

Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume LI FIRST SESSION Number 43

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

Thursday October 29, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Good afternoon, everyone.

Visiting our public gallery today are family members and a friend of the late Dr. Bill Montevecchi, who is the subject of a Member's statement. Welcome to his wife, Janet, as well as Gioia, Marina, Aspen and Aldo Montevecchi, as well as Diana Tally.

Welcome to our House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Certainly, please accept our condolences.

Before we begin, I want to welcome a new face to our table today, Andrea Hyde. Many of you already know Andrea as an information specialist with the Legislative Library. In the future, she will also be serving as a journaling clerk on certain sitting days.

Welcome, Andrea, to the new role.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I also want to introduce another new Page to our House of Assembly. I'd like to welcome Amelia Peddle. Amelia is from Lethbridge and is in her second year of studying political science at Memorial University.

Please join me in welcoming Amelia.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Before we proceed any further, I'm going to rule on the point of order that was raised yesterday.

I will now rule on the point of order raised by the Member for St. John's Centre yesterday, October 28, 2026. The Member referenced Standing Order 49 and stated that during Question Period the Minister of Housing made accusations against the NDP with respect to their conduct toward staff of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

Standing Order 49 prohibits unparliamentary language and the use of offensive words against Members of the House.

I have reviewed *Hansard* and I find that the exchange between the Member for St. John's Centre and the Minister of Housing is a disagreement between hon. Members relating to an issue occurring outside the House of Assembly.

While the Members may have different views about the facts of this issue, I find that the minister's statements did not specifically refer to any individual Member and that the language used by the minister was not in breach of Standing Order 49; therefore, there is no point of order.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Corner Brook, Fogo Island - Cape Freels, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Conception Bay East - Bell Island, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and, with leave, the Member for Exploits.

The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize a remarkable milestone in the history of Corner Brook, the 100th anniversary of Corner Brook Lodge No. 11.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. PARSONS: In spring of 1926, the Grand Lodge of England approved the formation of a lodge in Corner Brook, and on October 4,

1926, the Corner Brook lodge held its first meeting and was consecrated. Since its founding in 1926, the lodge has been part of the fabric of our community, bringing together generations of men committed to brotherly love, relief and truth.

While Freemasonry is steeped in centuries of tradition, its values remain as relevant today as they were a hundred years ago. The belief that we have a responsibility to help our neighbours, to support those in need and seek truth is truly timeless.

Speaker, reaching a centennial is an extraordinary achievement for any organization. It speaks to the dedication of generations of members who have sustained this institution through changing times.

I ask all hon. Members to join me congratulating Corner Brook Lodge No. 11 on 100 years of fellowship, tradition and community service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

J. MCKENNA: Speaker, I rise today to recognize Winston M. K. Perry of Newtown, New-Wes-Valley, who was recently honoured with the Premier's Medal and the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador recognizing his exceptional contributions to the heritage preservation and community development in Newfoundland and Labrador.

For over three decades, Winston has been a driving force in preserving the history, culture and traditions that define Newfoundland and Labrador. As a founding member of Cape Freels Heritage Trust in 1991, he helped transform the Barbour Living Heritage Village into one of the province's leading heritage tourism destinations.

His contributions are extensive, from restoring historic buildings and constructing traditional boats, to develop theatre productions, designing heritage structures and securing support for important cultural projects.

Winston also served for many years as president of the Cape Freels Development Association, where he worked tirelessly promoting tourism, conservation and community growth. He has been a dedicated advocate for protecting wetlands, wildlife and culturally significant sites throughout the region.

Mr. Speaker, Winston Perry's dedication and leadership have created a lasting legacy. I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating him on these prestigious honours and thanking him for his service to Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to recognize Steward May, a true volunteer and leader. Steward has been a lifelong volunteer for the Town of Belleoram and the Coast of Bays region. For 40 years, Steward served on the town council of Belleoram, including 30 years as mayor. His service extended beyond municipal government serving as president of the 50-plus club for 10 years, member of the joint mayors committee, several boards and organizations throughout the region including the president of the Fortune Bay North Shore Family Resource Centre, fire department, harbour authority and more.

For his years of service, he received the King Charles III Coronation Medal, a volunteer service award and the 75 years of Confederation award.

In the aquaculture industry, Steward truly enjoyed and embraced a 20-year career with Cooke Aquaculture.

Steward's journey of service also includes a calling to church ministry, where he currently serves the parishes of Twillingate and Gander Bay.

Steward May's life is a testament to the value of volunteerism, leadership, faith and community spirit. Whether through municipal government, community organizations, career, or church ministry, he has consistently given himself for the benefit of others.

Join me in congratulating and thanking Steward May.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to pay tribute to a great Newfoundlander and Labradorian. A man who wasn't born here but decades ago he adopted this place proudly as his home and we will be forever grateful that he did that.

Dr. Bill Montevecchi passed away in July. He was a teacher and a mentor to thousands; an environmentalist who was passionate about protecting the many species of seabirds inhabiting our coastline.

To some, he was best known for protecting the beloved puffin, but over his more than 40 years teaching at Memorial University, he covered so much more than that.

He was vocal, but he was also very humble. For some context on his global influence, Stanford University ranked Dr. Montevecchi in the top 1 per cent of the world's marine biologists and among the top 2 per cent of the world's scientists.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

F. HUTTON: Speaker, while we are thankful for his contribution to protecting the environment and teaching others, we must remember that above all this, Dr. Montevecchi was a husband, a father and a grandfather. As you mentioned, many of his family members, including his two grandchildren, Aspen and Aldo, are here today. They referred to him as Big Willy. He was a big guy and he was pretty cool, I've got to say.

We are thankful that he chose Newfoundland and Labrador to spend his career here and raise his family.

Mr. Speaker, I ask that all hon. Members rise and pay tribute to a man who gave so much to this place – leading by example on how to protect and respect the beauty that surrounds us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Bay Roberts Fire Rescue has proudly served the community and surrounding areas for 80 years with dedication and professionalism.

Earlier this year, its members experienced a historic first. In the early hours of January 14, firefighters Adam Russell, Cole MacDougall, Roy Mercer, Dean Franey and Andrew Dawe responded to a medical call in Shearstown involving a 22-year-old woman in active labour.

Upon arrival, EMS personnel Chelsee Bradbury, who is also a volunteer firefighter, and Jennifer Earle requested assistance as the baby's arrival was imminent.

Through calm, professional care and teamwork, baby Snow was safely delivered

at 2:19 a.m., making the first birth assisted by Bay Roberts Fire Rescue in its 80-year history.

A second EMS crew, Toni Noseworthy, Hiram Snow and Kyle Riddle Ellsworth also attended to assist.

In recognition of their efforts, all fire and EMS personnel involved received the Stork Award and a commemorative pin.

Speaker, this remarkable event reflects the readiness and teamwork that define these first responders. I ask all Members of this hon. House to join me in congratulating everyone involved in this historic delivery and thanking the Bay Roberts Fire Rescue and EMS personnel for their outstanding service and continued commitment to the people of our province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits, with leave.

