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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Monday

January 23, 2023

The House met at 10 a.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Before we begin, I would like to welcome our visitors to the public gallery.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice and by leave move the following motion, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that notwithstanding any Standing Order of this House, that Routine Proceedings of the House of Assembly are suspended for this sitting day and the Orders of the Day provided for in this motion shall be as follows:

That Notices of Motion be deemed to have been given on the bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services, Bill 24; that the said bill shall also be deemed to have been read for a first time and that the bill now stand ready for second reading; and that notice shall be deemed to have been given under Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, January 23, 2023.

Speaker, we're obviously here on an urgent and emergency basis. It's not a regularly scheduled day of the House of Assembly. We're here to debate the *Essential Ambulance Services Act* so voting for this motion will allow us to move right to debate this morning.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Does the Member have leave?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

J. DINN: No.

SPEAKER: Leave is not granted.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: The whole motion was read out. Leave wasn't objected to at the time I asked for leave so I will say, by no one objecting to it, leave was given. So I ask that the motion be debated.

SPEAKER: The Leader of the Third Party, you did not grant leave?

J. DINN: I did not grant leave.

J. HOGAN: He did not say he did not grant leave until after leave was granted by consent to the reading –

SPEAKER: Leave was not granted. I asked if leave was granted and the Leader of the Third Party did not grant leave.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I ask that the House recess until 10:30 a.m.

SPEAKER: This House do stand recessed until 10:30 a.m.

Recess

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I again give notice and again ask leave to move the following motion, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that notwithstanding any Standing Order of this House, that Routine Proceedings of the House of Assembly are suspended for the sitting day and the Orders of Day provided for in this motion shall be as follows:

That Notices of Motion be deemed to have been given on the bill entitled, An Act

Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services, Bill 24; that the said bill shall also be deemed to have been read a first time and that the bill now stand ready for second reading; and that notice shall be deemed to have been given under Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, January 23, 2023.

Speaker, the reason we're asking for leave on this, again I'll reiterate, it's an emergency situation. We can move right to debate right now as soon as I sit down, if everyone is willing to do that, and to debate the merits of the bill, as opposed to playing politics about the timing of it and whatnot. People's lives are at stake. It's beyond an emergency and important situation, and I hope that the other side can see that and is willing to debate the bill.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Does the Government House Leader have leave?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

MR. DINN: No.

SPEAKER: Leave is not granted.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: I ask that we recess the House until 11:15.

SPEAKER: This House do stand recessed until 11:15 a.m.

Recess

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice and by leave move the following motion, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that notwithstanding any Standing Order of the House, that Routine Proceedings, with the exception of Question Period, of the House of Assembly are suspended for this sitting day and the Orders of the Day provided for in this motion shall be as follows:

That Notices of Motion be deemed to have been given on the bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services, Bill 24; that the said bill shall also be deemed to have been read a first time and that the bill now stand ready for second reading; and that notice shall be deemed to have been given under Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, January 23, 2023.

SPEAKER: Does the Government House Leader have leave?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I guess we can vote on the motion or was leave enough?

SPEAKER: We'll vote on it when we get into debate.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank everyone in the House for leave on that. I have already made a couple comments about why I think this motion is important; I'll just leave it at that for now.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: I ask that we recess the House until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

SPEAKER: This House do stand recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

Recess

The House resumed at 3 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Are the House leaders ready?

As to the resolution this morning, we are going to suspend Routine Proceedings except for Question Period. So we'll move right directly into Question Period.

Oral Questions

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

D. BRAZIL: Speaker, the crisis we are faced with today is the result of a broken health care system. This legislation is a band-aid. The Health Accord specifically addresses ambulance access in rural Newfoundland and Labrador as one of its top priorities, yet the report gathers dust on the Premier's desk.

Why has the Premier refused to act to ensure all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have reliable access to emergency services?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I'd like to acknowledge the hard-working women and men who are the heroes of the front line in the gallery today, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: We recognize that the first responders, ambulance attendants and paramedic providers are on the front lines. It is a priority of this government, it's a priority of the Health Accord and it's one that we're hoping to have a more robust and full conversation about how we can best improve it through the use of technical services, the access to paramedical services, to expand its scope of practice, all of which are embedded in the Health Accord, Mr. Speaker.

We're anxious to continue to have that conversation, to have that debate and develop it into a formal policy that will ultimately enhance both their professional services and the access to medical care –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Your time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

Premier, if you really want to acknowledge the great work they do, work to get them a fair and equitable deal so that they can provide the services they provide in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: Speaker, 136,000 people in Newfoundland and Labrador do not have access to a family doctor. Many emergency rooms are closed more than they are open. Now rural ambulance and access is grounded to a halt.

I ask the Premier: How many more picket signs will we have to see before you take action?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite knows, we have taken a significant amount of action with respect to addressing the health care shortages. This is not unique to Newfoundland and Labrador. All you have to do is turn on the news; it's across the country; it's across the world.

That said, we recognize that we need to employ local solutions to local problems. We've done that, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to do that. Whether it's an increasing enrolment in the nursing schools, increasing enrolment in the paramedical schools, increasing enrolment in the LPNs, increasing enrolment in the medical schools; offering incentives to doctors to go to rural communities; continuing to implement the Health Accord, Mr. Speaker. It goes on and on.

We are continuing to ensure that we're creating a modern health care system that is sustainable and one that everyone can be proud of for future generations, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's ironic, on Friday, the Liberal government stated that the health authorities were enacting their contingency plans and services would not be interrupted. Less than 24 hours later, the Premier calls for this emergency debate.

Premier, what changed?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we had confidence in the immediate contingency plan. As we're aware, that would put more stress and strain on the current people providing the contingency, Eastern Health paramedics and beyond, Mr. Speaker. We recognized that the system just cannot sustain that, long term. That's why we're here today.

Surely, the Member opposite appreciates that, Mr. Speaker. A contingency is only a short-term solution. We offered a conciliation process. It's not unfolding as we want. I'm not prepared to put people's lives in jeopardy any further. We're acting today to ensure that ambulances are back on the road.

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

D. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, what we do realize on this side of the House is that administration have always and continues to be reactive versus proactive.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: That's why we're in the situation we are.

On Friday, the Liberal government tried to suggest that the Liberals had been proactive saying – quote – we've been involved in this process for close to a year.

Well, Premier, will you admit waiting a year has caused this crisis?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we've been proactive. We've been proactive and I'm happy to say that

the Members opposite have been involved in a proactive measure, including the Health Accord, to address a reimagined health care system for the future. We've been involved in this process, we've heard the unions and we've recognized that they want to be declared as essential. We were hopeful that we wouldn't have to interfere in the bargaining process, which I think we can all respect. Everyone wants a negotiated deal that's agreed on by both sides.

Unfortunately, that did not happen, Mr. Speaker. We're here today to ensure that they are deemed essential because they are essential for the people of this province.

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier himself said this morning – and I quote – we thought we'd have more time. Those aren't the words of a Premier being proactive and facing the issues of the people of our province.

Does the Premier take responsibility for the lack of action that got us in this position today?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're certainly proactive. We're proactive in engaging with the unions and engaging a conciliation process. Unfortunately, as negotiations often go, they didn't go as planned. The contract didn't expire until the end of March, and that's what I was referring to there.

But we're here today to address the fact that they are essential and they are essential for the delivery of services around this province and for the provision of medical services to everybody so that when people dial 911, they know that they're getting the care that they need, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

While the Premier thought he would have more time, the union was saying that the strike was a real possibility for a long time. On December 21, the media reported that a strike was imminent.

How could the Premier say he thought he had more time? Is this being proactive?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We were certainly hopeful that the best resolution is a negotiated resolution. We were certainly hopeful that that would happen. We're here today because the paramedicine individuals that are in the gallery today would rather be doing what they do best, would rather be looking after the health care needs of the communities they serve.

We are here to provide the legislation to give them the pathway to being an essential service, to binding arbitration if that's necessary, Mr. Speaker. This is proactive in ensuring that the individuals that are here today have the tools that they need to work towards a collective agreement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Speaker, it is the Liberal government's duty to provide emergency services in Newfoundland and Labrador. Today, ambulances sit idle and communities are stuck in fear if an emergency happened.

I ask the Premier: Will you acknowledge your government's failure to ensure emergency services to all the residents of this province?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we put a helicopter in place as a proactive measure in the event that it was needed in our Category B sites, and that is available in the event that it's needed. We worked with our regional health authorities on contingency plans, with other private operators on contingency plans. Those are contingency plans.

So far, since the strike has taken place, they have, for the most part, worked but what is best is getting our paramedicine folks back to doing that they do best, Mr. Speaker. That is what we want to do. That's what our paramedicine folks want to do. This legislation will give them the pathway that they need to work towards a collective agreement. If that doesn't work, to work towards binding arbitration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, the government had a conciliation officer on this fall for almost a year.

Why weren't government reactive when it was clear for a long time that a contract was out of reach, a strike was possible and no such essential worker provisions were in place? Why wasn't it done last fall?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. Member for the question. As the Premier reiterated earlier, it's important that we let the process happen. It was a negotiated

process. Obviously, when parties are at the table, we want to make sure a negotiated agreement is put in place by them. That's the best agreement we can possibly have.

We've had not only a conciliation officer in place but the director of Labour Relations has been in place. So we understood the importance of this file. We understand how important these people are for the system that we provide.

So that's why we put the best people on the job right away. Obviously, we would have liked to have a collective agreement had by the parties. That did not happen. That's why we're here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, I ask the minister: When did the director of Labour Relations' report land on his desk and would you please table it?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, I have no problem tabling that report. I'll bring that tomorrow or whenever we sit again.

Thank you.

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

J. WALL: The question also said, when did it land on his desk, Mr. Speaker?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I can't think of the day. It was just before Christmas when it arrived. That is a tool in a tool box that unions and employers use

from time to time. Many of the agreements that come like this, the conciliation officer's report comes, never come to a strike – very few, actually, to be honest. So we went through the process. They were still in negotiations –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. DAVIS: – a conciliation officer was still in place and still working through the opportunity of trying to find a negotiated deal, which is what we all wanted.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, the union has been speaking about a possibility of strike for months now. The minister had the report; in fact, we were told it was on his desk for quite some time.

Will the minister admit that he ignored the issue to get to this point today?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ignoring would be not doing anything from the start of this process; we've been involved right from the beginning. Right from the time the union asked to negotiate or the employer asked to negotiate, we've had a conciliation officer at the table working through it. We knew that it was challenging and it has always been challenging in labour relations: certain files take time. We knew that they were working hard at it. We knew there were challenges, they were working through those challenges and that's what the process is.

It is not straightforward, as the Member leads us to believe; it is not straightforward like that. The conciliation officer report came in; we dealt with it. That's one part of the tool that they have that gives them the opportunity to have a legal strike or a lockout. That is the process we are in now. We're here today to make sure that we continue the services that are so important to people (inaudible) –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, I ask the Minister Responsible for Labour: When did you first speak with union representation on this matter?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, a little bit more specific would be great on this matter, particularly this piece of legislation. We had a conversation on Saturday night that we were going to be bringing in this legislation to the House of Assembly, that we were going to be bringing forward this piece of legislation – something that the union has been after for a number of years now.

We're moving it forward. We're looking forward to hopefully having everyone in the House support this piece of legislation to get the business going back again. That is important for the people of the province, the services that these individuals provide to the people that we all represent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, this has been going on for over a year; the minister reached out on Saturday night.

Why did the Minister Responsible for Labour fail to consult with the union prior to then?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, it is very important that the Minister Responsible for Labour stays balanced in the approach between negotiations. I would argue that the Member understands that – I just want to make sure he understands that and believes that and the people in this House understand it as well.

The Minister Responsible for Labour cannot be interfering in negotiations between two parties that are working through a negotiated agreement. That's important. We have to give them the opportunity to deal with the negotiated agreement that they're all working to achieve. It didn't happen in this case. Every day, negotiated agreements are had, which is the best agreement to get for both parties involved.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I would say that the delivery of health care is of prime importance here. Speaker, it is the duty of the Health Minister to inform this House of any adverse health events in the province.

I ask the minister: Was there any such event that happened over this past weekend

in relation to the provision of emergency ambulance services?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm aware of one incident that happened. I am told that it is not directly related to the strike, Mr. Speaker, but we are aware of one incident that happened within the area that would be represented by Fewer's Ambulance.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Why is this government allowing private ambulance workers to be underpaid relative to their public sector counterparts, when obviously their work is similar and equally essential?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some time ago, over the past couple of months, we have provided to the employers in this province that employ the private ambulance operators, the paramedicine individuals, equivalent or similar to what NAPE had negotiated, Mr. Speaker. We provided to the ambulance operators roughly 2 per cent for this year, 2 per cent for last year, as well as a \$2,000 retention bonus.

Those have been offered. It is up to the employers or the ambulance operators to ensure that their staff get those increases and bonuses.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The minister mentioned about one incident over the weekend.

Can he elaborate on the seriousness of this and how it came to be resolved?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we're talking about an individual here and their family. I will not bring those details to the floor of this Legislature.

This was a very unfortunate incident that happened, Mr. Speaker. I am told, I am advised by the health authority that the resulting outcome was not impacted as a result of the paramedicine folks being on strike, that the outcome was the outcome. We did have volunteer first responders attend to the scene, but the outcome would not have changed is what I'm being advised.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

There are other health care services that are provided by the private sector, for example, personal care homes and home support services.

Can these employees expect similar legislation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. Any opportunity we have to look at the legislation that we currently have in this province we will continue to do that. Anything that'll improve the labour situation within the province, we'll always look at those options.

I thank the hon. Member for the question. We'll always be looking for people, if they come forward with those concerns, we'll look at those on a case-by-case basis.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Any further questions?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I stood in this hon. House on numerous occasions in debate in Question Period and presented petitions on the lack of ambulance service in Trepassey. Residents deserve timely and accessible ambulance services in their community.

I ask the minister: What part of legislation today will improve access for the people of Trepassey?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We are aware of the situation in Trepassey, Mr. Speaker. I can say, in full disclosure to the Legislature, that we have been served notice by the ambulance operator for the withdrawal of service in Trepassey. That is something that Eastern Health and the department are looking at very closely in how we resume and maintain service for the area of Trepassey. That is something that is being actively worked on in the midst of the labour situation that is currently unfolding.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Again, Speaker, I understand what he had said today, but, I mean, the last ambulance is taken out of their community. This decision will put people's lives at risk.

I ask the minister: When will this government finally do the right thing and ensure that the people of Trepassey have timely and accessible ambulance service?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. OSBORNE: As part of the contract with the ambulance operator, Mr. Speaker, the ambulance operator has an obligation to provide the service to the Trepassey area and surrounding areas. The ambulance operator has been providing service. It's debatable whether or not that service was satisfactory to the Member opposite or the constituents that he represents.

We do know, Mr. Speaker, of the withdrawal of service notice that has been provided and we are working on ensuring that service will be maintained in that area once that happens.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

This weekend a constituent of mine called for an ambulance from the Town of English Harbour East. They waited over an hour, called back and was informed that an ambulance hadn't been dispatched. This individual eventually arrived at a hospital almost 2½ hours later.

Speaker, I ask the minister: How will this legislation today address this situation?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not aware of the particular circumstance that the individual talks about. I'd be happy to look into that particular situation. Therefore, I can't specifically address what changes could have or should have been made, or whether or not any changes could have been made.

The legislation today, as the Member should be aware, will address the issue of essential service and will give both sides here avenues to work towards coming to an agreement on essential services. If that doesn't happen, it gives both sides the ability to work towards binding arbitration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: In my District of Harbour Main, many constituents, including seniors experiencing anxiety, raised concerns to my office about the lack of ambulance coverage. In bad weather, like we experienced this weekend, it can take up to an hour or more to reach the Health Sciences complex.

I ask the minister: How will this legislation ensure an adequate response time?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the legislation – and my colleague the Minister Responsible for Labour can speak to this as well – will ensure that there is an avenue to work towards an essential service. If that doesn't work there's an avenue to work

towards binding arbitration. That's what this legislation is about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the District of Conception Bay South is home to one of the largest private ambulance depots in the province with a catchment area of tens of thousands of people. I hear the concerns of ambulance drivers and paramedics almost daily. They are exhausted, under resourced and feel abandoned by this government.

I ask the minister: How will this legislation improve the working conditions for these workers?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As my hon. colleague from Health and Community Services did say, this piece of legislation deals with the establishment of an essential services agreement between the two parties before a labour action can take place. That's bringing it more in line with the public service, which is an important piece. It also, as my colleague, the Minister of Health and Community Services, talked about the fact that this is a pathway to binding arbitration, which is what the parties have been asking for, for a period of time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, the doors have been shut at the emergency room in Bonavista on numerous occasions due to the failure of

the government in power. Now we see the ambulance service workers on strike.

On behalf of the people of Bonavista District I ask the minister: Why did you let the situation get to this point?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In terms of physician coverage for the area of Bonavista, we put a number of initiatives and incentives in place, Mr. Speaker, to try to attract physicians to the area. We have been successful in a number of areas in the province: Harbour Breton, we've attracted two physicians; Fogo Island, we've attracted a physician due to the incentives we've put in place; New Wes Valley, we're working on and believe we have a physician attracted to that area. We're looking at Bell Island, as the Leader of the Opposition knows, which has now been stabilized as a result of the initiatives and incentives we've put in place.

What we can do, Mr. Speaker, is put initiatives and incentives in place in the hopes of attracting physicians. I know Eastern Health has been working hard on attracting physicians. We will continue to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The health of our Newfoundlanders and Labradorians cannot be overstated, nor can creating a supportive work environment for our front-line health care workers. This government continues to use a stick in dealing with health care workers, instead of creating a collaborative atmosphere where workers' challenges are addressed proactively.

When will this government get its act together and create an atmosphere where health care workers are respected and can do their work without having to fight this government at every turn?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure what stick the Member opposite is talking about. In fact, we have – and I'm happy to table it in case you need more familiarity with it – extensive incentives. That's a carrot, not a stick, to ensure that we're incentivizing all health care providers, Mr. Speaker. Not just doctors, nurses, paramedics, all the allied health workers, everyone, to ensure that they're a part and valued in the reimagining of a new health care system. Whether that's through investing in Collaborative Team Clinics, which ensures that everybody is working to their full scope of practice, ensuring that every patient has a provider, every provider knows that their patients will be looked after.

These are the creative ways that we're incentivizing, not beating people into a new health care system, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I may have been thinking about a fishing pole, maybe.

Government is pushing all health care professions to the brink – they're pushing them. Many other professions sympathize with these workers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you for the protection.

Let me go back to this very serious issue.

Government is pushing all health care professions to the brink. Many other professions sympathize with these workers because they, too, see the system is badly managed.

When will government bring all health care professions to the table and start working collaboratively to bring our system out of crisis?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The nurses' think tank was one example of how government brought professionals to the table. Out of that, Mr. Speaker, came the retention bonuses and a number of other initiatives; the HR plan, which has now gone to an RFP and about to be put into action; other initiatives to deal with workplace issues came out of the nurses' think tank. That's one example of what we've done to work with our health professionals to try to address the issues.

National media have talked about this province and the proactive approach that we've taken to dealing with the issues, to dealing with recruitment, Mr. Speaker.

This issue, the health care issues and pressures are felt –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker.

The Health Accord has made a number of recommendations to improve air and road ambulances.

When is this Premier going to be proactive to start acting on the recommendations of the Health Accord to address these challenging issues, particularly around road ambulances?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We've already started to enact some of the measures of the Health Accord, as the Member opposite is fully aware. The discussion of road and air ambulance is a broader discussion; it's not meant to be today. We're here today to make sure that Newfoundlanders have the essential ambulance services that they deserve.

A broader discussion of where ambulances and paramedical services belong is a broader policy discussion that we're happy to take. It's one that we think we need a robust plan to make a sustainable plan for the future, Mr. Speaker. But right now, today, we're here to make sure that these people are essential and that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are getting the essential services that they deserve.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

After our refusal to grant leave today forced the Premier and several of his ministers to speak to Mr. Dawe, and other leaders of Teamsters Union Local 855, to address their concerns regarding legislation, the union agreed, as a sign of good faith, to get ambulance service back on the road by 4 p.m. today.

I ask the Premier: What stopped him from having this conversation before today?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister responsible has been in discussion and I believe has rightfully articulated today in this hon. House the position that he has to maintain with respect to a labour dispute, Mr. Speaker. I was happy to talk to the members today. We're very grateful for the service that you all provide; you're incredibly valued. You're the true heroes of the front lines of the service.

I can tell you from having been a provider myself, these people do an incredible job and one we all value. I would love to talk to them more every single day, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Mr. Speaker, when push came to shove, they obviously had no problem interfering with the bargaining process today, if that was the reason.

Speaker, the employer refused to let workers get ambulances back on the road today. So I ask the Premier: What is he going to do about this?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I take exception to the hon. Member who tried to hold up the debate on trying to get something moving forward positive for people of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: But I will say that we have been engaged right from the get-go, right from the

start with a conciliation officer. Not just any conciliation officer, the director of Labour Relations, which is an important piece from our standpoint.

I know the hon. Member doesn't think that we should be here today trying to bring an end to a situation that could hurt people in this province. What we're trying to do – no one wants to be here in this House of Assembly; we wanted a collective agreement to be had by both parties but that didn't happen. What we're doing here today is to fix that problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

We actually just want things to be done correctly, right and with consultation.

Speaker, the Premier said today that delaying the debate by two hours would put lives at risk. Yet, since December 23, there have been medical diversions in Labrador which had two to four hours delay on medevacs in my district. But we're already facing delays due to the lack of available medical crews, aircrafts and pilots.

So I ask the Premier: Will this government act in investing in airstrip paving and other required upgrades so the people in my district can avail of the larger and faster provincial aircraft services that the rest of the province enjoy?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would be happy to sit down with the Member opposite and look at the issues that she just raised and if that is an attainable or an achievable outcome for Labrador-Grenfell Health and the new Provincial

Health Authority, I'd be happy to look at that and provide anything that improves services for her region of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: So you will consult and engage – excellent.

Speaker, I have residents waiting in beds in Labrador West Health Centre to be transferred to the Health Sciences Centre for care that is not available in Labrador. Patients are getting bumped down on priority lists for transfers, the few beds we have. The medical diversions are putting more stress on the health care staff in my district.

I ask the minister: Where is the plan to deal with the systemic issues driving away staff from our system and putting more pressure on rural and Labrador health care delivery? Where is the plan?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, I'd be happy to have a copy of the Health Accord delivered to the Member opposite. The Health Accord is a 10-year plan, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of initiatives already put in place as a result of that plan, a very thorough analysis of what needs to be done in terms of improving health care in this province.

This province is not unique to the challenges of health care. We are fairing better than many other jurisdictions globally, Mr. Speaker, but we still have issues that need to be fixed. We are working on those issues.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Speaker, Labrador-Grenfell Health is currently advertising for 264 positions and that is not only doctors and nurses. We are short in almost an entire Labrador town of health care professionals. We are short from everything that is needed to run a health authority.

I ask the minister: Where is the retention plan for rural and Labrador health care delivery? We have people leaving hourly.

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the very party that the Member sits with criticized us for undertaking a recruitment plan and a recruitment initiative just last week, so I don't know if I would take lessons on whether or not we should be recruiting from that party.

We have been focused on recruitment in this province, Mr. Speaker, both nationally and internationally. We are very aggressive when it comes to recruitment. Recruitment, not only for paramedicine, for nurses, for physicians, for every discipline in this province will help lift the load for a health professional workforce in this province that is currently overworked.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I would like move the motion to sit past 5:30, which is now deemed to be on the Order Paper.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader that, under Standing Order 11(1), this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, January 23, 2023.

SPEAKER: 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.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I would like to call, from the Order Paper, the second reading of Bill 24.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that we do second reading for Bill 24, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 24, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services." (Bill 24)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

First of all, I'd like to say thank you to the people who are in the gallery here today

and the many more who are outside, I think, with a big round of applause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to bring before the bill to enact the *Essential Ambulance Services Act*. The health and safety of our residents and the delivery of health care services in Newfoundland and Labrador is paramount. This act requires the union and the private sector employer to negotiate an essential ambulance services agreement. This agreement will need to be in place prior to the union being able to strike or the employer being able to lock out. It's that simple.

The immediate effect of the act will be the suspension of the current job action between the Teamsters Union and Fewer Group until the essential ambulance services agreement is concluded.

