it enough – please talk to a financial advisor before you go and get a payday loan, before you go and get a high-interest loan, because it can come back to haunt you in a hurry.

This piece of legislation also specifies the type of information that a high-cost lender must post in their establishment so everybody can know what they're getting themselves into. I think that is a great point as well. You need to know all that you're getting yourself into. You don't want any surprises. You don't want any traps, but oftentimes you fall into this trap and, unfortunately, it takes its toll.

But we want to ensure that all these companies, if they are working within the province, are upfront about exactly what they are getting their customers into. Because once you fall into, again, it's hard to get out. We want to ensure that this legislation covers the most vulnerable out there.

So we think it's a good piece of legislation. I look forward to the rest of the comments that are coming down. I don't see anything here that –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The level of chatter is getting a little bit too loud. I can't hear the speaker.

The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

So we're looking forward to the debate. This one is something that has been on my mind for quite some time now, well before I got into politics and watched lots of friends and families go through it. Absolutely, it's a piece of legislation that is needed. The more we can regulate these people that are – in my opinion once again – preying on consumers that are in trouble already, that legislation that's going to protect them, I'm going to support it all day long and I hope everybody else does as well. I look forward to the debate.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

Yes, no doubt, we will support this in terms of protection for the consumer, but let's look at this in the larger context as well.

The minister, in her opening, talked of the high cost of borrowing and solutions and this is basically for people with no other viable options for borrowing. The 60 per cent rate is criminality. I think certainly if you look at most old literature and the Bible, it would have been called usury, is what it comes down to. Even 60 per cent, I'm just trying to think in what world that that's the level and that's the threshold. If anything else, the threshold should be set lower, federally, and certainly in this piece of legislation.

So the proposed amendments applying to high-cost credit lender are very similar to the legislation enforced for payday loans grantors – great. We can do better. Let's add something else to this, by the way, if you've been paying attention to the news that recently a court case now will allow

merchants to pass on the credit card fee to the consumer.

While we might consider that it's unfair that the merchant would absorb those, it's now going to go to the consumer. I want to talk about that in terms, Speaker, of credit and those who rely on credit. I want to remind people of the proverb: A drowning person will clutch at a straw. A person who's desperate, it's always going to be their choice, but they will clutch at any straw to save themselves. Even if that straw is not going to provide any material help or benefit and it's probably going to make matters worse for them.

So we're the sixth province and the first in Atlantic Canada to bring in laws and regulations on this matter. Four of the five of these provinces define high-cost credit products that those are offering an interest at 32 per cent or higher. Quebec sets their threshold at the Bank of Canada rate plus 22 per cent. And in this province the rate will be set in regulations and be drafted after the passing of this bill – great.

However, Cabinet may by regulation exempt a high-cost credit grantor or class of such grantors from some or all of the new legislation. Already loopholes. Again, to the person who's clutching at any straw, loopholes are going to be the death to that person.

It talks about cooling off period. It talks about the number of things that these creditors cannot do, such as offering prizes or incentive; state or imply that high-cost credit product will improve the borrowers credit rating; require the garnishing of wages; collect or attempt to collect payment before the date is due; offer a cooling off period; allow for the borrower's right of cancellation; and to post signs in their offices containing information prescribed in the regulations. All very good.

There are a lot of people and people on fixed incomes and people on minimum



wage who are basically living off revolving credit. It comes down to a lack of income. And you know where I'm going to go with this. It comes down to a lack of income, inadequate income.

When I was with the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul, I don't know how many people we would actually have – but they were numerous – people who were on income support, insufficient income support, or those who were on fixed incomes and minimum wage who were reliant upon credit cards to basically put food on the table and to pay their heating bill. And once you start, it's a snowball effect to the point where whatever income they had coming in was going straight to the credit card, which was ever growing and they could never catch up. We would get them into credit counselling to Al Antle's service here.

That was the situation they were in. It became insurmountable. Some of these seniors, in some cases, were so busy trying to pay this off to their detriment to the fact that they couldn't afford medications. They couldn't put food on the table. They were barely holding their own. In some cases, society pay their bills to help them catch up knowing full well that they were going to be continuing the cycle all over again. That's the world, I guess, where I come from with this.