Does the Member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave has been granted.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to pay tribute to the late Mr. Woodrow Frazer Hibbs, a 57-year veteran of the Peterview Volunteer Fire Department.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Woodrow, known to all as Woody, was one of the founding members of the Peterview Fire Department which was formed on March 16, 1965. He was an active member who participated in meetings, training and answered the call with his fellow firefighters until his retirement in May 2022. Woody was also employed by the Town of Peterview from 1966 to 2008. He collected the garbage from 1966 to 1979 and then became an equipment operator from 1979 to 2008.

Woody was a devoted husband, father and grandfather. He would always have the biggest smile and always there to help anyone. He enjoyed his vegetable garden, spending time at his woodpile, cutting and packing it up, but would also put people before himself.

Woody passed away October 9 of this year at the age of 82. He will be forever missed within the community and the fire department.

Speaker, may I ask all Members of this hon. House of Assembly to rise for a moment of silence in memory of Mr. Woodrow Hibbs.

Thank you.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: Thank you.

You may be seated.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today to recognize an important milestone in Newfoundland and Labrador’s mining industry with the inauguration of the Valentine Gold Mine, now in commercial production in Central Newfoundland.

This project represents years of investment, collaboration and hard work. In its recently announced Phase 2 expansion, Equinox Gold will double its throughput capacity and raise its average annual gold production to approximately 223,000 ounces. Over the next two years, Equinox plans to invest $436 million to expand its mill, fleet and infrastructure at the Valentine facility. And the company is not yet done exploring its 320-square-kilometre property.

Speaker, our government is focused on making sure companies like Equinox can grow, invest and create jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador. This mine means jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, opportunities for businesses and long-term economic benefits for communities throughout our entire province. Through the project's benefits agreement, residents and companies are well positioned to share in its success.

The Valentine Gold Mine strengthens Central Newfoundland's reputation as a premier mining region and reinforces our province's position as a leading destination for mineral development and investment.

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, I congratulate Equinox Gold, its employees, contractors, Indigenous partners and everyone who helped bring this project from exploration and development to production.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister opposite for the advance copy of his statement and join the government and him in congratulating the company on this big milestone.

Speaker, the opening of the Valentine Gold Mine is an important milestone for Newfoundland and Labrador's mining industry and we recognize the workers, Indigenous partners and communities who helped bring this project into production.

Mining can create jobs, support businesses and strengthen our regional economies. As the mine moves ahead, it is important that the benefits are felt here at home. The government must ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have access to employment opportunities created by this project, that local businesses can participate in its supply chain and that the project delivers lasting benefits for the communities around it.

We also need to ensure that mining development proceeds responsibly with strong environmental oversight and meaningful engagement with Indigenous communities. The Valentine Gold Mine represents a significant investment in our province's future.

The Liberal Opposition will continue to advocate for responsible resource development that creates good jobs, supports rural communities and delivers meaningful economic benefits for all people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

This is certainly great news for the province. As more opportunities open up in the mining sector, we call on this government to prepare to take full advantage.

The NDP ran on a pledge to revamp the critical minerals strategy, creating a special division within the department to help

streamline the approval process and provide support to prospective mining companies while upholding strong health and environmental protections. The time to act is now.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the completion of a project that has been many years in the making and one that will continue to have a lasting impact on transportation throughout the Northeast Avalon.

The opening of the final section of the Team Gushue Highway marks the completion of a critical transportation link that now makes daily travel safer, easier and more efficient for thousands of residents, workers, students and visitors.

For years, growing traffic volumes have placed increasing pressure on our road network. With this final connection now in place, commuters benefit from improved access, reduced congestion and shorter travel times. Residents of the Southern Avalon now also enjoy more direct access to major health care facilities, educational institutions, employment centres and Speaker Lane's district.

This achievement was made possible through a joint investment of $30 million by the provincial and federal governments. It reflects a shared commitment to improving road safety, strengthening connectivity and supporting economic growth.

I would also like to recognize the engineers, contractors, project staff and public service employees whose expertise and dedication helped bring this project to completion.

As a government, we remain committed to investing in infrastructure that meets the needs of growing communities, strengthens connections between regions and supports a safer, stronger and more prosperous Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Speaker, I thank the minister for the advance copy of the statement to recognize the completion of the last stretch of the Team Korab – sorry – Gushue Highway. I'm never going to stop doing it, it's a force of habit at this point.

In all seriousness, infrastructure improvements are critical to allow tourists and residents to enjoy all parts of this province. We've all been waiting for this moment. It helps get residents to work quicker, to medical appointments and to schools quicker, but also safer. It also gets more vehicles off residential streets, making it safer for vehicles, but also pedestrians, creating safer residential streets.

It's both a great achievement for our planners, builders, public servants and contractors that have worked on this over the years.

At the opening ceremonies, I'm sure the ministers can agree, you could tell how proud Brad Gushue was of the naming of this highway.

I'd be remiss if I didn't say, personally, 20 years ago, at the opening ceremonies with frosted tips, I did not think I'd be standing here 20 years later at this completion. For that, here we are, but happy it's completed.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: I thank the minister for the advance copy of the statement.

What a wait it's been. Going forward, we would like to see greater transparency in how roadwork is scheduled and which routes get priority. I know the minister says we'll never be able to take the politics out of pavement, but by being transparent and publishing a graded list of highways around the province, residents can see why the decision was made to pave one route or another.

Where there's a will, there's a way and, hopefully, now on to regional public transportation.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Fisheries and Aquaculture.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House to celebrate an important milestone for Newfoundland and Labrador's fishing and aquaculture industries.

Earlier this month, I joined my federal and Atlantic counterparts to announce the renewed Atlantic Fisheries Fund. This fund will invest over $300 million in fishing and aquaculture projects in the Atlantic region, including approximately $90 million for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The fishery has helped shape our province and with support from the Atlantic Fisheries Fund, it will continue to strengthen our economy and create opportunities for our future.

The fund aims to enhance the value within Atlantic Canada's fish and seafood sector by focusing on four pillars of support: market diversification to support market development activities; innovation to support research and development of new initiatives; infrastructure to adopt or adapt new technologies, processes or equipment; science partnerships to enhance our knowledge and understanding of the impacts of changing ocean conditions and sustainable harvesting technology.

Newfoundland and Labrador's fisheries and aquaculture sector generated a record $2.11 billion in market value in 2025 and continued investments through the Atlantic Fisheries Fund will help build this success.

Speaker, applications are now open and I encourage all those interested to apply.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

Our caucus welcomes the renewal of the Atlantic Fisheries Fund and the commitment of new investments for Newfoundland and Labrador's fishing and aquaculture sectors.

Our previous Liberal government invested in a similar program that supported our fish harvesters, plant workers, aquaculture operators, processors and coastal communities. Any investment that supports innovation, infrastructure, science and access to new markets has the potential to

strengthen the sector and create opportunities for the next generation.

The Atlantic Fisheries Fund was and continues to be a very valuable program, but the true measure of this fund will be whether dollars reach the people and projects that need it the most. We will be looking closely to ensure that decisions are transparent and that investments deliver measurable results for rural and coastal communities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of the statement.

