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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Wednesday

March 13, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Admit strangers.

**Government Business**

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

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

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that An Act to Amend the Correctional Services Act, Bill 71, be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce Bill 71 and the said bill be now 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.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Correctional Services Act," carried. (Bill 71)

**CLERK (Hawley George):** A bill, An Act to Amend the Correctional Services Act. (Bill 71)

**SPEAKER:** This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

**J. HOGAN:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 71 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that in accordance with Standing Order 65, the Privileges and Elections Committee shall comprise: the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, the Member for St. John's Centre and the Member for Terra Nova.

**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.'

Carried.

Motion carried.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 8.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that An Act to Repeal the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act, Bill 44, be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 44, An Act to Repeal the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Repeal the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act." (Bill 44)

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

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

I appreciate the opportunity to rise today. We're proposing today to repeal the *Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act*. Speaker, this act was introduced to provide regulatory oversight to ensure the integrity of harness racing in the province.

People in this province will remember, I remember as a child, hearing the sound of the racetrack in the Goulds. I was living in Corner Brook at the time, a young child, and I remember it being on television. It was quite something here in its day, but that racetrack, which ran for about 50 years, has since been closed.

We do have a Harness Racing Commission that has jurisdiction throughout the Atlantic provinces. Basically, it's an agency of the Council of Atlantic Premiers and is responsible for governing, regulating, supervising harness racing in all its forms in the Atlantic provinces, so that includes Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

The Commission falls under the umbrella, as I said, of the Council of Atlantic Premiers. As a participating member, even though we do not have a racetrack now, we're

responsible for making an annual financial contribution towards its operations. From 2015 to today, we've paid out about \$146,000 towards that Commission.

We're basically saying there is no harness racing occurring in the province today, the harness racing in the Goulds has concluded and there's a closure of that track. So given the length of time that the facility has been dormant now, we've chosen to withdraw from the Commission – we do not have any active racetracks in the province – to repeal the *Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act*.

Should the sport be revitalized, it will likely take a considerable amount of time and financial resources to do so, but should the sport return to the province, we could revisit our involvement at that time. It does not make sense to be continuously paying for a Commission that is no longer required in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

This has nothing to do with our support for the industry or support for harness racing in general. It has to do with why are the people of the province making a financial contribution to the Commission when the services are not required? It's as simple as that, Speaker.

I'll take my seat. It's a small amount of money every year but money adds up. Last year, I think in '23-'24, we paid out \$17,500. We're expecting that to continue to increase over time. So what we're basically saying is, look, we haven't had harness racing in the province for a number of years now, there is no active opportunity for us to have harness racing start up in the province today. It would take, as I said, time and financial consideration.

On that, people can still place their wagers as they have in the past and likely will continue to do so. It has nothing to do with that, it has to do with the oversight of the Commission itself.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

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

It's good to see this bill come here. We certainly support it, but I'd like to speak on it a little bit. It's in my district. I was there as a young kid, as well, and certainly watched harness racing. I'm going to say there was bingo that used to be down there years ago. It's been a long time since there's been harness racing down there for sure. I did have some friends that were involved in it as well. They took a great interest in it and would be down there every Saturday and Sunday afternoons as well. It's sad to see it go, but there doesn't seem to be a lot of interest in it right now. There were a couple of jockeys that were in our area, as well, in Bay Bulls. I know of those people. So it's a sad day to see it go, but I can see why they're doing it.

One time we went on a trip with the guy who was interested in harness racing, went to Montreal, watched a hockey game and I think we made an hour subway ride to go to the harness racing track that was in Montreal at the time. Again, it's sad to see it go.

There was some interest in it, for sure, back in the day. It wasn't only up our way. It was in the Gould's but there were a lot of people from St. John's and the surrounding areas that used to go attend it and it was pretty big at one time, but right now it's not. It's certainly something that had to be done, I guess. So we're sad to see it go, but I guess we'll have to move on.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

Yes, I see that we haven't had harness racing in this province in what was it, about eight, nine years. So, like the previous Member said, it's unfortunate, I guess, that sporting event has lost interest and unfortunately gone. I don't remember any harness racing. I grew up in Labrador, the only thing I know is snowmobile racing, but I guess if we're paying for something that we're not participating in, or we're not part of, I guess it's good to start cleaning up this stuff. So, other than that, we support this obviously.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers, if the minister speaks now, we'll close the debate.

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

**S. COADY:** I thank those that are engaged in the debate. I think it makes sense for us to do this at this time. As I said, we can revisit should it ever return to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I thank the Members for their contributions.

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

The motion is that Bill 44 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:** A bill, An Act to Repeal the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act. (Bill 44)

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Repeal the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 44)

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

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

I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 44.

**SPEAKER:** A seconder, please.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Seconded by the Premier.

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

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 (Pardy):** Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 44, An Act to Repeal the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act.

A bill, "An Act to Repeal the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act." (Bill 44)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

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

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

It's great seeing you in that position down there.

Why has that bill not been repealed until now, a decade later, following the end of the harness racing, paying \$145,000 a year to that?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

Thank you very much for the question.

You know, there had been discussions and possibilities with people continuously looking at the possibility of reopening, especially the Goulds racetrack. As time has passed, this aspiration has faded. We didn't think we wanted to repeal it prior to now because of that, but now that we see that time has passed, things have not progressed, that it's the right time to withdraw from that at this point in time.

It's not a large sum of money every year, it's \$17,000, \$18,000, but that continues to grow, and we feel that it's the right time.

If someone came in today and said that they wanted to restart, it would take some time and some financial investment for that to occur. We allowed as much time as possible. As you know, I think the bill was only passed in 2014, so we allowed some time to pass to make sure that it wasn't going to revitalize and now we're suggesting that we step aside. If it should ever resurge, we can always revisit it.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Will there be any services that local horse riders rely on that are lost by withdrawal from the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission?

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

**S. COADY:** I'm unclear of the question. There is no horse racing currently. So I'm unclear as to what services you're considering, so perhaps you could just give a little bit more detail.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Just the local riders, if there's anything there for them to fall back on, in case they want to pursue it further.

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

**S. COADY:** Well, the Commission itself just oversees the races, it oversees the rules of racing. It oversees infractions, disputes, the welfare of the animals. As there is no horse racing occurring, then there would be no requirement for those services.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** What are the total annual cost savings of repealing the act?

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

**S. COADY:** I believe I answered that a little earlier. I can tell you that this year, in '23-'24, we paid \$17,500. It was estimated in '24-'25 that would be \$18,200. So, \$18,200.

**CHAIR:** Are there any further questions or comments?

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 to 3 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 to 3 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 3 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.'

Motion carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** An Act to Repeal the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act.

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

On motion, title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

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

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

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 44 carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is the Committee rise and report Bill 44 without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

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

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

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 44 without amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed that Bill 44 be carried without amendment.

When shall the bill be received?

**J. HOGAN:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**J. HOGAN:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 16.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Premier, that An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act, Bill 70, be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 70, An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act." (Bill 70)

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you.

Speaker, I hope this bill is less contentious than the harness racing bill.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak about the repeal of the *Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act*, more commonly referred to as EDGE, and certainly through the course of this particular debate I will use EDGE rather than repeating that every time.

EDGE, which many people may be aware, which has been around almost 30 years, December 1994 it was launched. It was a performance-based economic development program which was designed to create new business investment, diversify the economy and stimulate private sector job creation. Again, it was around for 30 years and certainly had some success starting off. It was there for local companies that wanted to expand, entrepreneurs that wanted to try a new business start-up or national and international companies that wanted to come here and establish a presence and a new company in this province.

In order to get what they call EDGE status, you had to meet certain specific criteria in terms of investment and job creation that would make them eligible to receive

benefits. These included the remission and reimbursement of provincial and federal corporate tax, access to unserviced Crown land for \$1 per year, which would come with an option to buy the land for \$1 upon successful completion of the EDGE contract and this actually superseded the *Lands Act* that was in place.

The reality is, that over the last number of years, particularly the last decade or more, the EDGE program has declined in relevance and it's not meeting the needs of business right now. It's something I saw even when I was involved in economic development back in the 2000s. It seemed like it was getting harder to achieve EDGE status, less people were applying, less people getting it and now having been in the department, those thoughts, I guess, or feelings were confirmed.

What we have heard in some of the feedback was that EDGE lost relevancy for the ability of expansion. Changes in tax areas meant there was a reduced benefit from the incentives that came out of EDGE programming. The business community wanted a programming tool that would fill gaps that they saw. The EDGE incentives themselves were not enticing clients to actually set out to start these businesses. The needs were coming from the immediate wage demands and coming from attraction of skilled labour.

Just to get some stats, which I think are important, there have been 363 applications for EDGE since 1994. Only four have been received since 2011 – only four. Close to 70 per cent of companies that had EDGE status have actually had that status revoked now because they no longer complied with the terms that were necessary.

There is only one current company, Fonemed, that currently has EDGE status. They will, I will point out to the Chamber, continue to receive benefits until their benefits period expires or the same thing, if EDGE status happens to be revoked for



non-compliance with the rules. Obviously, we would love to see them continue on, and Fonemed has been doing a wonderful job.

We actually recommended this program for termination in 2021 and we've been looking for a way to come up with a new updated program to take its place. Obviously, we want to continue to encourage business development to support that. That's why just this past summer we launched the Job Accelerator and Growth Program, JAG, which was incentivized to help companies establish and expand in the province.

I'm just going to speak a little bit about that, because the question I would ask is, if you're getting rid of one, what is it you're doing now to make sure that you're competitive on an Atlantic basis, on a national basis? I'll speak very briefly about what we are doing now to replace the EDGE program that we are repealing here today.

Again, we have a tool here that's meant to attract high-growth companies, investment in the province. The requirements for this new program, JAG, you have to create a minimum of 20 jobs over a three-year period, ensure that the jobs have an average salary of \$50,000 and demonstrate a long-term commitment to the province through capital or other investment. That one in particular, we found that EDGE became very rigid and very hard; whereas, hopefully with this program we can work to tailor to meet the needs of companies and, at the same time, to meet the needs of the province.

We want to be less rigid and more flexible, because, at the end of the day, the goal here is we are competing on an Atlantic, national and international basis. We have to be flexible to work with companies to entice them to set up here or to help businesses here to expand. You're not going to do that through rigid models. That's why we are trying to have some flex.

The qualifying companies will get an annual payroll rebate of 10 per cent on each incremental job created over a three-year period, a further 5 per cent incentive for hiring recent Newfoundland and Labrador graduates or newcomers with priority skills that are in short supply here. The projects must be of a net benefit to the provincial Treasury. All classifications which I think would be necessary if we're going to talk about investment of tax dollars into business development.

When we designed this – and again, I give the credit to the staff within the department. Certainly, I talked about it, myself, and knew that EDGE had just lost its relevancy from my perspective. Obviously, that was felt by many people. But the staff was the ones that came out and did the hard work in coming up with the new program. They did the jurisdictional scan. They consulted with the feds to make sure we're not going offside there. Obviously, we don't want to do something that's going to unknowingly cause trouble or, maybe in some cases, trip up in other federal programming. In many cases, we don't want to have a situation whereby applying to a provincial one, you find yourselves unable to apply to the federal government. And, obviously, we had discussions with business. That's one of the big things that we did.

Each Atlantic province has a similar wage-based incentive program. We looked at each one and that's who we felt our primary competitors were, the Atlantic provinces. So we work with them and, in fact, I think our program stands out above them and I think it makes us competitive. Again, it is super competitive right now, especially when we talk about getting new labour, getting new skills. There is a reduced administrative burden for business and government and business has said to us there's a clear preference, instead of having tax based have wage based.

Since we've launched this back the summer of '23, we have had over 20 companies that

have reached out to express interest and we're actually working with three companies now that are in different stages. So, hopefully, at some point, we will be able to come out and announce good news on what this program has helped us do. So, right now, it is making headway and we're appreciative of that.

On that note, Speaker, I would say, I've explained what EDGE was, explained why the purpose of this legislation today is to move away from this bill. I've talked about what we hope to get into. I'll sit down now and listen to my colleagues speak about this and hopefully we can move forward into Committee.

Thank you.

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

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

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

It's interesting to note, Liberals have been in power since 2015, that's nine years; the current Premier, since 2020, four years. According to the briefing deck, the EDGE program has received just four applications since 2011, 13 years ago. The program was recommended for termination in 2021, three years ago to enable an updated program to take its place, which is the JAG program as the minister just spoke about.

Close to 70 per cent of the companies that are given EDGE status have had their status revoked. So it leads to the question: How long does it take for this government to recognize something is not working and to get around to changing it?

The updated program was not announced until 2023, eight years past the 2015 date when they came in. JAG has only had three applications since that date. So this is all action to report on the Job Accelerator and Growth incentivization under the Liberals.

The briefing deck said companies do not like tax incentives but prefer wage-based incentives. It took a long time for them to figure this out. The briefing deck said companies wanted reduced administrative burden for business and government. Wow, how many times do businesses have to say that?

There is too much red tape. The Mills report said red tape was one of the biggest problems facing businesses in Newfoundland, the amount of complexity and hurdles at the time. We've seen plenty of examples how this government has crushed small business with start-ups, red tape and slow movement.

We've seen business insolvency stats on the government's watch rise exponentially. In Newfoundland and Labrador, insolvency rose 141 per cent in 2022, from 12 to 29 in 2023. And those included business bankruptcies up 70 per cent, from 10 to 17 and proposals up 500, from 2 to 12. Which leads to the question, is government actually a friend of small business?

Now, it is important that we look at some of the historic background around this bill, so I'll just get into some history. As the Liberal government moves to repeal the province's EDGE legislation it is a good time to reflect on where the legislation actually originated. An Act to Promote Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises in the Province was first brought forward by Premier Wells in 1994. He described it as an important step to the province's economic recovery, which had just been battered by the Northern cod moratorium.

The point of the bill was to attract and support industries by offering them large incentives to set up business here. It was Premier Wells, himself, who led the debate on the legislation; that's how important it was to him. He said his approach to economic recovery included restructuring government to remove bloat, shoring up pensions, shoring up the province's

finances, removing red tape that impedes business, reducing taxes, securing workers' compensation, improving labour relations and attracting business growth across the province. These sure sound like measures the province is currently in desperate need of 30 years later.

Premier Wells said the EDGE legislation was the next step in that plan. He said: "I do not think it is enough for us to create the most favourable investment climate in Canada. I think we have to take the kind of steps that will make investment in Newfoundland and Labrador virtually irresistible and ... that is what this bill is aimed at doing, making investment in the Newfoundland economy irresistible."

Premier Wells said, EDGE legislation was the product of major public consultation: "The original White Paper that we put out had a number of suggestions put forward. It was put out as a White Paper so that it would generate discussion of the issue, so that it would invite responses that would make the proposal better. Mr. Speaker, we believe we got the responses that would make this proposal better and I think we have implemented all of those responses."

He described measures in EDGE legislation and what they contained. These included "the creation of a public/private board. A board made up partly of representatives from the public service and partly of representatives from the private sector to be the evaluation board that would evaluate each proposal."

The inducement measures included included an array of tax exemptions, start-up incentives and a provision of Crown lands. They included the provision of facilitators to guide an enterprise to success. They included ongoing evaluations of the employment rates in particular areas of the province and special measures to provide the inducement for companies to invest those areas in the province that have the highest level of unemployment and to have

greatest needs for employment opportunity. That's an important fact.

This was a crucial part of the economic recovery strategy. The PC caucus at the time supported the general thrust of this strategy after bringing forward some improvements and suggesting others for consideration. It sounds like the kind of strategy we could all use in this House today. But here we are today, we're being asked to end it. The statistics that the minister briefed probably gives us a reason when we're talking about – I believe the stat was three people left in the EDGE program right now or three applications since 2011, only one left in it.

The question is, and it's an important question: Where is the current government's economic recovery strategy? The current Premier came into office, promising the same kinds of things, fiscal and economic recovery and he appointed Moya Greene to develop that plan. But where is the plan now? It appears to be on a shelf gathering cobwebs. Giving some of this and the things that it contained like massive funding cuts and asset sell-offs and tax increases, we can only breathe a great sigh of relief for that.

Where's the economic recovery plan to replace that? It's nowhere to be found. The Premier in 2021, in a red book promise, promised to appoint a chief economic recovery officer, CERO – C-E-R-O. How much action has been taken on that promise? Zero – Z-E-R-O.

What is the government's strategy for economic recovery? We're seeing the current Liberal government dismantling a previous Liberal government's economic recovery strategy without providing a strategy of its own. The great irony is that the minister who closed the second reading of debate on the EDGE legislation in 1994 was none other than the minister named Furey.

Here's some of what Minister Furey said in defending the bill that we are now being asked to repeal: "What we are trying to do is stimulate this economy.... We are very proud of this piece of legislation.... As I listened to the debate I heard the Opposition say that they supported the thrust, the intent, the principle, and the direction government is taking in the EDGE corporation, and I appreciate that. This is the right way to go."

"... we are saying to outsiders, this is a good place to invest. Newfoundland and Labrador is a good place to invest." "... let history record that fifty-one sensible members saw the light, saw the opportunity, saw the hope, that we set out in this piece of legislation to draw in new investment and new opportunity, and I move to second reading."

So here we are, 30 years later, witnessing the legacy of one Furey being undone by another. In a province suffering so badly under government with no economic recovery plan, no economic diversification and growth strategy whatsoever, it's sad to see them undo their own Liberal predecessors who worked so hard without offering anything else substantial in its place. How far have we fallen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I know, as was said, we're debating now the repeal of the *Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act* and, obviously, the JAG program is said to have replaced it.

The point being that we are replacing one with the other. (Inaudible) how many numbers of years is that? Was it zero – we're replacing one with the other. Anyway,

with one, was it one person left in the program? And was it only three applications or four applications since 2011? So obviously, the program wasn't working or wasn't attractive enough to businesses and now we have the current JAG program which I'll have some questions in debate, I guess, about what the transfer of that all is over.

You're looking at it now, it's replacing one with the other. Is the other going to be the same kind of funding; is it going to have the same kind of opportunity as that? From what I heard, I guess, hopefully the minister can correct it, is it only three applications since 2023, or four?

**A. PARSONS:** No, three in the last (inaudible).

**J. BROWN:** Three in the last three months.

Okay, anyway, I'll have to ask that in Committee if that is that and if there any more prospects coming up on that.