Let me be very clear at this point. Government is not removing the right to strike or lockout. That is not what this legislation is or ever intended to be. Unions have the legal right to strike and employers will have the legal right to lock out. This act will require the establishment of an essential ambulance services agreement to be in effect prior to either party exercising their rights under the *Labour Relations Act*.

This act prescribes and requires contents of the essential ambulance services agreement and if the parties are unable to conclude an agreement, either party can apply to the Labour Relations Board to settle its terms. An application can be made to the board to resolve the disputes with respect to the interpretation of the agreement or any action taken under its terms.

If the union or the employer believes the condition of the essential ambulance services agreement deprives them of a meaningful right to strike or lockouts, either

party can apply to the Labour Relations Board for a decision. If the board decides that the parties are being deprived of the meaningful right to strike or lockout, it may amend the essential ambulance services agreement, direct the parties to continue to negotiate for a collective agreement, direct the parties to confer with a conciliation officer in the effort to confine the collective agreement or conclude a collective agreement, order binding arbitration or give the other direction the board considers that may be appropriate in this circumstance.

Speaker, this act will ensure the continuation of essential services in the event of a strike or a lockout. This act will ensure the health and safety of the province's residents, particularly those in rural areas and communities that are serviced by private ambulance operators.

The provincial government has always played a mediation role in labour disputes in this province and will continue to do so. We are committed to ensuring a fair process in navigating labour disputes and our government will continue to review legislation and ensure it is responsive, relevant and timely. We will make the necessary changes to best serve employers, unions and all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Speaker, I am proud to stand in this House of Assembly today to bring forward this important legislation. I ask all Members in this House to endorse the *Essential Ambulance Services Act* and I look forward to debate.

I am not going to speak for very long on this because I think it's too important for us to be standing and talking. Let's get the job done for the people that we all represent.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

It is indeed a privilege to stand in this hon. House today and, of course, represent the fine people of the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis. Before I go any further, I want to thank all those members who are sitting in the gallery on both sides.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you for your service. They are responsible for the health, welfare, safety and security of those who are in need. I do have friends sitting in the gallery today. I am very proud of them and for the work that they do. Let that be known, that is not political. That is from me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Speaker, like the hon. minister, I'm not going to take too much time but I will make a couple of comments. The purpose of the legislation being brought to this hon. House today is in response to the ongoing strike of the employees of a private ambulance operator.

Speaker, I know that the government didn't wake up on Friday morning and see this issue before them. I know that. We all know that. This has been going on for quite some time, and coming from a union background myself, 28 years as a senior group home counsellor, I do realize the importance and the effectiveness of a union.

The first thing I thought on was with respect to the level of consultation with the union with respect to the issues that these workers have. So I am glad to see that we're here today. We could have done it earlier as we said in the fall, but we are here today to deal with this particular issue.

Speaker, while I was reading this bill, I was trying to look at all the possibilities with

respect to scenarios, as this would come down. It does appear that the process for getting the essential ambulance service can take a certain period of time. It could be a very long time, extended by the right of either party to have the agreement reviewed but eventually there would be an agreement.

Under section 9, either party can terminate the essential ambulance service agreement, under certain conditions. So despite the effort that was taken to get the agreement in the first place, we looked at either party can just terminate it. So that would bring us right back to the drawing board. If that was the case, there would be no strikes or lockouts, but there would be an agreement. I think I'm reading that correctly.

I do realize the minister said that government is not removing the right to strike or to lockout, which is very important because they do have that right in their collective agreement.

Speaker, on Friday, the Minister Responsible for Labour did say that government was being proactive and they've been offering conciliation services to help the dispute. Again, it was at the eleventh hour. We don't fully understand or realize the scope of what has transpired from that point until now, but we do know that being proactive is much more responsible and looking at these decisions that need to be made. It's time to get that done.

We do appreciate being here today to deal with this particular issue. The members need to be heard. I go back to consultation with the union: I'd like to know how many times that consultation was provided. What was discussed over that length of time?

As I said, the members need to be heard because the state of ambulance operations in our province is deteriorating. I have had discussions with several paramedics who love their job. I know that each and every

one of you wouldn't be here today to do the work that you do and to take time out of your position to strike. I realize that. We all realize that. You do enjoy what you do. But one person said to me: I love my job. I don't like the politics in the job.

That says a lot, Mr. Speaker, when you're coming to the ambulance operations in our province and what these individuals have to go through daily on a shift. There is no doubt that the working conditions they operate under needs improvement. I'm sure each and every one of you can agree to that.

Government is accountable for this service. Government is accountable for this service to be in place, as I said, to provide the health, welfare, safety and security of all the people who are impacted.

Mr. Speaker, patients are impacted. Families are impacted. Of course, we have many communities who are impacted because of this strike, but we also have the workers who are impacted.

When you look at the full degree of what's going on, should it really have gotten to this point? Should it have gotten to this point? We are here today in order to deal with that.

I know it was said earlier: Where is the plan? I'd like to know where the plan is when it comes to dealing with this issue before today. We are called back to the House on an emergency sitting of the House to deal with this and we have to ask why? Why did it get to that point?

However, we are here, the legislation is now before us. I would have much preferred to have dealt with this legislation back in the fall when we were here. It could have been a much more timely fashion to deal with it; however, we will see what the debate brings on today, to move forward and, hopefully, have a resolution.

It was mentioned earlier about the Health Accord. Of course, we all have a copy of the Health Accord. In it has to deal with the rebalanced health system for air and road ambulance. Of course, the rationale is there with respect to what needs to be done with respect to implementation. I'm hopeful that this government will take into account the full provision for the Health Accord for road and air ambulance when it comes to making these decisions and going forward and to have these people working in a safe, meaningful work environment.

When you look at the decisions that have to be made for PCPs and ACPs, for the policy decisions on the delivery system, for necessary service agreements and implementation plan and, of course, the proper infrastructure as well. We'll keep the Health Accord in mind, Mr. Speaker, when we're moving forward.

I do know that we have several other of my colleagues wishing to speak to this today. As I said to the minister, I won't take too much time, but this is something that we are looking forward to debating here in this hon. House and I will have more to say on this after.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It's certainly a privilege to get up in this House and represent the District of Ferryland and I would like again first to thank all the first responders that are here today to listen to this debate. I certainly appreciate your time and effort.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: I've been dealing with an ambulance issue in my district now since,

I'm going to say, a year and a half or two years. It is getting to a point that I stand up here and I do a petition – we get a right to do a petition for three minutes and speak on the issue in our district. I've done that on several occasions, many occasions, certainly once a week while we're here, maybe twice a week.

My first start off was the ambulance leaving Trepassey and leaving us with one. I dealt with that issue and was trying to deal with it, bringing it here, doing a petition, falling on deaf ears and it's the government's responsibility to be able to answer those questions.

I asked some questions in the House of Assembly and the previous minister said I was fear mongering when I asked him questions for the people of my district, which is wrong. I am not fear mongering. People are scared when they don't have a second ambulance.

When the ambulance leaves Trepassey, it's gone for two hours to get to St. John's, two more to get back, and they're sitting out waiting for the dispatch at the Health Sciences Centre or whatever hospital they may be at. They're definitely gone for a minimum of six hours. I would say it would be more like eight or nine hours and they're in red alert, after we lost the first ambulance.

They moved the ambulance from Trepassey to Cape Broyle. What I can hear, from December 26 to January 7, the ambulance is sitting there and the owner doesn't have anybody there to man it or to take care or resource the ambulance. So people in my area are concerned that the ambulance is sitting there not plugged in and there's no one there to do that.

We respect everything that they do. We really do. Where would we be without them? They don't have the resources – or government is not making this ambulance being resourced for the people in the area.

I'm getting phone calls upon phone calls. I called the minister's office to ask a question of why it's not being taken care of, why it's not being resourced, and my concern is that somebody in Calvert, Fermeuse, Renew's has a stroke and they're sitting home waiting for the ambulance from Cape Broyle when the call is dispatched to go to Calvert or Renew's and they're thinking it's going to be a half hour. Well, I'm telling you it's not going to be a half hour, when there's no one there. It's coming from St. John's; it's coming from Holyrood.

I've asked this question. I've asked it numerous times. The government who is responsible, no one else only the government are responsible to these owners, and they don't have people manning these ambulances and taking care of the people in my district and every other district that's affected. It's just unbelievable that they don't answer your questions.

So I called and asked. It's important for the people in the area to know that the ambulance is not there. The reason being, if they're having a stroke that they need to get him in a car and get him out the road and they could meet an ambulance half way to get a clot-buster. if that's what's needed or whatever emergency – sometimes you can get them in your vehicle and meet the ambulance half way there but if they don't know the ambulance is not there, they're expecting it to be a half hour and it's more than a half hour then they've got to get moving. It could be detrimental to somebody.

I called and I asked the question and, well, we don't want to put fear in people to know that the ambulance is not there. Well, it's important for the people in my district to know it's not there, I can tell you that. To stand up here and just to take these calls, it's unnecessary. The government should be doing something about it – bottom line. They're the one who are responsible. I call in there and nothing has been done. I did petitions in here. I don't know how many

times I'm after doing petitions and never get an answer and nothing has changed.

Now they're going to take the last ambulance that's in Trepassey and remove it. How is that fair to people in my district? It's not. It's not fair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: And they're not responsible. They're not responsible for that. The government is responsible for that. They've got a job to do but they can't do it if they're not resourced out there and the people in Trepassey and the surrounding areas, not only Trepassey, it's Portugal Cove South, it's Fermeuse, it's Renew's, it's Calvert, it's Cappahayden, it's everywhere and they're more than two hours away from the city. It has nothing to do with cost. It's about people's lives. It's more than cost.

They're sitting there now, they're two hours away from the nearest hospital and an ambulance leaves St. John's to go Trepassey, it takes two hours to get there, under conditions like today maybe. What about conditions on Saturday? How long would it take? How long would they be there? How long would it take a driver to get there, because you don't know the area? The people in the area know what it's like to drive.

Somebody left from Ferryland, that knew the area, the other day, and it took them an hour and half or two hours to get to Trepassey from Ferryland. That's not counting from St. John's to Ferryland. And we sit here and we let this continue on.

I've asked questions to no avail. Yes, I'm government, but I'm the Opposition. We ask the questions and we don't get any answers, and that is our dilemma. The government are responsible for enforcing these ambulance operators or ambulance owners to make sure that the ambulances are active and the people of the area – it's disappointing, I've got to say, to get up here

and come in here and have to do this. It really is. One ambulance, I'm fighting that since I came in here. Now I'm fighting no ambulances in Trepassey area.

They don't just get a call from Trepassey. The mayor got a call – well, we're getting about three calls a week. Yeah, three calls maybe out of Trepassey. They're not counting the ones coming from Ferryland, Cape Broyle, Calvert, Renew's, wherever that may be. They may respond to a call in Bay Bulls if they can't get one from St. John's or Holyrood. I've had calls in Cape Broyle this summer, three times on one weekend that took an hour and a half for an ambulance to come from Holyrood because there was no one in Cape Broyle.

The ambulance is sitting there five minutes away, somebody looking at it through a window, and they don't have an ambulance. Not acceptable – it is not acceptable. Take it and move it out of there; put it where it can be used. Don't have it there so it looks like a cold comfort, I would think – cold comfort.

We were in here in the fall. We left I'm going to say, in November, a big hurry to get out of here. Now we're in doing an emergency debate and all this legislation is sitting there and could be done, and what are we doing? Now we're back in here – and I got no problem; I'll stay here all week. I don't care how long we stay; it don't bother me one bit.

But we had ample opportunity to do this before and we did nothing about it. The same as the legislation we tried to get through before when we were in the House in November. They tried to rush legislation through and not thought out properly, and we stayed here and I'm going to say we bargained or we done whatever we had to do to get it through and they moved it off.

Now you're getting this legislation on Saturday night, we're going to have an emergency debate on Monday and we get this legislation here and we've got to be ready to talk on it today. We get it last night

and got a briefing at 8:30. Well, that's some way to handle – that's some prepared; that's some plan. That would turn your stomach, that's what it would do. It would turn your stomach how it's handled, and it's not right. We should, as a government here, get together and get this right. Whatever that may be, I'm not sure, but we should get together and get it right because this is not acceptable.

You get legislation 8:30 last night, with a briefing, and come in this morning and we're trying to have a meeting to see which way we're going to go and all this legislation is here and we've got to try to understand it – not acceptable. Somebody should have known something different than that to be called in here. I might be wrong. If I'm wrong, you can certainly correct me or anybody can correct me. Because I'm sure I'm going to say something out of passion here that's going to be wrong and I will be corrected, I guarantee you. That's fine, they can correct me and I can take it, but I can't take the way they treat the residents in the area with no ambulance and it just boggles me how it happens.

So why is the government letting all this happen, taking the ambulance right out of the area? I had a person in Bay Bulls that had an ambulance licence. Would they give him it? No. I don't know why, but they wouldn't give it to him. So he had a licence that he could do it and they wouldn't give it to him. Why is that? No one can answer it. This is what I'm saying. You ask questions over here and we don't get the answers.

I'm going to take my seat in a minute just so everybody else can have an opportunity to speak, but let's get together and get this right. Today is an emergency, we need that done for sure, but we have to start taking the people of every district in this province in the rural areas seriously.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity.

I, too, extend our concern with our paramedics that are in the galleries today. I know that it is a taxing time for them. The whole of the District of Bonavista would be involved with this particular action and what's happening here since Friday.

When we look at the paramedics, nobody questions that they would be deemed to be essential. They are certainly essential employees. They are our first responders. If we have loved ones at home in the District of Bonavista and they call 911, then these are the people that are going to respond in the health-life safety of those that would be in our district.

I think they're interested in going back to work, but they have tried with negotiations for close to 10 to 12 to almost practically a year and it didn't happen. It didn't bear fruit; it didn't meet with satisfaction. In fact, it broke off. We're here today to look at legislation that is going to assist – that is going to put the paramedics back in the District of Bonavista and the other districts in order to serve the residents that would be in our districts.

A couple of things that would jump out at me. We all – again to restate – deem them to be essential. What we would like to see in the agreement is we would like to see some timelines. Those people in the galleries today would be looking at it and say we don't wish to go back to what we ended in December. They weren't going anywhere in December. They would like to have legislation or something that would say let's make it happen, if we return to work in a reasonable time frame. That's not a lot to ask because the bottom line is that it will be government that will decide what happens and what the due process would be after this legislation today.

So I would say to you, I would hope that the legislation is going to provide a timeline, a reasonable timeline that if they return to work there will be a resolution. If there's not a resolution, there will be a binding arbitration process that will help settle the matter, because it will be the residents in the District of Bonavista that need that intervention and many other areas in the province. They are essential.

If I took a poll of the residents in the District of Bonavista, and I know many of these paramedics personally from the district, their main focus is the well-being of the residents in the district and responding as fast as they can. I'd love to see legislation that has some standards.

You call for an ambulance on Ottawa Street or Halifax Street here in metro St. John's, seven to 12 minutes. Seven to 12 minutes response in the District of Bonavista is unheard of, unheard of because these people are always on the go over great distances.

I just want to share a little short story that I had one time. We were in George's Brook-Milton at a meeting and the councillor in that meeting had stated that his father had a heart attack and fell and they called for the ambulance. Well, on that particular day, knowing that they were busy somewhere else, it was close to 25 minutes that the ambulance arrived.

I shared that story as if we should have standards to make sure that every Newfoundlander and Labradorian would have the same access to the same level of care, or at least in the ballpark, very similar.

Then I went to Burgoynes Cove with a Local Service District meeting. When I went to Burgoynes Cove, I told the story about George's Brook-Milton. I ought not to have told the story because I shared and said: Well, we got 20 to 25 minutes. When they looked at each other and they responded and said: Well, we may not get an

ambulance less than an hour. We look at an hour.

So I would say we need to have something comprehensive that looks at standards. Nobody over here in a rural district would say that we're going to have parity with Ottawa Street or Halifax Street in St. John's. But what would be the reasonable period of time that we would serve our district and for the paramedics to serve them? Because lives are on the line. It's as simple as that.

So while we sit here today – and I would say that the paramedics who want to get back to work made an offer to go back to work, because if they're back to work they do the best they possibly can with what they're provided to serve the residents that would be in their area.

I asked the minister about the hospital in Bonavista, the emergency room, and the minister responded that he is doing the best he could. He recruited doctors from other parts of the province. No doubt he is. But when we hear him say it's a national issue, international, I don't disagree. But the other thing I want to hear and tell is that there are actions that you can take to make a difference. That's what we're requesting.

Case in point, every two days the paramedics who serve the District of Bonavista will come across a Level 1 or Level 2 acuity patient: Level 1 being resuscitation, Level 2 being emergent. So every two days, according to Quality of Care NL data, one of those residents is going to be facing life-threatening situations. The first responders are sitting here in the gallery. They're the ones who are going to get them to the hospital to give them a chance that they live.

Friday was the job action; we are now into Monday. Count the number of days. Every two days there is one of those situations that fall within Level 1 or Level 2.

All hospitals are not the same. This government put in categorizations for hospitals. They made some A hospitals, other ones are community centres, are B. Well, Bonavista fell in B. Some would say they're not all the same and they may not deserve the same quota of people or professionals.

The only thing I keep reflecting on is if a teacher teaches in King's Cove or they teach in Bonavista or they teach at Holy Heart, they get the same pay. A nurse in Bonavista, a nurse in Clarendville and a nurse at the Health Sciences would get the same pay. Doctors, not.

Remember, we're not talking about the volume or the quantity of doctors; we're talking about if a doctor saves lives in the Bonavista hospital they will not get the same pay as what a physician would get in a category A hospital. I would say to you, some might look at that and say that's unfair. If we look at the basic daily rate, 30 to 35 per cent of what the physician would get in Category A hospital as what the doctor in the Bonavista emergency room would receive. Keep in mind, government added to that, as lately as December 19, by giving the physicians more money and closing that gap.

So they closed the gap to about 60 per cent now. I assume the plan would be to keep incrementally increasing the amount until they get a doctor to sign. I would say that is the wrong practice. Give them the same amount as what they would have because of the data and the volume of what the District of Bonavista would present and instead of giving you some data, I'll just take for granted – I've said it many times – the amount of visitations at the hospital in Bonavista is in the same ballpark as the Category A hospitals, several of them. Not the Health Sciences and not St. Clare's, but many of the other Category A hospitals. On Friday, there were 76 patients that went through the emerg in Bonavista. That was on Friday.

Another thing I want to throw out, government, these paramedics that are up in the galleries now, I can recall back in the school we had a guidance counsellor who was on staff and her name was Roberta Stanford. We had a guidance counsellor. When the RCMP went to a traffic accident and it was traumatic and they knew that they needed a debrief session, whenever the RCMP went, the guidance counsellor from our school would be engaged to debrief them for their own mental health.

I would say to you, our paramedics who would respond to the same call, that go to the same event as they are, if we looked at the way they operate and their job performance, I would say, they get no debriefing. I would say, for their mental health and the work quality and for their home life balance, they ought to be getting the same.

So in legislation that we present and what government does, there are a lot of things that government can do to make the life of our health care workers much better. There are many things that government can do to bridge that gap to make sure that we retain our employees.

Before I take my seat, I want to state the two things that I would suggest. Number one is that we have a time frame of which this legislation comes in. That means don't leave these paramedics for another year to continue doing what they did in '22. Let's make sure that they don't exceed another month in '23 to make sure that they've got a resolution option that would remedy it and put them back to work.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: The second thing that would be mentioned in this legislation, which is a "may," would be the binding arbitration. We change "may" to "shall" and binding arbitration, I would think that they know that there be a resolution coming because there's a will that they want to work and they

want to have a resolution. If there's a willingness to have an arbitrator, binding arbitration, then that is what the legislation should hold.

I'm interested in hearing some other people voice their opinions on the current legislation and our health care situation in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Before I recognize the next speaker, we'd like to welcome Chief Hart and his staff, Karen and Shannon, to our Speaker's gallery this afternoon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I think the crux of just about everything we discuss here has to deal with health care and providing the best health care we can to residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. Also, dual to that is ensuring that our front-line health care workers, our nurses, our doctors, our paramedics, our ambulance workers, all those have the opportunity to have a supportive work environment in which to work.

As was mentioned already I've had discussions with the Teamsters and I've had discussions with the Paramedic Association, as well as many other associations in health care. One common thread has always been – and I'm still hearing it – is the lack of respect. The lack of respect they feel they're getting. They don't feel valued. They don't feel there's fair treatment. They have concerns about compensation.

Our first responders, think about it: first responders, they're to these accidents,

they're to these events, these horrendous events, and they're probably, in many cases, the first person someone sees who's probably clinging to their life and they depend on our paramedics to look after them and get them to where they need proper care.

In my short time as shadow minister for Health, I've heard many stories. I don't know how they do it. I don't know how they do it on a daily basis and come home and leave that, leave their job where it was and come home. It's a very demanding, very strenuous and, in many cases, horrifying job, but it is also very rewarding when you can get someone who is on the brink and assure they live another day for the next 20 years. Here we are talking about essential. The definition of essential is absolutely necessary. You cannot do without them, and we can't. We can't do without them and all the other health care workers we have.

It's only this afternoon myself and my colleague here, we went to a wake. We visited an elderly gentleman who was rushed to hospital a couple of weeks back, got there – he was so thankful to get there. So thankful to get the treatment he wanted. I visited his house there last week. He appeared on all accounts to be doing fine. But this past weekend, he passed. But it's because of the response of our paramedics that this gentleman had extra time to say goodbye to his families. That means so much to so many, and our paramedics mean that much to us. They truly do.

So we're here trying to deal with health care in this province, which is beyond crisis. I don't know what we can call it now, but it's too important to bring legislation to this House and have a technical briefing with the Opposition on a Sunday night, 12 hours before it's being presented. To hear that those, the paramedics Teamsters, they have their briefing on the morning of and we hear from the minister responsible that he reached out to the union on Saturday – on Saturday.

If our paramedics were as slow in responding and addressing an emergency situation, there'd be many lives not with us today – many. We depend on these people, these men and women. If we're going to call them equally essential to those in our public system, those who are of similar qualifications, doing a similar job, yet not apparently treated the same, certainly not reimbursed the same, this is what we need to deal with. This is what we need to deal with sooner rather than later.

This group were in conciliation for 10 months – 10 months – and issues like this were here longer than that, much longer than that. We sat in this House in the last sitting – we were willing to keep this House open. We said it many times: Let's get down and deal with the issues we need to deal with. That was right in the middle of the conciliation. This did not just appear.

Why were not having those discussions then or before? Why are we putting, this past weekend, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at a heightened level of anxiousness because they may not have an ambulance provider to arrive at their door when they need it? Why did we drive our paramedics to do that? I know they don't want to do that. I know each and every one of them is dedicated to their job. They want to work. They want to save lives. They want to do the best they can.

Even if they do pick up a person and they take that person into the hospital, Health Sciences, they don't want to be waiting there for hours to offload a patient. They want to make sure that patient gets in to where he or she is going to get the care they want so they can go back out and do the job they were trained to do. That's what they want to do.

They don't want to be on call for 20-odd hours and be paid for 10. Think about it. If you were on call for all these hours, but hang on now, you're only getting paid for this many. How many of us would do that?

How many of us would do that? Not many and that's how dedicated these people are to their job.

But this government is driving them out on a daily basis. You talk about contingency plans over the weekend. We hear it's all going to be looked after. In the situation we're in, where were they getting these people? We're lucky, from what the minister told us, they only had one serious issue over the weekend. How lucky we are. How lucky that one serious incident was.

Truly, this reminds me of the piece of legislation we had on the regional health authorities, combining them, little or no consultation and we kept this House open so the groups that needed to could review that legislation and ensure it was going to do what our front-line, people with lived experiences, want and needed to do.

Here we are in a very similar situation. Our paramedics have agreed and reached out. They've reached out to say okay, we'll go back to work. We'll go back to work this afternoon, so the urgency is not theirs. So we can work through this as best we can, whether it's another 12 hours today or tomorrow. That's how dedicated they are to what they do. That's how dedicated they are. They don't want to be out like this, but they do demand respect and to be treated fairly, to feel valued, because there's nothing worse, if you're doing a job and you feel disrespected and you feel undervalued and you feel like no one really cares.