So legislation to reign in the practice of high-cost credit products and their providers is welcome customer protection. However, it might be worthwhile to ask why government intends only to legislate and regulate these industries rather than making them very difficult for them to operate in this province at all.

We could ask government to set a low percentage in the regulations for qualifying it as a high-cost credit provider. For example, Quebec sets their, as I have said before, rate at the Bank of Canada, plus 22 per cent. This is more stringent than other provinces with similar legislation, which

defines high-cost credit as that with an annual percentage rate of at least 32 per cent.

In terms of payday loan legislation, Quebec capped the APR, or the annual percentage rate, at 35 per cent, effectively banning the practice in the province. So why can't we in Newfoundland and Labrador make our laws and regulations just as stringent so as to make high-cost credit products illegal?

By the way, Quebec *Consumer Protection Act* also forbids the transaction fees on credit cards. So they have very stringent consumer protection regulations.

Now, you might argue, well, where are people going to get the money? Well then let's tackle it at its root as to why people are forced to avail of these. The lack of credit – the banks will not often provide loans.

It has always been amazing to me that people who call in to my office or people we have helped through Saint Vincent de Paul were often paying rent, Speaker, at a \$1,000 or more a month. They never missed a payment; yet, they could never qualify for a mortgage, even though they may have been paying something for decades and have demonstrated clearly their ability to be good stewards. They could never qualify; yet, they're often forced to go to this.

So, ultimately, we can make this more stringent so that these users are not taking advantage of consumers and we can start looking at remedying the issues that underlie why people have to go there.

Ultimately, maybe these products and these companies will continue to exist and while the law and regulations will mitigate the worst industry practices, many people will still fall into the trap of taking out such loans and then later falling into the financial hardship.

I do remember taking out one such loan but I already had a plan in place to make sure on the day it was due to pay it up. But guess what? I was in a position at that time to make that payment. The self-discipline to do it was fine if you had the money but if you don't have to money, if you're very strapped and hanging on by your nails just to feed a family, it becomes increasingly difficult.

The broader problem is not only that such financial tools and practices need to be regulated, but that many people are so precarious in their financial situation that they have no other means of accessing credit. I can tell you, it was in the PROOF report and from the people that I've helped, that those who were paying rent, if they were in some sort of condominium, they're in better shape than those who had never owned a house and were always renting. They were always at the edge.

According to a survey of its members in February of 2021, ACORN Canada found that 13 per cent of respondents said that they had to take out high-interest loans due to COVID-19; 16 per cent say that they had missed some payments to pay off the loan; while another 70 per cent said that they had been making payments as they were facing tough financial times due to COVID.

Now, not to blame COVID, but it shows that people who are already financially precarious or in a tough state have less capacity to absorb the effects of a downturn like that, of an event that causes such catastrophic damage to the economy.

The majority of respondents, 40 per cent, approached banks before they took out a high-interest loan, but there their family member or friend were denied, and there it is. Think about it. There in lies the problem. Is that right off the bat, the choice is between going hungry or getting a loan; can't get it at a bank, you can sort of see here where the direction is going.

Twenty per cent of people have a credit card but 25 per cent said that it's maxed out. It would be interesting to see just how many people have a maxed-out credit card, or not just a maxed-out credit card, multiple maxed-out credit cards. A lot of it is just simply in many cases to make ends meet.

I used to say, I guess, that many people were just one paycheque away from bankruptcy. I would say that's more true than we care to admit.

Eighty per cent of respondents that said they took out a loan to meet everyday living expenses such as rent, groceries, hydro. Some people took it for a range of reasons such as to meet medical expenses, critical illness and car repair expenses.

So tax breaks and that are not going to help, but I will say, the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development hand delivered the invitation to sit on the guaranteed basic income committee that he is initiating. I'll compliment him on that for getting that on the go, because if nothing else we can start getting at the root causes of this and have fulsome discussion.

So while I may have given him a hard time before and put him on the spot, I will give him the credit for the fact of delivering that today with the terms of reference. We'll have more to say on that later. But do you know what? That's a positive start and we can have a fulsome discussion.

Don't let it go to your heads.