The curiosity of it is, we're looking at economic diversification and we're going from one program to another program, but is it going to be more funding? Is it going to be the same funding?

That's the question I really want to ask, so we'll go into Committee and I'll ask those.

Thanks.

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology speaks now, he will close debate.

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

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank my colleagues for debate.

I want to thank my colleague from Terra Nova for his optimistic words here today. It certainly gives me the warm and fuzzy

feelings to hear my colleague from across the way talk, and again, I appreciate the contributions from my colleague from Lab West.

Again, we'll get a chance to talk during Committee. I'm sure there will be questions asked. I know the Member just mentioned some specific questions. I don't have a copy of *Hansard* from 1994 here, so I won't be able to talk about what was said during that debate.

What I will say just for perpetuity, for eternity because when we talk about how there's no planning – in times like these, I always like to refer to stats. Again, these come from Statistics Canada. I don't know if that's a biased group. So just looking at 2024 and 2023, economic indicators: Employment, up.

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

**A. PARSONS:** Let me see: Labour force, up; unemployment rate, down; employee compensation, up; food service and drinking place sales, up. Actually, that's up substantially since 2019. That's up substantially. Retail sales, up.

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

**A. PARSONS:** So what I would say to the tens of people that are watching the House of Assembly this morning, what I would say is that there are some good things happening and, hopefully, we'll continue to get to talk about them. But, at the end of the day, always come back to the facts.

Thank you.

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

The motion is that Bill 70 be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act. (Bill 70)

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 70)

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

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

I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 70.

**SPEAKER:** A seconder, please.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to discuss Bill 70.

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 (Pardy):** Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 70, An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act.

A bill, "An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act." (Bill 70)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Terra Nova.

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

I wasn't going to speak in Committee, but I got to speak after the minister stood up and wanted to talk about performance indicators.

The Minister of Finance obviously is pretty keen on these performance indicators, but I have to go through a few of them myself. We talk about performance indicators; we talk about employment and we talk about all the good stuff that's happening in Newfoundland and Labrador. No doubt, there are some good things happening and, no doubt, you guys should pat yourselves on the back, as you always do for it, there's no question. But here's the thing that you don't talk about. When we want to talk about performance indicators, I don't ever hear you guys stand up and talk about the poverty and the crisis we're in.

I don't hear people stand up and talk about the housing crisis we're in. I don't hear people stand up and talk about health care —

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

**L. PARROTT:** Dr. Lovemore, you can get up and speak whenever you want.

The health care crisis, whenever — there's no health care crisis. The cost-of-living crisis, it's not here. The performance indicators that are happening in this province, when we talk about employment — we talk about employment all the time. Let's bring all the people back from Alberta and elsewhere in the country and see what our employment rate reflects then.

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

**L. PARROTT:** We can all take these statistics and put them whichever way we want but when we talk about employment specifically, how many people do we have flying away from this province to get work? A good many.

So, on that note, I'll take my seat, but I had to stand and say that the performance indicators that we talk about all the time aren't reflective of the whole issue.

**G. BYRNE:** Point of order, Mr. Chair.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

**G. BYRNE:** Recognizing that if statements were to go unchallenged, they could set as a precedent and be expected both in Committee and in regular proceedings of the House. I would remind the Chair that you cannot say indirectly what you cannot say directly.

I think there as an indirect reference to an hon. Member's name. I would argue that that is an indirect statement of an hon.

Member's name. You cannot say indirectly what you cannot say directly.

**CHAIR:** The Chair would recognize what the minister has stated and ask that we all make sure we address each other by their proper title, please.

**L. PARROTT:** I retract it.

**CHAIR:** Okay and retract it.

Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Labrador West.

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

I want to ask the minister: With the current budget of EDGE, will that money be reprofiled back into JAG, and is there going to be any increasing in the JAG over what EDGE was currently providing?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** What I would say to the Member is that the budget for this new program, JAG, is \$2 million per year from our Investment Attraction Fund. EDGE funding was never predictable because it came from the taxation that was paid in, so trying to identify what it was on any given year. In fact, it hasn't even been something we've had to look at, really, for the last 10 years or more, except for that one application that was granted, I think, last year, Fonemed. This is one, though, is \$2 million.

What I would point out, though, is that this was based on not having done this program, looking at other jurisdictions. I'm always open to modifying a program, hopefully, upwardly if the need arose.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Labrador West.

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

When will the last EDGE contract expire or is it possible that they'll be rolled into JAG?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Right now, I think the expiration date for Fonemed is 2033. It will remain an EDGE application; however, depending on how things go, we would obviously entertain rolling that into JAG but it's a conversation with the company.

The other thing is that there are different benefits, as well. In fact, I was told – I wasn't at the briefing, but I was told there was a question asked about stacking benefits. So we would always look at the opportunity to look at what the new program offers versus the old one. There won't be anything more on EDGE, everything will be on the new Job Accelerator and Growth Program and we'll see how everything goes but 2033 is the expiration date, if everything stays in compliance.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Labrador West.

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

I know earlier in second reading, the minister indicated that there were four applications for JAG and obviously there hasn't been any applications for EDGE. Is that four applications that are approved or is that four applications that are in the process of being approved?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** This is a good opportunity, because I did throw out a bunch of numbers during debate. So since 2011, there have been four applications for EDGE. Only one has gone through, the one I currently

mentioned: Fonemed. Since we launched this in July of 2023, we have three that are actually in internal conversations with the department on the possibility of moving forward. Twenty-one have reached out.

Sometimes there can be a bit of a slow burn on a new program. Part of this today is repealing the EDGE legislation. Part of it is letting people know – even removing it from the website and letting people know that that's not the program going forward.

Part of what we do now, in fact, is when we do speak to companies or get chances for speaking engagements or talking out of province, we talk about the new program to put it out there, to create an awareness and knowledge. Speaking to different boards of trade, chambers, even here internally, so that's part of it going forward.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Terra Nova.

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

Mr. Chair, can businesses who are currently enrolled in the EDGE program – the one – also enrol in JAG and double dip?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** A couple of things there. One, there is only one, so there's nobody else in that right now, one EDGE. I wouldn't use the term double-dipping, but if there's the opportunity to look at new benefits from JAG that could be applied, we will have that conversation.

But we would be cognizant of that one company. It's not a worry we have. It's only the one company, so it's not a worry. I get the point of what the Member's saying. We will be cognizant and aware of that.

The best I can say, probably.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Mr. Chair, we all recognize the importance of small business. A concerning fact is that the JAG Program has a requirement of an average salary of \$50,000.

Is there a possibility that a small business is going to be left out of this because they can't ensure that new jobs create a \$50,000 salary?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** What I would say to that is that there are a couple of different things here. This is meant for – and again, I would point out that if we created jobs that had lower salaries, we would probably get criticized for using tax dollars to create low-salaried positions.

Two things, this is meant for the higher impact company that wants to ramp up or to come and establish here. There are throughout the department and probably during the budget Estimates is a good chance to talk about whether it's investment attraction, business – there are a million. I can't even remember them all; that's why I have staff. There are a ton of different opportunities for small business to avail.

This one here is meant for the incentivization or creation of something that did not exist before. We work with companies every day, whether it's marketing plans or attendance at trade shows, things like that.

I wouldn't say they're left out, but this has a different intent as opposed to most small businesses are not looking at the creation of 20-plus jobs, per se.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.



**L. PARROTT:** You kind of make my next question a little redundant, but I'll ask it anyhow.

A small business, obviously, has to create 20 minimum jobs over a three-year period. Again, I'll say, it kind of alienates some small businesses because there are small businesses out there that can create substantial impact with less than 20 employees. I'd like to understand how they came to that number, directly.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** At the end of the day, you have to set a program based on looking at other jurisdictions, figuring out what it is you want to do. We could have said 100 and nobody would apply. We could've said one, everybody would apply and we're actually spending tax dollars and not really creating any return to the Treasury. This is the number we came up with based on jurisdictional scans, looking elsewhere and thinking, what can we actually achieve here.

What I would say is this: Smaller business who generally aren't looking at increases of 20-plus jobs, if they get to that threshold, we'll look at it. The big message we sent out to the community is, come to us, have a conversation and we have the not-why-we-can't-do-something approach; we have the how-can-we-make-this-work-and-be-flexible approach. In some cases, businesses will come to us with an idea. We might not be able to work under the parameters set out, but maybe we can work together to find a way to get that benefit that they want in a different way, that they hadn't thought of before.

The other thing is that the program – look, it's like anything new; I'd love to come back next year and say this is the couple of changes we've made. The new program is not legislated as opposed to EDGE. EDGE had a couple of things: the implication with the *Lands Act* which required a legislative

aspect, as well as the fact that we're talking about taxation which requires legislation.

This one is not, so JAG can be modified much better. So, like anything, we want to have metrics, we want to see where we are and we can modify to fit whatever comes in the door or what we're hearing from businesses as they reach out.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** Just a quick question, Minister, and thanks for your answers. They're insightful.

When we do a jurisdictional scan and we're talking metrics, do we take into consideration population? I think you know where I'm going with that. You know, if it's 20 in Ontario for programs similar to this, based on our population, I would think that it could be much smaller. Do we take that into consideration?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** This was mainly an Atlantic-Canadian approach here. We're not competing with Ontario. The fact is when you look at certain sizes – the other thing, though, I will point out, there was an emphasis here on two things. Right now, one of the big issues we have is skilled labour across the board. Every jurisdiction has it. We're seeing it. I mean, we're all seeing it in terms of competition for these people.

So that's why there's a higher salary and that's why we're trying to go after that and as well as the Newfoundland and Labrador incentive there. We're hiring people from here that are just graduating, new grads or if we're hiring people from outside the province, international but are coming here with the skill set. That's one of the big things I'm sure the minister could mention. Like, when we talked about immigration, one of

the challenges is the skill sets that are coming. We're trying our best to fit the needs of the different groups that are out there that want to expand. It's a challenge, so hopefully this will provide some incentivization going forward.

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

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

Minister, just wondering what checks and balances are in place with – well, I guess, it would be JAG really and I know that we're talking about ending EDGE but the conversation, we've seen some latitudes, so I hope we can afford the same latitude here.

What checks and balances are in place? Like, it's fine for a company to apply for funding and say I'm going to create this many jobs by this many years or I'm going to do this or I'm going to do that. But is there a follow-up to make sure they actually do it? If they say in three years, I'm going to create 20 jobs and you go back and in three years they've only created two jobs, do we get the money back or do they get to keep it and say, oh well, I tried?

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** It's a good question, because one of the things we talk about, whenever we're investing tax dollars into any incentive, into any program, into any opportunity, we do have to have that. I would start at the top. The first thing that happens is that there is an Auditor General, as you know, that always looks over these different programs. In fact, we went through an audit just in the last year over COVID response. So that's the high-level one.

Internally, every year, on an annual basis, the department has to file reports here in the House of Assembly talking about the different programs, the different decisions, the different applications we had and how

many approvals were made. Then there's the internal one.

What I would say is that internally we keep an eye on it. So that's the best answer to that is, yes, we keep an eye on this. One of the main reasons is: Do you think I want to sit here, in this House, and have the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands look and say you talked about this, we looked at it a year later and you actually gave a ton of money out and never got anything in return? That, to me, has multiple implications about our departments and our government's ability to invest.

So there's that factor, which is not tangible per se but even within the department, yes, there is a mechanism within. We have staff that constantly work front and centre with these companies to go through that.

I just have some notes here. There are records that must be filed that are easily checked and audited. So there is a record-keeping facility to this and they get paid at the end of the year on the basis of the wages that they verified we paid and the jobs that they verifiably created. This is not money upfront, go out and see you later. You do it and then, boom, we'll get you on the back end.

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

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Minister.

I'm glad that you said that. Especially the last part, that gives me some sense that there are controls in place, which is good.

Minister, the final question I have – and I brought this up in the House of Assembly. I can't remember because you kind of lose track of time. I'm going to say three years ago; might have been five years ago. At the time, the business part of your portfolio was separate. I think it was stand alone for natural resources and your former colleague, I believe it was the Member from

the Northern Peninsula, Mr. Mitchelmore. I don't know if I can say his name, but anyway, he's not here anymore. He was the minister at the time.

At that time, I had presented a document that they were using in, I want to say Nova Scotia, but it could have been a different province. I think it was Halifax, Nova Scotia and what they have in place is that they do proactive disclosure.

So any company that receives funding, grants and so on from the government, you can go on the government website; you don't need to be a researcher to do it. Any Joe Q. Public can easily go on and click on one link and, boom, there it is, a spreadsheet comes down and it shows all the money that has been given out to different companies for programs. If there are milestones to be met before they get the money, it gives periodic updates as to if they've met the criteria, have they received all the money or have they received portions of the money.

Other than a Member in this House – as you said, I can come back in a year's time, but I'd have to get a researcher to start doing ATIPPs and everything else to try to –

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

**P. LANE:** Get Eddie, yeah.

I'd have to get a researcher to start ATIPing departments and ATIPing documents, trying to piece it all together to try to understand. Whereas, if we wanted to have true openness and transparency, as they have done – and again, I think in Halifax. I'd have to recheck. They have it right there on a website.

So the company's name, the name of the program and how much money they received. If there were milestones that had to be met to get that money in payments, it would be updated so any member of the public can see exactly how their taxpayers'

money is being spent in terms of giving money to companies, and if that money is being spent wisely.

**CHAIR:** The Chair recognizes the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology for a response.

**A. PARSONS:** I appreciate the point from the Member.

The first thing I would start off with is that ATIPP is not always required. We get many requests from citizens, Members, media alike, asking us about company acts, and unless there's some kind of reason we can't do it, like it's going to cause us legal trouble, we usually provide that information.

But I get your point, something out there proactively without requiring somebody to ask for it. I'm not aware of that, and again, I don't know if it's Halifax, Nova Scotia, but I'm always willing to look at what other jurisdictions are doing to see if it's something we can do here. I will say that there's always improvement to be made, but I will point out that sometimes you have to weigh the reward versus the cost.

I was just reading a quote the other day. It's nationally recognized that our legislation, here, when it comes to disclosure of information is the best nationally. I don't take credit for that. I was certainly here for the debates, but I don't take credit for that.

So, we are nationally recognized for having that. But having that same system costs significantly. If it comes down to putting an extra job in place to do that versus putting an extra job in Health, Housing or CSSD, I would always weigh that. But I think the point I would come back to is, I'm always willing to say, look, is there something we can do internally as a department to put the information out there? That's not a bad thing. I would absolutely consider it. If there's a way forward to do that, why not have a look at it? If you're not going to do it, come up with a reason why. Maybe it's

along the lines of what I said or there's something else. But again, it's taxpayers' dollars. At some point, it is available. It is not hidden.

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

**P. LANE:** I thank the minister for that. I will endeavour to find out where that came from. Again, I think it was Nova Scotia, but I stand to be corrected. Yes, I'm aware that you can get it and that you don't have to necessarily ATIPP everything but, in the name of proactive disclosure, I guess, is what I'm saying.

Anecdotally, you hear from constituents and people from time to time wondering about where taxpayers' money is going, and people have this perception that corporations and businesses and you hear the old corporate welfare thing being thrown out all the time. If we are going to be investing taxpayers' money into companies and so on, then having it there readily available to the public, I don't see it as a bad thing.

Just as an example, when we talk about EDGE – Fonemed, which I heard in the briefing and you confirmed, they're the only one, right? I had no idea that Fonemed got money from the government in terms of that they had EDGE status. I mean, how would I know? They would apply to the government and they'd get it or they wouldn't get it based on the merits. But there was no news release coming out saying Fonemed just got – and it wouldn't be, but the point is that there could be any number of companies that are availing of these programs and getting taxpayers' money, and if you can simply have it in just a very quick form, that someone can click on a link and there it is for everyone to see, then I don't see it as a bad thing.

In terms of taking away resources, quite frankly, unless we're giving out grants left, right and centre, which I don't think we are,

then at least what I remember seeing on that website, it was just a very simple spreadsheet, company name, name of the program, date the money was received and a very small explanation as to what the money was for. If it was something that did require a milestone or something in order to get portions of it, then as they met the milestone they would say, okay, this milestone has been met and they got this much money. A year later, they now have 10 jobs, they received another payment; they now have 20 jobs, they received their (inaudible). Do you know what I mean? Just something very simple.

I don't think it's going to take hiring. I would think it wouldn't take hiring a whole new person just to every now and then flick in two or three lines on the spreadsheet, to be honest with you. But I do thank the minister for his answer and his willingness to at least consider it.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology for a response.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you.

Again, this is where normally if I was – I should probably just let it lie, but I have to point it out. I get what you're saying. There are a lot of those anecdotal conversations. I'm not always convinced that putting this information online, those same people are going to take the time to actually click on the link, either.

I'm not prepared to go through a costly endeavour to get to that, but I still take your point and maybe there's a way forward. I will say it comes down to at the end of the day people taking the time to ask you questions and you asking me.

I was in the grocery store the other day, I had someone come up to me and asked about a certain question, actually had to do with Service NL. I literally emailed the Minister of Service NL, got the answer and

called that person back, who I didn't know, and called them back, and there it is.

You wish it could be as easy as that. I'm not sure putting in online that these people are going to take the time to look. There are some that will. But either way it comes back to the point which is, look, if I can find a way to do it that's not cost- or labour-prohibitive, then I don't think that's a bad move, in theory.

I apologize. I will point out I just got a message; there are stats available online that you can go to regional development stuff, where we actually do list that out, how many and what they get. Maybe we have to proclaim that a little more that some of the information actually is there. But I take your point.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you, Minister.

Are there any more questions?

Seeing no further questions, I would ask on the clause 1 motion, all those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 and 3 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 and 3 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 3 carried.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** A bill An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act. (Bill 70)

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

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

I think you're doing a great job.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Some of us have been doing this for a while and we still need to be put in our place sometimes.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 70 carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** Seconded by ...?

**L. DEMPSTER:** The Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

**CHAIR:** All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

The hon. the Chair of the Committee and Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 70 carried without amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report Bill 70 carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Government House Leader, that this House do now stand in recess.

**SPEAKER:** This House do stand recessed until 2 this afternoon.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

Before we begin today, I would like to welcome everyone to our public gallery.