Well, I can tell you, with total confidence, we care, and I would hope we all care in this House. It's just different approaches, but we all care about the health and well-being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We've just got to make sure we take the right steps to do that. In the last couple of months of the sitting of the House, we asked questions. I won't quote them, but there are many ministers across the way – the Premier, the past minister of Health,

even the Minister of Finance – in questions we've talked about and we asked about the plan and Health Accord, and they all referred to it as it's referred to in the introductory letter: It's a collection or a composition of options and recommendations that may be implemented.

But it's not a plan. It's not a plan with targets, with benchmarks, with how you evaluate success. It is a collection of actions and recommendations for implementation. That's right out of the Health Accord. Now they're all great. There are some good ones in there, no doubt, because it's a good piece of work done. But when I get the Premier getting up and reciting oh, we offered bursaries, we offered five additional seats and on and on, and talk about tremendous and significant success, where is it? If we have 19 taking advantage of a bursary and 200 are leaving, how's that success?

They came in with a pilot last year to try and lure retired doctors back to work. Where's that? The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair was only in the press there a couple of weeks ago saying that retired doctors are not coming out of retirement because of COVID and the different illnesses there. So within their own caucus they're doing this, but there's no support here.

So it's great to throw this and that at a wall, but what are you expecting from it? If that's our approach, what do our paramedics – what do they think of that? How can they look at it with any confidence that this government is truly invested and truly has a plan with targets, benchmarks and timelines and what they're aiming for and when, for all these things they've brought in.

Now, I'm not arguing that bursaries and adding additional seats and the like are not positive, but how do they play into the big picture when we see the number of those without a primary doctor going up, still going up – 136,000 without? That just leads to

greater people becoming ill, more calls to 911 and more of these individuals going out on the road to save somebody.

So when we held this up today – I say, we, although it was the gentleman next to me – it's all about doing the right thing and making sure your t's are crossed and your i's are dotted. We look to those with front-line experience, those with lived experience, those who know how the system operates and knows what is needed. That's what we should be doing anyway. There's no harm in letting the labour process work itself out through conciliation. That's what it's there for.

But there's also no harm picking up the phone as the minister responsible and making the call saying, Mr. President, how's it going? What's happening? Is there anything I should be aware of? Develop that rapport. You don't have to insert yourself into the negotiations.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. DINN: But that's not what you would be doing. The Member across here is singing out. Obviously, he has a better way to deal with this.

PEI, in dealing with their nurses, they developed a rapport with their nurses to keep them there. That doesn't mean you're inserting yourself into the process. Doesn't mean you're hands-off all the time. The responsibility for health care here in the province lies with government. The responsibility here for labour lies with government.

Now, there are mechanisms in there for doing it, there are timelines and so on. The Member across says you'd be inserting yourself there, I don't know. How is that any different from a fishing trip? How is it any different, really? No, but how is it? The Premier can talk to individuals and it's not inserting or conflict, but when I suggest that

a Member reach out to paramedics and have a chat it's not doable, double standard.

I did not want to go down that route but the Member across took me there. This is about health care. This is about people in this province who need the best health care. Right now, they're having a hard time getting it and they depend upon our paramedics here to get you there. They are first responders. When you're lying on a road and you don't know if you're going to make it, these people do it.

I think we do have to consult with them. We do have to ensure that the legislation we bring in meets everyone's checklist in terms of what's needed. That's also including the employer. You go through a collective process, collective bargaining, conciliation but you come a point where it's either working or it's not working. It's at that point someone should reach out. Right now, we've left it too long, but I'm hoping we'll have this settled today, if not tomorrow, for the benefit of all. It's a small stepping stone because there are many other issues to be addressed. Moving forward, there are many other issues to address.

When I spoke to the president of the Teamsters, a similar response. I think his response was: baby steps. This is moving on and I hope it is. I really do truly hope that it is. I do hope that our paramedics and our first responders know that we appreciate you. We appreciate everything you do. We just got to start showing it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this very important bill and this very important day. As so many of the folks, at least on this side of the House, have been

speaking, there is a great deal of urgency and emergency to this bill. Just the fact that we've been called back here today underlines what's happening.

I do believe, as my predecessor just indicated, we all care. We have different perspectives, but what I'm asking everyone in this House and this Legislature to think about is exactly the rationale for this bill.

I did have an opportunity, I'm pleased to say, during the break today to speak with several of those that are in the gallery that are directly affected by why we're here. What I saw then and what I'm witnessing here in this House as we go through the debate is a great deal of concern. I feel it's important that government has listened to their situation and is responding in this way.

As a former minister responsible for the Labour Relations Board, I would also like to concur with the current minister and I acknowledge his – what I thought were very good – answers in Question Period today because the minister has to take a hands-off perspective. You deploy your best team, and I have to say even the briefing, although, granted this is coming quickly, but to sit with staff last night, we are blessed with very sharp, capable people in the Labour Relations Board. I have to compliment Yvonne Scott, somebody I have known for years and I feel we're very lucky to have her. I don't know who the minister appointed to work with both the employer and the people that I am seeing here in this gallery today, but I'm sure they're equally capable.

As we have said time and again in this last hour and throughout this day, we had hoped, you certainly allow the parties to try to reach an amenable and reconciliation of differences and come forward with a matter that we could all agree. That wasn't happening.

I also have to compliment the fact that we have a very solid bill here. This isn't

something that has been rushed through in its preparation: it was there. Again, I compliment the government and the minister for being ready, essentially hoping that the parties could reach a resolution and they were unable to.

Here we are today, and as I was explaining to the folks in the gallery, essentially what's going, this is called second reading, we typically can take up to three days on a minimum to pass a piece of legislation. We hope to do as much of that today. Perhaps we can get through to third reading, we'll have to see, but it requires the consent of the House when we change the way we procedurally do things. We still have to go through those steps, but we have to make sure we have the blessing of everyone involved.

What I wanted to do was just draw on a little bit – especially for those that are listening, either on the broadcast or here in the gallery. As I spoke to them at lunch today, it was clear that they haven't had a chance to see the legislation either. So if I could, I would like to explain some of the elements of it. I can't go into the clauses of the bill because that's what we're going to do when we go into Committee, but I would like to talk about the rationale for the bill.

If I may, I'm going to go directly, I think, to the cover of the bill. There are a couple of things – though I think I'm going to mention also that we are doing it at this time because as we – I often keep track, not often, every Question Period I keep track of every question. I've done that for the years that I've been here. It's quite interesting to go back on it.

Of course, today was dominated by this sudden callback to the Legislature, our health system, issues around it, the ambulatory system, the Health Accord and so on. Obviously, we were 100 per cent focused on that today. There are some different perspectives, but this has been a big topic.

This is also, though, why for the last couple of years this province has been engaged in a re-imagining of our health care system. As I think the Premier indicated – and I just ran home to see my wife and had a little lunch. I was watching the national news and there we are talking about what's happening in this Legislature today, but also talking about the rather, I would suggest, innovative, creative and unique approaches to dealing with an issue that is very much of an international status. We are not sitting back; we are trying to do what we can to ensure that the residents of this province, and those that come to our province, are protected with the health care system that they deserve.

If I may, I'm going to go to the bill and I'm just going to talk about the rationale for it, again, for those that are watching. Most of us have a copy of it in front of us. This bill is Bill 24. It's called the *Essential Ambulance Services Act* and it does a variety of things. It requires “an employer of and a bargaining agent for ambulance workers to enter into an essential ambulance services agreement.” That's essentially what we're talking about today.

If and when we can conclude, if it can be today, perhaps tomorrow, essentially, and when it goes to Royal Assent, there would be a requirement then to go back to the negotiating table and to enter into that agreement, as is laid out in the details of this. For those that will be watching during Committee, you'll have an opportunity to hear more about that.

This act would also “prescribe the terms of an essential ambulance services agreement.” So it will actually outline what agreement will need to be in place for any future job action. It will “allow the parties to an essential ambulance services agreement to apply to the Labour Relations Board” – to which the minister is the lead on that – “to settle the terms of an essential ambulance services agreement where the parties are unable to agree and to resolve disputes with

respect to the essential ambulance services agreement.”

This bill will also “allow a party to an essential ambulance services agreement to apply to the Labour Relations Board where the party believes that the agreement deprives the party of a meaningful right to strike or a meaningful right to lockout employees.” So, essentially, and as I was speaking to the folks that are gathered here out in the lobby, it will actually empower you. You don’t need both sides to feel that you need to come to the Labour Relations Board. You, as a union with the employees, folks that are here watching, you will be able to apply to the LRB yourselves to seek support and assistance in this situation.

This legislation also “authorize the Labour Relations Board to make an order referring a matter to binding arbitration where the board determines that an essential ambulance services agreement has the effect of depriving employees of a meaningful right to strike or an employer of a meaningful right to lockout employees.” So as I’ve heard some commentary early this morning, this is by no means taking away an employees fundamental right to strike. All it is saying is put this essential services agreement in place first and if nothing else can be resolved, that right to strike, one that we trust and value in this country, certainly in this province, is still there.

It “sets out the powers and procedures of an arbitration board with respect to disputes regarding the meaningful right to strike or to lockout employees.”

This Bill 24 prohibits “an employer from locking out ambulance workers where an essential ambulance services agreement is not in effect.” So this could, of course, extend to other private operators in the province. It would be hoped that you and your situation with your employer would have an agreement in place. But for

everybody else out there in the private world, this would also apply.

Bill 24 prohibits “a bargaining agent from declaring a strike of ambulance workers where an essential ambulance services agreement is not in effect.”

It prohibits “an employer from locking out ambulance workers who are required to work under an essential ambulance services agreement.”

It prohibits “a bargaining agent from declaring a strike of ambulance workers who are required to work under an essential ambulance services agreement.”

This bill prohibits “an ambulance worker who is required to work under an essential ambulance services agreement from participating in a strike against the employer.” So as some has said to me in the last several hours there is balance here and it’s, again, to protect the health care system, but I feel that everyone watching, from whatever your perspective, you’re going to agree we need this clarity of thought, this clarity of direction when we’re talking about, let’s face it, a very essential service. Finally, it prescribes “the penalties for contravening the Act.”

So for my colleagues that I spoke to earlier, I hope that helps you a little bit understanding the scope, the rationale, why we’re here. Again, when we go into Committee you’ll be hearing more detail but I also wanted to end my remarks by saying, again, another compliment to you. It’s clear that those that have had to take this job action don’t want to be there. They’d rather be doing what they do well, what they’re trained to do, what they have been professionally serving our province in a very admirable manner and it’s unfortunate but here it is.

We’re here to support you and we hope that you’re seeing the rationale for why we’re here and, certainly, if you have any

questions I'm sure any Member of this Legislature will be willing to speak and answer. I'm hoping that the debate that will go on when we go into Committee will also help you with that.

To that end, thank you very much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am just going to stand and have a few minutes before we get into the other parts of the debate during Committee and third reading. I just want to say something here today, because I read it on the news and I heard the Members opposite say a couple of times about holding up this bill. I know the Leader of the Third Party, the Member for St. John's Centre, this morning, didn't give leave. I just want to explain what happened.

Last night, there was a briefing. We got some information that was sent to me. This morning it was changed. When myself and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands were discussing it this morning I was saying, it's on this page. He said, no, no, that changed again, and it did. It actually did. What I had from the bill, it actually changed.

So when the Leader of the Third Party, the Member for St. John's Centre, said no leave, it was because he never had the bill until he sat down in the House of Assembly. He wanted to do his due diligence. He came back here and he said, I can't do this because I haven't even read the bill.

That's the reason why it was done. It wasn't that he was trying to stop this one bit. It wasn't that he was trying to delay the House. He wasn't grandstanding. It's because he never had the bill and I know because when I sat down, myself and the

Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands were sharing it, it was different.

So I just had to put that on the record because I saw it in the CBC report saying that he wouldn't give leave. He was stopping the bill. He was not. He was doing his due diligence and I thank him for that because when he did that, we found out that we had a different version also.

I just had to put that on the record for all the paramedics and everybody out listening that he was doing his job to make sure that when we brought in this piece of legislation, it was for the right reason and we were making sure that we're going to discuss and debate what we need to get done to ensure that the workers will have the binding arbitration, that we need to ensure that this don't happen again. I just wanted to get that on the record, Mr. Speaker.

I just have to thank Hubert Dawe, the president of the association. I've been speaking to Hubert numerous times over this, some very open, very candid conversations. I can tell you, and we all heard everybody stand up here today thanking the paramedics, and we all know the work that you do. A lot of us seen it personally. A lot of family members saw it personally. But there's something that wasn't said that I want to say to the paramedics. If the paramedics, sitting in our galleries and that's out in the West Coast today didn't take the bold stand that you did, we would not be here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. JOYCE: We would not be here.

When you all get together and you talk and Hubert is talking to you guys and ladies, and you're here discussing all this here today, just remember it's because you took the bold step that we had enough. We can't get our work done. There are people suffering because of the working conditions that we have. We had enough, we're going to go out

and we're going to say we're going to take a stand on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We all owe you a great debt of gratitude for what you did and the bold stand. The publicity that you took in the media for saying that we need to do this, now we understand the reason why you had to do it.

With the quick action by the government, they realized that when you took that bold step, the system breaks down. The working conditions that you were all under was not worth putting yourselves, putting your patients and putting the whole health care system – so thank you for standing up and taking the bold step. If now, we would not be here today. Thank you very much for that and thank Hubert for the leadership that he had through all this also.

I'm just going to go through a few items on this, and we hear all the concerns today about the health care system breaking down. We know the concerns in the health care system; we know it. I'll just give you a good example, a prime example. This may seem, okay, Eddie Joyce is bringing something up again. I know there are ambulances who bring seniors from their homes to the hospital for an appointment because they have cataracts and they can't drive. We have 800 people with cataracts in Western Newfoundland and they actually get ambulances to bring them to the hospitals for appointments because they lost their licence and we can't get it done. Just that alone.

I heard the Minister Responsible for Labour talk today, Environment and Climate Change and responsible for labour relations, about the binding arbitration and in this act it does say that it is binding arbitration. You say the board can order it. The board shall. It is there. It says "shall." It is actually there. It says "shall."

The questions I'm going to ask the minister – it's on page 14. It starts on page 13, subsection (6): "... shall order binding

arbitration." So that is there and then section 20 is the Terms of Reference on that. From my understanding – and the minister could stand and confirm this – this here mirrors the public sector bargaining act. From my understanding, this here mirrors it.

If the minister can clarify that – and I'm under the understanding, and I need the minister to confirm this when he stands up, once you go through the process and then there's no agreement reached and it goes to Labour Relations Board and they go, it shall be binding arbitration. I just want to put that on the record.

I told the president that I would do this, through the minister. I have given the minister fair notice that to ensure that once it goes to the Labour Relations Board, there's no misunderstanding that it is binding arbitration. The minister can confirm that. That's what's here. In one part it says the Labour Relations Board "may." The reason why that is, from my understanding and past history, is the Labour Relations Board is a quasi-judicial board and you can't order them what to do, but they usually move it on to that.

So that is part of the reason, but when you get into that other section, when they go through the process and they go through the steps, it does say they shall order binding arbitration. They do say that and I just want to put that on the record and I ask the minister can he clarify that later when he speaks.

If we all agree and paramedics agree that if we go through all this process, then all of a sudden, once we get to that part with the Labour Relations Board there is no misunderstanding, absolutely none, that binding arbitration is final. I just need the minister to clarify that and when the minister clarifies that then, of course, I think that will ease a lot of people's minds and that's my complete understanding of it.

The other thing I'll say to the paramedics that are on strike now and walked out is you're going to have to go through a process now. The process, sometimes, is going to be tough. It is because now you've got to sit down and you've got to negotiate and you've got to get essential services. It's going to be tough. But remember, the first one that you do for all the other paramedics across the province, you're going to be the leaders in it. It's going to be tough, but hang in there because what you do is going to be the stepping stone for all other binding arbitration agreements in the province.

You already took the bold step to get us back here to do this so work on making sure and stick together to make sure you get to the process of either a settlement that's suitable to you, the union and all the members, or you get the binding arbitration because that is going to be the blueprint for all others in your field.

I ask you to be patient on it because sometimes it will be hard. It will be stressful. It will be time consuming, but in the long run it will be worth it. I can say that.

I ask the minister also, and again I said I'll put this on the record, this agreement, is this for all paramedics across the province or just for the group that's out now?

B. DAVIS: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: For all? Okay, the Minister of Environment and Climate Change and Minister Responsible for Labour, he's saying for all paramedics.

B. DAVIS: Private.

E. JOYCE: All private paramedics, yeah, this here is for all private.

Once again, the bold step that these men and women in the gallery took is for all private paramedics who are working for a private company in Newfoundland and Labrador. You may have taken the first

step, but there are going to be people who benefit from the work that you're doing and the stand that you took.

Once again, I'll just say, stick together, we need your services. There's absolutely no doubt, we need your services. I don't know if there's a person in this House that can say that they don't know someone who used your services. I know, personally, family members or the neighbour next door about two months ago used the services. I have a friend out in Stephenville, who works in Stephenville, who's a firefighter in the Town of Humber Arm South who contacted me on Sunday to have a chat about this. You go beyond your own work.

Minister, when you get an opportunity, just ensure and have it on the record that it is binding arbitration so there's no confusion for anybody in this House of what it is, so when we decide and we vote on this piece of legislation that we will say, yes, that the end result is binding arbitration. That is extremely important, Minister. We need that confirmed just for the people in the paramedic profession in Newfoundland and Labrador to know that once it's said, okay, we have an end result. If we can't get a fair agreement, we have a way out, so we don't stranglehold the health care system in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador like we're doing now.

The sad part about it all this, I know a lot of paramedics, I don't know too many here in the galleries, but I know a lot of paramedics and they don't want to be doing this. They don't want to be here and saying now, listen here, we're not going to go out there, maybe putting the work on the other people. They don't want to be at this. None of them wants to be in this gallery listening to us in debate today. But what they need and what they're saying to all of us, the government included, and we have to be a part of it, the whole government account and offer suggestions and ideas, what we need to do is to say there's a system that's broke, let's work together to get this system working. This is

the first step. This is the first step that we see right now that the paramedics are stating from their profession, here's what we need.

I always say to people, when you really want to know something go to the experts. What's broken? Go to the experts. The experts here in the ambulance service are the paramedics in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So once this concludes, Minister, and I know and we heard it discussed earlier, it's nice to keep in contact and say, okay, what can we do? How can we bring something different to the lifestyle? I heard it earlier about the – I think the Member for Ferryland brought it up. No, the Member for Bonavista brought it up about post-traumatic stress. That's real. It's real. So what can we do, as a government, to set up to help alleviate that? What can we do? That's the kind of steps, Minister, that once this is going to be resolved, that's the kind of steps you, as the minister, can say, okay, how can we set up a working group here to see what we can do for people across Newfoundland and Labrador?

I noticed also on the news today Duane Antle, president of firefighters' association. A lot of firefighters stepped up and did some extra things during this time. I just have to recognize that also because they do a lot of work and I know they work hand-in-hand with the paramedics across the province. I know a lot of paramedics are firefighters also. So they're doing double duty as a volunteer to help out their communities and their towns.

I'll just take my seat. I won't go into the full bill right now, but I just want to say let's have a very healthy debate. Let's talk about the concerns in the health care system, which are real. This is a prime opportunity for us to speak about it. But the main goal here, in this whole debate, is to ensure that the paramedics across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador – they have

enough stress as it is, they have enough stress. They should not be having to worry about their working conditions. They should not be having to worry about if they can pay their mortgage. They should not be having to worry about, well, if I'm working too many hours, I can't do my job properly. They shouldn't have to do that and this is a prime opportunity for us now to focus on this.

Long after this debate is done, long after this is resolved, long after we vote, we need to ensure that we look at other issues that may affect the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, the primary people who have the first contact with many residents in need in Newfoundland and Labrador to ensure that they are in the best position possible to do the best job possible. It's up to us as the 40 legislators in this province to do what we can and support each other.

I know there's going to be a debate here and I'm going to be one of them in the debate about health care across the province, but when we leave here, we should try to ensure that we did the best possible – in the legislation – outcome to ensure that the paramedics in Newfoundland and Labrador who work for private companies will have the best working conditions you can get across Canada.

Let's not say that other conditions got it. Let's be the leader, set up programs, set up examples that we could be leaders, how we treat our paramedics, how we help them in time of need, how we ensured that they don't have to worry about the food to put on their tables, the kids going to extracurricular, how about paying for their mortgages of their house and when they're in time of need – because there are situations that the paramedics see that we would run from – that we need to make sure that their mental health and well-being is taken care of long after we leave this House of Assembly and have this debate.

So I'll take my seat, Mr. Speaker, and once again I'm sure on behalf of every Member of this House of Assembly and every Officer of this House of Assembly, thank you for the work you do. We appreciate it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always a great honour to stand in this House and represent the good people of our great District of Placentia West - Bellevue. One in particular I know that's watching today is my dad, Dennis Dwyer.

The question here really is why are we here today? That's what everybody wants to know. It's really about the protection of people. It's about the protection of services. We always say that our people are our greatest asset, but we don't necessarily treat them that way. For these people to have to take this action today is beyond reprehensible, really, because there was lots of opportunity for this to be put to bed or to come to an agreement and this, today, didn't necessarily need to happen.

We are looking at the protection of the employees. Not just the services, not just the people that need those services, but the people that provide those services, which are here in our gallery today. Yes, they are essential; we can't really have a health care system without them. But I don't think that we need to have a two-tier health care system. As my colleague for Bonavista alluded to about Halifax Street and Ottawa Street, well, if one of my paramedics has to come from, let's say, Marystown or has to come from Arnold's Cove or Clarendville or Whitbourne, they have a drive ahead of them before they even get there. They don't have a seven-minute response time.

They are working on these people all the way to the hospital at the Health Sciences,

no different than a health care worker for Eastern Health, but the person from Eastern Health is getting an exorbitant amount of money more for doing the exact same work. I would contend that our EMTs, our paramedics and our ambulance attendants in rural Newfoundland have stepped up and gone above and beyond. At the end of the day, they need to be protected. They deserve what they are asking for. They deserve to be able to sit down to a table and negotiate and bargain in good faith. That is why we have a labour code. That's why we have labour laws. It is not for anybody to skirt the issue because if they are trying to skirt the issue, we'd need to come back in here and change the legislation. That is the way it works.

But for us to have this in conciliation for 10 months shows a lack of respect, as my colleague, the shadow minister for Health, alluded to. So what I would ask when we are here debating Bill 24, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services, then how about we get to that and start using integrity and respect of how we treat our workers in our health care system and our education system and all workers in our province that work privately and publicly? That's why we have labour standards.

I have said it before in this House and I will say it again today: We have to stop looking at our health care system as a cost. We have to invest in our health care system. We have an aged demographic right now in Newfoundland and Labrador spread out over a vast area. That's going to hiccup us all the time. But when we look at the Burin Peninsula, for instance, the average age of the Burin Peninsula now is 54. They're going to want to use ambulance services, and there is probably none better than what's being provided right now on the Burin Peninsula.

I will commend the companies that do work within my district. But the thing with my district is we don't have a physical hospital.

Everybody from my district that has any issue has to be transported outside of our district to a hospital. It's these good people here who are providing that service. For that, I will support them 120 per cent every day, all day long and unequivocally. And so should this government because they deserve it.

We don't expect employers to come in and break even or lose money, because then they have to start laying people off. That's never going to be a good business model; I understand that. But it has to be equitable and fair of how you treat your employees and what you provide for them to be able to do their job to the best of their ability. It seems pretty simple to me. But it's fraught with integrity and respect. That's what we want to do with our health care system. That's what we need to do.

But how do we do that? By considering it to be an investment, not a cost. I know that the people that are in this audience today are good at their job, but it takes passion to do that for a 24-hour shift and only get paid for 11¾. That right there is integrity and respect. They're not leaving us hanging, but we're leaving them hanging and we should never have done it. These people here are showing up here today, they're fighting not only for themselves, but for their colleagues that can't be here today because they're providing services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. They're going to stand here and they're going to represent everybody. I'm here to protect them as well.

We don't need a two-tier system; equal work for equal pay. We've said that in this House before. We've talked about pay-equity legislation and all this kind of stuff, but we're not even doing it within our own province for people that are doing equal work. That doesn't need a gender lens. That just means that people deserve the same benefits for the same work, that's it.