Some people took it out for a range of reasons, to meet medical expenses and so on and so forth. Twenty-two per cent of respondents mentioned that they took it out to improve their credit ratings as they are promised it would help them to do so.

Now, do you know what? There is a certain level of truth. I used to say to my children when they were first – get a credit care first, small limit, because if anything it will

establish a credit rating. Don't get a credit card with a \$10,000 limit because you'll find yourself in the hole before you know it.

I understand where that rationale is, but, again, if you're trying to make ends meet and really your chance of being able to pay it off, it's not going to help you.

Forty-five per cent of respondents mentioned that they were not explained the cost of borrowing. In fact, they were rushed through to sign the loan agreement with the lender. That I can see because all you're looking at is that money at the end of it.

I often think, you know, that there are many people out there who work at minimum wage jobs and one of their big expenses is medical expenses, prescription drugs. I often thought what would it cost to the government here if we want to eliminate the need for payday loans, maybe to look at how do we expand the Provincial Drug plan so that private employers and employees in these businesses can pay into this, keep it self-sufficient, but have access to those needs, have access to those benefits. There are many, I think, creative approaches to it.

So we've talked about a living wage, increases to income support, pay equity legislation and potentially basic income, which it now looks like it will become a reality – not the income but the Committee. These are all ways in which we can improve the financial circumstances of those who are in the toughest position and eliminate the demand for these services. That, in the end, is probably better than any legislation. It's one thing to take out a loan because, hey, you know what, I want to go on a trip or I want to do something for my children, but if it's day to day, it's an issue.

So we'll support this, but from my point of view, from our point of view, we would have had a larger discussion around the underlying causes of this, of why people find themselves in this situation. You might

think, well, it's only those who are the middle class who have –no, it's not.

It's interesting with credit card companies; just about anyone can get a credit card, it seems, without any worry about how you're going to pay it off until it comes due. The same thing here, we're just feeding the misery. I think in terms of from our point of view, the Committee on guaranteed basic income is a good start; let's look at overall how do we support people, looking at a minimum wage that is a livable wage, looking in terms of pay equity, all of these things.

If we want to get at the root of the problem, to address what the Health Accord calls the social determinants of health, then let's address the underlying cause and get at that, so that people's need to go to an exorbitant payday loan company are no longer there. Or, if they do decide to go that route, they have the ability to pay it off when it comes due. Or better yet, let's find a way so that people can access loans, borrowing through the normal processes of banks and so on and so forth. Let's look at that as well.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly a pleasure to get up and speak to this bill. I didn't think I would get up on ServiceNL, all the bills we did the last time, but I will certainly get up and speak on this one. It is a little bit familiar to me in my previous life I'm going to say, in the car sales business.

The first thing I touch on would be education in this. The education would come from – really in the schools is where it should be taught. When I was in selling cars – and I

heard the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, I think it is –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** St. John's Centre.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** St. John's Centre. He brought up about his kids and a Visa card. I did the same thing when my kids were 16. I got them a Visa card with a \$500 limit, so they built up their credit. And when they get to go to school and they want to go get a phone or want to go buy something that they got to finance, then they had a bit of credit established. The same thing would happen to students in school. Students leave. They're in high school now, they're all leaving to go to university, and this is where the high-interest loans come in. They don't understand what's really happening in their life and they got –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Financial literacy.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** What?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Financial literacy.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** So it's something that should be – financial literacy. I'll quote the member that said it there.

They leave and they go to university. So it could be a group of girls or a group of boys or whatever, living together in a house, four people. The person that puts their name on the light bill – and they all leave and they quit school or they don't pay the bill. The person that's standing with his name on the bill is the one that's going to get the credit that's going to get hammered. Then they can't get their loan when they come in to get a car.

So that's where it all leads. This is all education. It doesn't have to be a major course in the school, but they probably have parents that didn't know this. I didn't know when I was a young fellow and I certainly didn't get it taught by my parents; you learn as you go. We all did that – not everybody

but I'm sure there's a lot of people did and that's the issue.