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Placentia - St. Mary's, Placentia West - Bellevue, St. George's - Humber, Torngat Mountains and Stephenville - Port au Port.

The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's.

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Speaker, Harnum's Cakes & Pastries was established on May 5, 1983, by George and Beverley Harnum in New Harbour, Trinity Bay. They both left full-time employment for the love of baking. It started out as a small business, baking bread and cookies in one room on one day and selling to local stores the next.

Within a year, the business had expanded and the first additional employee was hired. Deliveries were done by day, with baking into the very late hours of the night. The business grew physically as the demand for cookies, pies, breads, tea buns and muffins took off.

After 10 years, the success of the bakery allowed them to decrease their days at work and take much-needed breaks. After 29 years and 7 months, they retired and sold the business to Robbin and Brenda Harnum. Robbin has been working in the business for almost 40 years and Brenda for 34. Together, they have been operating Harnam's for 11 years, continuing to make all the products that originally were baked there over 40 years ago.

Today, Harnum's Cakes & Pastries has three employees and I can guarantee you the best cheesecake bites. Support local, visit Harnum's in New Harbour.

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

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

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

Today, I stand in this hon. House to recognize the Royal Canadian Legion, Branch 29 that serves the Marystown and Burin area.

The Royal Canadian Legion plays a vital role in honouring and supporting Canadian veterans and serving military personnel. Branch 29 has been a cornerstone of local patriotism and community engagement.

They serve as a hub for veterans and their families to come together and share their experiences. They host various events and ceremonies to commemorate significant national military milestones, including Remembrance Day and Canada Day to pay respects to our fallen comrades.

The Legion also extends their support by providing assistance to veterans. They actively engage in fundraising efforts such as their 50/50 lottery every month, which has been a great success. Our local branch also serves as a community centre in which they host social events, dances and educational programs. This fosters a sense of unity and belonging.

I ask all hon. Members of the 50th General Assembly to please join me in recognizing all the hard work and dedication of local Branch 29 and all Royal Canadian Legions within our beautiful province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber.

**S. REID:** Mr. Speaker, Alice Maude Gosse was born in Red Brook on the Port au Port Peninsula on February 5, 1923, to a Mi'kmaw family of 28 members.

Through her life, Mrs. Gosse illustrates how courage and determination can overcome poverty, prejudice and discrimination.

At the age of 15, she walked two days to Stephenville Crossing to work as a servant girl. At 17, she moved to St. Fintan's in Bay St. George's South to start work with another family. There she met the love of her life, Herbert Gosse. Two years later, they were married.

Despite the many challenges she faced, Maude Gosse would never falter. Prejudice and discrimination would be no match for her love and caring. She taught herself to read and write and became the mother of 5 boys and 4 girls. Her main goal in life was to ensure that they were educated and would not have to endure the hardship that she had endured throughout her life. She made

that dream a reality through her hard work and determination.

On February 5, of this year, Maude celebrated her 101st birthday. I ask all Members of this House to join me in wishing Maude Gosse a Happy Birthday and all the best throughout the new year.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I rise today to pay tribute to April Allen, a designer of Rigolet, Nunatsiavut.

April has made her way to one of the biggest fashion events in the world. She has brought Inuit fashion and a team of models along with her.

Her label, Stitched by April, was showcased during the prestigious New York Fashion Week in February. Accompanying her were Inuit and other Indigenous models, five from Nunatsiavut, including her daughter, Julia Allen and cousin, Coralee Evoy. She also brought kamiks made by her mother and grandmother. Having Indigenous models was an important choice. She wanted to ensure authentic representation.

April incorporates furs and sealskin into her designs and shows traditional Indigenous clothing like silapaks. Presenting Indigenous models not only validates her brand, it adds to its authenticity, but April feels that it could provide other opportunities and potential careers within her community.

She said that is was “very heartening to witness, you know, all the progress Indigenous representation,” and “attending the New York Fashion Week was a dream come true.”

I ask Members to congratulate April Allen, wishing her luck as she continues this journey and as she heads to her next big show in Paris, France in September.

Thank you.

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

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

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

This year the Caribou Curling Club of Stephenville celebrated its 50th anniversary. To mark this milestone, a special dinner was held to honour and acknowledge some of the accomplishments and highlights of the club and its members over the past five decades.

In 2013, the first female Masters team to represent our province at Nationals were from the Caribou Curling Club. Team members were: the late Mary Byrne, Marcheta Gallant, Cheryl Stagg and Shirley O'Connor.

Another first was in 1976 when the provincial men's Tankard was hosted at the club with the winner, Jack MacDuff's team, from St. John's, going on to win the Brier – the first ever, of course, for Newfoundland and Labrador and we've had many great ones represented by our Team Gushue since.

Two outstanding curlers, Roy Bungay and Charlie Earle, were given lifetime memberships, both of whom represented our province at many nationals. Now in their 80s, they both continue to curl, volunteer and promote the sport of curling.

This past weekend, the Caribou Curling Club hosted the Men's and Women's Provincial Club Championships. Congratulations to tournament winners Team Curtis from Corner Brook and Team Turpin from St. John's.



Thank you to previous executives and all the volunteers in the curling community who strive to keep curling alive in Stephenville.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Speaker, March is Canadian Agriculture Literacy Month – a perfect opportunity for young people to learn about, connect to and celebrate agriculture.

To mark this occasion, Agriculture in the Classroom NL is hosting activities for the 13th year, where farmers and agriculture professionals share stories and spark discussion about food security, safety and production with students throughout the province.

The month is off to a fine start with the release of a music video for the Little Green Sprouts song, written and produced by JUNO award-winning band, The Swinging Belles.

There's also the annual "Bee Creative Literacy Contest," which gives schools a chance to decorate a beehive from a participating beekeeper's farm. Thanks to the Newfoundland and Labrador Beekeeping Association and Egg Farmers of Newfoundland and Labrador for being part of this fun and educational initiative.

Speaker, Canadian Agricultural Literacy Month activities are funded in part by the federal-provincial Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, which provided \$330,000 to support agriculture in the classroom activities in Newfoundland and Labrador last year.

Through this partnership, Agriculture in the Classroom NL is deepening students' understanding of where their food comes from and promotes careers in agriculture.

I thank Agriculture in the Classroom NL for their work and encourage students and educators to take part in the variety of activities this month.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. Celebrating Canadian Agriculture Literacy Month shines a light on the incredible journey from farm to table. It's heartwarming to see Agriculture in the Classroom spearheading initiatives that bring the stories of our farmers and producers to our schools. Engaging activities like Little Green Sprouts, Bee Creative Literacy Contest, not only educate, but also inspire our young minds about the importance of our agriculture.

Understanding where our food comes from is essential. It's about recognizing the hard work behind every meal and significance of agriculture in our communities' well-being, especially here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We must continue to nurture this connection, encouraging the next generation to explore vast opportunities within the agriculture sector.

From the PC caucus, we extend a huge thank you to the educators at Agriculture in the Classroom NL and urge the government to increase supports to these vital educational initiatives.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

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

I will say that both my grandparents were farmers, and we have many memories of weeding that is forever indelibly etched in my memory.

Food security education is important for living here and we encourage government to continue to take action to attract more young farmers and to expand food production with a goal to reduce the cost of health and fresh food.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

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

It's a pleasure to rise today to recognize Nutrition Month, celebrated annually to increase public awareness about the importance of healthy eating.

Our government understands that food security is one of the social determinants of health. Guided by recommendations from the Health Accord NL, we are improving access to nutritious food for children, adults and seniors.

We are proud to provide a total investment of over \$2 million annually to Kids Eat Smart Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador and the School Lunch Association, which together serve over 50,000 meals and snacks every school day throughout the province. As part of the Poverty Reduction

Plan, we will provide additional funding to ensure school meal programs are available to all pre-kindergarten and K-9 students. We have partnered with the Maple Leaf Centre for Action on Food Security to improve food access for families in all regions of the province, as well as implementing the Provincial School Food Guidelines.

Speaker, we've provided approximately \$2.8 million in funding to support the Gathering Place, which, among other services, serves guests three hot meals seven days a week.

Dietitians are being recruited for Family Care Teams, to collaborate and offer tailored nutritional guidance for clients. We also offer dietitian services to all residents of the province through Dial-a-Dietitian through 811 Healthline.

This year's theme for Nutrition Month is "We Are Dietitians." I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking our dietitians for their dedication, and acknowledging the key role they play in improving the well-being of residents.

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

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

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

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We join the minister in recognizing this month as Nutrition Month. While this month is designed to increase public awareness about healthy eating, the minister fails to recognize the dire impact the soaring cost of healthy food is having on the pocketbooks of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Speaker, one-third of Canadian food bank clients are children. The Kids Eat Smart program and School Lunch Association are great examples of how families have had to

rely upon these groups to ensure their children don't go hungry each day.

Families are suffering, all the while the minister's partners in Ottawa pile excessive taxes onto the backs of the farmers who grow the food, the truckers that ship the food and the hard-working families that eat the food.

Speaker, thanks to almost a decade of Liberal taxes, we now see homeless encampments right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're grateful for spaces such as The Gathering Place to have their backs because Liberals and their partners in Ottawa certainly don't.

It's time for the Liberals to come out of their shells and stand up to their partners in Ottawa despite the hike and axe the tax so Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can afford to eat healthy again.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

School nutrition programs must be universal and not exclude any student during their growing years. We encourage government to expand this program to ensure students are not abandoned as they reach high school. Government must prioritize making healthy foods more affordable for everyone: people in Tent City, low-income families, all residents, no matter your social or income status, must be able to access healthy foods.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

Speaker, the Premier said yesterday: "... we certainly are committed to looking at all the structural issues that exist within the fishery, including the potential for outside buyers ...."

I ask the Premier: When?

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

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

As we've said, we've heard the anxiety from harvesters. We appreciate the uncertainty at this time of year. We've heard that one of the issues that they've raised in addition to the price setting is outside buyers. The minister and I are committed to looking at that.

We welcome a proposal from the FFAW, as they are the ones who represent harvesters and plant workers to know the exact details and the impacts it would have on plants across the province and in the communities with respect to the indirect and induced economic impacts that these plants provide to the communities.

That said, we are always welcome and open to receive that proposal and we would act on it should it be in order.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I would argue that the Premier doesn't need to wait for the FFAW. The Premier, as Premier of the Province of Newfoundland, can certainly coordinate that meeting and coordinate that discussion.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** The Premier said yesterday – quote – we certainly are committed to looking at all structural issues that exist within the fishery, including processing capacity.

I ask the Premier: When?

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

**A. FUREY:** Again, Mr. Speaker, the minister has been dealing with process capacity across the province. The minister is fully seized with this issue. It's not his issue –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. FUREY:** The most important thing, right now, is making sure that there is a timely and orderly start to this fishery. That's why we listened to harvesters; we listened to plant workers; we suggested a different price-setting formula and I'm happy to say that both parties are exchanging offers currently, Mr. Speaker. That's because we got involved last week; we continue to be involved, which is why we'll be supporting the PMR today by the Member opposite as we continue to be involved in this tight, anxious times, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, the Premier would have certainly heard that it's not just about pricing. They're here for much more than that.

Yesterday, the Premier quoted: "... we certainly are committed to looking at all the structural issues that exist within the fishery, including ... controlling agreements ...."

Again, I ask the Premier: When?

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

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

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

Again, we are committed to looking at all of those structural issues. At this point, we will do it in due course, as soon as we can get this fishery going, Mr. Speaker.

We want to make sure that there is a timely, orderly start to this fishery. One thing, it's not supposed to start for another couple weeks. It gives time for both –

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I heard the question clearly; I'd like to hear the response, too.

The hon. the Premier.

**A. FUREY:** That's why we used the off season, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that we were consulting. We had the Blackwood report to help inform the minister, to help inform both the ASP, the fish harvesters and the FFAW. As soon as that is resolved, Mr. Speaker, we will be looking at a deep and intrusive dive into all of those three items that the Member opposite suggested.

It's important to do this. It's important for the harvesters. It's important to do it right. It's important to ensure that we make the best –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Premier's time has expired.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Again, I would argue that having done the tour already over the summer, they would have known what the issues were and this could have been addressed a lot sooner.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Again, I ask, one of the things the Premier talked about was structural issues that exist in the fishery was including corporate concentration.

So again, I ask the Premier: When?

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

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

As the Premier has alluded to, we have two sides that are at the table, at a very important table, that is going to determine when the fishery gets going this year. We do not want to see a repeat of last year. That's why the Premier took immediate action, Mr. Speaker.

All those structural issues, we are taking a deep delve into that. I told the harvesters yesterday, I even met with a crowd from my own district and told them the same thing. I'm going to make one thing clear: I'm going to be responsible for the whole fishery of Newfoundland and Labrador. Unlike on the other side over there, who are irrational.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, while the minister would like to make that statement, clearly this is much more than just about price. We're talking about issues that he heard on his tour with him and the Premier that have not been addressed.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So, again, I ask the Premier: Do you believe in free enterprise in our fishing industry?

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

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

I think in order for everybody to answer that question, me included, the public and the harvesters, themselves, I think I need to ask the Member Opposite, what exactly he means by free enterprise?

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** And when I become Premier of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, I'll have no trouble answering it.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**T. WAKEHAM:** Premier, how many processing licence applications that the Fish Processing Licensing Board have approved are still sitting on the minister's desk?

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

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

I'll, again, address the preamble. I'd like to know what he means by free enterprise, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**T. WAKEHAM:** I ask the Premier, again: Why are the recommendations of the Fish Processing Licensing Board not dealt with and how long have they been there?

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

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

I'll say to the Member opposite, the capacity issue is something that we said is on the table. We've said it very clear and he keeps omitting that piece.

But I'll say to the Member here that this minister, this government, is responsible for the whole industry. I'm concerned for everyone in the industry. I would like to know what his thoughts are. Is he concerned about the fish plant workers in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I'm concerned about the 16,000 people that make their living from the fishing industry in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** That includes not only harvesters. It includes fish plant workers, it includes truck drivers, it includes convenience store workers, it includes –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** – all the people that live around Newfoundland and Labrador that depend on our fishery and what they want is

answers, not questions. They want answers from their Premier and from their minister.

So, again, what assurances can you give to those 16,000 people that you're going to actually do something about this fishing industry?

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, and there are over 6,000 fish plant workers in this province as well. That's a very important fact.

Again, the –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. LOVELESS:** They don't want the answer.

I say, Mr. Speaker, we're concerned about the whole of the industry and the whole of the industry involves everyone: harvesters and processors.

Right now, the ultimate thing to do is to get harvesters back on the water so all can and have a living in this industry. That has to happen when the two sides are at the table. We encourage them to get on with it, get the job done so we can see an industry and a good industry this year.

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

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

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

Speaker, the Department of Health and Community Services spent \$71,000 on a recruitment trip to Ireland.

How many physicians were recruited, Minister?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, we've taken a number of recruitment trips, not just to Ireland. I anticipate the Member will ask about those as well. Under the Come Home Incentive, of which one of the physicians we've recruited actually was from Ireland, came to this province, was under the Come Home Incentive. There are other individuals that we've looked as well, including registered nurses from Ireland, Mr. Speaker.

The Come Home Incentive is one of the most successful incentive programs this province has ever put in place to recruit health care professionals to this province.

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

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

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

Minister, we have the answer. I asked about physicians. Speaker, the answer is one – one physician. Big trip to Ireland for recruitment, they got one physician. So in three trips the department took, spending more than \$100,000 on travel, the department is only able to identify one physician recruited.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I can't have Members shouting back and forth, I can't hear the Member speak.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

**B. PETTEN:** Thanks for that protection, Speaker.

We have the answer, Speaker, it's one. In three trips the department took, spending

more than \$100,000 on travel, the department is only able to identify one physician recruited. That is travel to Ireland, the UK and Saskatchewan. Speaker, \$100,000 for a single physician.

Minister: Do you believe this is a success story?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, the Member is not accurate in his statement. We also recruited four IMG positions, out of five, four of them came from Ireland.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** (Inaudible) the Come Home Incentive launched in October 2022. How many badly needed nurse practitioners have been recruited through that, Minister?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I can get the most up to date, I believe we're up to almost 140 individuals recruited through the Come Home Incentive. A number of those were nurse practitioners, a number of them were physicians, a number of them were registered nurses. There are other health disciplines included as well.

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

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

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

We have the answer to that as well, Minister: zero. This is confirmed by the Newfoundland and Labrador Nurse Practitioner Association, who we met with. It's their words: zero. So we're spending

millions of dollars on retention and recruitment in your department and the health authority.

Why is it so ineffective with such a massive amount of taxpayers' dollars being spent?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, again, the Member is not accurate. Under the Come Home Incentive, we have recruited a number of nurse practitioners. We've recruited approximately 80 physicians to this province, as a result of the recruitment efforts –

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

**T. OSBORNE:** – since April 1, the beginning of the fiscal year. We've recruited over 450 registered nurses to this province, Mr. Speaker –

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

**T. OSBORNE:** – as a result of the recruitment efforts.

I ask the Member opposite: Does he want us to stop recruitment? Because those numbers speak for themselves.

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

**B. PETTEN:** I figured the Minister would come back to those numbers, but he hasn't factored in how many have left and the net gain.

We met with the Newfoundland and Labrador Nurse Practitioner Association. Minister, I asked you a clear question: How many nurse practitioners? We met with their association. So are you saying they're lying to us? Because we met with them and they said zero.

I asked you earlier about physicians in Ireland, you never answered that, and you never answered this: How many nurse practitioners did you get? That's the question.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I will repeat my earlier answer. We recruited approximately 140 individuals from the Come Home Incentive alone. Some of those were actually nurse practitioners. I will get him – before Question Period is ended – the up-to-date numbers under the Come Home Incentive alone, the number of nurse practitioners we recruited to the province.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Shameful that the minister would be accusing the nurse practitioners' union of speaking mistruths.

Premier, now that your letter-writing campaign to your partner Mr. Trudeau has failed, how come you haven't written a letter to the PUB asking them to scrap the 5 cent per litre North Atlantic tax?

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

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

Happy to stand and answer this question; it's my first time this session. What I would say to the Member opposite is that he knows full well that the Public Utilities Board is a – I would hope he would know – judicial board, basically, that we do not provide direction over.