If somebody is on a 24-hour shift and they're only getting paid for 12 of them, I'll

average it up, then maybe for the other 12 hours, because they can't make any plans, they have to stay in the area, this is not time to themselves or anything like that, probably not the full wage – there are probably days that they're probably not going to be going out if they're on call for those 12 hours, but they need to be compensated for their time. Why not give them, I don't know, two-thirds of their hourly rate so that they can feel like they're being respected and that they can do their job when they're called upon? It's just trying to treat people fairly that have always, always, always gone above and beyond to help the people of our province. That's integrity. That's what our whole system should be built on. It's treating people fairly, equitably and respectfully.

These people have been very respectful today in our Chamber. There's been no yelling or no adversity or anything like that. Like other MHAs in the House, I went out and spoke with some of them in the lobby as well. Some of these people I represent as well, because of the different ambulance services that are in the District of Placentia West - Bellevue.

But what I wanted to ensure to them was that we're listening and we do want you to get a fair and equitable deal, but you need a willing participant to come to that table and it has to be in good faith. Ten months of conciliation, that's not bargaining in good faith; that's just gone way beyond the ability to get your point across, as far as I'm concerned.

So I will say that all problems have solutions. It's incumbent on everybody in this House to find that solution that these people that are fighting for their daily lives, and fighting to save lives daily, are here trying to be protected.

When you look at the vast area of our land, yes, there's going to be a lot of ambulance services that are needed. But if somebody in St. John's that can make a seven-minute call and have a drop off and depending on

the situation, you're talking about a half hour to an hour and they're unloaded and gone back on the road. It's a half an hour or an hour right now in rural Newfoundland before we can get an ambulance to be there because they're so overworked, because they're so undermanned. That's what we need. We need to look at this as a respectful workplace function. They're not asking for the moon. They're just asking for a bit of respect and an opportunity to go to the table and to bargain in good faith.

How that bargaining goes, that's up to them. That's up to the two parties, but we have to get to the table. Ten months in conciliation, I will say, is just way too long.

So the last thing that I will say is why are we here today? Because it's incumbent on us, as 40 Members of 40 districts in this province, to not only look out to the public sector employees but the private sector employees as well and make sure that our employers are all being fair and equitable as well because, at the end of the day, an essential service, as my colleagues said, is absolutely needed. We absolutely need every single one of you and every one of your colleagues.

Thank you for being here today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I guess the easiest way to start this is, you know, I didn't come here today to play around. I never do. It's important to understand my reasons for refusing leave; I take this job far too seriously.

We had a change in the Orders of the Day. We had a technical briefing that was less than adequate; difficult to get access to the legislation; it changed again today; no opportunity, really, to engage with those

who are going to be affected by this and to get the necessary information we need. It's just too important.

Why is it too important? I'll speak, certainly, through you Speaker, to those in the gallery. It is important to remember – and I said this in relation to education – that the working conditions of our paramedics are the care conditions of the patients that they care for, that they take in their ambulance. That's an important thing to remember.

In my family, we've had two occasions whether it was my father who died of a heart attack or my brother who was killed in an accident, and often the very first people who are on the scene, not the family, but the paramedics are there. They're not called to give good news or to respond to good news, they're there in life and death situations. In some cases, situations that will probably traumatize them for life. So I commend them.

It's very much a people job, you're dealing with people, you're always dealing with someone who is need of help, but also the loved ones of that person who are probably dealing with tragedy as well. They take that home with them. I don't know how you compartmentalize it, but I'm sure that's something that they try to do.

The decision to strike, Speaker, is a difficult decision. I've been there as a teacher; two strikes in my career. That's well over 32 years. That's probably the only two strikes in the teaching profession here. To get people, especially if you look at people who are in emergencies dealing with people, to take that step, it's very difficult. When they take that step, their backs are against the wall. In this case, you had almost 100 per cent (inaudible) that tells you the level of dissatisfaction, when they would rather be serving the people in need.

Now, I've heard here certainly in term of the word crisis. I had the Premier earlier today shake his head and tut-tut at me in terms of

what a terrible thing you're doing here. So this is a crisis of – let's call it what it is – this is a crisis of the Liberal government's own making. It's akin to a pyromaniac crying fire and that's what this comes down to.

In the spring of 2021, the minister of Labour brought in a conciliation officer that was assigned by government. That was in May. Now maybe a little bit too late to bring in legislation during that sitting, but it's been done, but it could have been brought into anticipating a job action. We could have had legislation around essential workers in the fall sitting – nothing. So it seems then that government was concerned in the spring of 2021 that, well, we need to bring in a conciliation officer, but did nothing. So even though the union was looking for essential worker legislation, the government sat on its hands. There was no communication.

November: a legal strike position. All the warning signs were there that the union and its employer were heading towards a confrontation that was going to have tremendous impact on the people of this province. Not until the strike was called and there were contingency plans in place, so we're told, that all of a sudden the crisis was upon it and if we delay the debate by even one day, people will die. That should have been a concern back in May of 2021. That should have been a priority to make sure that the people who put their lives and their health and well-being on roads, when we don't dare go out, they should have been looked after.

The first time, basically, today that government decides to open up any conversation with them was after the fact that we refused to give leave, not once, but twice. Then, all of a sudden, the Minister Responsible for Labour is calling the leader of the union, Mr. Dawe, out. The Premier is there and the Minister of Health and all of a sudden there's a big conference there to try and deal with the issue. That, no doubt, is being proactive, but in many ways that's a conversation that could have and should

have been had a long time ago. If nothing else, just to bring the legislation in.

I wanted to go back, though, because the minister is fond of talking about how he wants to take a hands-off approach to negotiations. In fact, I think this legislation has probably done more to interfere with that process. I'll tell you why.

in May 2021 the headline on CBC reads: "Paramedic strike vote delayed by labour minister's intervention." That's from the CBC. It goes on to talk about how Minister Davis "appointed a conciliation board to bring Teamsters Local 855 and the Fewer group of ambulance companies closer to a contract."

Mr. Dawe talks about how they got slapped with a letter announcing the decision: "It is upsetting," he's quoted as saying, "to members to no end that they're not allowed to exercise the rights that are normally afforded to unionized people

"And our province, despite the fact that they can't interfere with private business, has taken these deliberate actions to undermine the efforts that are being put forward by our members." At that time, it didn't cross the minister's mind to think, well, maybe we need to get ready for this and bring in essential worker legislation for the ambulance group. Didn't cross the minister's mind.

Instead, what we do, what government did, is that rather than bring that in and be proactive and have it in place in advance, to make sure that people's lives weren't put at risk, we wait, or government waits, until members are on strike. Now, we'll introduce this legislation, which is going to have the effect, no doubt, of basically setting back the clock a little with regard to negotiations. They've already gone this route and once again, it's hard not to interpret this as a way of basically cutting short the strike and trying to show, I guess, to the public that government is actually taking some action

here; we're being proactive. In many ways, though, this is basically what started the fire in the first place and they're scrambling to put it out.

I know that polling season is coming up. I guess it's important that government looks like they're taking a strong stance and they're doing something. Unfortunately, they had plenty of opportunity to make sure, to get this done beforehand. Yet today, if there's any clear message, you heard it from Mr. Dawe today – well, you'll hear it in the news – in a gesture of good faith, they approached the employer to get ambulances back on the road by 4, to get their paramedics back on the road by 4 today; in other words, well ahead of any legislation. The problem could have been solved in many ways as a sign of good faith and that was rejected.

Even more disturbing I guess – and I brought this up in Question Period – is what has the government done to reach out to the employer and say, look, you know what, they've made this offer, get back at it and we'll work this out. But that might be considered interfering or intervening with the negotiating process. Yet, we can see that back in May, the media considered an intervention. Mr. Dawe considered it an intervention. This legislation could be considered a back-door intervention and a way to interfere. Yet, here you have a chance – folks, it is now 5 o'clock. An hour and 15 minutes ago, we could have had ambulances back on the road. I am assuming – I would like to believe that government actually called Mr. Fewer and said, listen, how do we make this happen while we're debating. No such call I would assume; I stand to be corrected.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: Well, it is almost like being back in high school again.

The fact is the government should have done this – the minister, the Premier, the

Minister of Health should have taken a more proactive approach months ago, but it is something we have come to expect.

I think of, if anything else, what our concern is that somehow this legislation and the way it was brought in again is what are we voting on and is it going to have a negative impact, not only on the workers who are manning these ambulances and who are responding to calls, but also on the people who need their help. Because our memories are short if we forget the health act in the last sitting; remember, oops, didn't consult with the Privacy Commissioner. Oops, we'll have to make sure – but that was supposed to be good legislation; trust us.

Pay equity legislation, the same thing. A lot of consultation that didn't happen there, a lot of gaps in it, so I am not totally surprised. But if I am going to be making a decision, Speaker, and to vote on something, assuming of course that there were actually contingency plans put in place, then we had time, if nothing else, to sit down today and discuss this. Or better yet, to discuss this with the Teamsters leadership and with the other unions who may or may not be affected by this because I can tell you in talking to the union leaders, they don't really know what's in this and how it's going to affect their workers and the people they serve.

I do know in talking to the leadership that there were clauses in the original legislation that, if passed, probably would've caused paramedics to quit, which would've brought a greater emergency on us and we would've had a bigger problem.

It comes down, then, when I look at this, this is people's lives. I've had a first-hand experience with my family; I know the work they do. I know the work and I don't know the work, because I haven't had to live the more horrific events. What are they looking for? Better wages and a pension plan. A pension plan that will allow them to retire with some dignity, and maybe even for that

matter to retire earlier. I don't think that's a lot. That's not a cost; that's an investment about bringing maybe some parity between the people in the private system with those who are in the public system.

We're very good about mouthing about how important our front-line workers are. Government is especially good at it, but when it comes to walking the talk, not so much. We talk about the incentives and the retention bonuses. Well, we had retention bonuses; it was called severance. The whole purpose of severance was to get people to stay for 10 years or so. By that time, they're settled in. That was a retention bonus. It was this government that eliminated it. So much for incentivizing people to stay in these professions. Now they'll come out, well, we gave \$2,000 here, \$5,000 here, that should be enough, shouldn't it?

Now, I think if anything else, it's very clear when you look at the recruiting efforts abroad to Ireland where our nurses and health care professionals are going through their own contract negotiations. Because the message might as well be come to Newfoundland, the weather's great, the living conditions are fine and housing is affordable. Contract negotiations, the labour relations, well, not much better, but hey, that's what it comes down to. Because you really don't have to in many ways – if the Irish nurses are making less than what we make here, you can bring them in, take care of the problem and never really have to address the issue of our nurses here in this sitting. We're going to see it bleed. We're going to see the system bleed again.

So at some point, I guess, send a message – here's a message I think if I were in the public sector, if I were still a teacher and the people in the public sector, send a clear message that we're going to make a commitment that from here on in we're committed to pay equity and parity. That we are going to guarantee that we're going to make sure that from here on in no

mandated overtime shifts. That we're going to make sure that we have a pension set-up for the people who are in the private ambulance care system. That we're going to do everything we can from here on in to eliminate the working conditions, a commitment, a covenant, if you will. That we're going to do our level best to make sure that the things that are driving you from the profession into casual work conditions or into as a travelling nurse are going to be rectified so that you'll want to come back. Because the nurses and the people in the health care and certainly these people up here are probably not buying it at this point in time. Walk the talk is what I'm asking of government here.

The Teamsters have made it clear that their members are burnt out. They're not paid for wait times for primary ambulance services. They want respect and remuneration for the work they are doing. Now, I understand from government's point of view, the benefit of, I guess, a private ambulance service, too, of contracting out P3s, whatever you want to call it, privatized system is that they get to deliver the services at a savings, at a deal. But the people who are paying for this deal are the people who are driving these ambulances, who are providing the care. That is the cost and I think they are worth the investment.

So if anything else, I think I'll end right here with this, maybe we need to address a few other things and we can start solving the problem. Many people in my district have called me, Speaker; they still don't have a primary care doctor, a nurse practitioner. We have a long waiting list. How much progress have we made, Speaker, on this?

I was speaking to people on the Northern Peninsula last night, it's two hours at least, depending on an ambulance, if you have a heart attack, depending if an ambulance is gone on somewhere else. What are we doing to make sure that there's always access to an ambulance, either air ambulance or road? And what are we doing,

too, with regards to establishing these virtual emergency rooms?

So if anything else, where are we? Let's get these collaborative care clinics up and going, ambulance and the virtual emergency centres and maybe we'll start seeing some progress.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's an honour to stand here today on behalf of the constituents of the District of Harbour Main to speak to this very important bill, which would enact the *Essential Ambulance Services Act*. Before I get into assessing the merits of the act and the impact of the act, I'm going to share, Speaker, with you some comments and some discussion I received from a concerned constituent on Saturday.

She happens to have worked as a paramedic for a number of years and I felt it very important that this message be relayed and the people need to hear what the experience is of being a paramedic in Newfoundland, specifically rural Newfoundland and Labrador.

She said, as I start this post, I'll say this: No one does this job for the money. No one goes to school to become a paramedic thinking they're going to get rich and live a life of luxury. Becoming and being a paramedic stems from a calling or a desire to help, I'm still trying to figure that part out.

But imagine going to a job interview or entering an educational program where you're told you will make a difference. You'll wear a uniform and drive a fancy truck with lights and sirens. Kids will get excited when they see you driving down the road and

wave and you will flick your lights and make their day. You'll do your very best to save lives and help people on their very worst days. You are to be the calm to the chaos. You are told it's going to be a rewarding career and you and your skills are gravely needed.

When you start this job, you realize the extent of it. You'll see mind-crippling scenes that your eyes will never forget. You'll attend to car accidents where you will extract mangled bodies. You'll see gruesome suicides and do CPR next to Christmas trees and kiddie pools. You will tell parents their children have died, husbands and wives their partners of 50-plus years have died. You will hear the screams of a mother when she hears that news; a scream that you will never be able to unhear.

You will hold the hands of palliative patients as they take their last breath and provide care and compassion to heartbroken families. You will be expected to respond to all the calls at all the hours, drive quickly during rush-hour traffic and foggy nights and snowstorms, when the general public struggle with pulling over and giving you the right away. At times, doing this while your partner is stood up in the back trying to provide life-saving help to the patient.

You punch these long days and deal with the repercussions and the residual effects. Your back and your knees and your hips and your mind hurt.

Now, imagine you do this job and you don't get to go home at the end of the day, not at the end of eight or 12 hours. No, you work 24-, 48- or 72-hour shifts. You do these shifts during holidays and family events. You don't get to refuse no matter how busy it is, how long you've gone without sleep or a bathroom break or a meal because, for one, you're not allowed, but also your conscience wouldn't let you anyway.

Now, do all that and only get paid 11 hours for every 24 hours you work. When your

shift ends with a minute to spare and you get a call, you do it for free. You provide all of this care in all of these situations without money or adequate compensation.

Private ambulance is an absolute travesty in this province. Enough is enough. It's time to stand up with them and for them and demand more. They deserve it, we deserve it and our communities in rural Newfoundland and Labrador deserve it. Anything less than proper compensation is completely unacceptable.

Remember this on Monday, please. From: A friend on the front lines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, when I stand here and I listen to this government today say that they value our ambulance drivers, sorry if I'm skeptical. Because when I look back, just reflecting over the past couple of years, I've had the privilege of being a Member of the House of Assembly for almost four years now, and I've met with many of the paramedics in the Holyrood area over that period of time.

I look back at a media account in May of 2021 when: "Paramedics and associated personnel employed with the largest private employer providing ambulance services in our province are set to take a vote on targeted job action." But negotiations broke down. "Teamsters Local 855 is disappointed that negotiations have broken down, saying that leaves their members with no choice but to take the next step."

But they've been patient, Speaker. This is 2023 now. Back then in 2021, do you know what the Local 855 said? They were "appealing to the provincial government to intervene."

When I hear the minister and others in the government, the Premier included, say that, well, they have been working hard on this the last 10 months. You have had

knowledge, you are aware for at least two years of the state of this situation, of the problems that exist. Yet, you've done nothing. We know how very demanding this job is, how stressful it is. We've just heard a first-hand account of a paramedic who has explained the physical, the mental, the exhaustion, the stress of being a paramedic and a first responder, the post-traumatic stress that's involved.

When I hear government say that they value that, I'm sorry, that doesn't ring true here. They must be valued. How are they going to be valued? Yes, we have to make sure that this legislation that is put in place finally will protect the interests of these emergency service workers. But again, the delays and the failures – the total, in my view, labour relations failure by this government is evident.

When I hear, Friday, the Minister of Justice state that health authorities enacting contingency services would not be interrupted. They had contingency plans. Health authorities had enacted contingency plans, yet that was on Friday, then we hear that this emergency motion was coming forward. We also, after questions by our critic – and thankfully the critic for Health here raised that question: Was there an adverse health event in our province that may have prompted this motion?

Although there's no clear explanation as to if that was the case, one is left to wonder, when fortunately we heard that it was a very serious outcome, which we don't know what that is, but Friday government stated, we've been involved in this process for close to a year and then they referenced the conciliation officer of their Labour Relations Board who, by all accounts, has been doing great work, trying to effect a resolution. But surely in 10 months, government should have recognized that there was an impasse, that a contract was out of reach here.

So the union was saying back then that strike was a real possibility. Even back in

December, the minister acknowledged that that report from the conciliation officer was on his desk. So they were aware; they had knowledge of this, Speaker.

We're left to wonder, why wasn't there action by the government? Their delay, their failure to act is very concerning. Why is it concerning? Because of the impact that this has on the people of our province. Our ambulances are sitting idle today and, over the weekend, our residents and especially our seniors – I've heard from our paramedics that the vast majority of calls that they receive are from our seniors. Our seniors are very anxious and very worried and they are the most vulnerable, if they have an emergency, if an emergency happens. Whose responsibility – I've heard government say over there today that we've been doing what we can, but we don't want to interfere in the bargaining process. We all understand the bargaining process. We know labour relations and the importance of respecting negotiations, but it clearly, Speaker, is government's responsibility to ensure emergency services are provided to all residents of this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: And when these emergency services are not provided, it is government's failure. They have to fix it.

Now, the government is putting forward legislation and we have to ensure that that legislation is going to improve the working conditions of these workers because, otherwise, we're here for no reason. This will not solve anything. It has to have provisions and protections in there so that these workers can negotiate with their employer so that this union can work with this employer and that this employer will work in good faith with the union and if that doesn't happen that there will be consequences, Speaker.

So that is the hope that this legislation will accomplish today. We looked to how we got

here. It's very concerning. I think of the Member for Ferryland who has stated that the people of Trepassey, within 180 days, their last ambulance is going to be taken out of their community. I mean, government has to do something. They have to act. We have to start valuing the workers here. We're losing paramedics. There are staffing issues, the stress and the exhaustion. They're under resourced. They feel abandoned by government. So now it is government's time to step up.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am glad to have the opportunity to speak to this bill. Mr. Speaker, I must say I have heard from a lot of Members. I agree with a lot that has been said.

Mr. Speaker, prior to, I guess, getting into politics myself I worked for many years as an Occupational Health and Safety practitioner. One of the sections of the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* that comes to mind, that kind of applies to this situation, there was a clause in the act that's called the principal contractors clause. Basically what that says is that as a principal contractor if you hire contractors to do work for you, you cannot contract away your responsibilities for safety.

Now, that's specifically to safety, but I would suggest that applies to government here in general when it comes to our ambulance operators. Certainly, they cannot contract away the responsibilities for the safety of these people in terms of having safe vehicles on the road, winter tires and so on, as required, making sure that they're having proper rest breaks and so on. All those things that we've talked about in terms of

safety, issues around PTSD and so on, and having programs to deal with that.

Under the Health and Safety Act, when it comes to those issues, government has a principal contractor who's hiring a contractor to do this work on their behalf. They cannot escape it. They have a responsibility to make sure all that is in place. But I would say, Mr. Speaker, it goes much further than that for this group of individuals because, when you think about it, these are essential public services that literally could mean life and death for people in our province – literally mean life and death.

These services are funded 100 per cent by the taxpayer. So whether my taxes are going to pay paramedics at the Health Sciences Centre, who are part of Eastern Health, the health authority; or whether they're going to pay a contractor who's then paying his employees, it's still my taxpayers' dime. All of our taxpayers' dime collectively. It is government's responsibility to ensure that taxpayers' money is spent properly on public services.

You cannot compare paramedics and put them in the same boat as, oh, well, we hire out a contractor to plow some roads, fill in the gaps for Transportation and Works, or we hire a contractor to pave roads or to fill in potholes. That's a different quintal of fish altogether. Again, we're talking about life or death services, essential services and it feels like, to me – and I'm not hanging this on this administration in particular, they just happened to be here now when everything fell apart and exploded. We can go back to the previous administration and the one before that and the one before that.

But it seems to me that really government, in general, have contracted away the responsibility. It's almost like there's this sense of as long as we can reach an agreement with private companies and reach an agreement as to how much money we're going to pay them to take this off our hands, so to speak, so we don't have to

deal with it, we just come up with some amount that a private company is willing to take to do these services and then we just walk away and our hands are free. We're free of it now. We don't have to worry about it.

But government doesn't have that luxury; government doesn't have that luxury to walk away from these services because, again, there are lives on the line.

If somebody is in some rural community or whatever and they're two hours away from a hospital and we know the issues we have now with no doctors in communities, no nurses and all this kind of stuff, so their only lifeline is these people in the gallery and their colleagues who are not here. That is their lifeline. That is their life or death. No government – and again I'm not just pinning it on this government – no government can walk away from that responsibility. We can't simply fund a private company and say that we've done our part, we've paid them, now let them look after the employees; figure it out. You can't do that. So there has to be standards.

We fund private daycare centres but when we fund private daycares there will be people coming from the government departments, I guess child, youth family services or early childhood – whatever the department is – early childhood education are going to be coming over. They're going to be inspecting these places to make sure that you got proper bathrooms and they're telling you what food you're allowed to serve.

Same thing, by the way, with nursing homes, personal care homes, you have dieticians saying that you are only allowed to give the seniors this and this and you can't give them that. They have all these rules in place in terms of the safety around the facility, the programming for the seniors or, as I said, in child care. The programming for the children, the play equipment they're allowed to use, the food and the snacks

they're allowed to give them. The physical structure that they're in, in terms of you have to have so many exits and the pathways to exits have to be so wide and all this stuff. There are standards because it is a publicly funded entity being offered through a private – it is being offered through a private entity but it's publicly funded; it's public taxpayers' dollars.

So if we can put standards in place for child care and we can put standards in place for personal care homes and all this kind of stuff, why can we not have standards in place for our ambulance operators for private companies? Why can't government say that as part of the package, the remuneration that we're going to give to a private operator, you must have X number of employees, they must have certain levels of training, there must be so many on at all times, you can't have somebody working 24-hours, you can't have people on call that are not getting paid and you have to pay these people a decent wage and all this kind of stuff.

Why cannot government, when they're negotiating with the private entity, say all this has to be here, no questions asked? Once we've established what that's going to cost and we agree we're going to pay you that, now we can talk about what we're going to remunerate you for running this. How much profit you're allowed to get for running this. But all these standards have to be in place in order to retain and make sure that we have enough of these people out in these areas as first responders. I don't get why we're not doing that.

The minister, I have a lot of respect for – the Minister of Health I'm talking about now – and he's going out and trying to deal with a lot of these issues with retention bonuses and dealing with nurses and doctors. They've gone to India. He just went to Ireland. I heard he's going to South Africa, whatever, doing whatever we can, putting all these initiatives with the schools, putting more nurses, more doctors through the

medical schools, the nursing schools, trying to be proactive and retaining them before they graduate, which wasn't done before, unbelievably.

We're taking all these actions to retain these people, but we're going to leave this group out here on a limb and simply say negotiate with your employer and hopefully you can reach an agreement. If your employer happens to be not a great employer, too bad, that's it, that's all you can do. But we'll continue to fund that employer, we'll continue to pump taxpayers' dollars into it for substandard service and have employees working all kinds of hours, not getting paid for it, not being fairly remunerated, on call on the (inaudible), not getting paid, no life. Talk about work/life balance.

One guy told me he was on call for a month or something. Imagine. You were talking about work/life balance and we hear this from nurses and everything else because they're forced to work a shift of overtime. I don't blame them, by the way, I'm just saying. But we have people here that are working three weeks, a month or whatever the case might be. I've heard from people who said they've been two or three months on call, no days off, zero. What kind of a work/life balance is that?

How can you expect people – we're talking about retaining health care professionals – how can you expect that of anybody? It's just not reasonable. To say, well, that's between them and their employer is BS. I call BS on it because it's a public service, publicly funded.