So they get to these high-interest loans. They got no choice. They come in and look for a car – and I can put it in real perspective. They come in and see me and I give them a price on a car. Next, they'll go in to the finance office when they got a car picked out – they have no credit. If I had to know that from the start, all right, let's find a car. Let's go and do a credit application to see where you fit first to buy a car. There might be a limit of \$5,000; there might be a limit of \$7,000.

So now you start and you spend, I'm going to say three or four hours, probably a couple of days. You finally get the car picked out, you go in and they've got no credit. It happens a lot in January, February and March, right after Christmas when they can't make their car payments and they have to pay for all their Christmas gifts and pay for the houses. Then something happens, like COVID, and they got no income, so now their credit is gone. In three or four months, they lose their vehicle.

Now they come in and they got to get a vehicle – everybody needs a vehicle in their life or pretty well, unless you're in the City of St. John's. When you live in the outports, you need a vehicle. So now you come in and you buy a vehicle, you finally get one and you go in and do a credit application and get it approved.

So these high-interest loan companies, not the banks, the high-interest loan companies are going to give you a loan for 25 to 30 per cent. They are telling you, when you come in to get a car, they are coming in and saying you make your payments on this car for one year and then you'll be able to come back and we'll get you a lower interest rate. They fall for that. Me being a salesperson, I never wanted to sell somebody a car at 25 per cent, never, because I know where it goes.

After one year, they're going to come back and think they're going to get a lower interest – yeah, they're going to get a lower interest loan, it goes from 25 down to 15, but they have a car that is financed at \$25,000 and they owe \$40,000 on it. Or they financed it at \$25,000 and they're not going to get the value back for the car. So now they are \$10,000 bottom up on 15 per cent and that's where it rolls.

And until they get the education and understand it – I wanted to get up and speak on it because it is very important. It is a real-life experience; you run into it all the time. There are salespeople that are out there today that are trying to make a living and they do all this work and you go into the finance office and you can't sell the car because they don't have credit. It happens so often; it is incredible how often it happens.

But, you know, they get in a situation – as the Member for St. John's Centre said – because of lifestyles, just the way the family has evolved over time, and it is about education right from the start. Financial literacy, I think he called it, that is where it has got to start in the high schools. Like I said, not a whole year-long course but combine it in a math subject somewhere that they understand interest and how it works and credit and how it works.

So if somebody comes in to me looking for a car and we do a credit application, so he doesn't like this car and he does a credit application, then he goes up the road and he does another credit application and then he goes up the road and he does another credit application. So as long as your credit is good, it doesn't affect you, but when your credit is right on the borderline, every time you do a credit application your score goes down more and more. Now it goes to a point that you can't get a car because your credit is too low. Now you have to go to a higher-interest loan. That is what happens to people when they are doing this.

So I just wanted to get up and speak to it because it is a real-life experience. Looking at vehicles today – I was in looking for a vehicle for myself coming up in March. But if you don't plan to get a vehicle soon, in four or five months, there is nothing there to pick from. Vehicles are \$5,000 or \$6,000 higher – maybe some kind of protection can happen to the people in society today because the vehicles are up \$5,000 or \$6,000 – why?

My question is: Why? Nothing changed other than COVID. People are back to work and the prices are higher because they're not building as many – I don't know – but they have the market captured. You could drive Kenmount Road and there were 300 or 400 cars in each lot at one point in time; they're not there now because of COVID.

Will we ever get back there? They probably don't want it back there because they're making more money on their vehicles. It is realistic what's happening. So to see this legislation come in is pretty encouraging to stop these high-interest loan payments from people that – you know, it's definitely going to happen; they get in the situation to go get the money. The problem is they got to pay it back and that's where the trouble falls. So I just wanted to throw that out there just as a part of this legislation and I think it is good legislation. I'll certainly support it.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers if the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL speaks now, he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to thank everyone for their feedback. The MHA for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, thanks for all of the

comments that you added. The MHA for St. John's Centre, I do want to address some of your points.

I agree with the Member; it is unfortunate we have these credit products. In an ideal world, we wouldn't need them. I do struggle personally because we have them today. People are using them today. If we were to get rid of them tomorrow, what would all of those people do? There are a lot of other underlying, connected issues that I don't think we can realistically solve, so this is our pragmatic next step to help protect consumers who are consumers of these high-interest credit products.