We, too, welcome the renewal of the Atlantic Fisheries Fund; however, we can't help but observe that these programs will be of little use if we run out of harvesters, one-third of whom are 54 years or older.

We call on this government to engage more actively with the FFAW in its quest to attract young entrants into the fishery; seek out people from backgrounds that aren't so represented in the fishery, like newcomers, women and others.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the saga continues. Yesterday, it was revealed that the Premier's lead negotiator on Churchill Falls informed the Premier he would leave before final agreements were negotiated, but here's the kicker, he told the Premier this before the September debate in the House of Assembly, yet the Premier chose to hide this from the public, from the media and from the Members of this House of Assembly, which we now know is typical.

Why did the Premier hide the planned departure of his lead negotiator before the debate?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, nothing has been hidden here at all.

Mr. Perry did a tremendous job as the lead negotiator and brought Newfoundland and Labrador a better deal, which is exactly what the MOU did not do that they had agreed to, that they had supported, that they had voted yes to. Instead, we now have an MOU that provides a much better deal for all of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Let's talk a little bit about one of the items in that deal. Let's talk about the fact that the Members opposite were happy to go around and promote $223 billion. Well, we've got $279 billion. Take that to the bank.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I know they don't like us using semantics and saying we're relying on their words, but not telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians something is hiding something from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, it's as simple as that.

During the debate, the Premier bragged repeatedly about how great his lead negotiator was and actually confirmed that the same negotiating team would continue to final agreement. We now know that that is not the case.

So why did the Premier keep this hidden? Why did he keep this secret during the debate in the House of Assembly?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I said, we're very fortunate to have had Mr. Perry as our lead negotiator. We're very fortunate to have Mr. Perry continue on as part of the negotiating team as we move to the next steps.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Let me tell you, let me tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador exactly what was done in this MOU. I just referred to the fact that we're getting $273 billion more in cash. The Liberals voted yes to an MOU that brought in less. They voted no to the MOU that brought in more. That's their record, Speaker. They voted yes for less and no to more.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: The Premier misses the point. It's not about Mr. Perry; it's about the Premier telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians what's happening.

The Premier misses the point. It's not about the deal; it's about having trust in the process which he now knows there is absolutely no trust in the process. Because the entire four days in which Mr. Perry was here on the floor, right there, and answered questions, the Premier knew that Mr. Perry was no longer the lead negotiator.

So doesn't the Premier think that the public would want to know that the lead negotiator, giving his opinion about the deal, would not carry on to do the final agreements?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what the public of Newfoundland and Labrador needed to know is that we got a better deal than the previous MOU.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: That's what they're concerned about. Let's talk about that. Let's talk about a deal –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: – that finally solved the transmission challenge. Newfoundland and Labrador will now have a full portfolio of 985 megawatts of guaranteed transmission options that Quebec cannot touch.

The Liberals voted yes to an MOU with zero new transmission and voted no to 985 more megawatts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: He continues to miss the point. It's not about us. It's not about the Liberals. It's about Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. The Premier said during the debate – and I quote his words – there was nobody in Newfoundland and Labrador more qualified than Barry Perry to lead this work.

Why did the Premier say this when he knew – nobody else knew, but he knew that Barry Perry was not going to be the one leading the work?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, let me keep going on the benefits to Newfoundland and Labrador, the benefits which this Liberal government did not have. They were prepared – they were telling the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to vote yes for less but, at the end of the day, we have negotiated a deal that brings more value –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm not going to say it again. I'm going to start naming people.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: They voted no to a guarantee of 85 per cent of all jobs staying in Newfoundland and Labrador. The workers of Newfoundland and Labrador support this deal. The trade unions support this deal and so does the business community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I say to the Premier, he can focus on me and the Liberals all he wants, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want to trust the process and they want to know this is a good deal. He talks about me in the media. He put a Facebook post about me when he was talking about me. He talked about me at the Board of Trade.

Premier, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want to hear about why this is a good deal and why the process was flawed and why you hid things from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians while it was being debated.

I ask you, don't get up and talk about the deal. Don't get up and use political slogans. Tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians why you hid facts from them that were important to them, that were important to the debate and they were important to Members of the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, it's amazing.

M. KING: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: I ask the Member for Burgeo - La Poile for your co-operation. If I have to acknowledge you any more today, it will be to take away your speaking privileges.

The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I just heard or think I heard is that the Leader of the Opposition doesn't want to talk about the biggest deal in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador – the biggest deal in the history, the hydroelectric deal in North American history and they don't want to talk about it.

Well, I can tell you that what we have done is a better deal and we will continue to talk about it, inform Newfoundlanders and Labradorians because of the things that they said no to and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador said yes.

SPEAKER: The Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Oh the irony, you couldn't write it any better. I don't want to talk about it, yet the Premier won't bring the final agreements back to the House of Assembly to talk about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Give me a break.

The Premier promised he'd bring any Churchill Falls deal to the public in a referendum, broke that promise. He promised he'd bring the final agreements to the House and now admitted he won't until after they're signed when it's too late, yet he thinks that I'm the one who doesn't want to talk about it.

L. DEMPSTER: What's the point then?

SPEAKER: I'm asking the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair –

J. HOGAN: He won't let the public have a say.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm asking the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair for your co-operation as well.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: He won't let the public have a say and now he won't let MHAs have a say on the public's behalf.

Why does the Premier think he alone gets to make this monumental decision behind closed doors all by himself?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, 10 years and these guys couldn't even get their picture on the cover of the *Rolling Stone*. Have a look at this, the cover of the new federal budget. I'll table that document now in a minute – it's Churchill Falls – *Masters of our Destiny*.

SPEAKER: Please address the Chair.

L. PARROTT: The federal government is 100 per cent behind this. The building trades are behind this. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador are behind this. Their own existing minister made the comment publicly that they couldn't get the feds on board when the former premier over there said that they could have had all of that. Their own minister said that was false.

Mr. Speaker, we have a great deal. These guys are fixating on semantics and it's time to get on with it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: I'll remind the minister that the federal minister said that it was their job to grow the size of the pie, but I think he was pretty clear that he didn't feel that the Premier got Newfoundland and Labrador's fair size of that pie.

The Premier says that this House doesn't need to vote on the final 17 agreements because we already voted on them. I'll remind the Premier that not one of those 17 agreements have been negotiated and they certainly weren't negotiated when we were here in September.

Why does the Premier think we already voted on agreements that don't even exist?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, that's the difference between the old MOU that the Liberals brought to the House and voted yes to. It had all the work yet to be done. The Leader of the Opposition on several occasions has said, yes, we were going to do that.

We have done it and it's protected in the agreement that was voted on here in the House of Assembly – section 2.2, when it comes to the material terms of what was voted on here in the House of Assembly, that the definitive agreements have to align with that. We're going to make sure that we follow through on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, if that's true, why did the Premier say to the media yesterday there's a tremendous amount of work left to be done?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's talk about work. The Member for Windsor Lake was the premier for 183 days, I believe. When we took over, there wasn't one piece of paper around that had anything to do with this agreement. Not one definitive agreement had been negotiated, nor was there any sign that they were in the process of doing it. Yet they set timelines, told the public that they were in the process of doing it and zero was done.