We have to do better; we have to demand. If the employers are not going to play ball, cancel the contract and give it to someone who will or make it a public service. One or the other.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. LANE: One or the other.

The other issue that I just want to sort of bring up about this bill, and I don't want to frame it in an accusatory way, I really don't, and I know it has been framed in an accusatory way about the Minister Responsible for Labour and so on, but I just would love an honest answer. I'm just trying to get my head around it.

If we knew that there was negotiations ongoing, which we did, if we knew that things were not necessarily going great, which they weren't – you had conciliators in there and everything else. Everybody knew that this was a tedious set of negotiations and was probably going to end up where it did. Or at least there was a possibility.

Again, I'm just asking the question for the minister when he does speak to close this second reading. Why wouldn't somebody say hey, in the event that this does result in a strike or a lock out, we're going to need an essential services agreement? We're going to need it. So why didn't we put one in, like, six months ago or wherever, why are we waiting until we have a strike and the employees have exercised their right, which they're entitled to do, and now we're going to chop the legs out from under them, to some degree, in terms of we're going to call an end to their job action – that's what we're doing. We're going to call an end to their job action. Whether that ends up being a good thing or a bad thing, maybe they want it. Some people are saying they want it and the binding arbitration piece is good. I'm just saying though, why are we doing it now? Why wasn't the legislation passed months ago so that they could have negotiated an essential services agreement before they went on strike?

I'm just asking the question. I guess it is being a bit critical, but I'm just asking the question because I don't understand. If I was in that position, on that side, somehow I have to believe that I would have had to ask somebody well, b'ys, what happens in the case there's a strike. Some would say well, if there's a strike, we're going to have to put

in legislation. Wouldn't you say well, shouldn't we get this legislation in now before there's a strike? I just don't understand it.

So again, I'm not trying to just beat up on government; I'm just asking the minister if he could provide his thought process, or whoever he got advice from, as to why this wasn't done long ago, rather than wait for a strike to happen and then impose it.

With that said, in terms of the actual bill itself, while I will share concerns that my other colleagues have raised about the timeliness of it and so on – and I know that it's not uncommon for us to receive a bill the day before, get a briefing and go into the House. It doesn't mean it's right. It just means it's not uncommon. Other past administrations did the same thing. As a matter of fact, my colleague from Port aux Basques often says, well, when we were in Opposition we wouldn't even get a briefing. They just put it on the table and you wouldn't even get to see it at all, and he's right but that wasn't right either.

I do share that concern but I will say that, overall, from what I've read and what I'm understanding and gleaming from it – and I look forward to, certainly, the Committee of the Whole where there will be more direct questions line by line to get a full understanding. From what I'm reading, I think it sounds to me like it's a good thing and that there is an opportunity for binding arbitration which, I think, everyone would agree is a good thing. I will support that.

The only concern I have is how we get to the binding arbitration. That's the only concern, in terms of time because there are no specific time frames. I'm just wondering about, let's say we pass this bill tomorrow and now they've got to negotiate an agreement for essential services. How long is that going to take? Let's say if the employer, for argument's sake, wants to delay it, how long can he delay it? Can he delay it for 30 days, 60 days, 90 days? At

what point in time does the section kick in that we can go to the government, to the board and say he's negotiating in bad faith, whatever? Is that 30 days from now, 60 days from now, 90 days from now?

Then it goes to the board. At some point, it goes to the board. Now we all know how these boards work, that's the other thing. Because if you've got a board with three people, they've all got to check their schedules to see when they're available. Unless it is something different than this, that's the way it always operated.

So all of a sudden, it's not like we can pick up the phone and call the board and say yeah, we want you to deal with this tomorrow – click. No, b'y. I'll get together and I'll contact the other members of the board. I'm busy next week. Joe is busy the week after that. Mary is busy the week after that. We're all busy the week after that. So we'll get our first initial meeting in a month from now. Then they have their initial meeting and they do whatever and say we're going to have to meet again. Are you ready to meet tomorrow, b'ys? No, I can't meet tomorrow. I'm gone out of town now for a week. I'm going on vacation next week.

So that's my concern. I've seen that stuff happen. My only concern with it is how long from the time that we start the process of trying to negotiate an essential service agreement, the time that it takes from when we start to when we actually reach a point where all hands can throw up their hands in the air and an order is issued, saying now you're going to binding arbitration. Is that window 30 days, 60 days, 90 days, six months? How long? It's not here. I don't know if you can prescribe it, per se. I don't know how much prescribing you can do. It's not something that will be easy to do. I'm just saying that's my only concern.

But beyond that, I think the process outlined here, generally, is fair. It does allow for binding arbitration, which is a good thing, I

think. So I'll support the bill, but again, I want to go back to the fact we can all support this bill and say we're doing it for these guys, which we are. We can all tell them what a wonderful job they're doing, which they are. We could all tell them how much we appreciate them, which we do. But at the end of the day, there has to be mechanisms outside of this, beyond this. When government is negotiating with private operators, there has to be mechanisms in place where there are clear-cut standards that have to be met.

There has to be a very easy way for employees to report to government if that's not happening, and there has to be consequences to an operator who's not abiding by the agreement. You cannot have a situation where you're treating our first responders with disrespect. You cannot have a situation where they're being expected to work for nothing. You can't have a situation where they're getting paid way less than others who are doing the exact same work. You can't have a situation where they can't have a life and expect to be on call forever. That's not reasonable, it's not sustainable and it's going to do nothing to keep them here. All it's going to do is drive them out.

Then we can go and we can add all the classes you want. We can go put more classes of paramedics, put them through CNA or wherever the case might be, run them all through. You could put through a thousand, but what's the point in putting them through if after they graduate, they are working in a toxic work environment where things are not being done properly. They're being disrespected. They're not being played properly and guess what they do? They do like a lot of young people, a lot of Newfoundlanders do, they hop aboard the ferry and they get the hell out of here and we can't be doing that. I apologize for the language, Mr. Speaker; I got a little bit caught up there. But we can't be doing that. We simply cannot be doing that.

I will support the bill. Generally speaking, I think the bill is a good bill. Timing is bad, it should have been done months ago, but the bill is not necessarily a bad bill. But beyond what we do here today with this bill, government has to commit to getting down to the brass tacks with the operators, with the owners of these companies and making sure that they're treating their employees fairly and properly. That has to be number one – if they don't do that, the rest of this here is not worth the paper it's written on, it's not even worth our time.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

D. BRAZIL: Thank you, Speaker, and to all my colleagues in the House of Assembly, but particularly to our first responders here and our paramedics.

It's an honour to speak in the House of Assembly. It's a piece of legislation that I would prefer that we were not doing it the way we're doing it, but with that being said, it's an essential piece of legislation that needs to be put in play as quick as possible, but done with due diligence to ensure that we're protecting the rights of the workers and ensuring that the labour negotiations are done in good faith. But more importantly, allowing these great men and women to get back doing and providing the service and keeping people healthy and safe in Newfoundland and Labrador, back to work, while they exercise their right to negotiate a contract that's fair, that's equitable, that represents the skillset that they bring to the table and, more importantly, guarantees that health care can be provided in all corners of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So first and foremost, on behalf of my caucus here, I sincere thank you for the services that you provide and, more

importantly, for being flexible to be able to provide services in an hour of need now while you're still in the midst of negotiations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: So as we sit here and debate today, I know people in the gallery here are probably questioning the process here. I know you've been sitting here for eight hours, patiently, looking at and listening to what's going on here. Sometimes the House of Assembly can be confusing, it can be bewildering and sometimes it can actually leave you shaking your head of what we're doing. But I will say here, because we're at a point of doing something that needs to be done in the best interest of health care in this province and the best interest of the workers here, for fair wages, fair compensation, for respect for the service they provide and for assuring that, in Newfoundland and Labrador, people are kept safe and that government and all Members of government provide those services.

Many of my colleagues here have spoke about what's right and what's just and what needs to be done. It's unfortunate that we're in this situation right now and I'm going to keep this without being cynical or controversial around the Opposition. What I will say is we need to be in a place where we're proactively looking at how do we protect workers in our province, particularly the crisis that we have in health care? I'm not blaming anybody for what we're facing with health care. What I'm saying is we all have a stake in solving those issues and who better than front-line workers.

I'm a former volunteer first responder and I know the number of times that I responded and some of the things that I saw and the challenges. I can only imagine what you guys do on a daily basis. Every day going out knowing there's going to be adversity. But I see the positive stuff. Knowing that you're there to save lives, knowing that you're there to comfort people, knowing that

you're ensuring people will get better quality health care. I know coming from my district where I have private ambulance providers and I know we have a health care centre and, as part of that process, we're having challenges around emergency rooms being closed.

So I know when somebody has an emergency and they make a call, it's the ambulance and the paramedics who come pick them up. They are the people then who are entrusted to provide the best quality health care before they can get them to a health centre. We know what it takes. One part of my district is Bell Island, so I know exactly the impact it has for ours. The lives and the well-being and the care of those patients are in the hands of our paramedics and how valuable that is and the quality service that they provide.

So we are here to make sure that you can continue to do that in an environment that respects the skill set you have, that supports retraining, that supports a livable wage, that supports a pension plan, that supports quality health care and well-being for yourselves and quality of life, but also ensures that you can look at moving around our province here and providing services wherever possible. But just as important, it's about engaging the professionals that we have in this room and the other hundreds that are in Newfoundland and Labrador about how we improve our health care.

We've had conversations around with nurses and doctors and respiratory therapists and pharmacists and everybody else, but we've also had them with paramedics and got a real true understanding of the value of how we improve our health care and what you face on a daily basis. Some of the preventative interventions that could be done that would prevent people from getting sicker, or people from not getting access to health care.

So what I want to reassure you here, we are here to ensure that this piece of legislation reflects your ability to do your jobs professionally, but also sustain your quality of life. That means a decent wage and it means giving the rights to negotiate.

I will acknowledge, too, that as we sit here in the House of Assembly the last period of time, while my colleagues here have outlined a number of the challenges that we've had, and you may have seen it in Question Period where we questioned the government on things that we thought they should have done in the past or question them on things that they're going to do in the future, that's our role here. Our role here is to ensure that every aspect of health care, of the economy, of the needs of the citizens in this province are looked at in advance. That we don't do reactionary stuff. That we are proactive. But to be proactive we need to start listening to the people who do the front-line services like yourselves. That's what we've been encouraging this administration to do.

But what we also do, we've put it out for the last number of years about being collaborative here. The intent for everybody in this House of Assembly, and I'm convinced of it, is to do what's in the best interest of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, particularly around their well-being, their health well-being and their financial well-being. That's what we've offered for the last number of years when we're debating legislation, when we're asking about consultation on issues that are relevant to the people. We're asking about developing programs and services that are going to be beneficial to the people of this province. We've thrown those olive branches out there and sometimes, very pleasantly, sometimes we get to a point where we're collaborative and we can come to an agreement.

Again, I'm happy to say, particularly from the Official Opposition's point of view here, this is one of those times. We've taken a

piece of legislation – you may have noticed the last eight-plus hours that my Opposition House Leader has been in and out of the House and our staff have been sitting with the Minister Responsible for Labour, some of his staff and the House Leader looking at how do we improve this piece of legislation so that the piece of legislation here reflects the needs of the people in this room and reflects everybody else who will be affected by this.

This is one of the few times that I'm happy to say, particularly when we've only gotten this less than 24 hours ago, to look at a piece of legislation to make sure this is going to be in the best interest of the people it's supposed to serve. The people it's supposed to serve are the paramedics of Newfoundland and Labrador and every other citizen to make sure they get quality health care, because that's what you provide on a daily basis, and ensure that the collective bargaining process is not jeopardized, it's not controlled by one entity and that, at the end of the day, you'll feel comfortable that you're not forced to take something that's not in the best interest, use an employee and also the citizens of this province.

So I'm happy to say that there's been some negotiations between our House Leader, the government's House Leader and the minister responsible to get some amendments here that reflect improving the quality of this piece of legislation and improving your ability to bargain in good faith. That's why we come together in this House of Assembly. We'll have many times to get in the House and beat each other up politically and say why our policies are better than the government's policies and what they didn't do and what they should have did. They'll outline stuff that we may not have done in the past or that we're not aware of.

This is about doing what's right for the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador. We have that ability to do that again here today,

but the way we had the ability to do it was listening to the people that we have here in the gallery and their needs and what works in the best interests of everybody in this province here.

So, as we sit today, my colleagues outlined all the concerns they had and they all vary from their own district's impacts. My colleague from Ferryland, the fact is we talk about providing adequate services and making sure that the services continue. He has trouble getting a service in his area. There are things that need to be negotiated, that need to be looked at. There has to be answers given as to why a service can't be provided in the same manner it would be anywhere else across this province.

We've talked about inequity here of having a two-tiered paramedic pay system. It shouldn't be. Every Newfoundlander and Labradorian who provides a service and provides that should be paid equally, particularly in the professional classification. Every area of Newfoundland and Labrador should still have access to basic standards of health care. Access around paramedics and first responders, particularly ambulance services, should be primary, no matter where you live in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So we're entrusting, with this piece of legislation, that this will be the next first step of moving it in the right direction. I know we've had some debate here today and we've had some bantering back and forth on some policies and reflection on what we think is in the best interest here. But again, I want to reassure everyone that the piece of legislation that we'll get to debate a little bit longer and we'll pass – and I'm confident we will eventually get to pass this because it's too important. We need to get these qualified, skilled health professionals here back in providing services, while they can feel comfortable that they're going to get an agreement that best fits their needs and makes them respected in our health care system as part of the process.

I just wanted to take a bit of time to reassure the people in the gallery and all those at home who are watching, people in the health care profession, that our objective in the House is to find solutions to improve our health care system.

This piece of legislation is also around anybody who negotiates in good faith, that there will be an opportunity and a policy developed here that will guarantee your rights are protected. That's what this is about. People are asking for a fair wage, fair supports and fair respect. Our legislation in government should reflect that. That should be our process here. We develop policies that reflect what's in the best interests of the people here. We support the programs and services. The professionals who provide those services, we give them the supports that are necessary for them to be able to do their job safe, equitable and in the best interests of the people of this province.

I want to reassure everyone in this House, particularly those in the gallery, that our side of the House, particularly the Official Opposition here, have set, as a goal, to get good legislation that reflects the needs of the people of this province, without rushing it. I know there are emergency debates for a reason here. There are specific things that happen that may not and should have happened in this case. But we're here to debate this and get it fixed and get it right. It's only a few times you get a chance to sit and really debate and have an argument about what is in the best interest and look at what best fits the needs of people. The best way to do that is get a discussion with the people in this audience and we've had that over the last number of days.

So what I want to say in closing, because we don't want to drag out debate, what we want is to get this legislation in place so these people can get back providing emergency service while they negotiate, in good faith, a collective agreement that works for them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

D. BRAZIL: On behalf of our Official Opposition, we'll say there will be some amendments coming, and I'm happy to say there are some friendly amendments, which is what reflects the needs of this House of Assembly and a collaborative way of solving some of the problems for the people of this province. We will be supporting this piece of legislation with those amendments that reflect the needs of the paramedics, the needs of the citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador, and hopefully the next step in improving labour relations and health care in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Ladies and gentlemen, let's make this happen as quickly as possible so these great people can get back to providing the service that they do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

This Bill 24, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services, is important legislation. We have a lot of people attending here because this is going to impact their lives, going to impact their jobs; it's going to affect our health care system as a whole. But the Leader of the Official Opposition just sat down, and just before he closed he was talking a little bit about the rushing of this legislation. It's a common theme that we have: Why is this being rushed?

The technical briefing was 8:30 last night. Actually, my fellow MHA from Labrador West couldn't fly out yesterday afternoon. His flight was delayed because of weather. He was on the plane when that technical briefing was taking place. I was trying to get off the coast of Labrador, and his

misfortunate was my fortunate because I was able to get on that exact same flight. I wouldn't be here today in this House of Assembly. I would actually be flying out now today because we only have one flight.

So we were sitting on the plane while the technical briefing was taking place, while people were getting to see this very, very important legislation that's going to impact people's lives, patients' lives and the health care providers, the paramedics that actually delivers this service.

It's so important to us. We're sitting here now, emergency sitting, and why? Why is this all being rushed again? That's the problem that I have and that's why we did what we did this morning. It wasn't a lack of respect for the workers who were out on strike. It wasn't a lack of respect for this House of Assembly. It was we just wanted to be able to see the legislation and make sure this legislation is good legislation so we could actually look through it to make sure that it's not going to be a huge problem in the future for workers. That it's not going to be a problem for our health care services.

That's the problem for me now, rushing. I have a lot of notes written down because I'm basically reading through this and I'm trying to come up with what I feel is important. I'm sharing ideas with my caucus and with the other Members of the Opposition just to try to make sure that what we're doing today is right. But we're rushing. We're rushing to catch up.

I'm just going to look at my notes. Teamsters Local 855 has been at the table since February, last February, trying to negotiate a deal that reduces the paid deficit between these paramedics and those in the public system. What's being missed here a little bit is about this two-tier pay system, which is what got us here, which is why these workers are out on strike. The difference between the public and the private systems, but they're still responding to the same emergencies. A car accident is

a car accident. Broken bones are broken bones. Heart attacks are heart attacks. It doesn't matter if you're working for a private company or you're working for the public service. But there's such a difference.

Everybody is stressed out. In our health care system, everybody is stressed out. Everybody has a lot of the stress; everyone is overworked, all these extra hours that people are working. The difference is the burden is even greater for the people here today, because they're not being treated with respect. They are not being treated with respect, which is why they're out on strike.

It's very, very important; we need the public health care system. We need people to be there for us when we have an emergency. We need the paramedics to be able to respond to an emergency. But also they need to be respected, they need to be treated fairly and they need to have quality of life. That's decent wages and a decent pension. That's not happening. This is kind of like a little bit of a diversion, because no one is really, really talking about that.

Looking at the road ambulance system, the regional health authorities have 13 operators; private companies have 25 and the community operators, 22. Currently – and this is a bit of a learning curve for me – the private and the community employees, so we have private and community employees on one side and on the other side we have the public employees and what separates them is the pay and the benefits, even though they respond to the same systems.

Now, when we start talking about giving them quality of pay, equal pay, for the same work, there's a bit of fear mongering that goes on. I hear it and what the fear mongering is, is in terms of cost. Well, what's that going to cost the province? But my fellow MHA over there from Placentia West - Bellevue said, and I actually had to same thing written down, we both wrote the

same thing down, we said it's not about costs, it's about investment. It's about investment in our health care system. It's the investment in our people, in the services and also an investment in repairing our health care services because we have to have equal benefits for equal work. That's so, so important.

I'm just going through my notes that I prepared because I want to talk on this. This is very, very important because we have a strike of ambulance workers. It has been mentioned here when you go to school to be trained as a paramedic they should be allowed to be called paramedics because that's what you are. That's what you're trained to be. So when you go to school, you're trained, you're there because you have a drive and a love and a passion to help people. You respond in crisis and there has to be respect for that.

Now, we're looking at Teamsters Local 855, their collective agreement expired when? March 2020. That's when it expired. Among the main issues are wages and pension benefits. Now, do they want more, when we look at them, when we look at these people up here, do they want more than what the other paramedics are making? No. When we learn what their wages are and what their benefits are, it's shocking. You think are we in Canada? Might as well be a sweatshop over in one of those countries we talk about that don't treat their workers fairly, that don't treat their people fairly because, at the end of the day, we, as a province, we're running into that. That's why they're on strike. They're not on strike to get more than others. They're just wanting a little bit of a quality of life and that's so important to us.

Teamsters 855 indicated that they intended to close the gap in compensation between private and public ambulance services. To close the gap, are you asking for more? No, you're not asking for more; you're asking to narrow that gap so you can get a bit of quality of life, so you can get a decent wage

and get the decent pension benefits. The current agreements leave the rate – now I want to read this out so it will go into *Hansard* – current agreements leave the rate a primary ambulance service paramedic earns up to the employer to determine from corporate profits as an operating expense.

Now, what's the problem with that? When the employer is a private business, they're profit driven, right. So the rate a primary ambulance service paramedic will earn will be based on their profits and not on the public good, not on a decent wage, not on decent benefits. That's why you're out on strike and that's so important. It's shocking.

Secondary ambulance service providers are able to bill back overtime rates to the government as a billable amount. That's the difference. So you know what that means? I'm going to continue because I have to talk about it. They are paid based on their hours they are going to be paid per day. I think it is 11.43 hours of work per day. Now what happens if they're on a call-out and they go past the 11.43 hours? Are they going to get overtime? No. I have been told that when they go past the end of their shift, they're not paid.

So for an example given to me is that they are on a call. Somebody is on a call by the patient from out around the bay, out around the rural areas to the Health Sciences and they're basically waiting for the Health Sciences emergency team to take over that patient. At the end of their shift, if that patient hasn't been taken over, signed over to the Health Sciences, they have to stay with that patient and they're not paid. What that means – this is my little scratching that I wrote down – they are expected to volunteer their time. That's what happens. At the end of their shift, they're looking after a patient and they're expected to volunteer their time. I thought how crazy is that? Is that true? You're expected to volunteer your time. No overtime?

AN HON. MEMBER: Shameful.

L. EVANS: That is so shameful. That's why we're here. We're not here to save the health care system. We're not here to make everybody look good. We're here because these paramedics are being robbed of their benefits and they're just trying to narrow the gap. They're out on strike and now this legislation is being introduced.

Where was this legislation? This legislation could have been actually written and produced during the summer and we could have debated it in the fall. We could have had time to review it. We're going to be debating stuff we're reading through as we're going because it has been handed over to us so quickly. That seems to be the way that this legislation unfolds for this government. Do you know something? That's not good quality legislation because we're debating on things, we're trying to actually see things and we don't have enough time to look at that. If this was a government that wanted the best legislation possible, they would at least allow us to see it, review it for a day before we debated it.

But, no, we're going to go to midnight tonight. I mean, really, this is a disservice to everybody. It's a disservice, not only to this union that's on strike; it's a disservice to every other union that's out there because they weren't consulted. Yes, unions, were you consulted on this legislation? No. It showed up, we all got a look at it. We're all trying to make sure that it is good legislation. We're all looking at the different sections to see how can this be problematic. This is how the government is treating us, the entire province; this is the legislation. It's crazy. It's not right and I totally disagree with it.

Now, also, back in May 2022, when the union was looking to call for a strike vote, the minister reported to the media he had appointed a conciliation board as outlined in the *Labour Relations Act*. That's what you did. We found out in a technical briefing

that, in actual fact, it was an officer that had been appointed. But what it did is actually it prevented the Teamsters from taking their strike vote. In actual fact —, I'll quote them here, they talked to media — they said they were slapped with a letter announcing their decision that morning that they were intending to hold a strike vote. So what kind of respect is that? What kind of respect is that to the workers, to your union, to your ability for you to actually even take your vote to see about strike action? Your union called that a slap.

Anyway, of course in November, when talks broke down, there became an illegal strike position. But for me, this legislation may benefit those that are out on strike right now, but we have to go through it. We've got to make sure this is good legislation for our future, for the future of labour, for the future of companies that want to negotiate, for any worker out there that wants to be treated with respect.

For me, Speaker, I'm not going to go past my time here; I'm not even getting close to it. In actual fact, I'm going to end there. I am going to speak more to this, when I have time to read this a bit more. I'm out of things to talk about because I actually haven't had really much time to go through this legislation to see if it's good or not, but I'm actually going to speak again on next reading.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister Responsible for Labour speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I won't speak for very long. Obviously, we've had a long opportunity waiting to get

the debate started, some five hours later than we probably could have had it started. So I'd just like to thank the Members for their contributions. The MHA for Cape St. Francis, I agree with much of what you had to say. MHA for Topsail, you can't dispute some of the things that you were identifying with respect to that.

Same with the MHA for Bay of Islands who added his support to this binding arbitration which I thought was good. The MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue and MHA for St. John's Centre, I'm not going to comment directly on what's been said by each and every person, because I know we're going to get the opportunity to do that when we go through the Committee or the third.

Also I'd like to say thank you to MHA for Harbour Main, MHA for Torngat Mountains, MHA for Mount Pearl - Southlands and MHA for Conception Bay East - Bell Island for their great words. I think we all would tend to agree that we're in this situation – I guess we didn't want to be in this situation that we're in right now. We would have hoped that the parties could have come to an agreement that was there.