So we have made representation to them, we have talked to them, because we think it is incumbent on them to explain to the public the logic and the explanation as to why this was done back when Come By



Chance – I would say it to the Member for CBS, let me answer. Again, Mr. Speaker –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. PARSONS:** – I would love to answer but the Member for CBS can't stop yakking. I'd love to keep answering.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. PARSONS:** Tell Marble –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member has 6 more seconds if he chooses to use it.

**A. PARSONS:** I'll keep answering when they simmer down, and I'll answer the question.

Thank you.

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

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

**L. PARROTT:** Something else I can tell the minister I know; I know that letter-writing campaigns to Santa Claus don't work and they don't work to Mr. Trudeau.

Speaker, the cost of food on the North Coast of Labrador continues to soar –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** – because of the Liberals and Mr. Trudeau's costly carbon tax. It's impacting the cost of shipping.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

**L. PARROTT:** The cost of food on the North Coast of Labrador is continuing to soar because of the Liberals and Mr. Trudeau's costly carbon tax and other Liberal taxes impacting the cost of shipping.

Premier, why are you not taking action to make food more affordable on the North Coast of Labrador?

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

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

Leave it to the PCs to get rid of Santa Claus, that's all I've got to say.

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

**A. PARSONS:** I thought I seen it all but this is a new record here today.

What I would say is the Member opposite knows that when Come By Chance went down, we had to import that fuel. With that, comes the cost. So that company, therefore, went to the PUB to get an addition put on that.

Now, certainly, we do not like that. But what I will say is that the Member does not recognize that if you start to go after that, what happens is we may have an impact on the fuel coming into this province.

Now, I could get into the mechanics, but I do think it is incumbent on the PUB to explain to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and to the Member opposite what is going on and the mechanics behind this and the calculations behind this.

But, again, I'm very happy to say that it was this government that actually got Come By Chance back up and running.

Thank you.

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

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

**L. PARROTT:** Mr. Speaker, I understand the mechanics and I also understand that two out of the three fuel companies in this province were always shipping their fuel here, so it's an excuse.

Speaker, the residents of Labrador can't afford to fly to the Island. A round trip flight to the Island from the Big Land cost upwards of \$1,500 per person – unbelievable. Meanwhile in Quebec, the government subsidizes travel over \$500.

Premier, when are you going to do the same?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

**S. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, the Member for CBS is really excited today. I don't really know why, but he just –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

Air access is something that's extremely important to this government. We work with airlines all the time, Mr. Speaker.

I think the Member opposite, if he were to look into it, he'll find that, unfortunately, after not being successful, the Government of Quebec has ended their subsidy.

We, right now, actually, led by our Premier, have an ongoing partnership with the –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**S. CROCKER:** I'd love to answer this question, Mr. Speaker.

The Council of Atlantic Premiers have issued an RFP for domestic interprovincial travel, Mr. Speaker. That is bearing fruit and I think that will be a way for us to help with interprovincial travel.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

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

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

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

Speaker, while government has announced the consultation process for a new school in Kenmount Terrace –

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

**P. DINN:** – the existing area schools are full. Leary's Brook Junior High, Larkhall Academy and St. Andrews are all busting at the seams.

What is the minister's plan to address overcrowding now, given a new building is still years away?

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond.

I'm glad that the Member referenced the consultation process because it's very important that we get the feedback. If we don't go out and speak to the people who are impacted, it kind of reminds me of the old saying my grandmother used to have: when you play foolish games, you win foolish prizes. If you don't consult and ask the people who are involved, then you often come back with the unintended consequences like ferries don't fit wharves or hydroelectric dam projects balloon out of control.

So I think it's very important that we do our consultation process and get it right the first time so that when we have a product to put forward, it's something that meets the needs of the community and the students in Kenmount Terrace.

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

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

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

I believe the minister missed the question here. The question was about now.

Speaker, there has been significant disruptions to these schools, including classes having to be split, bus routes changed, classrooms created out of libraries and music rooms. One school has gained almost 100 children since September and this level of growth cannot be accommodated.

Speaker, parents are looking for a plan now. When is the minister going to have one?

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker.

As part of the consultation for Kenmount Terrace, it includes the feeder system of schools and how we can have capacity in different schools. I would say that the Member opposite would know that our plan is to continue to build modern infrastructure, given that there was an announcement of a high school build for Paradise just a few days ago.

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

**K. HOWELL:** Again, I'm sure that he'll vote for the budget because that would certainly be a benefit for his district. We've also announced that there's significant work

happening in Pilley's Island. There's work happening in Cartwright.

So we do have a plan for infrastructure. It takes time to build these buildings, Speaker, and as we continue to move forward on our plans to move Newfoundland and Labrador forward, as a modern province, then infrastructure certainly follows that plan.

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

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

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

Announcements are great, but we were looking for plans.

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

**P. DINN:** Speaker, these schools are all at capacity and some have gained more than 20 per cent more students since the last school year. Children are eating in hallways; classes are overcrowded and schedules are constantly adjusted.

Again, a new building to alleviate the overcrowding is years away. What is the minister's plan in the meantime?

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

**K. HOWELL:** Thank you, Speaker.

I think what the Member opposite is trying to do is congratulate my colleague, the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, on his hard work over the last few months –

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

**K. HOWELL:** – because we have seen a significant increase in students coming into our province. Several years in a row, we've now noticed that the population of our schools are increased. As I mentioned in my

previous answer, it's part of a plan that we look at our infrastructure and how we build our schools to meet the needs of the students that are surrounding.

We continue to offer supports to the schools that are currently dealing with some of these new additional students. We have additional resources that have been placed in these schools and we'll continue to work with them on a case-by-case basis.

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

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

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

If you're bringing in people, you would think you would have the resources and the infrastructure here to deal with those people, to have classrooms.

Speaker, a number of new schools have been announced with little or no detail on the grades, the size, the location, the catchment area – no detail, yet they're announced.

When will parents and students finally see a detailed plan?

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

**K. HOWELL:** As I said, Speaker, in my previous answer, it's important that we have an understanding of what the needs of the communities are. It's not one size fits all for our schools. There are certain needs in different areas that are represented as we look at our infrastructure projects.

In this incident, we're going out to look at the Kenmount Terrace region, trying to get a feel for what it is that the community would need. That's going to be something very different than what would be put forward in Cartwright. So it's important that we speak to those folks on the ground and ensure that

we have a plan that meets the educational needs of the students in each district in terms of infrastructure.

While we're doing a great job of ensuring our curriculum is based across the province and that everybody has an equal opportunity to access that, the needs of infrastructure are a little different, so it takes a little more time to fabricate the plan.

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

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

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

The rescue vehicle of the Baine Harbour Volunteer Fire Department broke down, is beyond repair and has been condemned now since Saturday past, March 9, 2024.

Minister, what do you say to the Baine Harbour Volunteer Fire Department that services over 100 kilometres of Route 210 on the Burin Peninsula, seven communities, which includes a school, and who rely on this rescue vehicle to respond to emergencies?

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

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

First of all, I say thank you for all the hard work of everyone who works in the volunteer fire departments throughout the province.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Certainly, I say that there are lots of communities, lots of fire departments that need help with their fire equipment funding and with the fire truck funding and, certainly, last year when we increased the budget by double to \$3.8 million to distribute throughout the province and, of course, it does take time to get through everyone, to

meet with all communities, to talk to communities, as the Member knows.

I've been talking to him for a while about this and the fire commissioner is working on that very specific community right now, as we speak.

So, again, thank you for all the dedicated volunteers and I look forward to that Member's support in the budget when we discuss Fire and Emergency Services.

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

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

**J. DWYER:** I have met with the fire commissioner and the minister, and I do agree with that, but this was three ministers now and we've been asking for this for a while because this truck was given to them on a temporary basis. It was a retired forestry truck with a lot of kilometres on it. Now, it's gotten so condemned that they can't even repair it anymore.

So I ask the minister: Are they going to be included in the budget so that they don't break down en route to a motor vehicle accident again?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, of course, we don't allocate per community in the budget. It's lump-sum funding that's distributed throughout the year on an as-needed basis. As I said in the previous answer, the fire commissioner is currently discussing options for this specific community. I look forward to hearing back from the fire commissioner about what options are available.

Certainly, as we've learned over the last few years, the costs have gone up, including fire trucks have doubled from about \$300,000 to

\$600,000 and it takes several years for that fire truck to arrive.

So any community that wants to plan for a brand new \$600,000 fire truck, you need to start planning three years in advance. What I've learned and what the communities have learned is there are other options out there. There are used trucks available which might be more necessary – rescue units that are more specific and better suited for these communities.

I encourage fire departments to look at other options rather than things that are bigger than they need and take longer than they need.

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

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

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

On Monday, I asked the minister about patients in my district not able to get out to or from their medical appointments and treatment. The minister, instead, talked about medevac services. I am asking about the travel for patients to make scheduled medical appointments.

I ask the minister: Will he commit to adding more medical flights so patients in my district are not bumped off their flights?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

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

I thank the hon. Member for her question. It's really, really very important when we talk about coastal communities in Labrador that we have processes in place for people to get out and to access those services.

We have contracts, Speaker, in place right now, currently, with an airline, as the Member is very familiar with. They provide

multiple flights a day to those communities up on the North Coast of Labrador and twice a week they come down South.

Sometimes when you're servicing isolated communities, weather can play havoc. Sometimes – and we all know the different weather that we're experiencing those days due to climate change and things like that, the weather can be down for multiple days, but we do have a contract. We do have a wheels-up in 60 minutes for those services.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

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

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

I've added many times, the delays are not due to weather. Weather is a problem some of the times, but there is often when weather is clear cancer patients can't get out, families are stuck waiting three or four days to get back to their families, to their businesses, to their homes, to their jobs.

My next question is about medevac services, not scheduled medical appointments.

Speaker, *The Telegram* did a full series on the lack of reliable medevac service for Labrador, especially in my district. The minister said: We'll see a greater expectation of the operator for wheels-up in 30 minutes, as opposed to 60 minutes.

Is he committing medevac services for Northern Labrador to be wheels-up in 30 minutes from the call? Because, often, we have to wait more than 24 hours for a medevac.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

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

We all recognize right around this province the challenges that we have had in health care, the challenges with air ambulance. Those of us who represent rural constituencies and my colleague on the Northern Peninsula – St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows – we've been dealing with it lots as well.

As we have moved forward implementing the recommendations of the Health Accord and as we undergo this full transformation that is required and needed right now in our province, one of the recommendations was that we would implement a fully integrated road and air ambulance approach.

We have undertaken numerous consultations with our Indigenous partners, with our leadership in these isolated communities. They've been very fulsome. We wanted to hear what they said, and we take this very serious. I look forward to an improved air ambulance integrated road service in the very near future, Speaker.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, wait-lists for cataract surgeries were of a major concern for seniors on the West Coast. There was an increase of 200 surgeries before the budget last year. The provincial budget allocated an additional 500 surgeries for cataracts on the West Coast. Due to the demographics of the area, these increases are needed to ensure that there are no wait-list for cataract surgeries. There was a commitment that the increase would be on an ongoing basis.

Can the minister confirm that these 700 additional surgeries are on an ongoing basis to give these many seniors a good quality of life?

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

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

I am happy to say that with the increase in out-of-hospital cataract surgeries throughout the province, I understand from the group of ophthalmologists that do these out-of-hospital surgeries that the wait-list in the Western region is now well under control.

Mr. Speaker, we've been negotiating with the NLMA for and on behalf of the group of ophthalmologists on a way forward into the future that would give certainly, not only to the ophthalmologists, but to the health authority and the province in terms of hospital surgeries. We haven't arrived at an agreement with them yet, but I am certainly hopeful that we will.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Minister, that is good news.

Minister, there is a shortage of housing in the Corner Brook area. This shortage affects many towns and communities on the West Coast. The wait-list is growing in the Corner Brook area. There are 32 units on Crestview Avenue, which needs to be replaced, and the federal government did not approve the funding for this project. The former minister stated that the province has their share of funding to replace these units.

I ask the minister: What is the government's plan to replace the 32 units on Crestview Avenue and reduce the housing shortage in the Corner Brook area?

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

**F. HUTTON:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question.

Housing is important to this government. Just specific to Corner Brook alone, the area the Member opposite is referencing, in the last 18 months, we have committed over \$2 million in restoration and renovations projects.

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

**F. HUTTON:** Under our Affordable Rental Housing Program, 47 new rental housing homes have been conditionally approved with seven contractors.

With respect to Crestview, we, like the Member opposite, were disappointed last year that our federal partners were not at the table. But within hours of being appointed the Minister of Housing, Minister Byrne approached me about this and wants – sorry – the Member for Corner Brook, in his district, approached me on this. He has been very, very aggressive in making sure that this happens. Of course, there is a budget, Mr. Speaker, stay tuned.

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

**SPEAKER:** The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

### **Tabling of Documents**

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

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

In accordance with section 10 of the *Architects Act, 2008*, I'm tabling the 2023 Annual Report of the Architects Licensing Board of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

**Notices of Motion**

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

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

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

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

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

**S. COADY:** Speaker, I give notice that I will on tomorrow move the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider certain resolutions for the granting of Supply to His Majesty, Bill 72.

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

**SPEAKER:** Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

**Petitions**

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

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

The reasons for this petition:

WHEREAS individual residents and municipal leaders have spoken to the deplorable road conditions in the District of Harbour Main; and

WHEREAS the district is made up of many smaller communities and towns like Holyrood, Upper Gullies, Seal Cove, Cupids, Colliers, North River, Roaches Line and Makinsons, who have roads in desperate need of repair and paving, specifically Routes 60 and 70; and

WHEREAS these roads see high-volume traffic flows every day and drivers can expect potholes, severe rutting, limited shoulders and many washed-out areas along the way.

THEREFORE, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately take the necessary steps to repair and repave these important roadways to ensure the safety of the driving public who use them on a regular basis.

Speaker, last week in Question Period, I asked the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure three questions. He did answer the first two, which related to the safety issues that the people in the District of Harbour Main, specifically on Route 60, have to endure, from Holyrood out to Upper Gullies. His response was basically: It's unfortunate that the Member has to describe the roads in that way. These roads are open to the public first-hand and they are safe.

Well, Speaker, that is not the view of the constituents of the Harbour Main District, in particular, the people who have to drive all over these roads. They are very concerned about safety issues; they are very concerned about the ruts and the deep issues that involve these roads in terms of safety.

Speaker, they are not the only ones. Since that time, I have heard from the Town of Holyrood, who also has, it's said, indicated they've engaged in conversations on how to best provide safe, reliable services – safe,



reliable services – to its residents and visitors. And the town has indicated they're looking forward to the release of the provincial road plan and hopefully the commitment to improve Route 60, as they have requested.

Well, Speaker, that is interesting because question three, the minister refused to answer. In fact, he said: I won't answer the question. But guess what? He answered it on my Facebook page.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Have you ever heard of that? That is strange. That is very strange. This is the people's House, so maybe the minister will stand up here and be accountable where you're supposed to be, in this House, to the people of the District of Harbour Main, and the other people who are concerned about their roads.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a response.

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

I'll trust the Member will maybe quote what I did say on her Facebook page because basically what I said was that the question was very specific to the budget and I cannot answer on a budget question. That was simply the truth.

Now, when it comes to Route 60 or any other highway or byway in the province, we are finalizing our Roads Plan for '24-'25. We will be making that available very shortly. Every Member will know then what funding we have for each district. We take into consideration all the factors that the Member suggested. After we've done that, once we've allocated the funding, then we'll develop our plan. That will be available. She

will know, they will know, all of us will know very soon what will be funded for this year and next year.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

The breakwater on the lower coast in Trepassey is in urgent need of repair. This breakwater is necessary to protect the one and only access road to the lower coast.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to complete the necessary repairs and install a more durable and sustainable breakwater.

Speaker, only a couple of weeks ago, probably a month ago now, the breakwater that they installed last year and spent nearly \$1 million on is now torn up again due to the wind and the erosion down on the lower coast of Trepassey. It's disturbing to see this. When they had the first hurricane, they issued \$975,000 to repair it. When we were speaking with the minister at that time and the feds, we were asking them to put a cribbing behind it or armour stone out in front of it. That didn't happen.

Now, the wall is down again and we start from scratch, putting the town on the hook – a small town – putting the town on the hook for more tax dollars to be able to contribute to put the wall back up. But if they had to listen in the first place to the residents who had said when they put a wall down, you put it down in two feet of sand or rocks and the water is going to hit it, then it's not going to happen. It's not going to stay there. That's pretty simple. But they had armour stone that they could put in the front of it to reinforce it and a crimping behind. Now

we're going to go back and spend another million dollars, put the town on the hook for probably \$100,000.

We have people that are up looking at it – they did go up and look at it, but the coast is still vulnerable up there to the ocean. If they go in now and have another storm tomorrow and all the rocks and everything wash across the road, who's responsible to clean it? There's no department of highways in that section of the Trepassey, so now they've got to go down and clean it themselves and pay for that.

So this is what they're up against. They would love to see the government get out and get this fixed as soon as possible.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a response.

**J. ABBOTT:** Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond to the petition, and I appreciate the Member bringing that to the House of Assembly.

As we can all appreciate, the tidal conditions in that part of the Member's district are severe and very severe at times. It causes work to be – quote, unquote – undone. So we're committed to working with the Town of Trepassey to address the issues, to come up with a more – hopefully, now, in this case – permanent solution that won't be on the backs of Trepassey. We will make sure that gets funded. We have our engineers engaged to work with the town and others to make sure we solve that for the future.

What I will say to anybody that is representing coastal communities is we're fully aware of the issues; we're making sure that we have dollars allocated to address those situations. We announced some

funding just recently for eight or nine communities to address these coastal engineering challenges that we have. With climate change, we can appreciate we're going to expect more of those and we're ready to take on those challenges.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

You have one minute and 30 seconds, Sir.

**J. DINN:** Call to amend the Residential Tenancies Act to include rental increase limitations.

Concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador urge our leaders to take action to address the growing cost-of-living crisis and rental increases being faced by many in our province. A lack of supply of rental units, coupled with an increased demand has resulted in profiteering by some landlords simply because the market allows.