Perhaps the Member for Windsor Lake should get up and tell people how much work they did on this, I can tell you – nothing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I can tell him he doesn't need to take my legal opinion for it, but the agreements weren't supposed to be finalized until April. We weren't negotiating in public and we weren't going to table documents that didn't exist. We were going to take our time rather than rush it for political purposes.

The Premier is somehow claiming that this House already voted on agreements that don't exist, but did he even read what we voted on? The vote was to endorse the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador continuing to work. Where does it say in that vote that the House approves the final 17 agreements?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what the Member for Windsor Lake just said is absolutely shameful. He just admitted that they didn't stand up and vote for a better deal. They didn't stand up and give government the permission or the support to move these deals forward. He just, in his own words, said what they were voting for and they still voted no.

Just think about that. They didn't just say no to more transmission, more power and more money, more benefits, more jobs, a better future –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: What did you just say?

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island for your co-operation.

The next person I speak to is losing speaking privileges, no more warnings.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: He didn't just say no to that, he said no to the promise of trying to bring those things to the end. So now when we talk about who voted for what; they voted against exactly what he just said.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: When asked about the referendum, the Premier said yesterday – quote – it was part of a recommendation that was made to have a debate instead of a referendum.

Who made that recommendation to the Premier to break his biggest election campaign promise?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like for everyone to get into the Liberals' hot tub time machine and go back to June of 2021 when we debated the Terra Nova platform in this House in the exact same format that we're proposing right now.

The things that they have done and said as a government no longer are okay. They've hid away things from this province for 10 years. They've had people leave without saying anything. They've done all of these things.

Now, they're on their high horses pretending that none of that existed; all the secret deals, everything they've done. We offer a debate in the House exactly the same as what happened in June of 2021 and it's still not good enough.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Newfoundlanders and Labradorians aren't concerned with June of 2021; they're concerned about the next 50 years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: And not only is the Premier insulting democracy by bringing final agreements to the House after they're signed, he won't even confirm if he'll have a vote. The Premier said we will have to wait and see.

What is he waiting for and who does he think is in charge of these decisions, if it's not him?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I said before, we have negotiated a new and better deal; a deal that delivers more power, more value, more transmission, more jobs for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, not just now, but into the future.

Think about the optionality that exists, that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians years from now will be able to make their own decisions about how they want to use that power. Imagine a deal that allows us to

develop new industries in Newfoundland and Labrador. That didn't exist in the previous deal. It exists now.

Those are the type of opportunities that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want to talk about and that's exactly what we're doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Shameful, Speaker, all this Premier does is deflect, but anyway that's nothing new.

Mental health and addictions advocates, including many protesters yesterday and some who are here in the gallery today, are raising concerns that the company with the lowest bid was selected to provide services for residents of Horizons.

Did the minister consider the living conditions and the residents when he made the decision to award the tender and not just the lowest price?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Mr. Speaker, I spoke to some of the folks from 106 yesterday and some of the protesters that were out on the steps and they had some real concerns. I hope that our conversation, and our conversations moving forward, alleviate some of these concerns.

We put in a model that I truly believe is going to work. If there are tweaks that need to be made, we're going to make them along the way, Mr. Speaker, but I truly believe that we've come up with a model that's going to serve these people well, move them on to the next step. It's a three-model course, Mr. Speaker. We have a light-touch model; we have a medium-touch model; and a 24 hour, 7-day support model. We have placements for all 45 people.

I'm pleased with the people who have put this together. I have full confidence in Stella's Circle and Bensaid and I truly believe that they're going to do the best job possible and they're going to get the job done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: What due diligence has the minister done to ensure the new living initiatives are going to deliver the result that people need and deserve? Can he table those results of that due diligence?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These community groups, the crowd across the way may not have faith in them; I do, Mr. Speaker. Stella's Circle and Bensaid, they've done some great work in our community and continue to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: If it wasn't for these community groups, Mr. Speaker, where would we be?

I'm so pleased to award the contracts to the two groups that we have in place right now. I believe that they're going to do a fantastic job. I'm going to oversee it myself, Mr. Speaker, as minister, to ensure that these people get the supports that they need so

they can come home to a safe, comfortable house at the end of the day.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, following a serious collision in Mount Pearl yesterday that sent a youth to hospital, what is the minister doing to address e-scooter safety concerns? Where is the legislation that this PC government promised would be introduced this fall?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll start off by saying it's tragic some of the stuff that's happening with these e-scooters, certainly, with children throughout the entire province. We've had some very serious accidents happen and we do plan on looking after that.

I can tell the Member that we will be putting legislation in this sitting that will address that. I can also tell you that I've met with doctors from the Janeway. We've met with numerous groups. We've got consultations done.

We're looking forward to bringing this legislation forward and I can't wait to get their full support on it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, this legislation should already be on the Order Paper.

Can the minister explain why it's taking so long?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The House – this is the fourth day right now. Last sitting, we put forward more –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, I'm taking away your speaking privileges for the day.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services, I'm going to reset your time.

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, it's ridiculous that this legislation wasn't passed a long time ago. So we'll get this done this sitting.

What I will say is, every accident, every child that's been hurt, every parent that's had to deal with this, it's unacceptable.

The House has been open now, this is the fourth day. Legislation is coming this sitting, as early as next week. We look forward to the debate. We look forward to the results and we certainly look forward to their support.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Speaker, 142 Parks Canada staff who look after our province's national parks and historic sites have just been told their jobs are on the line. These layoffs threaten to drastically undermine the visitor experience at some of our most iconic attractions.

I ask the minister, what is his plan to protect these jobs?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm going to ask something from all Members here and it might be an anomaly, but it's to work together here, to join me to advocate to the feds, as I have done.

During a time when our tourism is up, the numbers are up, and thanks to our former minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation for doing a wonderful job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: I wrote a letter already. We have staff reaching out through the department, and I implore the federal government to look at this decision and redecide. It wasn't that long ago that the prime minister was in my district, so he must see the beauty and he must see the importance of it.

That's what we're going to do. Again, if everyone here can all work together to protect these jobs, I'm more than willing to work together.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll remind the minister that he is the one responsible for the tourism sector in Newfoundland and Labrador and for the visitor experience.

So I'd like to ask the minister, what exactly did he implore his national counterparts to do and has he had conversations with his federal minister counterpart?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: Mr. Speaker, again, very important. It's a lot of jobs. It's a lot of impact in our province, but I'll let the Member opposite know, maybe you should listen to the people when they said they would like for the people in this House of Assembly to work together. That's what I proposed to you.

SPEAKER: Please address the Chair.

M. GOOSNEY: That's what I propose to you, work together.

F. HUTTON: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island, I'm after warning you. Your speaking privileges are also suspended for the day.

Minister, you can continue.