We can talk about the timelines and any time you talk about the timelines, sometimes they get construed in different ways. I'm not going to correct Members who mentioned incorrect timelines, because I'm sure they didn't do it intentionally. But if you went through *Hansard*, you would be able to find some very different timelines that actually occurred. Rather than have that debate here in the House of Assembly today, I think it's much more important for us to move into the Committee and take that opportunity.

I'll take my seat, Mr. Speaker, just want to say thank you to the Members for their good words about the piece of legislation. I look forward to the support from all Members coming forward.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that the House resolve itself into –

SPEAKER: Wait now, we have to vote on this.

Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 24 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 Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services. (Bill 24)

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 Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 24)

SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Not the first time I have done that, Speaker. My colleague

mentioned Committee and I was moving right to it. I apologize.

I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 24, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded 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 (Trimper): Order, please!

We are now reviewing Bill 24, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services.

A bill, "An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services." (Bill 24)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

J. WALL: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, 2(g) defines emergency health services. This definition includes "transportation of a patient that is required to preserve the patient's life or to prevent or alleviate serious harm" Does this include

transfers from one health or hospital centre to another, and does it include routine emergency transfers?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd also like to first kick off by saying thank you to the MHA for Ferryland and Bonavista, as well as Lake Melville, for their great contributions to the debate. In the absence of trying to thank everybody, I missed three people that added to the debate quite heavily. If there's anybody else that added to it, I apologize. I had a little bit of a media scrum in between.

Thank you and if the hon. Member would like to ask a few questions in a row, I could try to get an answer for all of those at the one time. But yes, my understanding is that is included in that but I am waiting to hear from the staff on that question if you add another one to that list.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Chair.

Who makes the decision on what is an emergency transfer?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

One of the things that would be negotiated within the emergency services agreement between the two parties, that would be determined in that process. In the unlikelyhood that it could not be determined between the two parties, then there is an opportunity for them to move that directly to the Labour Relations Board, either after they have tried or right at the time at which this legislation passes.

If they believe they can't get to an agreement, then they could go directly to the Labour Relations Board who would work with them to get that agreement put in place for them or help them to negotiate that agreement. Obviously, from our standpoint, our conciliation officer has been engaged right from the beginning so they would help any processes along that way.

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

J. WALL: Chair, 2(j) defines essential ambulance services and gives the regulations an ability to include any other service that isn't listed. Does this mean that Cabinet could add a service to the regulations which would be deemed essential if that service is not covered by the essential ambulance service agreement that has been agreed upon?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Did you ask if Cabinet could – is that what you said?

J. WALL: Correct.

B. DAVIS: Yeah, like any piece of legislation, I guess, coming to the House of Assembly, if there are going to be changes made to that, most of these changes would have to come to the House of Assembly unless there are regulations changes that are not – in the question you just asked, that's not a regulation change, that is a legislative change, so that would have to come to the House of Assembly if you want to make any changes like that.

But those agreements can work with both parties to work through those agreements in the development of it. After that has been developed, if there are any problems that they have uncovered that they couldn't find a solution to, we are more than happy to look at legislation on a go-forward basis as well.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Chair.

Subclause 3(2) is where publicly employed ambulance operators and paramedics are specified to not be governed by this legislation. Why are publicly employed and privately employed operators being treated differently?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: The public employees already have this legislation for essential services. Public employees already have that – sorry, private sector employees already have that; public sector does not. Sorry, the reverse of that. Yeah, that's what I said first time. It has been a long day. Public sector does; private sector does not. That's the long and the short of it.

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Minister.

One more, Chair: If another union, such as NAPE, goes on strike, how is the level of essential ambulance service provided by the regional health authorities determined?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: So if NAPE, who has an agreement as a private operator as well, they have a current contract in place as well. NAPE represents some private operators now. So it would operate exactly the same as this case. They would have to have an essential services agreement put in place. If they're private sector already they would have that in place already.

This is just bringing it in line with what private sector has with the respect to the emergency services agreement.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to go back to a question I raised in the debate of second reading. The minister didn't address it; I thought he might. I'm just wondering, Minister, again, I'm just trying to get my head around it, my understanding. Other Members have raised this. I understand the fact that you are hoping for a collective agreement and hoping it will work out and that's the best way to get an agreement. I get all that, but knowing the fact that negotiations were challenging, did somebody or why didn't somebody at some point in time, several months ago, say just in case we end up with a lockout or a strike and we require this legislation, let's pass it now rather than wait for the strike to happen? I'm just trying to understand why we're doing this today.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's a great question and the answer is pretty straightforward. At the point at which we could have brought this forward, they were already in negotiations at that point. So when you start negotiations we don't want to presuppose that we're going to interject ourselves into those negotiations. At that point, we put a conciliation officer in place that was working through the process. Yes, there was tough negotiations. There's no doubt about that. We were always hopeful that they would get to an agreement at the end of that process. It worked before.

The MHA for St. John's Centre talked about his career in teaching, that he's been through two strikes in 32 years. The NLTA has been in strike position many more times than two times throughout the 32 years he was teaching.

So just because they were in a strike position or negotiations weren't going great doesn't mean they weren't going to come to an agreement. We were hopeful that that was going to be the case. The conciliation officer was fully engaged, both parties we were hopeful that they would get to that point. It hasn't happened, obviously, that's why we're here. We would have liked to be able to bring this in the spring sitting with not a strike situation that we're in now.

CHAIR: Any further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Clause 2(b) refers to an employee prescribed as an ambulance worker in the regulations. When will these regulations be ready and how broadly do you intend to define employees for the purpose of this legislation?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: We're working on those regulations. I can ask our staff if you give me a second, I can find out exactly when we intend to have them completed fully.

Obviously, we're going to broadly describe the employees as an individual that's providing that service to the people of the province, as respect to a paramedicine service that is doing it currently. I mean that's what we want it to be. That's what the union had asked for. That's what we're trying to get to that place.

Now, at the end of the day, I'm hopeful, based on what I'm hearing from the House of Assembly, it seems most people in the House of Assembly are in agreement to this, at least the movement in this direction. We're hopeful that we'll get this emergency services agreement put in place and then at that point it's going to give the parties an opportunity to put that in place. Once that's

put in place, they'll have the opportunity to continue back with job action or, hopefully, maybe that'll force a deal to come out that may happen between the two parties, which is what we're all hopeful for.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

In 2(j) how widely are you going to interpret the work that is incidental to the service described in subparagraphs (i) and (ii)? Can you please provide some examples of whether other types of workers will fall into this legislation?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: You asked for 2(j) was it?

J. BROWN: Yes.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, and you asked how broad it was going to be.

J. BROWN: Yes and how are you going to prescribe it? Can you provide an example of what types of work it was going to fall under this legislation?

B. DAVIS: We tried to cover off in the definitions what they are. Obviously, that will be between the two parties to iron out in a deal that will be ratified, hopefully, by themselves and then the Labour Relations Board. If it has to move to the Labour Relations Board to set it up, then that's where they'll be defined if there are any issues with respect to that. We're just trying to keep it – this brings it in line with what is already currently in place by the public service.

So this is not a perfect situation we are in, but we're in that process now trying to help the parties get back to the table, to provide

that services that the people of the province are requiring in those areas.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Chair, just a clarification, I can go to clause 3 to ask question of clause 3?

CHAIR: No, you're allowed to go to any clause at this time.

J. BROWN: Okay, perfect.

CHAIR: Under clause 1, yes.

J. BROWN: All right, perfect, thank you for the clarification, Chair.

What would be the discrepancies in how private versus public paramedics are treated once this comes into effect? Are you expecting discrepancies or any corrections that would have to be made because of discrepancies?

CHAIR: The hon the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The question is a little bit broad. I'm trying to narrow it down. Discrepancies with respect to the legislation or with respect to compensation, because that's two different things that we'd have to talk about?

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Under clause 3(2), where it defines the *Public Service Collective Bargaining Act*, I just want to make sure that with this average, with respect to this act where that is there, do you expect there to be, because of the way it's worded, we're just wondering if there are going to be any discrepancies on how private versus public paramedics are treated once this comes into effect?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: There are two separate pieces of legislation, of course, but they are closely linked. One builds upon the other, and the legislation from the public sector is largely reflected here. I can't speak about if there's a slight nuance there, but I can get that answer for you. I just don't have it right here at the tip of my tongue.

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Under clause 5(3), why does the legislation give both parties the option to defer the completion of an essential ambulance services agreement and why is this necessary?

B. DAVIS: Can you repeat that?

J. BROWN: My apologies. Why does the legislation give both parties the option of deferring the completion of an essential ambulance services agreement, and why would you feel this would be necessary in the act?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I said before to a previous answer, I think we want to give the parties an opportunity to determine that themselves. Obviously, that's what would be the best approach, if they can work together to get that essential services agreement. If that doesn't happen or one party wants to send it directly to the Labour Relations Board, they can. That's completely permissible with what we've got put in place for the legislation. They can do that and then the Labour Relations Board will work with them or try to implement that for them within that prescribed period within the legislation, which I think is 45 days.

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Under clause 6, what assurance can the minister give that the procedures of increasing essential ambulance services in a strike won't be abused by the employer?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What we're trying to accomplish is a balance here to make sure that the collective agreements, the right for the union to be able to strike and the right for the employer to be able to lockout, still exists. What we're doing now in this piece of legislation, essentially, is having to have the parties come to an agreement on essential services first. When that's completed, then that gives them the option to go to job action, if that's required and then, from that point on, there are things in place within the legislation that allows them to get certain milestones, whether that's binding arbitration or getting the board coming back and saying go back to negotiate with your conciliation officer.

There are a few remedies that the board can have to try to help get a deal done – as one of the Members said, something about a stick – which adds a stick, at least for the Labour Relations Board, to try to get people back to the table, to try to get them to negotiate a deal. Because if people are not talking, then there's no chance of a deal but if they're talking, there's always a chance at a deal that there could be movement on either side to get that deal. That's where we want to be.

I'm going to say it 100 times tonight that the negotiated deal is by far the best deal we want. Nobody wants to be legislating deals for anybody. Nobody wants to be in that situation.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, 6(1)(f) there, by allowing the employer to identify additional work functions as essential ambulance services, does this not open up the means for an employer to skirt the negative consequences of a strike?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That's essentially what the Labour Relations Board will be able to ascertain. If someone believes they're not being treated fairly within the legislation or by the employer and/or the union, both have the avenue to go with the Labour Relations Board to look at that process to see if it was in good faith.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

Chair, 6(1)(f)(ii), doesn't the ability of an employer to identify additional classifications of work as essential ambulance services give the employer the additional layer of power over striking workers and that the employer can make up any labour shortages by declaring that every worker is essential?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll just reiterate the exact same answer that I gave before, because that's exactly what the Labour Relations Board will be looking at if there was ever a complaint or a document that was sent to the Labour Relations Board to say that this is not negotiating in good faith, we can't put it an

essential services agreement in place because the employer, in your example, is not, for lack of a better term, playing ball. They are trying to skirt, as you said, the rules to make that.

We don't want that to happen. So that's why the Labour Relations Board can come in but there's also the ability as I said before I think to the MHA for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis who asked a question earlier – that's part of the reason why I had the answer for him as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

Under clause 7(6), does the subclause deal specifically with the current situation at Fewer's Ambulance Service, and what will this do to reach essential ambulance service agreements?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you very much.

That's one example that, yes, it could potentially help in this situation for sure. The board could look at this in this situation. They could also direct, as I said before, to the Labour Relations Board if it cannot agree upon terms. That's part of what this failure to negotiate means. It gives the ability for them to go to the Labour Relations Board to move that forward for both parties. It depends on which one is at the impasse. But whether it's one versus the other, it's still an impasse, so that's what the Labour Relations Board has the ability to do.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Under 7(7), how will meaningful right to strike and meaningful right to lock out employees be defined under this legislation?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: That's an important point; it's a very good one. What the Labour Relations Board would look at is if they believe that either one side or the other doesn't have the meaningful right to strike or lock out, then they would have the ability to move to another function, be it binding arbitration or some form of conciliation officer coming in or a conciliation board.

A couple of examples that the Labour Relations Board can bring forward that would be in their purview as a quasi-judicial agency – I won't presuppose what they would do, but they are some of the things in their tool box they could put forward to help in that negotiation portion to get to a point to make sure both parties are in good faith.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

Under clause 9(2)(b), how was this 90-day time length chosen as the window period for negotiating an essential ambulance services agreement?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

That's basically involved in the labour relations other legislation is where it's took – this legislation was based on a couple of pieces of legislation that already currently exist in Ontario and Nova Scotia. Those things were part of the foundation, as well as the Public Service Commission, some of the pieces they have for essential services agreements. That's where it was based on. Much of the information came from those other acts.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

Clause 15(5), given that many or most paramedics will be deemed essential, how will this legislation affect their right to strike in practice? Wouldn't it severely restrict their bargaining power in practice?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

We talked about that in a previous question he had, I think it was clause 7, that deals directly with the ability for those to have meaningful strike or lock out action. You don't want to take away the ability for them to have strong collective bargaining positions, so that's where the Labour Relations Board would come in. If that is deemed necessary, that someone doesn't have the clear ability to collectively bargain and use their – not collectively bargain, sorry – use the right to strike or lock out, then if that's been virtually taken away, that's where the Labour Relations Board could move, as I've said before, to binding arbitration.

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Chair, 15(5)(d), this seems like the legislation is giving the board wide latitude in giving discretion to the parties involved in the labour dispute. Are there any limitations in other pieces of legislation on this power?

CHAIR: The Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That's a good question. These are some of the things that we're talking about, the ability for the Labour Relations Board to inject themselves into some of this decision-making to help the parties. Whether they amend the essential ambulance services agreement, they can do that, they can also

appoint – not appoint, but confer the conciliation officer appointed through the *Labour Relations Act*, who shall endeavour to get a collective agreement. They can also go to an arbitration board for binding arbitration.

They can also give other direction that the board may see fit that could help the process get to an agreement. Obviously, as I've mentioned many times before, this also gives the ability for the board to move into a binding arbitration process if the conciliation officer can't find a solution for the process there.

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you.

Under clause 18(7), how is a reasonable time defined within this clause?

CHAIR: The Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've got to say, the MHA for Labrador West is very quick. I don't even get time to sit down and stand up, he's that quick. I'm getting a workout here tonight.

If you want to move on to another question, I'll try to address that one for you in a second, if you don't mind, because I just want to make sure I get the opportunity to think about that for a second.

CHAIR: The Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Under 18(8)(b), the period of six months seems rather short. How was this minimum time decided upon?

CHAIR: The Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

As I've said previously, the foundation of this was based on other legislation, jurisdictional scans across from Ontario, Nova Scotia. There are some in BC as well that we've looked at, and also the Public Service Commission that's there. That's where the foundation of this came from. So it mirrors a lot of the pieces of those legislations. I could give you a further layout of what the differences are if you want, in the future, if you'd like.

CHAIR: The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm just going to ask three questions. The first one is concerning – it says here, dispatching services. Does that include all dispatching officers working with department operators and also with 911 because it says there dispatching services.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Yes, my understanding is those determinations about what the emergency services agreement would be in place is between the two parties or the Labour Relations Board, if it gets to that point. So it could very well include – it won't include the 911, I don't think, but it will include some local area people that would have to do that if they're deemed necessary from an emergency standpoint.

That is my take on that. I'll wait for staff to confirm that, but that's my understanding of it.

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

E. JOYCE: The second question I'll ask, and I just want it confirmed on the record, that there is an opportunity for the union to

go to binding arbitration after they follow the steps that they go through.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Absolutely, unequivocally, yes. Section 15, I think it is (5) and (6) that deal directly with that, but I just wanted to make sure I was clear on where it was to. I made a note when you asked that question earlier; I should have addressed it in the preamble.

Thank you.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Minister, for that. I think that was the big concern for a lot of people.

The other question I'll ask: Can you explain in section, 22, the *Arbitration Act* does not apply to binding arbitration proceedings under this act. Can you explain why that is?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll double-check that for you. I'll be back to you shortly.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Minister, I just want to go back to a concern I raised in second reading. I am wondering about the timing that is involved in all this.

I understand under section 15 and 16, opportunity for binding arbitration, which I think most folks here in the gallery would look upon as favourable. My concern is around the timing. Do you give any sense

of, from a realistic point of view, how much time this process would take? Because it's not as simple as just snapping your fingers and going to binding arbitration.

First of all, you have to try to get an agreement with the employer and fail. Not saying how long that could be theoretically dragged out by the employer or the union for that matter, I'm not saying they would, but any part could drag it out. So there is time. Then you have to go to the board. Then the board got to get their schedules together to make sure they can have meetings and all that kind of stuff. Which we know from other boards that could be extensive periods of time. Then they get together and they decide we're going to go to conciliation first before we go to binding arbitration. So now conciliation, that could take weeks in theory. Then they finally recommend binding arbitration and then we've got to wait for our binding arbitration panel or whatever to get together on that.

So am I wrong in thinking that from beginning to end this process could take months or a year or whatever to play out?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The answer, I guess in short term, is maybe. That's the truth of it. I can't presuppose what the labour board is going to find in a future agreement or lack of agreement. What I can say is that if they've exhausted options from a conciliation board or a conciliation officer standpoint – and I'm probably not going to go down the road of even presupposing what may happen from the board.

It's a very good question and it's one I wish I could answer. I'm not in that position of chair of the Labour Relations Board to answer that question, but I do know the tools are there in the legislation to allow them to move in that direction if they so

choose, based on the inaction of one party versus the other or the lack of an agreement.

Rest assured, it can't happen until this is passed. When this is passed, there is an option for it to happen. Now, there may be – I won't say an exhaustive approach because they've already been in an exhaustive approach obviously. But from my standpoint, I can't prejudge what the Labour Relations chair is going to say, so I probably should sit down versus trying to meddle into what the Labour Relations Board would say.

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

P. LANE: I appreciate that, Minister. All I'm trying to accomplish with this question is I'm just trying to get it here in the public sphere for *Hansard* or whatever and for the benefit of paramedics. This is not being critical of what we're doing, I just want to get it out there that this is not, like, a quick fix. If anybody thinks that we pass this legislation and then within two or three weeks, we're into binding arbitration and we've got a collective agreement, realistically that's not going to happen.

If you've got to go through this process of trying to negotiate a service agreement, that could drag out; then go to the board, that could drag out; then go into conciliation, that could drag out; then, finally, maybe go to binding arbitration and there's a time period for that. So I wouldn't want folks to think that by passing this today, we're into binding arbitration two weeks from now and they've got an agreement. That's not what this is going to do, right?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

You're correct, but there is also the option that it could be 45 days from now. That is a legitimate option. If both parties were to

write tomorrow, or one of the parties was to write tomorrow, there could legitimately be – 45 days later, there could be a binding arbitration. Could very well be. That's possible within the way this legislation is.

So I don't want to give people in the audience, the people watching, or the gallery, sorry, not the audience, the gallery that are watching the preconceived notion that this could be years. It could be as low as 45 days or less, but rest assured that it's going to be some period around – you can't get to it until we do this piece of legislation. There's no chance for binding arbitration until this legislation is passed.

At that point, there are steps that could be constituted by the Labour Relations Board. There could be multiple steps or it could simply be they write to the Labour Relations Board based on the concerns that they have right now and it could move in that direction. That's what the legislation allows for.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Minister.

I appreciate that and again I'm not trying to put it out there, I guess, all I'm just trying to – and I appreciate 45 days is possible. You and I know, though, the way things generally go. I'm not saying which way it's going to go, but I'll be shocked if it went that fast. The point is, is that this is not necessarily going to be that quick fix, per se, that this could be an extended period of time. That's not being negative, it's not being critical, it's just being realistic, putting out information that people understand, that those are possibilities, that's all.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: I think that's great to put out realistic options. There could be an opportunity for binding arbitration tomorrow. That's the truth of it. There's an opportunity,

as soon as it comes, it could be any time that the Labour Relations Board believes that it could happen based on this particular situation that we're in currently. The legislation provides opportunity for that to happen.

I don't want to oversell the opportunity that it could happen tomorrow or some period in a shorter term. It could be, as you said, it could be a little longer than that depending on what the Labour Relations Board deems that needs to happen in order to bring them to that binding arbitration level.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

I want to ask with regard to (2), the definitions and I'm looking in particular at (j), where it provides a definition of essential ambulance services means: (i) emergency health services, which is defined in (g); (ii) dispatching services, which is defined in (f); but then it goes on to (iii) work that is incidental to a service described in subparagraph (i) or (ii); (iv) work that is performed on or in connection with an ambulance to protect health or safety; or any other services prescribed in the regulations.

Now, I know we talked a little bit about that, but I'm asking it in context of 6(1)(d) and 6(1)(e) on page 8. Now, you'll notice there on page 8, it says, "In order to enable an employer to continue to provide essential ambulance services in the event of a lockout or strike, an essential ambulance services agreement shall ... (d) in order to allow the employer to respond to a change in circumstances causing a need to increase essential ambulance services during a lockout or strike, set out a procedure ..." and so on and so forth.

So I guess where I'm going with this is – I have a few questions to follow up, Mr.

Chair, with this – who is not essential? In the end, who is not essential?

I have spoken, certainly in talks to the union leadership, the fact that you could end up, if you have a six-unit group of people operating, you could have four designated as essential and two who are basically on strike pay. I'm trying to get an idea of who do you anticipate as not being essential, because it seems you've pretty well got everybody covered off here and no one is in a position to strike because everyone can fit here into the essential category. Furthermore, in 6(1)(d) and 6(1)(e), the employer can decide to expand that.

Now, the union does have the option to appeal and say that they are basically impairing their ability to engage in a job action; nevertheless, it seems here that these sections give an awful lot of power and authority to the employer to, basically, designate just about whoever he or she wishes to designate as essential.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think I answered this for the hon. Member for Labrador West. I can't prejudge what is going to come out of an essential services agreement that may or may not happen between two parties that are there. What I can say is that if either party feels aggrieved by what has happened in the process, that's what the Labour Relations Board would look at. They would look at that, if they can't come to an agreement.

If X person is deemed essential by the employer but the union doesn't believe that person is essential and it impairs their ability to use a job action, then that's exactly what the Labour Relations Board would step in to fix and either move it directly to binding arbitration or re-affix the essential services agreement that is existing.

That's what they are there for, they are the stopgap mechanism to protect the interest of both parties if one party is, I'll say, being obtuse or is not listening to the other party.

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

J. DINN: Then why not leave it at – and I guess here the legislation is intentionally broad and I think will create opportunities for the employer to further delay the process.

To my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands, he raises a good point in terms of the timelines, but here it is, you've got emergency health services clearly defined: "... assessment, stabilization, treatment or transportation of a patient that is required to preserve the patient's life or to prevent or alleviate serious harm to the patient but does not include the assessment, stabilization or treatment of a patient provided in a health care facility." And "dispatching services' means call-taking and dispatching services required for the provision of ambulances services."

So they are clearly defined and I could argue that they're very prescribed there, the definitions; however, again I've got to come back to – actually before I go to that, it's very difficult for the employer or the bargaining unit to argue otherwise. That's clearly laid out as to what it is; however, when you use the words: incidental to the service described. I don't know really what means, because that's now open to interpretation.

"... work that is performed on or in connection with an ambulance to protect health or safety" What exactly does that mean because if I were the employer I could easily enough say, well, there are a lot of things that are now covered in that, they are not defined. And "... any other services prescribed in the regulations."

So why not for that matter – and there are, by the way, other definitions, that are out

there in terms that very clearly prescribe emergency measures. I think, for example, one definition from the Government of Canada "... a service, facility or activity of the Government of Canada that is or will be, at any time, necessary for the safety or security of the public or a segment of the public." That's from the *Federal Public Sector Labour Relations Act*.

Is not (3)(4) and (5) simply muddying the waters and making, basically, what we would have called in the negotiations, weasel words, weasel language that would basically allow an employer to tort any job action and basically nullify a union's bargaining rights?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: I was hoping, Mr. Chair, that I never heard the word weaseling in a piece of legislation, but I always seem to hear something new from the MHA for St. John's Centre, which is always nice.

This is similar language that exists in the Public Service Commission right now, the public service act. This is similar language that exists in other jurisdictions, Ontario and Nova Scotia in particular. I appreciate where the hon. Member is going with this, but if there is anyone trying to muddy the waters on this, it's the hon. Member.

What I'm trying to say is this is simple legislation that allows parties to come to an essential services agreement prior to a job action. That essentially is what we're talking about here. There is a bunch of pieces of acts and clauses that comes in, that's essentially what we're doing here today. Bringing this legislation in line with the public service act is what we're trying to do. That's the language that we're using in the most cases for this.