The *Residential Tenancies Act, 2018*, allows for annual rent increases of any amount for any reason. In doing so, the current legislation lends itself to predatory rental increases for the purpose of profit and treats housing as a commodity rather than a fundamental human right. Significant rental increases are making life more unaffordable for many in our communities, especially seniors and those on income support. The private sector has failed to deliver on the promise of affordable homes.

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce legislation to limit the amount rent can be increased annually.

I will say here in the last 20 seconds, Speaker, that it comes down to, I would say, a housing crisis is a failure of government

policy more than anything else. Protect the renters, protect people who have no other option but to rent at this moment and would like to have home ownership.

Thank you, and I think I have six seconds to spare.

### **Orders of the Day**

#### **Private Members' Day**

**SPEAKER:** This being Wednesday, I call upon the hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition to bring forward his PMR.

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

I move the following private Member's resolution, which will be seconded by the Member for Bonavista:

WHEREAS for the second year in a row, our province's fishing industry may be destined for a shutdown over issues such as pricing, leaving frustrated harvesters out of the water, protesting instead of on their boats fishing and leaving fish processing plant workers lacking product to process, while days and weeks are lost; and

WHEREAS these repeated shutdowns in our fishing industry cost our fish harvesters valuable and perhaps irreplaceable fishing time in the short harvesting season, cost our fish processing plant workers the work they need, cost our province an important source of spinoff economic activity in our communities and revenue and cost Newfoundland and Labrador its reputation as a stable place to do business; and

WHEREAS many approaches have been proposed in the past and many approaches are in place in other jurisdictions that might offer hope of a resolution to the current impasse and ways of avoiding future impasses, but good solutions are usually found faster when all parties are around the negotiating table working hard on a resolution; and

WHEREAS an industry, as important to Newfoundland and Labrador as the fishing industry, requires the hands-on leadership and presence of our province's top leaders in government, including the Premier and the Fisheries Minister, especially in times like this;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the Premier and the Fisheries Minister to immediately take a hands-on role at the table with representatives of our fishery workers and fish processors to help find a swift and effective resolution of the current impasse, as well as long-term solutions that make future impasses less likely and help place our fishing industry on a more stable and steady footing so that the opportunities our province needs are not lost.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, my parents came from a very small fishing community in Placentia Bay called Petite Forte and both of their parents were fishers; their dads were fishers; my grandfathers were fishers.

One of my most prized possessions in our family is a \$2 Newfoundland gold piece, and the reason that's so prized is because it's been handed down. My grandmother got that gold piece from her husband one year when they were fishing. At the end of the day, why is that so important? Because she turned around and recognized there was very little money that was actually paid out to the fisherpersons back then.

They caught their catches and, basically, all the money they received, they owed it to the merchants, to pay off what they had used over the winter, whether it be for food, whether it be for clothing. But she kept that \$2 gold piece and she passed it down to her oldest child, which was my mother. My mother passed it to me and I passed it to my daughter, who has now passed it to her son.

The reason we do that is to remember where we came from and to remember –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** – a time in our fishing industry when our fish harvesters and our fishers were the ones that had the least benefit from any of the work, and hard work they do. Out on the water every single day, risking their lives every time they go out, to catch their quotas to try and make a living.

So when they stand up and ask me what do I mean by free enterprise. I mean the freedom, freedom to go out and catch your quota and freedom to be able to come in and sell that quota when you want to sell it.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** I can't put it any simpler than that. I understand there are lots of reasons why, but this industry with 16,000 people employed in the current industry, this industry which has been the backbone of Newfoundland and Labrador, and not just the backbone, Speaker, but the soul – the soul of Newfoundland and Labrador.

People came here 500 years ago. Many ancestors came here and many more in this gallery today and here in the thing, came here because of the fishery. We've survived because of the fishery. Now we find ourselves in a situation where we have people here today who feel their livelihoods are being threatened.

I had an email from an elderly gentleman the other day and he talked about freedom. He talked about the fact that we fought in two world wars and other conflicts to provide freedom: freedom to make choices, freedom to be able to decide what career you want to go into, freedom to decide where you go to school or where you want to live.

But today, unfortunately, we have a group of people here today that feel that their

freedoms are being infringed on, that they don't have the freedom that they should have. They don't have the freedom to go out and catch their quotas when they want to catch it.

We all know there are time restraints on every different type of fish that these people go out and get and that fish plant workers rely on. It's not just about crab. It's about cod. It's about capelin. It's about mackerel – hopefully, we'll be able to fish that this year. It's about herring. In my uncle's days, it was about going out and catching dogfish and getting nine cents a pound for dogfish and selling it to the Japanese.

There is a big history in our province for people. But that freedom to be able to go out and catch your quota and sell it, but not being told when you can go out and fish or not being told how much you can catch, that's part of the problem. We recognize that there is a problem, but that problem can only be solved with leadership. It's not just the leadership of the unions –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** – or the processors. It's the leadership of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take control of the things we can control. We all know that Churchill Falls wasn't the biggest giveaway in the history of our province. It was in 1949, when we handed over management of our fisheries to the federal government. That was the biggest giveaway.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So there are lots of things we no longer control in our fishery because of that and we will continue to fight for that, to bring that back so that if we could have an accord for the oil off our shore, we certainly could have an accord for our fishery. We need to continue that fight with the federal government and continue to pursue that.

But in the meantime, we have to look internally within our own province and look at what we're doing, trying to make it competitive so that we're trying to put fish plants against harvesters, which is exactly what the Minister of Fisheries tried to do today, which is terrible. This is about 16,000 people who work in that industry, all of them deserve to make a living, all of them deserve a livelihood and I believe there are solutions. I believe there are ways to make this work, but it won't be done unless we get them at the table once and for all and we actually stay there until it gets resolved. It's no good to go on tours and talk about what you hear and then do nothing.

It is about taking action and that's exactly what people want. They just want that opportunity to be free, to have that freedom to go out on the water, which they all love to do and catch their quota and to bring it in and sell it.

We all know that pricing is always controlled by the markets, so be it, but there are lots of other things inside of that, that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador has control over. We've talked about those issues for the last five or six days. So that's what we're talking about here. Let's get together, let's turn around and finally see if we can't find a solution that puts everybody on an equal playing field.

That's all I've ever heard is they just want to be treated fair and they just want to be treated equal. Is that too much to ask? That's simply what I say today: Is that too much to ask?

My first job was selling fish, going around as a kid in Grade 8 door to door, a big codfish for a \$1, small one for 50 cents. Only problem was, the first \$10 I made, I had to give it back to my father and my uncle. Why? Because they wanted to buy a bottle of Rye because they wanted to keep so much of the fish to salt it. But, of course, it worked out at the end because the more

they drank, the less they wanted to salt and so I could make more money.

But that's an example of entrepreneurship in Newfoundland and Labrador that people in Newfoundland and Labrador have been doing for years and years and years.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** That's all we want. We want it so that everyone prospers; the 16,000 people that work in our fishing industry, the over a billion dollars a year that it brings in. This renewable megaproject of ours that we had given to us, we need to make sure that we maximize that and maximize the benefit to everyone involved in the fishing industry.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**G. BYRNE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the hon. Member's words, his reflections about his own history. There is a lot of history to the fishery, but the hon. Member also speaks of freedom and he says that with a very casual point of view because he does not reflect that all freedoms come with certain responsibilities. That really is the historical tradition of Newfoundland and Labrador, how we bind together to support each other. We recognize that freedom comes with responsibility to each other. That is the reflection I bring to the floor of the House of Assembly, today, is the history of collective bargaining in the Newfoundland and Labrador fishery.

The *Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act* was first proclaimed in 1971. Why? Why did fishermen want regulation controls over a price-setting process? It was because they felt as though the free market, at that

point in time, was not acting in their interests.

So in 1971, the *Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act* was created, where literally tens of thousands of fishermen from our province surrendered some of their right to be able to enter a marketplace and agreed that the better outcome and the better process is through a regulated process. I can't help but reflect on the fact that that was an initiative that came from fishermen.

From 1971 until 1997, it was basically a collective of fishermen where pricing was more of an auction-based process. It was not a formalized arbitrated independent panel process. There was the *Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act*, but it was more of an auction process where individual species – and it was mostly around groundfish. It wasn't until the collective bargaining, the price setting process for crab in 1997, that there was a recognition driven by fishermen that there needed to be further increased regulation over the setting of a price. From that process became the independent panel.

Since 1998, there have been 22 amendments to the *Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act*, always evolving, always changing. But let's bear in mind a couple of key points here.

We, as a province, have always had a value system. Raw materials should not, as first option, first choice, be shipped out of our province for processing elsewhere. That would be true of iron ore at Voisey's Bay; that would be true of forestry products; that would be true of fish – the core of our province. We've always held this as a core value. Wherever, ever it can be achieved, it should be supported that no raw material be shipped away from our province to create jobs in other communities, in other provinces elsewhere. That was a value system we took – the freedom and the responsibility.

So, Mr. Speaker, we also have a situation where just as we recognize that that is something we hold true, we reflect that nothing is written in stone. Values change, priorities change, and that's one of the reasons why we will ask Members opposite, in the spirit of the House, in the spirit of an institution that works collegially and co-operatively with each other to express where they might stand on a particular issue. Why? So that we can come to a consensus.

That is the purpose of asking a question in reply to the hon. Members. It is not a rhetorical exchange that is meant to leave no particular answers in place. It is to establish, or attempt to establish, if there could be a consensus.

So that's an important issue, because I am confident that a resolution will be achieved. We may change our values and our priorities, but it should be done in a transparent way, where everyone knows what is going on.

Why do we take consideration for the needs and the aspirations of our plant workers? There are 6,000-plus plant workers in the crab industry that are depending on our deliberations as to whether or not they will succeed. Many of them are spouses of fishermen – many, not all. All of them come from communities that are dependent on the fishery. Not to include them in any deliberations does not seem like the true spirit of what this Chamber is all about.

So when I reflect on the fact that we have a system in place that was generated on a price-based system, that was asked for by fishermen because they did not feel the free market was working in their interests, that's where this came from.

So we want to understand how can we correct this on a modern-day concept in a modern-day context? Change is constant and this side of the House is prepared to change – no problem.

I, as a former minister of Fisheries, allowed outside buyers. I had no problem with it. I reflected on the fact that we have to take into consideration all those who would be benefactors of it, what the consequences could be. But I did act. We did act. This side of the House did act and we will act again.

So let's all understand that when we want free markets, what are free markets? Well, I would argue that in its purest form or its most basic form, free markets are the ability to establish a price at the head of the wharf; free markets, in its simplicity and in its entirety, are the ability to negotiate a price at the head of the wharf.

I think that would be a difficult situation to be able to enact because I think the consequences of that may not necessarily result in the outcome that you might expect. Those who would not have power in that kind of a relationship would lose. Those who have lesser quotas would lose. Their power to negotiate would be minimized. They would not necessarily get a better bargaining position.

So, Mr. Speaker, let's remember here, the origin of this came from fishermen. We will always be ready to change, but there needs to be an open discussion as to what those changes will be, what their consequences will be and how we will enact them.

Whistling past the graveyard, just whispering what the solutions might be without every really having the courage to stand up and say what it is that we are asking for, what it is that we are prepared to consider, that's not responsible.

I know the fishermen of our province are the most courageous, most enterprise-orientated fishermen anywhere in the world.

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

**G. BYRNE:** Anywhere in the world. They deserve an opportunity to, not only engage in free market, but, at the same time, be

protected by regulation as needed. That's the fine balance.

Why do we have limited entry in the processing sector? It didn't come because someone just had a bad day, or just invented it, or whatever. It came because there was a recognition that in Newfoundland and Labrador when you have too many plants, basically in a fishery with a limited resource, you create an insatiable appetite for more fish and sometimes that insatiable appetite to feed those plants exceeds the ability of the stock to supply it and you create a conservation issue. That's why we have limited entry in the processing sector.

It's not because there was a desire to reward some and defeat others. It was based on a conservation principle. That's the history of this.

So if there are changes to come, let's talk about what those changes should be. As a collective, as a Chamber, as a province and as the great and historic fishing sector that we have, let's all recognize that there are many, many stakeholders in this industry. To change one aspect can have a consequence on another element of the fishery, another stakeholder in the fishery, another rightful participant in the fishery.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'll say this, I'm very, very proud of the fact that, while it's difficult – it has been very, very difficult in the face of the issues that are before us – our Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, our Minister of Fisheries has stood and listened and is prepared to act and he embodies what this fishery is in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

Wow, I don't exactly know where to start. We've said in a lot of circumstances here, we've asked that we would like for the government to create some action to make sure that we've got a more enriched fishing industry, everyone benefits more. Nobody can disagree with that.

We've stood many times and said we need to take action to make sure that what affects the harvesters, the plant workers, those in the fishery, ought to be arrested or ought to be improved.

My previous speaker had said: Well, tell us what we ought to do? Government is asking us what they ought to do. I've only got less than 10 minutes, but we've had numerous speaking opportunities in this House where we had suggestions. There were no suggestions acted upon.

One that I would pull out to the minister is that we said we have an abundance of seals, they eat a whole lot of fish in our water. We know that if the seals didn't eat all those metric tons, we know that our harvesters can bring it in and can get remunerated for it.

The last press release on sealing from this government was in 2015 when they took power. Now, I would say, action. The minister would state and say: Well, tell us what we ought to do? I'm not sure if that's exactly but that's how it came across: Tell us what we ought to do in the fishery to make it and improve it.

We've said we got issues with the arrangement with the federal government. The minister who just spoke before me had stated that the federal government, on the issue he spoke on, is morally and intellectually bankrupt.

We're not disagreeing. We are not disagreeing, but I repeat what I said –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**C. PARDY:** – I repeat what I said in my last speaking arrangement, I asked the minister and the government: stand with us. We would, on this side, go out to the front steps of Confederation Building. Let's go represent in Ottawa and let's make a difference to make sure we improve the life of the fishers and those involved in the fishing industry in their business. But that didn't happen.

So when you put out a call and say: give us some suggestions. We've given you lots and I don't think the minister would disagree with that.

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

**C. PARDY:** I can't give you anything to state what was acted upon by this government since I came into this House in 2019, and if I am missing it, I would love for the next speaker, maybe the minister, to stand and let me know what I'm missing in that regard or what we've missed collectively.

I'm from the District of Bonavista, proudly from the District of Bonavista.

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

**C. PARDY:** I would say watching me from the District of Bonavista now is a gentleman by the name of Barry Randall, who, for the past 20-plus years, has been the head of the union at the plant in Bonavista.

I've said it in this House on many occasions, this is not the first time, we benefit from the fishery in the District of Bonavista. But do we feel that it can't be better, that it can't give us more income? Sure, we think it could. If we had action, we think we could be doing better in the District of Bonavista.

We currently have many hundreds of harvesters in the District of Bonavista that bring their product to our shores. We have



one big plant in the District of Bonavista, located in Bonavista, which, for 3½ months a year, those 450 workers would be working flat out.

What does it mean to the economy, the fishery and the Bonavista Peninsula? I stated in this House before on employee salaries of those 450 per week, about \$330,000 per week in payroll. Add in the harvester payroll, we're up close to \$1 million a week that's landed in the District of Bonavista and put out into the economy. How important is the fishery to us? Very important – very, very important.

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

**C. PARDY:** We've stood here, when the price of crab a couple of years ago when it hit \$7 a pound, I stated before the budget came in and when the budget came in and they said the revenue for the province, \$1.6 billion and with that, the pounding of the desks over here, there was so much excitement, but there was no action. There was no action to make sure that we maintain that or we grow it further. Our leader has said that it ought not to be a \$1.2 billion- or \$1.4-billion industry; it ought to be a \$5-billion industry –

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

**C. PARDY:** – and that's where we are.

I'm going to throw out another suggestion now because basically the minister had asked for suggestions because, apparently, they may not have a lot of suggestions, but I want to throw this one out. We had a Fisheries Loan Board one time, back in 1995, then Premier Clyde Wells, and we know the moratorium was in '90 and we know that it was a different fishery back then, but the Fisheries Loan Board was abolished.

Anybody who wanted anything financed from the fishery thereafter, they basically had three opportunities. You finance it

through family: you find your money for your enterprise or for what you needed for your fishing enterprise through your family.

Secondly, you could go through the banks; anybody who has experience with the banks knows it is not easy, especially with the fishery. They analyze it and there is a lot of red tape with that – not easy. The third opportunity was the processors.

In *The Telegram*, last Wednesday, there was a gentleman from LaScie – and I don't know if the gentleman from LaScie was in the gallery yesterday or he was outside – he made public that he is part of a controlling agreement. If his family never had the money for him to enter the fishery, if the banks weren't going to loan it to him, he was either not going to join the fishery or it became controlling agreement, which is illegal.

One agreement I would say or one suggestion for the government, who's looking for suggestions, reinstate the fisheries loan board. Make some financing available –

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

**C. PARDY:** – to the harvesters that they can get it when they need a lower rate, less red tape, streamline it to grow the fishery. That's a suggestion that we would pass out to you.

How important would it be that we'd have a joint committee between the provincial and federal government to look after the management of our processing and harvesting sectors? It's been recommended since David Vardy did back in 2003; Richard Cashin in 2005. The latest panel report suggested it as well. They say the minister has too much power.

Form a management, an agreement team, a committee between the federal and the provincial agreement or committee, much the same as the C-NLOPB that runs our offshore oil and see what that does for us. I

would think many people would think that's a good thing because we are joined at the hip with the federal government and we can't catch something if the total allowable catch is not there to catch. We understand that.

We acknowledge that conservation is important, because we need to make sure that we have the stock for future generations and to bring in the income it is. But if someone out there is not questioning the federal science, I'm not sure. I'm not sure, because I haven't come across too many.

I'm not sure what this government has represented, but I think we need to do a better analysis of what is out there, a better analysis of what is out there in our stocks. That would manifest itself into a higher total allowable catch. That would put more money in people's pockets. Instead of bringing in a million dollars a week in Bonavista, it could bring in \$2 million a week in Bonavista.

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

**C. PARDY:** I'm not sure how many suggestions – I think if you take all the suggestions we threw out over the last couple of years, you've got enough to start on. We'd just like to watch you start.

Thank you, very much.

**SPEAKER:** The Member's time is expired.

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

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

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

Always a pleasure to stand in this House to represent the great people of the great District of Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. The fishery does play a very important pivotal

part in the existence of that part of the Island as well.