M. GOOSNEY: Are we good? Can I get a little respect here?

Thank you.

I'm here to work together. I reached out to the department. I have my department officials – actually, some are in Ottawa today that will be speaking face to face with the minister. When I have something to bring back more concrete, I'll be more than happy to present it in this House (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

The PCs promised permanent tax breaks, yet have only offered a temporary break for a few months. Given in the past the minister didn't like temporary cuts, will the Minister of Finance commit to keeping the gas tax off permanently?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you.

Speaker, contrary to what was heard earlier by the Leader of the Opposition, number one on our campaign and last election was affordability. Currently, we're at $279 million of people's money that we've put out to offset and help with affordability measures.

If the price of oil at the end of March is up to where it is now or is above the amount that we're going to discuss this afternoon – $89 a barrel – the provincial gas tax will stay off gasoline and diesel. We will continue to make affordability measures as we go forward, to the very best of our ability.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

The PCs knew they'd have extra, unexpected revenue from oil revenues months ago and they let the entire summer go by while collecting gas tax from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. They will also continue to collect over $7 million in extra tax in the next month until the proposed legislation comes into force. Now they're still saying to wait another month.

Will the government agree to bring in the gas tax reduction immediately?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I think the hon. Member misses the point of what we said many times, whether it be in the media or in the House. Eighty per cent of the oil revenue will be going to prevent us from borrowing more money to serve the debt that the previous government left us with. The 20 per cent will go back to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians for affordability measures.

Did we know months ago how much money we had with oil? Absolutely not. It was the Leader of the Opposition in a scrum the other day who suggested he knew where the price of oil was going, the only one in North America. I would say to you that –

SPEAKER: The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

P. PIKE: Mr. Speaker, the Fortune Head Ecological Reserve in the District of Burin - Grand Bank is an environmental embarrassment to the province. Domestic garbage continues to fall into the ocean at this world-class site. In April of 2025, a report was presented to the government with a plan for remediation.

Could the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change provide an update on when this evolving environmental issue will be announced?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Climate Change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. BARBOUR: Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member for their question. It's a very important question. The environment is very, very important for our future, for now and for the future generations to come.

I am aware of the dump situation, the erosion that is happening in that area in Fortune Head. The department is evaluating a cost-effective solution right now on that issue.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, when I was first elected in 2019, I approached several ministers of Housing about renovating the Grace Hospital nurses' residence for affordable, supportive and transitional housing, only to learn that the building was derelict for too long and had to be demolished. An opportunity now exists to renovate and transform the former Waterford Hospital site into a publicly owned and operated affordable supportive and transitional housing place.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to doing so?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Currently, the Waterford Hospital is not fully discontinued from use. Right now, it falls under NLHS. When it does, it will come to us. It will be in our inventory. That's a bigger assessment needs to be done with the building to figure out what's what.

That's a notional idea. We're always open to suggestions. We have a lot of vacant buildings throughout the province. We're always looking to repurpose. If that comes up, that's something we can repurpose and it can be done in an economical manner and it's feasible, we will definitely consider it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

If there are plenty of empty buildings across the province, then maybe they should be used towards affordable housing as well.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit to carrying out a study and to consult with not-for-profit housing organizations to determine the feasibility of using the Waterford Hospital site for affordable, supportive and transitional housing? Will that be done?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I would not commit to anything of that nature right now. It's too early in the game. We're doing a full assessment of all vacant government buildings and properties we have right across the province through Newfoundland and Labrador. Obviously, the Waterford Hospital is going to be in that group.

From a financial perspective, we carry too much burden on these empty buildings. We're maintaining them. Our goal is to disperse with as many as we can. If we can repurpose any of them for another purpose, we will do that, whether it be for affordable housing, whether it be for government offices, whether it be for any other purpose, we're open to that, but we're not going to commit to anything here today. That takes a bigger study and a bigger conversation that can add over time.

We're aware of the needs but we'll deal with that as the time comes.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: I think what I was asking that time was to do a study.

Speaker, the residents of Horizons would not be in their current situation and facing eviction if the hotel had been purchased rather than leased, if there was sufficient affordable housing available for them to go.

Let me re-ask one of my questions that was not answered yesterday. Premier, how many of the 10,000 homes you promised to build have actually been constructed?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

We did promise that 10,000 homes would be built across Newfoundland and Labrador. I'm pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, it's a fluctuating number but between January and August of this year, we've had 874 new homes built. That's almost a 30 per cent increase from this time last year.

Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has another 83 under construction and up to 344 in affordable housing program.

Right now, we have 2,477 people on the list and that's down as well, Mr. Speaker. We're going to continue to build homes across this province. We're going to continue to put people in these houses and make sure they have a comfortable home to come to at the end of the day, to raise their families in.

It's a lofty goal but I believe that this government and this Premier can get it done.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to see that list. People can't live in promises and I'll tell you, with 800-and-some-odd, we've got a ways to go.

As I understand, the government is seeking a new site for the extended stay for health care patients and Horizons was the preferred choice. I wrote the Minister of Health about this and suggested that site be used for both current residents and people travelling to the city for medical care. At least this way, residents would not have to be relocated and government would have more time to find the residents homes rather than evicting them.

So I ask the Premier: Will his government consider or pursue this option?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: No, Mr. Speaker, first of all, we're not going to apologize for the $38-million blunder from the crowd across the way.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: That's not going to happen.

Echoing the words of my colleague here, the Deputy Premier, I will take a look at any building along the way to see if it can be repurposed; to see if it is feasible to repurpose any building across this province and to utilize it in the best form possible.

Our responsibility is to the people of the province. I want to make sure that every vulnerable person is taken care of across the province, but, at the same time, we also have a fiscal responsibility to the people and the taxpayers of this province. We're going to continue to do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Time for Question Period has expired.

He was looking at me there for a second; I second-guessed myself.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I said I would table this document. This is a picture of the new federal budget. It clearly says on it, *Masters of Our Destiny: Budget 2026*, and it is a picture of Churchill Falls.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further tabling of documents?

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

J. HOGAN: I don't know why they're proud that the federal government is the master of our destiny here in Newfoundland and Labrador, but anyway, it's all good.

I'd like to table a document that was requested yesterday during Question Period from the Minister of Education. It's a media release from the NLTA calling on the government to immediately address critical education issues. It was dated October 26, 2026.

The minister asked me – he'd like to know where I got the information about this government's priority list. So this is what it says: "This government has been in power for a full year, and what they have shown is that education is at the bottom of their priority list."

So the information came from the NLTA. So I'd like to table that at the request of the Minister of Education.

SPEAKER: Do we have leave to table the document?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. HOGAN: That's not what I said.

P. DINN: That's not what I asked for.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Only speak when you're identified.

Thank you.

Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting Registered Professional Planners in the Province, Bill 30.

SPEAKER: Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act Representing Certain Cities in the Province, Bill 29.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

This petition pertains to implementation of GPS ankle bracelet monitoring systems for intimate partner violence offenders.