I do appreciate the hon. Member for highlighting some of these questions.

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

J. DINN: Speaker, I'll go to page 17, section 20(1), the arbitration board. Now, it says there: "An arbitration board or a single arbitrator shall inquire into and decide on the matters that are in dispute and any other matters that appear to the arbitration board or single arbitrator to be necessary to be decided in order to conclude a collective agreement between the parties, but the arbitration board or single arbitrator shall not decide any matters that come within the jurisdiction of the board. (2) In making a decision, the arbitration board or single arbitrator shall consider" – the very first one – "the employer's ability to pay."

So, really, two parts to this. The employer can easily say, well, we don't have enough money to pay and therefore that takes care of that. However, in this case, the money that the employer has is actually funding from the provincial government and they have a contract, so it's well within a government's ability to ensure that the employer has the ability to pay. There are two parts to it here.

So I'm just wondering how do we determine the employers ability to pay and is this basically – I'll start with that question: How do we determine the employer's ability to pay? How will we know?

CHAIR: The Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll go back to a question from the hon. Member for Bay of Islands. The *Arbitration Act* does not apply because the act outlines its own process. So it's covered by that already. I just wanted to give you the update on that question.

Section 20(2), I think you were looking at, right? Do want to ask another question? I'll just get to that section; I didn't have it open.

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

J. DINN: The second question, Chair, is this: Since it's a private contractor, is this not simply then a way for government to suppress the wages, to bring in controls, similar to what they're doing with MUNFA? The fact is they set regulations as to how much money MUN will get, which directly impacts the workers. Here you have it. If government is the one that's basically putting the contract in place, it has the ability here to make sure that the employees receive fair pay. I'm just wondering if indeed this is just a roundabout way then to restrain and put wage control on these workers.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Obviously it's not our intention to not make a decision based on the ability for someone to pay. That's not what this is talking about there. This arbitration board is determining the ability to pay for the arbitration board. What I'm going to do is let me just check with our staff to make sure I'm correct on that, but I just want to get that defined for you.

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

J. DINN: In relation to that, does the arbitrator then, realizing that this employer is receiving funding from the government, does he or she or that board have the ability to say well then, in determining whether the employer has the ability or does not have the ability to pay, to go back to government to insist that, you know what, this is a fair request and government is now required to, for lack of a better phrase, sweeten the pot to make sure that the workers have the remuneration they deserve?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The act is about securing essential services, not depressing wages. An agreement between the union and the employer, that's what we're trying to get at here. That's what this whole process is about with respect to this section as well. Hopefully that answers your question a little bit better.

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

J. DINN: However, in determining who's an essential worker it does bring in too, here, very clearly, negotiations and collective bargaining and does speak to the employer's ability to pay. It goes a bit beyond, let's say, what is an essential worker.

Again, the concern here I haven't heard really addressed is how will the arbitration board determine if an employer has the ability to pay? Will he have to show the books or will the government have to be shown, here's the money we paid, here's what we expected them to pay and if not, then I'm just wondering how is this going to benefit the employees themselves? In the end, it is government who is entering into this agreement.

On page 20, I guess creating legislation in the middle of a job action is not ideal by any stretch of the imagination, Chair. We have heard very clearly that government didn't proceed on any of this before because they certainly didn't want – there looked like there could have been an agreement and they certainly didn't want to interfere with the collective bargaining process. If I heard right and I know the hon. Members will correct me if I am wrong, but that's what I clearly heard that they're trying a hands-off approach.

Now I'm trying to understand, though, I guess – and there's two parts to this question. I am trying to understand then how not bringing this legislation in several

months before would have been interfering in the process or intervening or a hands-on approach and how bringing this legislation in in the middle of a job action is not.

In section 28(1): "Any lockout or strike between an employer and a bargaining agent that is taking place at the time this Act comes into force shall immediately cease until such time as the employer and bargaining agent have established an essential ambulance services agreement."

Convince me that this is not a backdoor approach, basically, to back-to-work legislation and considering the fact that we had all this time beforehand in the context that there was plenty of time beforehand to address this.

So, again, two parts, how is this legislation not, basically, interfering in the process, yet everything leading up to this was? And secondly, why shouldn't we consider this back-to-work legislation?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think this is like a four-parter in questions.

So while I acknowledge the union is currently engaged in a legal strike, continuation of the withdrawal of services is detrimental to the people that we all represent. That's why we're here. We can't negate the fact of why we're here. We can't just put it at faceless and nameless people that we're here. We're here because of that reason and I know the people up in the gallery don't want to be here, just like we don't want to be here to bring this piece of legislation forward – absolutely not. We're here because we're in a situation where we have to provide the services to the people that we all represent.

From that standpoint, when we look at where we're to, we've been involved from

the beginning with a conciliation officer. I can take you step by step through the process that was involved in that. We had the best we have working on the file. They could not come to an agreement over a period of time. This is not unlike other negotiations where conciliation officers have been in place. Some 95 per cent of conciliation officers that are involved in these types of disputes get a resolution – some 95 per cent. So the numbers were on our side to get a resolution. I know that sounds very crude, but that is where it was to. Where we're at now is that didn't work.

In an ideal world, we wouldn't be here today doing this. We would have an agreement between the parties, negotiated in good faith, bargained well on both sides and got an agreement that is beneficial to both sides. That's where we want to be; that's not where we're to. So if I'm being very truthful, that's why we're here.

At the end of the day, we've put this in place so that the job action is not a backdoor for back-to-work legislation. It is about establishing essential services agreement between two parties that don't have an ability to do it right now; we're giving them that ability. The union has been asking for this; we're doing this for them now. We could not do it before because, as the Labour Minister, I wasn't prepared to involve myself in their current negotiations that they were in. When that became impossible for a deal to occur, which we are at right now – they are in a strike, on the streets, service is not being provided to the people in the same way that they were getting it before and we want to make sure that doesn't impact them any further; that's where we're to. The union is going to get an opportunity, just like the employer is, to maintain their ability to strike and lockout. They can only do those job actions after they have an essential services agreement. The rest of the legislation deals directly with the Labour Relations Board.

You asked about the arbitration side. We can't predetermine what arbitrators are going to look at when they're going at it. All we're trying to do is trying to put in place an opportunity for them to try to move in that direction if they needed to from the Labour Relations Board for both parties. That's where we're to with this; at the end of the day, they can still go back to their job action when they have an opportunity to get the essential services agreement put in place and that's where we're to, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

J. DINN: Thank you.

This is about the fact that, as I said before, the working conditions of these paramedics is basically the care and condition of the people they serve. So it is important to have conditions and the situation so that they are supported in a way that they can do their job.

So what I heard – and maybe the minister can clarify this because I am getting a little bit further confused here and that's been known to happen to me, but the minister said that basically the conciliation board, at a time when it seemed to interfere with the strike vote, was designed basically to get the job done, to help encourage the sides to come to an agreement. When it became clear that it was impossible to get a deal, and we're now in a situation where this legislation is brought in, part of it, all extensively to determine who is essential, but is it then the intention of the minister that this is designed to get a deal? That this legislation is now designed to get a deal where conciliation and negotiation couldn't? I'm just trying to get an idea of where he stands, because if it is, then that sounds like interfering with bargaining.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I think we get confused in the two different areas where we're to, right? You said the conciliation board; that was put in place in the last set of negotiations that the parties were put in place for, that allowed them to get to an agreement, so that actually worked. One of the tools that we have in the tool box within Labour Relations is a conciliation board. That could work because there was an agreement that could be seen as coming to fruition because of that. As it was, the conciliation board really didn't need to exist because it forced the parties back to the table to get an agreement at that time.

What we put in place since that point in this separate set of negotiations – because you're getting the two of them tied together and it's hard to keep track when someone is saying conciliation board, someone is saying conciliation officer, two different processes. The conciliation board is the next step that could be put in place at the time.

Right now, we're in a situation where a conciliation officer is in place. It has put a course of action in place over a period of time, getting parties to the table with some success, albeit not the success we wanted at the end.

We've put our best person on the file, working that file. Got to the end of the process, wrote a report saying that they are at an impasse. They have the ability to strike and have a lockout. At that point, there is still an option for a deal. In many cases, you used your own example of the NLTA. The NLTA has been in a situation for strikes before that never – a strike vote that never, ever went to strike because that was one of the tools in the union, as well as the employer's tool box. So that's where we're to at this point.

Fast forward to where we're to today, job action happened. We found out on Thursday night, last Thursday night, that

this was a possibility. They said they were going out at 12 o'clock on Friday, this past Friday. We put in place a situation through Eastern Health and through the RHAs to put in place a coverage option. That was working for what we're trying to do. That can't continue on, and I'll let the Minister of Health speak to that if he wants to get up. That can't work in the longer term situation.

We're putting a situation in place where two parties can get an essential services agreement put in place that allows them to get back to providing the essential services that are required. Then at that point, the job action can either start again or, hopefully, maybe they'll have a negotiated deal, maybe, maybe not, but it gives them the opportunity to go either a lockout from the employer or a strike from the union. That gives them still the opportunity to exercise their rights that they have under the *Labour Relations Act*, but it also gives the ability for us to have services for the people that they represent. I'm sure that the individuals that are here in the gallery and many outside who want to do this work each and every day will look forward to getting back to work at that. Albeit, this is not the situation in which we wanted to do something like this, but it's a situation that we've all found ourselves in.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

J. DINN: So whether we call it conciliation board or a conciliation officer – and I certainly appreciate the minister giving me a history of the NLTA's bargaining history. It's always good to be given that and reminding me of my roots.

So here's the question, and I appreciate the explanation, but here's the question, because the minister in talking about the conciliation officer – and the process up to now is clearly that the realization came to them that it was impossible to get a deal. Is

this legislation then simply another arrow in the quiver, another tool in the tool box, to encourage people that decides to get a deal where conciliation failed? That's what I'm asking because in the context of what you said there, and I'll clarify it, I'm not interested in the process, up until now you've been trying to get a deal. Is this legislation, then, now designed, either the paramedics or the employer both, to get a deal?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

No, it's not designed to get a deal. What it's designed to is exactly the intention: to get an essential services agreement in place for two parties to provide essential services to the people we all represent in this House of Assembly. That's the goal of this piece of legislation. If it forces a hand of doing something else or not – force is the wrong word – if it helps along the ability to go to either binding arbitration or to get an arbitrator to look at this or further negotiations at the table, that's a positive sidebar of that, too, but that's not the intention of the legislation. The intention of this legislation is to get an agreement between two parties for essential services.

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

J. DINN: So from the minister's point of view this is not an attempt to interfere with collective bargaining. That's what I'm assuming.

B. DAVIS: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: I didn't say that, but again I go back to that creating any legislation in the middle of a job action is particularly chilling and it's not ideal.

I do want to go back to page 9. I know this question was asked but I missed part of it

here. It's clause 6(2) on page 9 where it says that: "The number of ambulance workers that are required to provide essential ambulance services shall be determined without consideration of whether other persons are available to provide the essential ambulance services."

Now, I did hear the minister talk about that but either I didn't catch it all or – it's section 6, Contents of agreement, clause 6(2) on page 9 just above number 7(1). I'm just trying to get what does it mean: whether the other persons are available to provide essential ambulance services. Maybe I will clarify this further to the minister.

Is this about referring to other workers within the company or is it talking about contingency plans that might evolve, let's say, workers in a regional health authority? I'm just trying to get an idea of what is meant by that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

That's about trying to get other workers involved in the operation to be involved in that process so they can provide that essential service, as well, but I think we'll straighten that up for you a little later.

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

J. DINN: I guess one last comment, Chair, and it has to do with – I want to follow up on my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands and this is cautionary about timelines. It's a question I've had about the timelines because having been through negotiations a number of times, the timelines have a way of stretching out. I can think of where negotiators on the government side change frequently, setting back negotiations each time, delaying a contract where getting an arbitrator, it is a significant process. While 45 days is

possible, I can't think of too many times when that was the case.

The purpose here, I think, if you want a good system, then a clear bargaining process where both sides are entering into it freely and fairly and in good faith has got to be the case and I think timeliness. If I understand, looking at the news reports, they've been negotiating since 2020. We're going into 2023. By the time they sign an agreement, it's probably time to start negotiating all over again and go through this process. I speak from many people, even as my own experience as a teacher and the bargaining team, it comes down to timeliness so that we can get this done quickly and let people have some stability.

Because I can pretty well assure you no one wants to be on a strike. It affects their well-being, people have bills to pay, and there are things that they would rather be doing than sometimes standing around a barrel with fire in it and trying to keep warm, or on a picket line, or here in the gallery. I applaud the people who are here, Chair, because this is pretty dry stuff even at times for those of us who participate in it. I do share that concern and I've got to pass it on. There has to be something there to make sure we can expedite or we can move things along so that both sides can get on with business.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: In a short answer, I fully agree with you.

CHAIR: Any further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Going back on a few of the answers that the minister gave, he referred that a lot of stuff will be handled by the Labour Relations

Board. I want to ask, though, now with this new act coming into force, will the Labour Relations Board be given more resources to handle the potential this, plus the continued work that they are doing right now, which it's a lot of work. I'm wondering, with this coming into effect, will the Labour Relations Board get the resources to take on this work as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Excellent question, and the answer is they've assured me that they can do the work. Stay tuned, I think we'll have a full complement to the Labour Relations Board very, very soon. That'll help them reduce any backlog they've had.

I've had conversations with the union leadership about concerns they have with the Labour Relations Board. Those are starting to get a lot better. So I do kudos to the staff at the Labour Relations Board for the great work they are doing to alleviate those backlogs and, albeit, they'll even be faster now when they get a full complement to their staff that will be very shortly. So I don't want to predispose what's happening but it's going to be very shortly.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

I just have another, I guess, a question to this. Now with this agreement in place and that, will your office as the Minister Responsible for Labour, will there be reporting or auditing of these essential ambulance service agreements? Will you be receiving anything to say how these things are progressing or anything like that, or will the department be looking at, is this process working or is there any way that – is there going to be any feedback to yourself or the department on this process?

CHAIR: The hon. Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Yes, Mr. Chair, thank you.

The answer to your question is yes, there will be feedback. Obviously if it goes to the Labour Relations Board, we're hands-off on that, of course, but once they have the essential services agreement, we will know that. Our conciliation officer, as I said before, would be involved quite heavily in these files and helping them get to where they need to be from – and not just for this union and this employer, but for many, many ones that go across the province that have – I hate to use the word “tricky” but more difficult negotiations.

They've got a very good success rate, some better than 95 per cent conciliation officers can find a deal with the parties, but there has to be two willing dance partners. In some cases, that's not the case. Here we're making sure that we have an essential services agreement put in place that's going to help those parties get to the table.

CHAIR: Any further speakers?

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 to 5 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 5 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 5 carried.

CLERK: Clause 6.

CHAIR: Shall clause 6 carry?

I recognize the hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

It's been interesting sitting here all afternoon and pretty well since this morning listening to this debate. Well, it was supposed to start this morning. So you know we sit here and you come in – my District of Conception Bay South is affected by this situation big time. Altogether, me and my colleague from Harbour Main and my colleague from Topsail - Paradise, we represent almost 28,000 people in Conception Bay South who, as we speak, there's no ambulance service. That to me is a huge issue.

I come into this Legislature – and anyone that knows me and I think a lot of people knows my style, I'm usually targeting across the way; I fire across the way. We have good banter in this House, fair enough. But I've actually coming in here today – we've criticized. I think we've all done that. My colleagues will get up, we threw the arrows, we feel government neglected this or whatever the case and we made that point. My colleagues all talked pretty eloquently about it, they've expressed their concerns because we're all affected.

But, you know, this is burning in me, because I've got a couple of friendly amendments, but it's kind of something I need to get off my chest after sitting here all day. Are you really looking for a resolution or are you looking for a headline?

We've sat back here and we've listened and we've waited and we've listened. I was ready to debate this legislation 10 o'clock this morning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: We were all ready to debate this legislation 10 o'clock this morning. When you debate legislation, you uncover stuff; you ask questions. So when we came in here 10 o'clock this morning, I was ready to debate because I'll make this clear, I know we care, I know you care, I know I care, I think everyone in this place gets it because they care. We should be caring about them and getting it done right for them. If they're happy and back on the job, everyone is happy and everyone is safe.

So you can do these antics and I'll say it and it irritates me. For five to six hours today, I've watched the Third Party with this show. There was a news release come out right off the bat this morning, I knew right off the bat what was happening. I seen it. Is that helping those people up in the galleries or those people home waiting to get this bill passed? No. Every hour we're spending in this House, they're not on the job. They're not getting the resolution, their issues solved.

When we get this legislation through you can call the Labour Relations Board tomorrow morning and you can get things in motion to get this essential services agreement in place, then proceed to a collective agreement.

Myself and the minister this morning when all this started happening, I know the Government House Leader across the way, my first question was we got to try to find a way to resolve this, get this bill passed. We have concerns with this legislation and some of the concerns are probably because we needed questions answered.

Because in fairness to the minister we've had a lot of time through the day, we've been back and forth with officials and with our staff, because some of the stuff we didn't see outright in the bill were there because you had to refer back to the *Labour Relations Act*. If anyone ever went back to

the *Labour Relations Act* that's a different beast altogether and you just don't read that in a day and understand what you're talking about. You need expertise on that stuff. So we went in and we asked the questions. Me and the minister were the least informed in the room, outside the staff we had with us, and he'll admit that. We were there and we were asking questions out of this world.

But, ultimately, the concern we had was for those people, those paramedics, those ambulance service workers. That's what the concern was. It's not about us or our leader getting on the soapbox or getting on the news this evening, that's not what we're here for.

We wanted to make sure our concerns were asked. I've got paramedics in my district and my colleague from Harbour Main read a very well put together note from a paramedic. I thought it was very moving. That's what's most important.

So we sat back. We talked back and forth and we finally came to the realization that our concerns are looked after in the legislation, which is getting the essential services agreement in place ASAP, no more prolonging, no more, you know – everything has got to be done on good faith. Then when that's done, hopefully, we can move to the next step of getting a collective agreement in place.

Based on what we've been told – and I'm confident that the officials and our own staff – this can be done in a reasonable time frame and everyone can get back to work and work with a new agreement and an agreement that everyone is happy with and, like I say, the people of the province will be safer.

So I wanted to get that point off. It was just irritating me. When I sit back sometimes – I've been in this place a long time and I've seen a lot of things happening in here sometimes and I pass it off and let it go. But

sometimes it gets to the point that you've got to say something.

Now to each their own and everyone got the right to get up and do what they want in this House, but on the other side of it is we have a right, too, to voice our concerns. So while all of this was happening, all these scrums and all, you know, the fanfare, we were behind the door making sure, trying to get answers for those individuals up in the gallery.

Forget about the evening news. Get it right and they'll be happy tomorrow and we'll all be happy. That's what it's all about.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Mr. Chair, I'm going to bring in an amendment now and it's a friendly one. I did this – the minister – we agreed that I would do it. It is clause 6(2).

We want to move the following amendment that clause 6(2) of the bill be deleted because there is ambiguous language in there. We both agreed and his officials said it needed to come out. We had concerns with it, as well. So that's being deleted.

CHAIR: Okay. I thank the Member.

The Committee will recess to consider the said amendment.

Thank you.

Recess

CHAIR: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

The Committee of the Whole have reviewed the proposed amendment and we find that it is in order.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Conception Bay South, if he has any further commentary.

B. PETTEN: No.

CHAIR: All good.

Okay, any further speakers?

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Certainly we'll support this. It's one of the issues that we brought up in the questions, so we'll support it. But I really do have to respond to the hon. Member – since you've given them leave – for Conception Bay South.

We could have had the ambulances back on the road by 4 p.m. today if someone from the government had at least backed up the union's request to get the ambulances back on the road – didn't. But I will say this: I'll take no lessons from the Official Opposition, especially about antics and especially from the Member for Conception Bay South.

I have seen antics on both sides and we've sat here in this House, without making comment, watched the catcalling, the insults. So let's not lecture us on antics because personally speaking, I've had my fill of it, it's as simple as that. Or getting on the media soapbox or anything along that line, because I would assume that what we're here for today is indeed not only to pass legislation but also, too, in the best interests of the public, but also to make sure

–

J. HOGAN: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: I think we're debating an amendment here now, a very specific amendment to a very specific clause and a very long piece of legislation. All Members need to stay relevant to the matter that's before the House right now, which is the

amendment, proposed by the Member for CBS.

CHAIR: Thank you.

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

J. DINN: Thank you.

So if anyone is up getting on a media soapbox, I've got plenty of examples in this House of Assembly here to follow. That's what I'm about. But I didn't come here to play, I came here and I got elected because this is too serious for me.

Now, we heard that while we were busy on our soapbox that the other two parties were behind closed doors trying to get it right.

J. HOGAN: Point of order, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Just for the help of the Member for St. John's Centre, the clause that is proposed to be deleted talks about the number of ambulance workers that are required to provide essential services.

I suggest to stay relevant. The Member should speak about the number of ambulance workers that are required to provide essential services.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: First of all – sorry – in terms of the point of order, I will rule that it is a disagreement between Members. We allowed some leeway with the earlier Members, but I would ask the Member for St. John's Centre to please get to the point and we'll carry on with our debate.

Thank you.

J. DINN: Well, then I think there's obviously a clear example here of allowing one rule for one group and not for another.

In many ways with this, we are only too happy to provide input, Chair, but it comes down to being asked as well. I take umbrage at somehow the suggestion that we're not, if we want to talk about challenges and so on and so forth.

We will support this. We're not willing to pick up our marbles yet and go home. But we will certainly support this because we believe it's in the best interest of the people. In future, we would like to see if there's going to be a disagreement between Members that other Members be given equal opportunity to respond.

CHAIR: Any further speakers to this clause?

The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: (Inaudible) I'd like to echo the comments of my colleague for CBS; I agree with every word he said.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Okay. Let's get back to the business of the debate.

Shall the amendment carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

It's carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

CHAIR: Shall clause 6, as amended, now carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 6, as amended, carried.

CLERK: Clause 7.

CHAIR: Shall clause 7 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I won't say any more than what I already said.

CHAIR: Let's stay relevant. We're going to stay relevant here.

B. PETTEN: Yeah, I'm going to try to stay relevant here now.

While others were busy at other things earlier, myself and the minister also had a discussion about clause 7. I'm being clean. But I'm going to keep it really straightforward. We were again concerned about the number of days the Labour Relations Board would have to rule on the essential services agreement. It states in the bill right now 45 days. We've come to some kind of an agreement. We want to try to get this sooner rather than later, unlike some in the House. We've made an amendment and we've agreed with the minister that this should be another friendly amendment.

I move the following amendment: That clause 7(6) of the bill be amended by deleting the word and number "45 days" and by substituting the word and number "30 days."

This will expedite things, Mr. Chair, when the time comes for the Labour Relations Board to rule on this act.

CHAIR: Okay, thank you to the Member for Conception Bay South.

The Committee will recess to consider the proposed amendment.

Recess

CHAIR: House Leaders, are you ready?

Order, please!

The Committee have considered the proposed amendment and we find that it is in order.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Any further discussion of the proposed amendment?

All those in favour of the proposed amendment, please say 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

The amendment is carried.

On motion, amendment carried.

CHAIR: Shall clause 7, as amended, carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Clause 7, as amended, is carried.

On motion, clause 7, as amended, carried.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 8 through 23 carry?

The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port who's had a nice bit of exercise there.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Chair.

I'll get it right at some point.

I'm not going to take a lot of time, but I want to refer you to an old saying that a gentleman once told me. He said: If you're talking –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

T. WAKEHAM: It's right at you now. He said: If you're talking all the time, you aren't listening.

There's a lot of truth in that because there's been lots of talking, not just today, but over the last number of years about ambulance services in this province because I've seen it on both sides. So I think we're past talking. We're talking about needing to take action.

Before I get into it, I'll be very quick, I want to relate a quick story to you because we all talk about the idea of full scope and working to your full scope. Well, I want to tell you a story about a paramedic that took care of my father.

My dad was 98 when he passed away. The last couple of years he didn't go to a nursing home. He stayed in my sister's house and my sister was able to look after him, but she had no health care background so every now and then Dad would be short of breath or something would happen and she'd have to call an ambulance. Where this is going is, a couple of times the ambulance went to her house to see my dad, but instead of having to put him in the back of the ambulance and transport him to the Health Sciences Centre and stay 10 hours and wait to be seen, those paramedics were able to look after Dad, check his oxygen levels, check his vital signs and do all kinds of stuff that reassured my sister and calmed her down so that everything was okay.