We are going to set the interest rate in the regulations. We are still looking at what that could and should be. The criminal federal interest rate of 60 per cent, Mr. Speaker, I did mention in my remarks that the federal government have just finished consultations on lowering that, so hopefully we'll see if they're making a change before too long, but ideally our maximum interest rate is as low as possible.

We have these products today and we don't want to send people underground to organized crime and to other ways of getting these products. So it's a difficult decision. There is no perfect answer, Mr. Speaker, but this is what I think is a good option for people who currently use these products to protect them so that they're not further disadvantaged, Mr. Speaker.

I also want to thank the MHA for Ferryland for telling us about his experience, and I also want to mention a few things. I forgot to mention in my preamble, Mr. Speaker, that this will also apply to high-interest leasing products. So I think if you get a couch or a computer or something from a leased organization, then this would also apply.

So we had a four-day cooling off period we're proposing in the *Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act*. Just to clarify, for payday loans, that is a two-day cooling

off period. Those are loans for up to 14 days, so there's a two-day cooling off period. This has a four-day cooling off period.

Just in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, as other Members have said, I recommend anyone who is having financial difficulties to talk to the Credit Counselling NL – AI Antle from Credit Counselling.

I also want to thank, again, the MHA for Mount Pearl North for bringing this forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

The motion is that Bill 13 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

**CLERK (Hawley George):** A bill, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act. (Bill 13)

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business

Practices Act,” read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 13)

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act.

**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.

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

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

### **Committee of the Whole**

**CHAIR (Warr):** Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act.

A bill, “An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act.” (Bill 13)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Chair.

We just have a couple of questions. This consumer protection legislation dealing with high-interest loans, the clientele of these companies are often in vulnerable financial positions. Would the minister consider meeting with the credit-counselling professional, a condition of a person applying for and receiving one of these high-interest loans?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Chair.

That’s certainly an excellent suggestion. I believe when we did the pension act changes a few years ago, we did include provisions like that into taking out money from our pension, I believe, Mr. Chair.

We’ll certainly look at what other provinces do in the regulations. I know this is something that people are accessing often, so we’ll certainly consider that in our regulations.

Thank you.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister.

Can the minister confirm what the regulation will be for what annual interest rate these high-interest loans companies can charge? What’s your zone?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Chair.

So in the regulations we will have a maximum annual interest rate listed in the regulations. We have not yet decided what that will be. But just to clarify, the federal interest rate is 60 per cent, so it will be

lower than 60 per cent. We're still working on what that should be. I welcome any suggestions from the Member.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister.

Is there a range that we're dealing with right now?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** There is a definition of a high-cost credit product currently in the act. It would be under 60 per cent. I know credit cards I think are mid-teens, low twenties. I don't have a more specific range than that.

I will add, Mr. Chair, we will also include in the regulations the total cost of borrowing. So the maximum fees and everything which are permissible, which is the total cost of borrowing, not just the interest rate. Because right now that's not in the legislation as it is before these changes, we don't outline that.

Alberta, BC and Manitoba, they have a maximum 32 per cent interest rate. Quebec, as the Member mentioned, is 22 per cent over the base rate. So we won't be in a different ballpark than the other provinces. But I can't say for sure what it will be yet.

Thank you.

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you, Minister.

The Quebec rate sounds a lot better than the other rates there.

Does the minister have any statistics on how many of these companies are active in the province and how many high-interest loans are given out each year?

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

**S. STOODLEY:** Thank you, Chair.

We do know how many physical locations there are. There are at least 24 branches. As they do not need to be licensed, at the moment, we do not know, but as a result of these changes we will then know how many organizations or branches are giving out these high-interest loans.

We do not know how many loans are given out in Newfoundland and Labrador at the moment.

Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR:** Any further questions?

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 36 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 36 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 36 carried.

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



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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Consumer Protection and Business Practices Act, Bill 13.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 13 carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 13.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

**SPEAKER (Bennett):** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**B. WARR:** Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 13 without amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed that Bill 13 be passed without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now recess until 6 o'clock.

**SPEAKER:** This House does now stand recessed until 6 p.m.