WHEREAS our court dockets are full of breaches relating to conditional release orders, many of which relate to intimate partner violence; and

WHEREAS real-time active GPS ankle monitoring has a proven track record of reducing breaches, including violent breaches, when used with IPV accused; and

WHEREAS victim notification alarms will give victims precious seconds to call for help or seek safe refuge; and

WHEREAS other provinces use ankle monitoring programs, including Alberta, that recently committed to $4.1 million over three years to expand its electronic monitoring program; and

WHEREAS the Conservative government campaigned on making communities safer for all of us;

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to implement an active GPS ankle bracelet monitoring program as an option for courts to impose on accused dangerous or repeat intimate partner violence offenders.

Now, as we know, the studies have been done, and we do know that this is a government that campaigned on making communities safer for all of us. I think the facts show, to date, after a year in government, communities are still not safer for all of us here throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

As a matter of fact, when the minister was on this side of the House in Opposition, this is something that she called for, along with her colleague who is now the Minister of Women and Gender Equality. They called on ankle monitoring, to make it happen. She's in the position now to make it happen. She should have the support of her Cabinet to make this happen, to save the lives of women and those who are in danger of intimate partner violence.

We know that here in Labrador alone, Speaker, we have the highest rates of intimate partner violence, higher than the national average.

So I am calling on the minister to action this. It's something that she called for when she was here, loud and proud. She called on me. She called on the government of the day, and now she's in a position and she has slept on that issue. She has done nothing to advance that, to make that happen. We see advocates in the news constantly showing statistics, and also the cost-effective measures and how it is certainly attainable to implement here in our province.

Women and those who are at risk of intimate partner violence certainly deserve this. It's something that can be done now. Again, we hear advocates in the news all the time who are calling for this measure. It's something that can be done. It should be done. They campaigned on safer communities. They campaigned on a lot of things but they're not making any of that happen thus far, after a year in government.

So I'm calling on that minister with the support of the other minister, the Minister of Women and Gender Equality, to make this happen today. Make it happen.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons and background for the petition:

WHEREAS the education of students in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is the responsibility of the provincial government; and

WHEREAS Canada is a bilingual nation and families are able, under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, to access education in either of their official languages; and

WHEREAS many schools in Newfoundland and Labrador do not offer kindergarten to Grade 12 French immersion programs; and

WHEREAS there are incidents where students in French immersion programming can't access the provincial school busing to attend schools; and

WHEREAS some students are required to attend school outside their catchment area to access French immersion programs; and

WHEREAS those students aren't eligible for busing, which presents unnecessary challenges for families to access French immersion programming.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED 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 provide the necessary funding so that families are not faced with unnecessary challenges while accessing French immersion programs for their children.

Speaker, I've known this first hand. Besides having many residents in my district, especially in Power's Pond area and, also, Speaker, in your area in Mount Pearl - Southlands, a lot of people are not able to access busing because there is no bus for them to even get a courtesy seat, let alone be able to go.

So for families who've got children in French Immersion, they've got to drive their children to school between 8 a.m. and 8:30 or whenever school opens for their children, and pick them up again between 2 p.m. and whatever time they get off, 2:30 or quarter to 3. The children have no way home or no way to school because both parents are working. Today, in most families, both parents are working. Unless you have grandparents or a relative that can pick them up and drive them to school or you're going to pay someone to do it, and it's very costly to do it.

Speaker, I've witnessed this first-hand. My own grandchildren, who live in Bay Bulls, my daughter or us had to drive our grandchildren from Bay Bulls to the Goulds every single day. I've still got one grandson in the Goulds attending school. He's in Grade 8, and we had to drive him to school.

A couple of years ago –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time has expired.

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

M. KING: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

Route 480 is a critical route for residents and visitors to access services. The road has experienced significant deterioration including potholes, crumbling pavement, inadequate shoulders and poor drainage. These conditions pose a daily hazard to drivers and cause damage to vehicles. Residents have long called for meaningful investment in the road's infrastructure. Continued neglect of Route 480 undermines the safety, accessibility and economic viability of the communities that depend on it.

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 allocate funding and undertake comprehensive road improvements on Route 480, including paving, shoulder upgrades, drainage improvements and any other repairs necessary to bring the road to an acceptable standard of safety.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I did ask a question yesterday in the House of Assembly to the minister, and I do appreciate him saying he has had the letter for a number of weeks. I hope it has made it up to the top of his chain now so that we can set a date to work with the working committee that we've established; because, I can tell you, the condition of the road over the last number of months has been completely unacceptable.

He said to me yesterday that I want pavement. Absolutely, I do, but it's not about me. It's not about him. It's about the people in that area of my district that use that road every single day to access services that they need. It is not as easy for us to jump in our car and be 10 minutes down the road to where we need to go. It is a 150-kilometre stretch of highway that people use daily, in the nighttime to go to where they need to go, and the conditions have been completely unacceptable.

People are sending me pictures of crates in the road, showing how deep the potholes are; completely washed out on the side of the road; a pass being created on the side of the shoulder so they can get around the potholes.

It is absolutely unacceptable. I hope the minister would take the advice of his Minister of Tourism to work together. We've offered solutions. We want to get this issue fixed. Maybe even set some priorities because if we took some of the pavement that's being laid out on the Confederation parking lot, we might have had the Burgeo road done this year and we wouldn't even be talking about this issue.

So I look forward to meeting with the minister to finally get some solution to this issue because enough is absolutely enough. The residents don't want to put up with it anymore, so I will continue to bring this issue to the House of Assembly to make sure we finally get it addressed once and for all.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I think the Member opposite, first and foremost, he needs to check his email because there was a response written to him on October 26. I had a copy somewhere kicking around but he was responded to. Check his email.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Check his emails. It was responded to. It was provided to me yesterday afternoon.

Do you know what the biggest criticism the Member opposite should have? The current Opposition he sits in, when they were in government, for 10 years they had –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: I'm after warning you.

AN HON. MEMBER: How many warnings?

SPEAKER: This is the final warning and I won't be taking comment from the other side either, by the way, whoever said how many warnings. I never heard who it was.

Anyway, the minister can continue on.

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

So for 10 years, this current Opposition was in government. They had a senior Cabinet minister representing this area. Do you know the shameful thing that happened here? Why that former government and the former minister that sat in that seat he's sitting in now never done what he's criticizing me for not doing –

M. KING: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member for Burgeo - La Poile, your speaking privileges are cut for the day.

It's unfortunate that I had to do that but several warnings. I don't know why it's so hard – anyway.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, again, Speaker.

That's the criticism. So you can't work both ways there. You criticize us. We're here for a year. We're working on number two. The second year's Roads Plan is coming out in another few months. It can't all be done in one day but for an Opposition that sat in government for 10 years and criticize me day in and day out, letters from all of his constituents, encouraging his members to write me and I write them all back, including him that he don't read his letter that I wrote back, and to stand in this House and to do what he's doing and to get the theatrics, it's shameful.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand in this hon. House to table this petition entitled Amend the Residential Tenancies Act to Include Rental Increase Limitations.