Now think about that in the future. If we have paramedics practising their full scope, being able to go into houses in rural Newfoundland and Labrador and keeping

people out of emergency rooms, that's what needs to happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So the Minister of Health earlier today talked about the Health Accord, and it is a lot of good work done by the people that did the Health Accord. But before the Health Accord there was an AG report; there was an EY, Ernst & Young report; there was a Grant Thornton report; – and the minister out there is looking at me and grinning because he knows we're there – and, of course, there was the Fitch report. So we've had lots of reports that have talked about ambulance services in this province of ours, but what we haven't had is action. We haven't had them dealt with. If you think about it, if all of those reports were followed, that's the questions I have for you now.

If we're really going to do what we say we're going to do, do you agree with consistent standards of training? Do you agree that, regardless of where you live, the ambulance service should be the same in this province? Do you agree that the training and the career options for paramedics in this province should be the same no matter where they live? Finally, do you agree that all paramedics should all receive the same rate of pay and government will provide equitable funding to ensure that we have a province-wide standard service?

So whichever minister, or Premier, wants to stand up and answer those questions, I'd love to hear them.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Sorry, Mr. Chair, I was just in the intention of trying to answer, letting the Minister of Health, but I'll take a stab at this.

This piece of legislation is to even the playing field so they can actually have an essential services agreement between that,

which brings them in line with the public service. So that's going to help them move in that direction. Also, giving them the option of moving towards binding arbitration is going to help in that process as well as an opportunity.

So I will sit down very quickly on that, just in case someone else wanted to make a comment on that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was on two minds today as to whether or not I would even come here based on my current health situation and decided that this legislation was important enough to warrant me to show up. Certainly, I think the fine people from Clarenville and the rest of the paramedics from the rest of the province deserve not only my attention, but the whole House's attention.

It breaks my heart to sit here, instead of stand, but I'll sit and say what I have to say. When we think about paramedics and the role they carry out and we think about as an example, someone in CBS who calls an ambulance and somebody in St. John's who calls an ambulance. Those two ambulances arrive at the door at the same time with two people in a similar situation. Two paramedics roll out from CBS getting paid, I don't know, \$18 or \$19 an hour and two paramedics roll out from the regional health authority one and they're getting paid much more, with a pension and with a secure future. It kind of makes you wonder what we've done.

I'll say something that's not meant to point fingers at government, but I will say this, we've argued today and bantered back and forth about why we're here today and whose responsibility it is. It's quite simple, it's government and I'm not saying it's this government. It's governments of today and previous governments.

The reality of it is we have a two-tier system, private and public, that aren't equal; not even close to equal. And the fact that we are putting in an essential services agreement for – just think of this now – a private-owned ambulance operator, we're putting in an essential services agreement in 2023 when it's existed in the public entity for many years. Why are they not essential? Why hasn't it always been essential?

In my previous life in labour, I've negotiated essential services agreement. I know exactly how it works and the reality of it is we failed these people. These people probably should be right now at a point where they have a contract. The reality of it is, is that two years ago, three years ago, maybe 2019 or 2020, this was brought up in the House several times. The previous minister of Health sat here and said we're all confident going into negotiations over the next couple of years. We know where we are.

This legislation should have been passed, perhaps in the last sitting or the sitting before, most definitely before these negotiations started out. Here we are now 10 months into it and sitting here today and having to negotiate a way forward to keep people happy.

Our role is to look after the people of this province. It's not to look after unions, it's not to look after the employers, it's not to look after individual people who work in certain sectors – everybody. These people up here are the ones that look after the public when it comes to calling for an ambulance. Unless you've served on the front line, be it an RCMP officer, RNC, paramedic, firefighter, military or volunteer firefighter in a small community, a lot of people don't understand what they do on a regular basis.

What they do on a regular basis is put their lives on the line. When they go to a call, they don't know what it is. They don't know if they're responding to a house where there's someone with a gun, they just don't

know, and they're paid way less and we're only just now figuring it out that ambulances are essential in rural Newfoundland. It don't make a whole lot of sense. So I will support this legislation as it is rolled out here today.

I say it is time for this government to stand with, not just the paramedics, but stand for the paramedics right across the province because the disparity between public and private paramedics in this province is a large gap. It is a very, very big gap. This isn't just one service provider; this is right across the whole province. There are more collective agreements that are going to come due. This legislation is long overdue. So right now, it is not about blame but we're at a point where we need to move things forward.

I had a conversation with the minister earlier today. The reality of this is, right now, we're 10 months into a situation – and it doesn't matter how long we have been in conciliation, who the conciliator is: none of that matters right now. What matters is these people went on strike. From a legal standpoint, they had no choice. I don't think they did.

I hear from ambulance attendants on a regular basis, I'll say almost as much as daily at my office, and they talk about the working conditions and the things that they have been put through, the things that their employers put them through, different scenarios at work. Yes, they have alternate – they have a grievance process; they have a complaints process that they can go through; they have the right to refuse work. But guess what? You do not become a paramedic, a firefighter or a police officer if you're going to be refusing work. It is just not how it works. These people do it because it is what they want to do. It is a calling.

It is time for this House to start supporting these people. I'll vote for this legislation and at the end of the day this has been a much longer day than it need be, but it is not our

place to really complain about that because these people have been 10 months without a contract. It is time for us to move things forward for them (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Before I recognize the next speaker, I will point out to the House that we are actually going to be evaluating right now, discussing and debating clauses 8 through 19, so I will just remind the Members.

If anybody has any further comments on 8 through 19.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just wanted to get up and have a few remarks on Bill 24. I do support the bill with the amendments that has been put in place. I'm sure we'll all support it, so there is no need to be up here tonight beating it to death all over again. I think we've done what we should have done for those paramedics and first responders way back when. So it is time to get it to the House of Assembly and get this done once and for all.

I just wanted to get up because, as recognized as first responders, I do have a personal connection to a first responder and I certainly would like to thank all the first responders, paramedics throughout Newfoundland and Labrador for what you do as a people and what you do for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: But in the bill it says, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services. That word "respect" is there and that is what they're looking for. That is exactly what they're looking for: respect. Respectful hours, respectful pay,

respectful lifetime, and that's just what's there. So if through negotiations – I know we have 30 days to become essential worker and then to have the 30-day negotiations, but at the end of the day that's just what they want and that's what we should give them is respect. Give them hours that they can go home, spend some time with their children. I see this. I see it every day. They need to come home and spend some time with their children, so that their grandparents haven't got to be filling in the loops for those people.

They just want a work-life balance and I think a good pay being equal with a balance with life, and being able to come home and to be able to spend some time with their families for what they do for us, and that's basically all I have to say. I just wanted to say thank you very, very much and I hope this legislation does well for those people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

Since there seems to be a little bit more leeway given now, just talking on Bill 24, for me it's a little bit confusing when I was going through this because we're looking at essential service legislation. Is this good or is this bad? It seems like the union was sort of supporting having this legislation put in place. So what's the problem with it? What's the issue there?

I just want to go on the record again, the biggest problem for us is the way the government has gone about this. There is supposed to be essential services, especially when it comes to paramedic services. Just waiting now for this crisis to come about, is a crisis on top of a crisis. Health care was already pressed to the limit and now to have certain ambulance

services out on strike was creating another crisis.

This legislation, I think it's 21 pages of legislation here being rushed through. We have to look through it within 24 hours. In actual fact the unions weren't consulted. It's not just the Teamsters union that is going to be impacted by this legislation. There are other unions that are going to be impacted as well. For them not to have the ability to actually read through it and be able to voice their concerns to the House, to the sitting Members here that's elected in each of the districts that provides ambulance services, is really not right. Because down the road we're going to be stuck with certain things because of this legislation. That's the biggest problem.

Now, last fall, in November, the Teamsters Union made the government aware they were in a legal strike position. They made them aware. The House was actually sitting. In November we were sitting. In actual fact, we could've extended the House sitting an extra week and we could've actually taken a look at this legislation and debated it and debated it in an intelligent manner. But, in actual fact, what was happening was they were already rushing through the *Provincial Health Authority Act* legislation. It was doing the exact same thing: Bringing it in, throwing it at us, getting us to look through it, try to make sense out of it and debate it.

This is the way business is done in the House of Assembly. This legislation, these pages here, we're just looking at it. To me, this is bad. There are going to be implications as well for this. One of the biggest things that I'm concerned about – and I wrote it down here somewhere, because I'm just reading through this. One of my concerns is that because the unions, stakeholders, MHAs haven't had a chance to really go through this legislation and see how it applies to the workforce, what the future may hold. Actually this is written down; I wrote this down just now: Will this be setting up unions to be entering a big

cycle of arbitration? You mark my words; we're going to find out the pitfalls of this legislation down the road.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Any further speakers?

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I won't take much time. I guess, me being me, I had to get up and make a comment. Here again the Third Party are saying about the consultation and they needed to make it right and they wanted to talk to the unions, it was more than the Teamsters involved and what have you. That's a really good point. We also talked to the Teamsters, too.

My question is for the minister that I spent a lot of hours today talking to. It's a good thing we get along because I don't think we would be able to spend that much time in the same room if we didn't. Did the Third Party reach out to you on this legislation about any concerns they had?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Mr. Chair, I'd like to say no, not specifically in this, other than what they've asked questions on in the House of Assembly.

CHAIR: I remind everybody about relevance. We will get on with the debate.

I recognize the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: I thought that was a really good question, Mr. Chair.

I'll finish up by thanking the minister. Outside of those questions asked in the House, there was no approaching before

the questions in Committee from the Third Party. That's what I got clarity on.

Thank you very much for your time.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further speakers?

The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you.

I'd like to take an opportunity to address some items that were raised throughout the course of robust debate on such an important piece of legislation. Good points by both sides on why we are here. We're here, of course – it deserves repeating – because of the people in the gallery and the people they serve.

First and foremost, I see this as an immediate need to protect you and your rights in your labour disputes, but also to protect the rights of patients and the people you serve. I don't know how you do the jobs you do. I've been on ride alongs and seen some, just a glimpse, into what you see. I can't imagine what you take home every night.

It's important that we all be here to support you and your families, not just today, not just because you're in a strike action, not just because you have labour issues, but because it is the right thing to do for the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: I also think that through the debate, through the commentary and through many of the discussions that have been had in the hallways and, frankly, in the body of this Assembly, it is evident that there does have to be transformation of the delivery of services beyond the immediate issue, beyond the emergency issue that we face today.

I'm glad to hear such robust supports, such unanimous support from the Members opposite, because as a provider myself, I recognized that this was an issue. That's why it was a fundamental plank of the Health Accord moving forward. We had the courage to develop the Health Accord with all parties.

Now I ask the House: Will we have the courage to act and move forward to create bold new opportunities to reinvent paramedicine for the future of this province? Whether it's expanding scope so loved ones don't have to be taken to the hospital, perhaps, or whether it's ensuring that you have the right work balance so you're practising to your full potential, so you're reaching your personal professional balance, we need to be there to support you and I guarantee that we will be. I think the Health Accord is a good first step.

Of course, when you develop a plan like the Health Accord, it can't be enacted overnight. It deserves robust policy decisions, it deserves research and it deserves debate. You can stay tuned; we'll certainly be advancing that in the not-too-distant future.

So to everybody in both galleries: Thank you for all you do. I think this was an important debate today and it provides, I hope, some solace for you and for the people of this province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall clauses 8 through 19 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 8 through 19 carried.

CLERK: Clause 20.

CHAIR: Shall clause 20 carry?

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair. I just want to be part of this wonderful love-in here tonight.

Okay, I move an amendment, please. Amendment in Committee of the Whole, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services, moved by me, the following amendment: That clause 20(2)(a) of the bill be deleted, which says, the employer's ability to pay.

J. BROWN: Seconded by me.

J. DINN: Seconded by the Member for Labrador West.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Committee will recess to consider the proposed amendment.

Thank you.

Recess

CHAIR: Order, please!

Thank you.

The Committee have reviewed the proposed amendment and we find that it is in order.

The speaker still has time on the clock if they wish to speak further.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Now is the opportunity to show just how much we are concerned about the health

and well-being of our ambulance workers and our paramedics. As I said before, these private contracts are entered into with the provincial government. If we are concerned, certainly we are, with their remuneration, their benefits, we've heard the issue here of the lack of parity with those in the public health care system, well here's a chance to sort of take that out and make it so that these paramedics, who are operating our ambulances in the rural areas of this province, with the private companies, have a fair chance at a decent salary, at a pension plan, at other benefits.

As I said earlier, the employers themselves basically enter into a contact with the government. My concern before was that this is sort of a way, if we put this here, sort of a backdoor way of suppressing wages, similar to what we've seen going on with the MUN Faculty Association, which basically wants an increase but Memorial is saying we can't because of government legislation. Here, I think, there's an opportunity then for government, through its agreement it can easily remedy this, Chair, by simply removing this clause. Arbitration then, it allows, I guess, for further negotiation, if not between the employees or the bargaining unit, but also the operator of this to enter into an agreement or to demand more funding to meet the needs, the financial needs of its workers.

We know quite clearly, and we've heard it from members that they can probably find better jobs elsewhere that are better paying. It may be not as rewarding, but certainly better paying. Here is an opportunity then, I guess, to remove one more obstacle to maintain keeping them in their positions in rural Newfoundland, in this province and remove one excuse that the employer has that he or she does not have enough money or the ability to pay, because, ultimately, this employer then has the ability to go back to government.

Government has the ability to make things right through whatever service agreement it

enters into and to also take the necessary action then to probably address the collective bargaining demands and maybe, with any luck, bring the salaries of the paramedics and other employees in these companies up to some parity.

I certainly heard support here on this side of the need, recognizing the lack of remuneration or the disparity. I've certainly heard here on the other side the definite concern of how we need to make sure that our paramedics have the ability to bargain fairly and collectively and make sure that they receive fair remuneration and get them back on the road.

I have heard from both sides, all sides, how deeply appreciative Members are of the work these fine people do in looking after those that are in need, those that are going through crisis, those who are in accident. Well, I think now, Chair, is an opportunity here to basically walk the talk.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further speakers?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Chair.

I'll just make a few points on the proposed amendment of 20(2)(a); 20(2) does say, "In making a decision, the arbitration board or single arbitrator shall consider" So it is only one consideration that will go into the arbitration board, which, of course, is not a decision of the employer or employees, it is the independent arbitration board so they wouldn't have any predetermined ideas about who they should side with, of course. And as I said, it is only one consideration of a collective considerations that can be looked at when they're trying to reach their decision.

I also note that this could go in favour of the employee. The Member seems to be reading this section, and I would submit maybe reading too much of the entire act, with an employer-friendly mind. That is not how it was drafted. Of course, an employer could argue that they don't have the ability to pay, but if we remove this section then the employees will not have the ability to argue that their employer can pay them fair wages.

So this protects both the employee and the employer to make the argument. But most importantly because the employees are here today, you can go to the arbitration board if your employer says I can't afford to pay.

What the Member for St. John's Centre would say, he doesn't want you to make that argument at the arbitration board; he doesn't want that to be a factor. I would say you should make that argument, if you believe the employer can pay you fair wages and a wage that you think is right, go ahead and make that argument. Allowing this amendment would take that right away from you.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Any further speakers to the amendment?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: So my take on this: "In making a decision, the arbitration board or single arbitrator shall consider (a) the employer's ability to pay" The minister did say their ability to pay, but what is the case there when they consider that it is the ability to pay? The employer's ability to pay is based off government and how much their contract is off government. So if you're actually going to pose it to the arbitrator and say the government's ability to pay and it is being used not in the greatest of light but in the

sense that government is responsible to give a contract that will make sure that fair wages are paid. Arbitration will look at that.

But at the same time if this is read out of a way that the arbitration board reads this legislation, then that also muddies the waters in that sense as well. But if the arbitrator goes in with a clean slate and it should be not taking into consideration things like the ability to pay, but in the sense that they go in with a clean slate and it's actually balanced and fair. Having this in here does put an inherent thing that it will be weighted towards the employer. At the end of the day, this should be a balance but this is weighted, in the sense that the way the wording is that the employer is the one that has to show and if he's not showing or they're not in good faith, it does weigh it the other way.

So maybe in a sense that it should go in that where it's an agreement with government, government is funding the ambulance services, it's not really the employer, it's government, and the contract that they signed with the service provider. So this is where you look at it this way, is that it's inherently not working out. Because, really, government is the one who's going to be paying the contract at the end of the day.

It seems it is weighted in that direction. I would consider saying that maybe it shouldn't be in there in the sense that, or worded differently in your case (inaudible) because it is inherently government paying the shot with the contract to the ambulance provider. Because, at the end of the day, that's who's paying the bill on that and who's paying for the contract, and it is inherently government's responsibility when they do tender these contracts to these employers, that fair wages and parity should be considered anyway. So this is where it gets the sense that it does do weigh towards the employer.

Thank you.

CHAIR (Warr): Further speakers?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll only take a quick second. This is a standard piece of labour legislation, the verbiage that's included in this. It appears in Ontario's legislation, Nova Scotia's legislation. It essentially gives the cover for this as a piece of legislation, not unlike what my hon. colleague, the Attorney General, who understands this legal language much better than many – definitely myself. I won't speak for anyone else there, but I do want to say that this is a standard piece of legislation. I encourage Members of the House of Assembly to look at voting against this amendment.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Further speakers?

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair, I do appreciate what the Member for St. John's Centre is trying to do. I agree with him on the issue, but certainly based on the response of the Minister of Justice, I sort of see that side as well. So it's probably not the appropriate move, but I do want to use this as an opportunity, just once again, to emphasize the issue that the Member is trying to get at and what I tried to raise earlier.

The issue is if we want paramedics providing these services, they have to be treated fairly; they have to be paid appropriately. Simply giving funding to a private company and saying you go negotiate something, whether that funding is suffice or not, who cares, you negotiate something and if these people end up working in substandard conditions, working

hours for nothing – volunteer, as someone said earlier – getting low wages, not getting benefits, as long as they're willing to keep on doing it and keep her going, we'll just close our eyes and pretend it's okay.

It's not okay. So again, somewhere in this process – I've just got to reiterate to the Minister of Health, not the minister of Labour – if we're truly serious about retention of these health care professionals, no different than we are with doctors, nurses and so on, there has to be standards in place. When you're doing your negotiation with the private company, there has to be standards. When you're negotiating out whatever you're going to pay, in this case it's Fewer's, it could be whoever, there has to be recognition that these are the standards that have got to be in place.

Employees have to be paid at least this amount of money, you can't have them working on the dead, you can't have them on call for free and you can't do those things. Once you figure out what all that is going to cost, then you put that together, we'll talk about it and make sure it's accurate. Then we'll talk about how much we're going to remunerate you for running the service, after we know all the employees are being treated fairly and getting the wages they deserve.

Simply coming up with some number with the private company that he or she accepts, and then they take that pot of money and do what they will with it and say well, I can save a couple of bucks an hour here and put it in my own pocket instead of giving it to the employees, that's wrong. That's the problem; that's the issue. That is what the Member is trying, I think, to get at, which I do appreciate because I agree with him, but what he's trying to do here, I don't think this is the right mechanism and way to do it.

So I'll agree with the Minister of Justice on that. I've just got to reiterate to the Minister of Health, we've got to find a way to get the

money into the pockets of the workers, not the owner. Similar to what you did when you were minister of Child, Youth and Family Services. There were standards for daycares. There were standards in place. You had to feed the children these kind of snacks. The building had to meet these codes. They could only play with these toys. There were all kinds of rules and standards if they wanted to get their \$10 a day or whatever.

We've got to do a similar type approach with these ambulance operators that these are the bare minimum things that you must pay your workers, working conditions, safety, all that stuff. Let's talk about what it is going to cost to actually do that. Once we figure that out and we agree that that's what it's going to be, now we'll talk, afterwards, about how much I'm going to pay you for running the service, once they're all looked after.

So I just wanted to put that out there again, Mr. Chair, because I think that's the only way we're going to solve this problem.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, any time that this has been used is, basically, it's been used to suppress wages and salaries. To cite Ontario which is probably, when you look at the conservative approaches that they've taken there in terms of workers' salaries and so on and so forth, I am sorry but the fact is, here, you put in the employer's ability to pay. It's not about whether, well, maybe they can afford to pay. Leaving this out will limit it because the rest of it does say: the employer's ability to attract and retain qualified employees, which also, I guess, you can look at in terms of the financial.

Also, "... other matters as the arbitration board or single arbitrator considers fair and reasonable in the circumstances." But they're all going to be, more or less, governed by that first one. Can the employer pay for it? Yes, fine. No, well, too bad. In other words, we're not going to give you the agreed upon or what you're requiring. We can't afford it. There ends the debate.

So I think here it's removing one more excuse in this case for an employer who is entering into an agreement with the provincial government. Maybe that's the fear here that somehow the provincial government will be on the hook to sort of bring some parity to the pay that these people play, but I know that in places where this has been brought in or it's been used, it's not been used to increase the benefits but it's been more than likely to limit the benefits because it becomes the out for it.

Well, that's good. We can agree to it, but we can't pay for it so, therefore, the agreement is null. I think what I'm looking here is one more protection for employees to give these paramedics an opportunity to negotiate a fair and reasonable settlement which, certainly, has not been the case up to this point in time. I do disagree with the Minister of Justice on this one.

CHAIR: Further speakers to the amendment?

Shall the amendment carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

CHAIR: I haven't seen three people rise to Division.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

CHAIR: Division has been called.

Division

CHAIR: All those in favour of the amendment, please stand.

CLERK (Russell): James Dinn, Jordan Brown, Lela Evans.

CHAIR: All those against the amendment, please stand.

CLERK: Andrew Furey, John Hogan, Lisa Dempster, Gerry Byrne, Bernard Davis, Tom Osborne, Siobhan Coady, Pam Parsons, Elvis Loveless, Krista Lynn Howell, Andrew Parsons, Sarah Stoodley, Derrick Bragg, John Abbott, Perry Trimper, Paul Pike, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Scott Reid, Lucy Stoyles, David Brazil, Barry Petten, Helen Conway Ottenheimer, Paul Dinn, Lloyd Parrott, Tony Wakeham, Jeff Dwyer, Pleaman Forsey, Loyola O'Driscoll, Craig Pardy, Joedy Wall, Chris Tibbs, Eddie Joyce, Paul Lane.

The ayes: three; the nays: 33.

CHAIR: Order, please!

The amendment has been defeated.

Any more speakers to clause 20?

Shall clause 20 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 20 carried.

CLERK (Hawley George): Clauses 21 to 27 inclusive.

CHAIR: Clauses 21 through 27 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 21 through 27 carried.

CLERK: Clause 28.

CHAIR: Shall clause 28 carry?

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

This time, instead of the handcrafted artisan, I'm basically going to take the one from the Official Opposition and rework it.

So amendment in the Committee of the Whole, Bill 24, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulances Services. Moved by me, seconded by the Member for Torngat Mountains.

I move the following amendment: That clause 28(1) of the bill be deleted.

CHAIR: This House stands in recess so we can take a look at the proposed amendment.

Recess

CHAIR: Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

On the proposed amendment, we find that it is not in order as it is outside the principle of the bill.

Any further speakers to clause 28?

Shall clause 28 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 28 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 29 to 31 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 29 to 31 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 29 through 31 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 Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services. (Bill 24)

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 with amendments?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, that the Committee report having passed the bill with amendments, carried.

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 24 carried with amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 24 with amendment.

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. 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 carried Bill 24 with an amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and reported Bill 24 with amendment.

When shall the report be received?

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: When shall the bill be read a third time?

J. HOGAN: Now.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Seeing how we've made great progress today as a collective House on this very important piece of legislation, I would ask leave of all Members to have third reading tonight.

SPEAKER: Is leave granted?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, we'll have to do the readings of the amendments now.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister Responsible for Labour, that the amendment be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that amendments now be read a first 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.'

Carried.

CLERK: First reading of the amendments.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I move that the amendments be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the amendments 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.'

Carried.

CLERK: Second reading of the amendments.

On motion, amendments read a first and second time.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, third reading of Bill 24.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister Responsible for Labour, that Bill 24 be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services. (Bill 24)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting the Provision of Essential Ambulance Services," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 24)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, given the hour of the day, it has been a long day and I thank the folks who stayed in the gallery, I move that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: 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.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: This House do now stand adjourned.

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