I'll say to the Member opposite that the fisheries loan board, if that's your suggestion, well, I had the harvesters say to me don't focus on a fisheries loan board. So I don't know who you're talking to.

I'll challenge the Member opposite. The analysis and the science – you and I have had conversations around that, and to say in this House that you and I have not is irresponsible on your part, because you know we've had the conversations.

**J. DWYER:** A point of order.

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

**J. DWYER:** The minister is not addressing the Speaker. He's addressing the Member of the House. I'd like him to address the Chair, please.

**SPEAKER:** There's no point of order there, but I remind the Member.

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** So the point is, and I say to the Member opposite as well that you talk about joint relationships. You're on that side of the House. You have the opportunity also to meet with your federal minister.

The federal Progressive Conservative leader is in town, did you meet with him to discuss the important issues of the fishery?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Get him to make a pronouncement.

**E. LOVELESS:** Absolutely. What's his stand on the fishery? Very important, because we have not heard – we have not heard, and that's important.

I say to the Member opposite, and I will go back a week ago when he stood in this House of Assembly to say that we don't hear anything about the fishery. That is totally wrong because every chance that I get, when I speak in this House no matter what matter it is on, I always talk about the fishery because it's important to my district and it's important to all districts in this province.

I take objection to that notion that the fisheries is not talked about in this House. It is talked about, and let me add, there are lots of questions asked when this gallery is full but when it's not full, there are not a lot of questions. So let that be known as well.

Mr. Speaker, the fishery is paramount, absolutely, in my district. I met with 13 harvesters that were in my district here yesterday after the proceedings of the House of Assembly, because that's important. No doubt about it.

Crab is not big in that part of the Island, I guess, in my district, but lobster is and other species as well. But let me say, and I'll say that on behalf of a few harvesters that were in the room with me from my district, the fishery is not just about one species, and I think that's important to remember. It's not about one species.

Today, DFO made an announcement: An update on caplin brings stock out of critical zone. That's a positive announcement I believe for the industry. It is. It's moving in the right direction.

Mr. Speaker, I come from a rural part of the province. My father was not a fisherman, he was a logger, but I had two brothers that worked on the FPI trawlers, who lived right alongside the salt water. So I understand that's the fundamentals, that's the foundation that I come from. I understand the importance of the fishery.

As a department, Mr. Speaker, many times the vital importance and significance of the

fishery is and will always be discussed. I understand the frustration that's ongoing at this moment and we don't want a repeat of last year – nobody does.

But we have the ASP and FFAW at the table, we're urging them to get on with it because I believe that's the first step in seeing a better year this year. Will there be challenges? Absolutely, but what the harvesters are asking for that are in this gallery is that there are other issues than the formula that they want addressed. I take it seriously and we are addressing it. We take it very seriously.

I attended the Boston seafood show because I believe it is important, on the world stage, to know what Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer, because we have a lot to offer, but realizing that it is the harvesters that have to pull it out of the water, absolutely, no doubt about it, and their voice was heard in Boston as well. But we have to represent ourselves at that world stage.

We export in excess of a billion dollars to more than 40 countries every year. We have 17,000 seafood workers in 400 communities and over 6,000 of them are fish plant workers and others, because there's a supply industry side to this as well, that people have employment from the industry.

Let me say, our Department of FFA, we work hard every day for all stakeholders. I stand here and I stress that point that it's the whole of the industry that I'm trying to work towards to make it better.

We play an active role, as I just said, in terms of examples like the seafood show in Boston. That is a part of it as well, and quality. Quality of our product is important as well. That was evident in terms of the discussions and seeing what's ongoing in Boston. All of those things are important to support everyone in our industry.

I met with the federal minister in Boston, as well, to talk about the redfish, the unfortunate decision on redfish, as the Member for Corner Brook has aggressively and passionately stood on his feet to support the western part of the province because it is – he's been around a long time and he's connected to those fishers. But it's still the whole of the industry. It's still the whole of the industry and we stressed upon the minister that she made the wrong decision. We're hoping that there's going to be a different decision and that's just on redfish. As I said, the fishery is more that just redfish or cod or crab, whatever it be.

There's positive news on cod. We hope that there will be a good management plan in place and we, as a province, will see the fairness in the announcement when it will be made by the minister. We're waiting for the TAC to be announced on crab. The assessment was the same as last year. We're hoping that it's going to be good news and even if it's the same as it was last year, it will be good news. I see my time is wearing down there, Mr. Speaker.

But recognizing that we didn't want a repeat of last year, the Premier and I did go through the province and it was not just an exercise to hear from a certain crowd or a certain sector of the industry, it was to hear from the whole of the industry, and that includes everybody. I believe that is the responsible thing to do. We will continue to listen to that.

As I said, I went and spoke outside yesterday, then came in and met with seven harvesters as well that really delivered the message that they wanted to deliver to us. They want outside buyers, capacity and other issues addressed. These are structural issues and I told them that we're not just looking at it, we're – I'm not just saying that to get them out of the gallery. Absolutely, 100 per cent not. That's their right. I respect that 100 per cent. I would meet harvesters anytime from any part of the province.

But I asked in terms of that meeting to happen, that it's respectful. We all ask that. All of us in this House of Assembly want to see a good fishery. We don't want to see these people in the galleries. I understand the difficulties that some are facing – a lot of them are facing – in terms of their enterprise, will the bank take it from them? That's serious, that's reality, that's a real-life story. That's bothersome, absolutely. I hear it loud and clear.

But I have a responsibility, again, for the industry as a whole. But those important things, other than the formula – let me make it clear because the harvesters made it clear to me yesterday, that it's not just about the formula. That's only one thing, absolutely. But I believe it's an agreement that if FFAW and ASP can get the job done and the fishery start on time, then we will –

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Well, I hope for the Member, a little bit more encouragement in terms of trying to get this done.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. LOVELESS:** So I respect –

**J. DWYER:** (Inaudible.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. DWYER:** (Inaudible.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

If the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue continues, he will lose his speaking privileges.

**E. LOVELESS:** That's not a contribution.

Mr. Speaker, I take their ask very seriously. We will take a wholesome view and, again, those structural issues, it's not something

you can click your fingers and it'll change things overnight. I realize where they are. I respect each and every one of them, but I have a responsibility for the whole of the industry and that includes everybody. I take this job very serious.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Order, please!

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

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

It is certainly a pleasure to get up and represent the District of Ferryland. It's not a fishing community where I am, it's a fishing district, not just a community for sure.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** I heard the minister say that time that we didn't ask any questions. Well, we're two weeks asking questions here now. We got no answers yet and it's too late to get them now for the people that want to process this year, for sure.

Then you talk about how much you speak about the fishery. This is a budget from 2023, one-third of a page, that's what's in the budget, one-third of a page; 31-page booklet, one-third of a page on the fishery. That's what's in there.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Shameful. Shameful. That's what it is. It's totally shameful.

So we're talking about the fishery here. I grew up in a fishing community. My dad was a fisherman and it's wrong to see what's going ahead here today. It's wrong. Yes, it's wrong, totally wrong. They want an opportunity to be able to go out and catch their quota and to be able to come in and

sell it and then go out again the next day or whatever day they choose to go out. They choose to do that. That's the first thing they want. They want to have the opportunity to do that.

In the community I grew up in there was a fish plant. I had an aunt who used to go and pick up fish. This is what it's like to go pick up fish in Petty Harbour, St. Shotts, St. Bride's, Pouch Cove, St. John's and Quidi Vidi. They had the opportunity. The plant owners spoke to them and the fishermen had an opportunity to sell where they wanted to sell and that's where they chose. Right now, we don't have that opportunity. So that's gone.

They can go out next week or whenever they start in two weeks' time, they can go out and catch their quota – go out and catch their limit is the first thing they have to be told, is how much they can bring in.

So that's wrong. If they can go out – and certainly the inshore group, I'll speak to that first. If they've got a 25,000-pound quota – I'll use that as a number, I'm not sure of the exact number – if they can go out and catch that in two days, well that saves them expenses. If they can't process it, then why are we sitting on a licensing board that recommended – I'm not saying give out the licence to everybody. I'm not saying that, and it's the first thing you're going to throw at me. I'm not saying to give them out to everybody, but there are licences there. If they couldn't process it last year, then why couldn't they give somebody a licence to process the crab? That's the first start.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** So they've got to sit and wait. They're scheduled for next Friday and it's windy or stormy and they can't go out. Now they've got to come back and wait another day. So there's an opportunity. And, again, I'm not saying they should give everybody a licence, but there are opportunities. You had it on your desk since

October, you have an opportunity to give someone a licence to help the processing so they can get out and get their crab caught quicker.

Now, hopefully, this year, they get out in time and we get this worked out and they get an opportunity to do that and we don't have those problems. I'm certainly encouraged and hopeful that it's going to happen. But you've got to give them the opportunity to get out, not sit here and wait and take all summer to get it.

We know that they've got to get out there to get it. The later you go, they run into the soft shell. And I'm just talking crab right now, I've only got 10 minutes. So the later you go in the summer – and you know that as minister – you're running into soft shell.

So we want them out there in April. We want to have it done by May, absolutely. And you can't throw back – I've got fish plant workers, too, that I've got to try to represent. It's certainly convoluted. This whole thing is convoluted, there's no doubt about it; it's convoluted. It's just so tangly.

But we have to fix one thing at a time and give them the right and give them an opportunity to be able to sell their crab and that means giving one licence and trying it. If that's not enough, maybe then you try another one next year. But to sit on your desk since October, we've had these prices fixed since last year, and you were out pumping your chests last year when you're out talking about it, when you got the fishery going after six weeks.

We got it straightened out, or got it done, now we're back here and it will soon be April again and we're still going through the same thing. We're not pumping our chests. You'll pump it next week when we gets it going, hopefully. I hope you are pounding on your chest. I dearly hope you are. I got to say, get that going. We need to have it going and that's absolutely what we need to do.

So you've got to give them an opportunity to be able to sell their product. That is absolutely what they've got to do. And outside buyers? Yeah, fine. Give them the opportunity, just give them the chance, give somebody a chance. I doubt for one minute if there's any crab that is going to leave this Island – I doubt for a minute there's any going to leave. But you've got to give them the opportunity, it's a fair, free-market system. Give them a chance.

And rather than that, another licence, let them get a chance to get out and process it; get out and catch it so they can process it. It's that simple.

I'm looking at signs. You talk about cod fishing and you look at the signs. The moratorium was July 2, 1992. It just happened to be my birthday – it's not the first time I said that in here either – when it happened and it was pretty devastating in the household.

So 1992, they're really good at signs. Now they just opened it up last year. So they're the scientists that we're relying on to tell us what they're doing. There are all kinds of stuff that could happen between – that's 30 years it took them to it figure out.

The Member from Bonavista spoke about seals: we never done one thing about it. You don't think taking seals out of the water won't help the cod fishery? It definitely will. You don't see seals up on the top of a salmon river in fresh water waiting for the salmon to come up. There should be something done about it. We should be pushing the federal government for that and we're not.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** We're not pushing it enough.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** As I said, growing up in a fishing community, I know. I worked in – not every job, I certainly couldn't fillet and I certainly couldn't split fish, but I went from working in the hole of a boat to weighing fish when the fishermen came in. The only time that they ever got restricted – and I'm sure everybody here knows – from my district, I'll start in Petty Harbour, I think there were two plants at one time, I'm pretty sure there was. There was one in Bay Bulls, I said this last week. There was one in Witless Bay. There was one in Tors Cove. There was one in Cape Broyle. There was one in Calvert. There was one in Ferryland. There was one in Aquaforte and there's one in Fermeuse, for sure, a big fish plant. Then you go up to Trepassey, which is the biggest plant that was on the shore at the time and there were 5,000 people probably lived in Trepassey in the heyday before the moratorium hit. Now, we're down to 350 people.

Now look at the signs that we have 30 years later and they still haven't got the cod figured out, how to figure the signs out. So I don't know why we're relying on them because it makes no sense to me that they haven't got that figured out, to try to help it. It's unbelievable.

So back to when we're talking about the only time they ever got restricted in regard to fishing, because I know I was out there. We go out on a Saturday evening – I remember one Saturday evening, the trap was full, there was 30,000 pounds in it. They were allowed to bring in 5,000. So, of course, when they dipped it in, they dipped in 7,000 or 8,000 and brought it in and the plant bought it because after Saturday night they didn't work Sundays. That's just the way all these fish plants worked in the districts; they didn't work on Sundays. So they limited fishermen. That's the only time they got limited was 5,000 to 7,000 pounds on a Saturday evening. That was the only time that they got limited. Then after that, they started all over again.

So that day, we had 30,000 pounds – and this is how finicky it was at the time. We had 30,000 in the trap and you could only take in 5,000 or 6,000. They went out, took the 7,000, like I said, brought it in, weighed it off, then they decided they were going to fillet it and try to sell it. They went out, took the few dead fish off the top, laid it down to try to dip and it all swam away, never got it, totally lost it. They went out Monday morning, they had to go to another boat to get a fish to be able to have fish stew. There was no fish Monday morning. That's how quick that happened with the wind change.

So these people need to be able to do it, as today, when they go out, have an opportunity to be able to sell while it's there and while the going is good, not wait for a certain day when they tell them to go. It's just wrong. It's just totally wrong, to be able to tell you when you can go and how much you can bring in. That is a big issue.

I have nieces and nephews that are here. I spoke to them one time last year: You're not out fishing today? No, we got no one going to buy it.

Now that's wrong. He couldn't go catch his fish because he didn't have anyone to buy it. Do you know why? Because the fishery didn't get started until six weeks later last year. They're catching their fish in July and these plants are still processing crab so they're not ready to process it.

They have to be given the opportunity to get out, given the chance to sell the fish, given the chance to catch their quotas and fix this once and for all. We're in here, let's see if we can get this fixed between 40 Members in here and not come in here next year talking about that again. It's ridiculous.

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** It's totally ridiculous.

Anyway, Speaker, seeing my time is ending.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

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

I'm very happy to be able to stand here today as a representative for the MHA for the extreme East End of St. John's.

I have no fish plants, but we do land probably the most catch here in the City of St. John's, so I'm very happy to stand here today in my position as minister of Labour.

I've stood here and I'm not going to profess to say that I understand the industry as well as some of my colleagues that have lived it a lot longer than I have, but I am learning. I've had the opportunity to have in excess of dozens of meetings on this particular file, in particular, crab and meeting with both the ASP and the FFAW on many, many occasions in the past number of weeks and months.

I do want to say how happy I am to be able to stand here and support this private Member's resolution here today with my colleagues on both sides of the House. I haven't heard from my colleagues in the Third Party or the independents, but I'm sure they're going to be supporting this as well.

Government is well aware of how important and significant the fishery is to this province, to the economy, to the people we all represent, to the communities that dot along our shorelines right across this province and even to the people who live here in the capital city, the City of St. John's. It's not lost on any of us how important the discussion is here today and I thank my hon. colleagues on both sides of the House for adding to the discussion here today.

Some of what I was going to say the Member for Corner Brook highlighted, but I did want to take some opportunity to go

through some of the steps that have happened over the last couple of years, since I've been in this position, but, more importantly, I guess the department of Labour's involvement with respect to this. I will highlight a little bit of that today and then hopefully shed some light on where we're right now, currently, in the process of negotiations.

I do, first of all, want to say thank you to the people that are in our gallery here today. It's their House. It's their opportunity to voice their concerns. I see the passion in their faces and hear the passion in their voices. I'm happy that they took the time out of their schedule to be here today. The importance is not lost on any of us, I don't think.

The Member for Corner Brook talked about FICBA, or the *Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act* and where it came from. I'm not going to go through that again; I don't think anyone wants to hear a diatribe about that, but I do want to get the opportunity to let people know that there were changes made throughout this whole period of time since its inception in '71 to where we are to today. I'm not going to go through it as eloquently as the MHA for Corner Brook did, on that part of it, but what I will say is where we've come in the last little bit.

I know throughout those meetings that I've had with both ASP and FFAW, and other stakeholders – we knew there were some system problems; there were some issues, obviously, on both sides. As the Minister Responsible for Labour, anyone who's ever been in this position will understand that sometimes the fence-sitting hurts, as a Minister Responsible for Labour, because you have to be the balance of both sides.

Part of the reason why we have to do that, so when we see what we've been through over the last couple of years, it was incumbent on me, as Minister Responsible for Labour, to ensure that the legislation is responsive to the needs of the industry. In July of 2022, we announced that there



would be an independent review of the collective bargaining model in sections 19.1 to 19.14 of FICBA.

Now Justice Conway, former Labour Relations Board chair, before this review was done, came forward with a report with input from the harvesters, the processors, the respective organizations as well as interested parties, people that made submissions, that was a very strong indication – I heard my hon. Member for Bonavista mention it earlier.

In October of 2022 that report was delivered to my office to look at, work through, try to find solutions and changes that may be in the benefit of both sides, that would give them that opportunity.

Fast-forward a little while after that, when we brought back the House of Assembly, to the fall of 2023, we brought forward amendments to FICBA, talking about a five-year statutory review of the collective bargaining model in the act, changes to the composition of the board – sorry, of the fish price-setting panel. Sometimes these are a large amount of words to say in a mouthful, for sure. So we said we would retain the three-person fish price-setting panel but, in addition, the two alternate chairs.

But the slight change was the chairperson and alternate chairs be appointed by the provincial government, with direction from the industry, of course, and the certified bargaining agent and the processors' organization will each nominate one member for the regular members and one alternate member for appointment to the panel.

Upon joint request of the parties for collective bargaining, the chairperson can hear and consider parties' positions and issue a decision.

I know the hon. Minister of Fisheries spoke earlier and said no one wanted a repeat of

what happened after last year; no one in this House wants that. I think, I'm –

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

**B. DAVIS:** Well, it's not happening. It's not –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Address the Chair, please.

**B. DAVIS:** You got your time to speak too, so don't interrupt mine and that's perfect. We'll get along very good because I don't interrupt yours.

Mr. Speaker, the new fish price amendments in 2023 deal directly with the standing, how it was appointed, members of the panel, the composition, as I said before. I won't go through who the members of the panel are because I think most in attendance would know who those are.