To the House of Assembly: A lack of supply of rental units, coupled with increased demand, has resulted in profiteering by some landlords simply because the market allows.

The *Residential Tenancies Act, 2018* allows for annual rental 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, petition the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to introduce legislation to limit the amount rent can be increased annually.

Speaker, one of the first experiences after being elected was a plethora of concerns that were brought to my attention as the new Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi of seniors living in REITs who had rent being raised without notice or very little notice and with very little control. Seniors and people on fixed incomes just didn't know what they were going to do.

This kind of played back and forth about how we're going to try to make things more affordable, a little bit of chicken and ball. It just keeps going back and forth about how to try and make it complicated for seniors to be able to find out how they can live affordably.

Rent control and having some sort of limitation is an adequate way. It's something that succeeds in many other jurisdictions and it will certainly help in the cause for our government right now who claims to want to be affordable and bringing in affordable policies. This is something that could absolutely help people keep an affordable life going for themselves.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Order 4.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 26.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 26.

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 (Dwyer): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act." (Bill 26)

CLERK (Hawley George): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Chair or Deputy Speaker, sorry. My apologies, I don't want you to take away my speaking privilege so I'll make sure I get it correct.

I'm happy today to get a few questions to my colleague across the way, the Minister of Jobs and Growth; and Rural Development. We had a rousing discussion when we brought in the second reading, I think, with respect to this piece of legislation, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act.

I think I'm going to delve a little bit into the red tape reduction strategy that he has here in this plan. I want to see clearly what he sees in the red tape reduction in this act and I'm going to ask him to delve into it a little bit, but before I get to that, I do have a couple of other questions.

One is, when we did the briefing on that, they talked about some jurisdictional scans. I'd just like to go through a little bit of the jurisdictional scan that you did with respect to this legislation and why you landed on bringing it into regulation versus legislation and which jurisdictions – maybe I'll just leave it there and we'll get to the next parts of those questions.

I wouldn't want to give you too, too many.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: No worries, MHA for Virginia Waters, I can follow along so you can stack the questions if you want. That said, with regard to jurisdictional scans, we're continuing to do that. Things have changed in this country since this act first came into effect in 2024. There's a greater push, right now, to be more agile.

We do have three provinces that have already adjusted. Those are Alberta, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick. We will be the fourth province to adjust in moving the schedules to the regulations. The intent of that, as we highlighted during the second reading, is to be more agile with regard to any changes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

We would be the fourth. The federation has more jurisdictions than that. Can you let me know where the other jurisdictions lie on this? Are they doing something different? My understanding is they keep it in legislation versus regulation, which is what we're asked to do here.

I just want to know why your government landed on moving it into regulation. I think you alluded to the fact that it was for nimbleness, which is fair enough. I just wanted to hear why those other jurisdictions are doing it that way and maybe you can highlight what those other jurisdictions are?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: As I highlighted, there are three other provinces that have already moved in this direction, to move the schedules of this legislation to regulation, again, for the same reason that we have done it.

As you know from your previous time in government in discussions during either FMRI or FLMM, there's an opportunity to discuss with your peers across Canada, provinces and territories. They did it essentially for the same reason that we are

doing it, that is to be more agile in any potential changes to the legislation.

Where the other six provinces and three territories will go. I do expect some of them to follow the lead of the four of us that have made changes because it only makes sense. As was highlighted by the MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, this just reduces legislative burden.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister.

Have any of the 21 regulatory bodies, which the department are currently engaged with, who have viewed this *Fair Registration Practices Act* and expressed an interest in signing on to this act?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: We have active discussions with 21 additional governing bodies. We do expect additional governing bodies to come into the act now through the regulations. That is because a lot of them will have a future need to bolster their own membership, and using the *Fair Registration Practices Act* is a medium to do it. We also have helped one of the regulatory bodies, the College of Physiotherapists, with labour market funding support so they can be in a position to come into the act.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any stumbling blocks to why those 21 regulatory bodies wouldn't want to sign onto this, that you've said as possible roadblocks that you would have uncovered. I know you're still in that process, but is there something that the House should know, anyone is finding is a problem, and is this act trying to alleviate some of those burdens as well?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Fair question.

It would have been a stumbling block if we had to have brought it through legislation each time, the first 12. There are 21 and some of those 21 are essentially in the queue. We have active discussions with those 21. We do expect some of them to come under the act and this is the same as what is happening pan-Canada, across other provinces and territories. This will be up to each regulatory body themselves.

We are working with them. If they view that they have an issue and is something that we can help alleviate, as we have done with the College of Physiotherapists, then we will look to do so.

Ultimately, the more that we have under the act, now through the regulations, will make it better for our future workforce and better in dealing with our future labour demands.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, if the regulatory body is interested – we've established that now – in signing onto the legislation, what would the process look like? Can you describe that to us in as much detail as you have? Because it's still undefined or it should exist on how they would want to enter into a process like this.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: That would be active discussions between our Fair Registration

Practices Office and the regulatory body. It ultimately would be up to the regulatory body if they do want to join.

We are encouraging the additional 21 to do that and to ascertain if there are any stumbling blocks for them. With regard to a process, one is having that active discussion. Two, are there any roadblocks for them to join, and then for each of them to seek the concurrence of their own boards.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you very much, Chair.

It's more of a consultation than an application, we'll say?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: That is correct.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: What mechanisms are currently in place to monitor whether regulatory bodies subject to the act are complying with its requirements?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Good question.

Each of these regulatory bodies have to submit a report to our Fair Registration Practices Office, and that report and the act dictates timelines with regard to appeal, timelines for approval. Their report back into the office and our review of that within government will dictate, I guess from a review and an overall audit side, of how each of those regulatory bodies are performing in relation to the act.

I can say, even as a member of one of the regulatory bodies that is not yet a member of the act, and that is the Chartered Professional Accountants of Newfoundland and Labrador, I believe most of the 21 there do want to be part of the *Fair Registration Practices Act* because it is a medium for them to get new membership from either internationally trained or Canadian trained across other provinces and territories.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: On that same note, Minister, I know when the regulatory bodies submit their annual report, as you say, is there a standard time frame in which they would hear back or the reports would be verified by staff in your department to ensure that they are meeting the requirements? Because it's one thing to invite somebody in; it's another thing to make sure that they're following the prescribed rules and customer service regulations that would go along with those things.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Thank you for that question.

Those reports are reviewed on an annual basis. The timeline for review I don't specifically have here in front of me right now, but I will provide it to you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister, for that. I look forward to seeing that.

Has the department identified any recurring issues or shortcomings in how regulated professionals assess applications for registration, particularly for internationally educated professionals? I think that's an important piece. As we discussed in the briefing, I think that's an important captive

audience, I guess, for growth of industries that we have that could potentially be going into this province in the near future.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: One of the challenges that was identified was with regard to language. Our department provides funding to ANC, the Association for New Canadians, to help with language training for those coming in or who came in most probably through a refugee status and would need English language support. Then the regulatory body themselves would set the conditions on what they will accept through affidavits of any qualifications.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

That sort of answers the next question I was going to bring up about the English translation and some of the barriers that were identified in the briefing. Are we finding that the funding that's been given to the ANC is enough to mitigate the English translation, as one example? But there are numerous other examples, I'm sure, of barriers for internationally trained individuals, for sure, getting records from their home country, the ability to prove credentials. Those things would be something that just comes top of mind, and obviously language would be probably first and foremost.