But at the request of both sides, we said, okay, after last year, we wanted to make some additional changes based on their requests. We sat down right after the season, we looked at some of the options, even throughout the season on how we can make it better. Whether it's minor tweaks or more substantive changes.

So in September of 2023, we announced the establishment of the Fish Price-Setting Strategic Review Team. This team came forward with a bunch of recommendations, a formula-based system. The team was comprised of Glenn Blackwood, Gabriel Gregory and William Broderick, all of whom are respected within the industry, one from each side. They were put forward – I would think they're respected; that's what both parties have said to me. They brought forward some recommendations as well as economic analysis, stakeholder consultations, review of the current legislation, looked at ways we can make it better and then came forward with a report.

In November, that report was released publicly. There were nine recommendations. We're working through those recommendations. Some we've implemented very quickly. Obviously, starting the negotiations early was one of the big things. Currently – and I don't have a lot of time left, so I do want to take an opportunity just to go through where we're to today.

Parties remained engaged in the negotiation process with the assistance of senior conciliation officer from our shop that provides a lot of insight to both sides. Ensuring they can get back to the table, taking every opportunity they can to push both parties in the directions they need to go to try to get that negotiated deal, which is what we all want.

I understand both parties have been working diligently. I know my staff has been working closely, even as recently as today, with the FFAW, sitting with them working through questions they have, concerns they have, opportunities they have to get a deal. That will switch over again now tomorrow to sitting down with ASP and then, hopefully, with both parties together, to get that deal done, which is really, really important.

I get the frustration that it seems like it's operating exactly as it was last year. We may be in a similar situation to what happened last year, currently, but I know the parties are working diligently and have been working longer at this to try to get to that deal. It is a process. It is a negotiation process that the two parties – and we encourage them as a government and as a people in this House to get at the table. Because the best deal that we could ever expect is one that's negotiated by the two parties for their mutual benefit.

That's what we want to see. We're going to continue to push as hard as we can with our senior conciliation officer. I know the Minister of Fisheries and the Premier have been working very hard with both of the

parties. I know we've had a number of meetings with them. We're going to continue to do that. I'm hoping – and I'm not pessimistic like some would say; I'm very hopeful that there will be a deal found in the very near future that we are going to be working with them to find that deal. I encourage everyone in this House of Assembly to support that process.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Always a pleasure to stand and talk in this House. I'd like to say to the Member for Virginia Waters – Pleasantville, he's probably not pessimistic because his house isn't on the line.

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

**L. PARROTT:** I'd also like to thank the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville and the Member for Corner Brook for the history lessons, but if you look up in the stands today at the men and women that are here, they don't need a history lesson. They're here because of history. They're here because it's their livelihood that's in jeopardy and it's being neglected. That's exactly why they're here. Same time year after year.

Mr. Speaker, the fishery in this province is the backbone, historically, and we all know that. No one can dispute that this province was built by the fishery. We know how we got here. We know why we got here. You can leave this province and go anywhere in the world and anyone who's had the pleasure to work with a Newfoundlander or Labradorian, they always comment on their work ethic. Do you know where that work ethic came from? It came from the fisheries.

That is why we are who we are and we should stand proud and support that.

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

**L. PARROTT:** We always talk about what we should and couldn't do. I'll say this: The Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture is in a hard position. I don't dispute that. Him and I don't always agree. But I will tell you this: I know that he's in a hard position, but there's something that we should do in this province. We should have a stand-alone Fisheries Minister. A stand-alone Fisheries Minister that's here not to fight with Ottawa, but one that is here to fight for the men and women that are in our fishery – one of the most lucrative businesses in this province, \$1.3 billion.

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

**L. PARROTT:** We should have a Fisheries Minister that's trying to grow this fishery from \$1.3 billion to \$5 billion. How do we do that? We need to manage it better. We have the federal Environment minister, the provincial Environment Minister. Everyone talks about climate change, yet we handcuff fishermen on everything they do – everything they do.

I'll give you a different perspective, one that most of the people in this House don't understand. These fishermen do and the fisher ladies that are here, they understand. I worked nine years with Search and Rescue. I know what an ugly ocean looks like. I know what a fishing boat capsized looks like. I know what bodies in the water look like.

That is what these men and women look at every day when they go out. They know when they go, that they may not come back. Do you know why they go? Because if they don't go catch their quota despite the weather, they don't get paid. They don't put food on their tables and they don't have a way forward to pay for their houses. We don't ever talk about that.

So now, we talk about processing. I have two plants in my district that applied for an extension on their processing licences. I think they both process right now a million tons. We've got a plant that was given a licence three years ago that still is not in operation. Why isn't that quota being dispersed across the province over the last little while on a short period of time until that plant gets up? It makes no sense.

Do you know what the plants in my district were told? They were told they can't get an extension unless they put in a brand new application as if they're new to the business. How does that make sense? What do we do? We add more red tape and we push people away. We add more costs and we push people away. These fisherpeople are not here arguing about cost. I haven't heard them say that one time out on the front step. They have talked about quotas. They have talked about their ability to get product processed.

Last year, what happened? The crab season got pushed off and what happened to the rest of the quota? Then, of course, cod gets pushed back, mackerel gets pushed back, capelin gets pushed back, people can't get out and fish. Why? Because they're still trying to catch the crab. So why not look at a way to add more processing? Why not look at these agreements that are handcuffing? We need to find a way to create a safer industry that prospers all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

If you don't think for a second that the fishery is not only the backbone of rural Newfoundland, go to St. John's. Where do you think the cars come from? Who's buying F250s and all the fishing pots that are sold here in St. John's or in Clarendville? I don't see any stores in small, rural Newfoundland selling fishing products. Come to Clarendville, Mercer's Marine, one of the most substantial businesses in this province. All the fishermen use it. Why? Because that's the only place they can go.

The fishery affects every single community in this province and I tell you, if you don't believe that it affects every single community in this province, go to Labrador. Go to Goose Bay or go to Labrador City or Wabush and look at the fish trucks that are there, set up with fish that's caught right here in Newfoundland and Labrador. It comes from here, so every single community prospers.

The fishermen and fisherwomen in this province want to grow the industry. They want to be successful. They want to go out and catch their fish during the season. They're not looking for an extension of season. They're looking for the ability to go out and make hay when the sun shines.

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

**L. PARROTT:** That is exactly what they're asking for. The way to do that is to go out and catch their product and be able to come back in and be able to sell it to whoever they want. Right now, they cannot do that.

Does the provincial government have the ability to change that? Absolutely, 100 per cent. The minister has the ability to look at processing in this province and make the necessary changes or award extensions in processing, allow the smaller plants to process more.

Here's another thing: We sit here and we listen all the time, ASP, FFAW; I'll remind everyone in this House that there are plenty of non-unionized plants in the province and plenty of non-unionized fishermen in this province. Who represents them?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Nobody.

**L. PARROTT:** One hundred per cent, nobody – 100 per cent, nobody. So why isn't that being brought up? It's never brought up. We need to do something.

It was interesting listening to the Member for Corner Brook talk about taking suggestions

and values from this side of the House. I can guarantee you, without any hesitation, if we brought forward a motion tomorrow to have an emergency debate in this House on the fishery, it would be shot down immediately by that side over there, the same as every other emergency debate that has been brought up.

Now, he thinks that we should be doing it –

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

**L. PARROTT:** There is no debate here.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** You had your time to speak; I'd appreciate mine, thank you.

The other thing we don't hear, we listen all the time to the provincial Liberal government talk about their federal partners. I have never once heard them talk about joint management. We should have joint management in this province over our fishery. We should have the ability to be the masters of our own domain. We should have an agreement similar to the Atlantic Accord. We should have a say in what happens here. There is zero question that we shouldn't have it.

Something else that nobody has talked about, and I don't understand – prior to COVID, we didn't have these issues. Now, all of a sudden, we got them. Where did they come from? The first year, when COVID came and the fisherpeople were forced out on the water, under very strict rules, then all of these issues started to rear their ugly heads.

And now all of a sudden, nobody has ever, ever had that discussion. Why did that happen? Why isn't that part of the discussion we're having here? It is an actual fact that prior to them – every year there was issues, there is no question. There are issues every year, but not like this – not like this.

I listened to the Member for Corner Brook talk earlier about secondary processing. It was really funny. I grew up in Labrador West and he said the word “iron ore.” No secondary processing in this province for iron. Two of the largest open-pit mines in the world, we do not do secondary processing here.

This government brought in – or they tried to bring in – actually, one of the only governments in the world that ever failed at selling marijuana. They tried to bring in marijuana and they wanted to ship that away for secondary processing. A lot of our aquaculture goes away for secondary processing. We should be doing all of our secondary processing here – every single bit.

That is why we need to look at a way to get processing licences extended or expanded. We know what quotas look like, but the government has the ability to issue and withdraw. If we have processors that aren't meeting their quotas, then we should be addressing that. But if they can't meet it and the crab – and I tell you, because I've heard it. If the crab is going out over the side of the wharf or it's being thrown out on the street or it's being given away, we've got a huge issue here. It is happening. If it isn't happening, then every fisherperson I know is telling me lies. I don't believe that to be true. I can guarantee you I've got three plants in my district; I've got plenty of fishermen in my district and they've all told me about crab going out over the side of the wharf.

Anyhow, Mr. Speaker, I think that this is not insurmountable. I think that the fine men and women that came into this House today, the fisherpeople, they're here for a reason. They're here because they're afraid for their livelihoods. They're here because they've been challenged in an industry that we haven't stood up for and I think it's time that we started to stand up for it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

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

Thank you for the opportunity to stand this afternoon and take a few minutes to contribute to this debate.

First and foremost, I think it is a very important debate. I, actually, applaud the Opposition for bringing forward this debate this afternoon. Representing a district like mine, I won't profess to understand everything about the fishery, but I do know that 30 per cent of the crab that is produced in Newfoundland and Labrador is produced in my district in three fish plants and the importance of that.

It starts with the harvester. Then it goes to the person who offloads the boat, the grader, the trucking company. I would say that I likely have two of the largest trucking companies in Newfoundland and Labrador that work in the fishery.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is a very broad issue. I have responded to every fish harvester that has reached out to me from my district, in a respectful way, has been contacted with a response or an offer to speak and I will keep that commitment to the people I represent.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Mr. Speaker, if you look back through *Hansard* from this week – and this has been an important debate all week and Question Period, quite frankly – and I served some time on the side of the House – is an opportunity to stand. Sometimes there might be a little bit of grandstanding and to and froing but, at the end of the day, if you go back and look at what's been said in this House this week by the Premier and the Minister of Fisheries, you will find that there is a lot of agreement on what the

harvesters, who have been here all week, are asking for, or putting their position forward on, and there's a tremendous amount of work that can be and will be done.

Mr. Speaker, I talked to a fish harvester again this morning, actually, just around lunch time before coming over here. It's not acceptable – it's not acceptable – that a fish harvester doesn't have the ability to change processors. That is not acceptable. In no business is that acceptable. There should be a need in any business, any enterprise, any environment that I sell my product – and I was told by this harvester today and I have no reason to doubt anything this harvester told me – is that pre-COVID, back five, six, seven, eight years ago, that opportunity existed.

This February, March, April was when processing companies competed for product. And, look, competing for product – I came from small business – occasionally, once you got to the end of a contract or ready to sign a new contract, there was an opportunity to offer your goods up to someone else. That's fundamental in a system. How we get there, we may differ on that, but that is a fundamental piece.

I've heard from many harvesters in my district that also talk about trip limits and scheduling. Look, let's be real, there is an opportunity, there is a reason for scheduling to a certain point. But one of the Members opposite said this afternoon, and I fully agree, if you're a harvester in Trinity or Conception Bay and you have 12,000, 15,000, 16,000 pounds of crab, and today's fuel prices and ice costs and bait costs, there has to be a level of flexibility so that harvester can harvest their product as quickly as they can.

If you look at some of the modern processing in our province today, we're putting through a lot of product at a time and I can't see where, if there has to be a level

of scheduling, it can't be done in a way it respects the smaller quota fish harvester.

But, Mr. Speaker, I'll just reflect again back on *Hansard* where the Premier – so a year ago, we found ourselves in a situation. We went out and made some changes, I think the Minister of Fisheries actually alluded to these changes, that we had the Blackwood report. Is any report that government or industry commissions perfect? No, but there's a foundation in that report.

I've heard loud and clear from the harvesters in my district that when it comes to a holdback, there's a lot of consideration that has to go into that. That holdback has to have thresholds and there has to be means to make sure it doesn't affect the harvester. I have questions about how a holdback would work when it comes to things like EI, for example, if you think about the way fish harvester's Employment Insurance is structured.

In good seasons – and hopefully we'll see a good season again this year – there's an opportunity for two claims. That's extremely important to fish harvesters, especially when you get into a situation like on the Northeast Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador where ice can be an issue, for example, and they're late getting out in the season and getting the season started, so park price for a minute. We have a challenge occasionally and, in many years, Mr. Speaker, I think would be very prevalent in the district that you represent, where we have ice challenges and that slows fishers.

So there are all kinds of questions about how that holdback in a formula would work, but I think the one thing that we all can agree on here today, we need this fishery to start on time because a fishery that starts on time, the product is landed on time.

In the challenge that we've seen recently in the price of shellfish, fish harvesters need the opportunity to get their crab in, in an effective and efficient manner so that they

can move on to other species because it is that pie now that makes up their year's income. It's extremely important that we get the fishery started on time, barring Mother Nature, you know, we can't control that.

But I think what the Premier and the Minister of Fisheries have said loud and clear this week, we hear the issues. I think if you were to review *Hansard*, the Premier said today that we are going to do an intrusive – and that was the word the Premier used – an intrusive piece of work into the structure of the fishery, particularly, the shellfish fishery at this point in time.

But I think it's apparent that we need to make sure that we dig into all the issues as we move forward to ensure that the fishery starts on time, harvesters are treated fairly, plant workers are treated fairly, because I think one of the important things to take away from this, the fishery starts with the harvester. So the rest of those jobs are hinged on the fishery starting and getting up and running in an efficient manner.

Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat, but I will assure those in the gallery this week, as somebody who represents literally thousands of harvesters and fish plant workers, truck drivers, graders and who understands from a business background, a small business background, how important the fishery is to each and every business in a district like the one I represent. It's what drives retail economy in places like Carbonear.

Let's not debate that, that is a fact. Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely important that we get to that resolution and I can assure you that the Minister of Fisheries and the Premier, who have this week answered these questions in Question Period. I realize sometimes that you know in the thrust of debate, it's lost, but I would ask anybody to look at *Hansard* and see what's been said because there are things that are being said and there is a commitment, Mr. Speaker, to

ensure that we get this fishery to where it needs to be.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I'll state upfront that we will be supporting this PMR. In particular, I guess, when we look at this, especially the part that says, "a swift and effective resolution of the current impasse, as well as long-term solutions that make future impasses less likely and help place our fishing industry on a more stable and steady footing so the opportunities our province needs are not lost."

I represent the District of St. John's, I think there's one small section of it that borders on the water, that's it, but there are no fish plants. But at the same time –

**P. LANE:** But you have Leo's.

**J. DINN:** Yes, I have Leo's and a few other places.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Don't forget Ches's.

**J. DINN:** And Ches's and Big R's. However, they're not a processing plant nor are they out catching it, I guess.

But I will say this, the Member for Bonavista and the Member for Terra Nova talked about how it affects all parts of their district and all parts of the Island. I would argue I just have to drive down Water Street, I look at Campbell's Ship Supplies and you go to the harbour and you'll see the number of fishing boats that are tied up and you know that it has a direct impact on the economy of the city as well.

Now, I was a teacher by profession and a townie by birth, but I spent half my career

teaching out in small communities. It didn't take long for me to recognize just not only how important the fishery was, but how dangerous it was and how much the fish harvesters, the mothers and fathers of students put at risk when they went out to haul in their catch, and whether or not they would come back. On several occasions, that's exactly what happened, people did not come back.

I taught my first year down in the Burin Peninsula, and I think it was with the Roses that I boarded. I can tell you that they cook very well and I ate very well. But I do remember that their son worked at the fish plant in Burin. I don't know if you'd call it secondary processing, but they had finished products there at the plant. You look at not only the processing of the fish but the production of products that would've been sold worldwide.

My second year of teaching was in Trepassey. If you want to see a community that benefited from that, it's prosperity was based on the fishery, it was clear to see in terms of the population, the money that was brought in, the people who worked in it. I remember vividly, supervising one of the dances there and I think it was a Grade 8 student who came in. Two dollars to get into the dance, Speaker. But he spent a lot of his time working at the fish plant and I remember that he had a roll of fifties he had peel out to find that \$2 bill. That's when I started to wonder if I was in the wrong profession to begin with.

But, nevertheless, the fact is that prosperity, that enterprise, brought in a significant amount of money to that community. It supported other businesses. It supported the school system up and down the shore as well. You can see today if you drive through Trepassey, just what has happened, my guess would be when the fishery collapsed, what it did to that community.

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I remind members up in the gallery (inaudible).

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

**J. DINN:** I would say it was in Ferryland, I think, Speaker, that I got schooled by my own students on the difference between fishing and trouting. Because what I would say is fishing, they would quickly remind me no, Sir, what you do is trouting; what we do on the water is fishing.

I got to know the fish processors there, the Grahams and a few others. I can tell you that it was easy to see just how much they contributed to the life of the community. Not only the fish harvesters, but the processors.

I guess, in trying to make sense of this, on our own provincial executive of the NDP, we do have fish harvesters represented. In many ways, here, I do think it's about finding a formula that, in the end, is going to benefit those who take on that risk, who have their own enterprises, I guess, and their fishing vessels, and the gear and the people they employ, but making sure the risks that they take are recognized and receive that compensation.

We are hoping that there's going to be a formula that provides that stability, but that's got to be one, Speaker, that's going to reflect the needs of the fish harvesters, not only those who are unionized, but those who are non-unionized as well, and about making sure that there is a balance. Also, I think, in talking to some of the fish harvesters I have spoken to, a formula that rolls with market prices, so that we don't have what we had happen last year. So that there is stability, so that people who know that they can make a living and that there is a reasonable chance of success.

I'm always careful when I hear the term "free enterprise" because I would argue that free enterprise has probably led to the



current situation where we've seen the control of the fishery in the hands of a few processors. So free enterprise works until it doesn't; free enterprise has got to make sure that the people who are doing the work, the labourers, are the ones who are also getting the value for their product.

At some point, if nothing else, it's going to require to sit down and have a process and address a major problem in the fishery once and for all; namely, that there's a concentration of purchasing power by a few processors. And I've heard that from a number of speakers here today, with regard to the ability of harvesters to sell their catch to who they want, when they want, and not being dictated to by processors at that time, which is going to have a negative impact on their livelihood.

For us, then, and I guess it comes from this, I've seen the impact myself. I haven't lived it, but I've seen the impact in the communities where I've taught of what happens when a valuable resource like the fishery fails. So, it's important that we make sure that communities who are adjacent to it, where fish harvesters reside, they are the ones that will benefit. The stores, the other businesses that are there and the people that live in that community get the first benefit. That much I can very clearly state is important.

I've looked at Royal Greenland. Royal Greenland operates on whose behalf, Newfoundland or Greenland? Well, I would say that as a Crown corporation of that country, they would be focused on the people in their country. Well then, how do we make sure that we get the best value for the people who work and live here?

Ultimately, I guess, for us it's a question of balance and fairness in recognition of both financial and physical risks the harvesters take. What I understand from people I've spoken to here, control seems to lie with processors, and government doesn't seem to be willing to challenge that. That's what

the people in the FFAW and the harvesters outside of that, that I've spoken to, have said.

Whether that's the case or not, the fact is they referred to the companies, ASP, as a cartel. As they would point out, it would tell harvesters when they can go out and how much to fish. I've heard harvesters talk about the fact that right now, they are forced, in many cases, to go to some of these big companies for loans for basic supplies.

Some have talked about the whole notion of re-establishing a fisheries loan board that would provide some independence, or work against the dependence on processors. Maybe that is an answer; maybe that's something that has to be discussed in more depth, but it's about decreasing dependence. It's about having access to co-op freezers that are owned by a harvester's co-operative. What they're looking at is anything that would provide that independence.

I don't profess to have the expertise in this, but I do think that what I hear in the House and from the harvesters, this is about a question of independence and the ability to choose when and where they sell their product and to get the maximum value.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. Member's time is up.

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

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

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

Again, it's great to be able to debate this PMR, especially for the District of Exploits. Now, some of you might say to me: What's a fellow from Central Newfoundland, from the District of Exploits, doing getting up talking about the fishery?

Well, down at the bottom of my district there's a small community, Leading Tickles, where I came from. All my family, all my friends are tied up with the fishery. That's their living, that's their mainstay, that's what they do. They provide a living for their families in that community and they're proud to do so.

I've heard it mentioned here, I've heard a lot of things mentioned here this afternoon, every year it seems to be – it's been a while, but every year it seems to be a tangle in the fishery every year. But then the last couple of years there seems to be more of a dispute, more of a challenge for those hard-working men and women to get the work. They're facing a lot of challenges of when and how and what they want to do. They're tied up in an industry that, right now, could be a lucrative industry, could be a good, balanced industry, but the mistakes over the past put it this way.

We need the government to get down to some pretty serious talking, pretty serious engagements with the stakeholders, with the federal government, with all the players, to make sure that the fishery stays alive and will keep us alive, that has kept us alive throughout the years, and that those fishermen in the Leading Tickles area and all throughout the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador have a place to go, have a place to earn a living, to keep their families and build our industry and build, again, Newfoundland and Labrador.

How important is that fishery to a fellow from Central Newfoundland? Well, I'll tell you how important it is for all of Central Newfoundland, all out around the Northeast Coast. I'll take Grand Falls-Windsor and Gander as hubs; they survive mainly on the fishery. There is a lot of industry that's built in those areas because of the fishery.

I can stand up here and tell you about it, but don't ask me, go in and ask the hardware store people, go in and ask those people how important the fishery is to that area; go

ask the boat builders how important that industry is; go ask the small engine repair; the marine places how important that industry is to the economy of Central Newfoundland. They will tell you it's very, very important.

The industry in Central Newfoundland, it's very viable and every year needs to be entertained so that those men and women can get back on the water and can get the fishery going at a reasonable pace. They don't need to be tied up at the wharves wondering what to do, if they're going to go fishing or not. They just want to go – every year, that's their livelihood. That's what they want to do. They build every winter to get ready to go fishing. That's what they do.

I know, I've been down there, seeing it, talking to friends of mine. While you're down there, you go to their houses, they're out in their sheds – they're out in their stores actually that's where they're to. What are you doing today, b'ys? Oh, a few traps here to mend up, got to get this done, got to get that done. They're always busy, that's their life. That's what they do. That's their industry. That's the way of life for them and they do this year in, year out.

When this time of year comes, if they still don't know if they're going fishing, there's something wrong. There is something wrong at this time year if they don't know if they're going fishing. So, we need government to take this serious and to sit down with all the stakeholders and some get solutions of their own.

I've heard them today across the way challenge us. I heard the Premier today challenge the Leader of the Opposition. I've heard lots of results. I don't need to stand up here and repeat it all. There's no need for me beating this to death all day. It do need to be beat to death all day, because they're not listening. So it needs to be repeated.

The Member for Bonavista gave out lots of solutions. As far as I'm concerned, he gave out a lot of reasons that could be done, lots of solutions, but they're not listening. The Member for Ferryland, also, lots of options, lots of solutions. We're still debating it.

So, we need the government to stand up and take this serious and find the resolve for the fishery, for every Newfoundlander and Labradorian that wants to go fishing and provide a good living for their families. That's all they want to do: provide a good living for their families.

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

**P. FORSEY:** So we need to help them, the government needs to help them. They're in the position to do this. They need to get down and have those solutions solved. The fishers just need to go fishing. When they come in, they want to sell their product, so, at the end of the day, they see what they get for their product. They take value in that. They take pride in that, of what they've done, what they've accomplished at the end of the day and they're providing for their families.

So, we certainly need more involvement from government to make this happen. I get the calls every day, even though I'm from Central Newfoundland, like you say, I get lots of calls from people around the Northeast Coast. They'll say to me: What's happening with the fishery? What's happening this year? What time are we going to go fishing? Nobody seems to know.

There are always challenges and the government – we were in this situation last year and now we seem to be in another predicament again this year, when last year, I can remember the government saying we will get this done. We will be in a better position next year for everybody to be back on the water. We have a plan. We'll be putting the plan in place. What am I hearing now? They're going to put plans in place.

Did I miss something last year? Did I miss something? I'm not sure. I almost thought I heard: We will have a plan in place for this year. But now am I hearing we're going to have plans in place for years to come? That's what I'm hearing now. That's not the way I heard it and I don't think that's the way all the fishermen and all the fisher people in Newfoundland and Labrador heard it last year. I really don't.

I think this time of year, this year, they were expecting to be on the water – well, as soon as it starts anyway, that they could get on the water – and be going out and bringing in their products, being able to sell that product and provide for their families.

So, that's what needs to be done, Speaker. We need government to come up with a resolve for the fishery so that those men and women can get back on the water, provide for their families, provide a good economy for Newfoundland and Labrador and build our communities the way they've always built our communities.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

Like a couple of speakers before, I would say I have no fish plants in my district. The closest thing I've got to the fishery, I guess, would be King Cod Fish and Chips in Glenhill Plaza – good fish and chips by the way.

That being said, just because I don't have an actual fish plant in my district, just because we may not have an abundance of fishers, although there are a couple of people, actually, who are fishermen that live in the district, the fact of the matter is, the fishery is important to all of Newfoundland and Labrador, not just rural Newfoundland

and Labrador but urban Newfoundland and Labrador, as well. As has been said – and I can tell you, if the fishery were to shut down tomorrow, give it a couple of weeks or a couple of months, whatever the case might be, and go and visit Donovans Business Park and see how many businesses would be seriously impacted, if not shut down. That is a fact – that is a fact.

And the same thing would apply, I'm sure, to a lot of businesses in Clarendville, businesses in Gander, businesses in Grand Falls-Windsor, businesses in Corner Brook, Stephenville, you name it. All those urban hubs would be significantly impacted if there was no fishery. So sometimes when people talk about the fact that you're living in an urban area; you're in St. John's, b'y; you're in Mount Pearl – and yes, granted I don't know a whole lot about the fishery; I'm the first one to admit it. I've been around it a fair bit when I was a young fellow.

My mother was from Wesleyville in Bonavista North and I spent lots of time down there, cutting tongues underneath the wharf and all that good stuff that a lot of rural young fellows would do. I don't have any great knowledge of the fishery, but I do understand the importance of it to all of us, to every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. It is a critical industry to this province.

Now, I can remember my parents telling me – my parents were born in the 1920s, grew up in the dirty '30s, I guess, and I can remember my mother and father telling me about the Water Street merchants. That was pre-Confederation; of course, they loved Joey Smallwood when we came into Confederation. They voted for Joey long after he was dead.

But they'd tell me about the Water Street merchants and how fishermen and people were treated unfairly. How you'd have to barter for a bit of flour, a bit of sugar, whatever the case may be and how those merchants treated the average person. And they would tell you that they didn't treat

them very good; that's how it was explained to me. They didn't treat them fairly at all.

Well, the Water Street merchant is gone; or is he – or is he? Maybe it is called a corporation these days. Maybe it's not the Water Street merchant, but maybe it's corporations. Maybe the corporations have crept into the fishery. And corporations and business – and there is nothing wrong with making a dollar, don't get me wrong. But it all becomes about profit and shareholders and more shareholder profit and more shareholder profit. Then you become a millionaire and that's not good enough; now I want to be a multi-millionaire; now I want to be a billionaire. I own one processing plant; now I want to own two; now I want to own 10; now I want to own all of them.

Where does this lead us? Do we get to a point – and some fishermen have said this to me – I took the time to speak to them. Everyone should take the time to speak to them, by the way. But there are some people who would say that if you sort of look into the future, is the vision not going to be factory-freezer trawlers owned by a handful of people, with no processing plants, nobody working on the Island, all processed at sea and all of that common property resource that belongs to us all and all the benefits coming from that, going into the pockets of just a handful of people? Now, that's what some people would envision. I hope to God that never happens, but I can see why people might think that.

What we're really talking about – and I've heard Members talk about, you know, seals. I've heard the Member for Corner Brook talk about the *Fishing Industry Collective Bargaining Act* and fish pricing and so on, but that's really not what it's all about. It all ties together, but what I'm hearing from the fishermen, really, it comes down to control – it comes down to control. Being under somebody's thumb. They want to be able to operate their own enterprise the way they want to operate it. They want to be able to

catch fish when it's safe to catch fish, when it makes the most sense for them financially to catch fish, when it makes the most sense logistically for them to catch fish.

They want to be able to time it so that they can move from one species to the next species to the next species and that their operations are able to do so. They want to be able to go out and maximize their quotas. They don't want to come in with a half a boatload today and go back out and burn gas on another half boatload tomorrow.

But those are the kind of things that are being forced upon them. It's being forced upon them because we've only got a handful of processors that are calling all the shots. They're not interested in the fisherperson and their enterprise in terms of what works for them financially, what works for them logistically, what works for their safety. They're interested in a schedule that maximizes their operations in their plants so they can make the most profit possible and that they don't have to go – and the trucking schedules and the amount of trucking. I understand that because they're thinking corporately. It's a big business. That's their priority.

I don't have a problem with it, if we're talking about some corporation that's going to produce widgets or they're going to do something, whatever the case might be, fair enough, but that's not what we're talking about. The fish does not belong to a handful of people. The fish belong to everyone in this province. They have the privilege, not the right. They think they have the right. They have the privilege to process that fish that belongs to everybody in this province – the privilege to be able to profit from it.

But it's not their privilege alone. It's not their right. It belongs to all the people, including the fisherpersons, and they need to have the ability to operate their enterprise and make a living to support their families and get a fair price, absolutely. But to be able to

prosecute that fishery in a safe way, in a way that makes sense for their business model so that they can make a good dollar because they're risking their lives to do it.

So when we don't have any competition or little competition, when we allow a handful of people to control all the plants – and I don't know all the history of it but people have told me you get a guy who might say I own this plant and I own this plant and I'm going to buy that one that one and that one. Then some of the plants I don't even want. Some of the plants I might not even want, but I'm going to buy them so I can shut them down. I buy them so that I can shut them down and then you're going to force fishermen to come to this plant.

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask the member to remove him, please.

(Disturbance in the gallery.)

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I'll clear the gallery.

Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Obviously, my understanding of the issue is what we're hearing, it's correct and that is the issue. So I say, Minister, if we need to look at having more licences to process, we need to do that. We can't have people under someone's thumb.

I had a processor I talked to yesterday call me and told me – I know I'm running out of time here – but told me about the fact that he had caught a quota of fish. It was cod. He caught a quota of cod. It was grade A cod, but the processor didn't bother. They left it on the dock or outside the plant for three days. By the time they got to it, they said

that's B grade cod, paid him less money. He said it was grade A when I gave it to you. Well, you're only getting grade B. That's all I'm paying you. So, he took to Facebook to say this is not right. Then they calls him up and says: We're not going to buy your fish anymore.

I had another guy, apparently, same type of thing because he dared to call Paddy Daly and complain about one of these policies. He gets a call the next evening, or that evening, saying: We're not going to buy your fish anymore. What am I going to do with my fish? I don't know, b'y, call Paddy Daly and ask him if he'll buy it.

If this kind of thing is going on, it is wrong and it must stop.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

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

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers, if the Leader of the Official Opposition speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

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

I'll start off by thanking everyone who participated in the debate today in this House. I come from the District of Stephenville - Port au Port, and while we talk about lots of different fishing species, lobster is the key in Stephenville - Port au Port. It's a huge fishery. It brings in millions and millions of dollars a year, but again lobster fishermen in my area have experienced the same type of issues. They've been told to leave their pots in the water because no buyer would buy their lobster.

So this is the type of scenario that we're talking about and these are the things that

cause us to lose value in our fishing industry. These types of rules and things, they have to stop. This has to stop. We should all be concerned about our fishing industry; all of us collectively in this House, should be concerned about our fishing industry.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** And it's not about trying to pin one against the other, harvester versus processor, or harvester versus fish plant worker or anything like that, and fear mongering, talking about people losing 6,500 jobs, that does nobody any good. It's no sense to be talking about fear mongering. What we need to be talking about is how do we fix this? How do we make this industry better for everybody that's participating in it, whether you're a harvester, or a plant worker, or a crew member, those are the people directly involved in the industry – or a processor?

And what about all those businesses that we heard talked about today, from all over Newfoundland and Labrador, from St. John's and Mount Pearl, and everywhere in rural Newfoundland and Labrador, and all the communities that are impacted by this fishery of ours. That's what we're talking about here.

When a minister or the Premier does a tour of our province and they sit and they listen to harvesters, they listen to what they're being told about what their issues are, that raises expectations. That raises the expectations that something will be done; yet we find out much, much later, here we are and nothing has been done. We find our Confederation Building steps full; we find our galleries full because nothing has been done.

That's the problem. They did their tour, they listened to the concerns, but then there was nothing taken, no action and that's what the problem is. People want to see what we are going to do about it. As a government, they

have that ability to do that. So, again, I know all of us, collectively, want what's best for our fishing industry, so let's find a way to get this done. Let's find a way to get everyone in the room.

That's what this PMR calls for. I mean, the last part of the PMR simply says: "THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this Hon. House urge the Premier and the Province's Minister of Fisheries to immediately take a hands-on role at the table with representatives of our fisheries workers and fish processors to help find a swift and effective resolution of the current impasse, as well as long-term solutions that make future impasses less likely ...." That's what we're talking about here in the House today.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** And we should not be here having to do this and having to debate this, but today it gave all of us an opportunity – everybody that spoke, spoke passionately about the fishing industry. I think all of us realize the importance of the fishing industry to Newfoundland and Labrador, but none more than the people who directly go out on that water every single day and, as I said, risk their lives to fish and to bring in that quota.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** That's where it starts and that's what we're talking about here today.

In this House of Assembly, we've had an opportunity, all week, to raise their concerns, to listen to their concerns and to turn around and say: Let's get this done. Let's take action. Let's not procrastinate anymore. No more words, words, words. Let's talk action, action, action. That's what we want to see. That's what we've been talking about.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, there is something that has just come to my attention that also bothers me. You know, this is the House of Assembly. This is the people's House and all week we've had people come in here and listen, listen to debate, listen to questions, seeking answers about their issues and their concerns and that's what the House of Assembly is for. It's about debate. It's about bringing up issues. It's about asking questions.

Now, I've just found out that, for whatever reason, the government opposite has decided to close the House of Assembly tomorrow and Tuesday and not return until budget day.

Now, if that is a fact, that is alarming. We have come here in the House of Assembly to debate on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, to ask questions on behalf of Newfoundland and Labrador and the fact that the government opposite cannot keep the House of Assembly open when it's supposed to be open, that is a problem. Whether they recognize it or not, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador recognize it.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** If that is true, we have a major problem because I look forward to coming back here tomorrow and asking more questions on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what we're elected to do, that's what we'll continue to do and let's make sure it happens.

Thank you.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now adjourn to budget day, March 20.

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

**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.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Nay.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Division.

**SPEAKER:** Division has been called.

Call in the Members.

### Division

**SPEAKER:** Are the House Leaders ready?

All those in favour of the motion, please rise.

**CLERK:** Andrew Furey, John Hogan, Lisa Dempster, John Haggie, Gerry Byrne, Bernard Davis, Fred Hutton, Tom Osborne, Siobhan Coady, Elvis Loveless, Krista Lynn Howell, Andrew Parsons, Steve Crocker, Sarah Stoodley, John Abbott, Paul Pike, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Scott Reid, Lucy Stoyles.

**SPEAKER:** All those against the motion, please rise.

**CLERK:** Tony Wakeham, Barry Petten, Lloyd Parrott, Paul Dinn, Helen Conway

Ottenheimer, Joedy Wall, Jeff Dwyer, Chris Tibbs, Loyola O'Driscoll, Craig Pardy, Pleaman Forsey, James Dinn, Jordan Brown, Lela Evans, Eddie Joyce, Paul Lane.

Speaker, the ayes: 19; the nays: 16

**SPEAKER:** I do declare this motion is carried.

This House do stand adjourned until Wednesday, March 20, at 2 p.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, March 20, 2024, at 2 p.m.