Is there anything else that we've seen as barriers? Is there enough money being given to the ANC? Does the ANC have enough support from the department in those ways or have they been requesting more?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Settlement funding – and that's where some of the English language training comes from – is both cost shared, federal and provincial. I know ANC would like to have more because they would like to bring some of the newcomers up to a higher standard of English before they're placed or assisted in going into the workforce.

So we recognize that there's always room for more with regard to enhancing settlement services. But, again, that's about a balance of what is available in the overall funding pot.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair.

I was speaking more, not necessarily settlement funding, about the individual themselves. I'm more talking about making sure they can move through the regulatory bodies in a more efficient manner. Is there anything that ANC is requesting from that standpoint? Because I know they'll want more settlement funding and I know that that's probably required based on from the immigration side, clear and proper.

But definitely, I think there's also an opportunity there for moving through the regulatory bodies. If there's more money that the ANC is requesting for that, it's going to be advantageous from an economic development standpoint and creating more employees for the need for growth in a variety of different industries.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: There are two items there with regard to this question. First of all, with regard to the settlement services for ANC and others, the language training – and I've been down there a couple of times – is an assistance for newcomers. When a newcomer then, or someone from across

Canada, deals with one of our regulatory bodies – there are currently 12 – then it is a relationship between that individual and the regulatory body as to what they are providing to them with regard to information.

What the act is doing is prescribing minimum timelines and a process to help provide transparency, clarity and accountability to that individual in dealing with the regulatory body.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for that answer.

Since the act was introduced in 2022, has the government tracked whether they've seen reduced registration delays or any other barriers for qualified applicants trying to go through that process?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Yes, when this first came in, in 2024 – and I tip my hat to your administration for bringing it in, we're just trying to accelerate now where we are. I'll give a couple of examples. The Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland and Labrador, PEGNL, there were 286 labour mobility applicants endorsed under the CFTA in 2024. Last year, that number rose to 360. Similarly, the College of Social Workers reports that the number of labour mobility applicants has increased from nine in 2024-25 to 32 last year.

The *Fair Registration Practices Act* is working. Now, given everything that's happening in our country from a tariff side with a need for greater labour mobility, given where we are in a future focused on being ready for a growing labour force, this is why we need to be more agile now with the *Fair Registration Practices Act* and move those two schedules to regulations so the act is more agile to the specific needs of individual regulatory bodies, the other 21 if they want to join, and also to the needs of specific members who want to join the current and additional regulatory bodies.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Let me, first of all, say, thank you. That doesn't happen very often, what you just said a second ago. I almost took note of the *Hansard* time so I could write it down, but I do want to say that the numbers that you just provided, the 206, I think it was, and 360, if you can send those along to us that would be great because it's nice to see progress in that area.

I'm hopeful that in 2026, though – because I think they're doing 2024 and 2025 – we see even more improvement in that based on some of the changes that have been made in previous legislation.

I have a few more questions but this one deals with – we just had the Resource Enforcement Act come though and you're going to say, what am I talking about the Resource Enforcement Act for. I'm going to get relevant. I definitely understand you're going to look at me for that. It was briefed earlier this week and it gave the LGIC, Lieutenant-Governor in Council, the ability to amend schedules within legislation when the House of Assembly is not in session. This would provide government flexibility – it's looking for in this piece of legislation as well – while still ensuring its nimbleness and effectiveness but it also kept its accountability to the House.

Why was that not considered in this act but was considered in the act we just talked about yesterday?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Well, first of all, they're two different acts and two different focuses. With regard to the Fair Registration Practices Act, it is important that we adjust now and be more efficient and effective to the needs of the regulatory bodies. Some of that is even tied to names of government departments, right? So it would create a fair bit of legislative turn and, more importantly, as we've been highlighting, it is about specific needs of the workers, the professionals within and looking to join these regulatory bodies.

It's a little different because the Resource Enforcement Act, yesterday, was about a consolidation within Forestry, Agriculture and Lands. This is about being agile to the specific needs of regulatory bodies in their current, potential and future members.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair, and Minister.

I do agree that they are different legislation, but the alternatives on how the legislation can be treated can be similar in that it still allows you to be nimble and make those changes to the regulations, it just allows it to come back here and have the oversight of the House on those same regulations. I don't think it would impede anything you're doing. I was just more so asking why one piece of legislation that we talked about yesterday and this one – I know they were done different times and all that kind of stuff, but that piece of legislation yesterday had a nice piece in it that said they would bring it back when the House is not in session, which I thought was an interesting piece. When we're looking at this piece of legislation, I know legislation is living and breathing pieces of a document. I just thought it was an interesting piece. If you want to respond to that, that's fine.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: I'll quote something that a former chief of the defence staff, a Newfoundlander: We're in a war on talent. We need to be agile with the *Fair Registration Practices Act* to pick up professionals whether they are internationally trained or have been trained across the country.

Being nimble now in moving the two schedules to the regulations, allows us to do so. That's why we're one of the early provinces doing this, because we need to be in a position to look at the future needs of our labour force.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you for elaborating a little further on your viewpoint. I still share mine, but I do like when you bring in quotes from interesting people, which is nice. So thank you for that.

Newfoundland and Labrador faces, as we've talked about many times, workforce recruitment challenges across a number of professions. One of the things we talked about in the briefing with your staff – and I want to thank them for the great work they do. I know many of them were there when I was there, so I think they're really good people.

How does the department see the *Fair Registration Practices Act* help the province attract and retain qualified workers? I know we've talked about it on numerous cases, and I think this is a good thing for streamlining, but how are we going to get the word out to those workers with the mobility we want to see across this country and around the world?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: I guess there are number of pieces to that question. First of all, with

regard to advertising and promoting our own *Fair Registration Practices Act*, we have been doing that through the government website and across the newcomer community.

With regard to our labour force, we have, essentially, three mediums, three pathways: homegrown, interprovincial and/or newcomers. We need to rely on each of those avenues to tackle the labour demands that are in front of us for the years to come.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Minister, thank you for that.

Immigration trade missions could be another option and I'm sure they will be looking at that to ensure those new Canadians or potential new Canadians would want to know that we're going to streamline that process to make it easier for their credentialling when they come here. I think that's a good point.

What work is your government doing to ensure internationally educated professionals and Canadians moving to Newfoundland and Labrador from other provinces have their qualifications assessed in a timely manner? I know that's part of what we're doing here, but what are we going to do to ensure that the regulatory bodies, that are not signed on, are trying to do that as well? I think that's an important piece.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: So, again, two pieces to that. If someone comes here to our province that first, say, landed in another province, that's the whole essence of the *Fair Registration Practices Act*. This is a medium for the regulatory bodies and to provide a pathway for them.

The other piece we've got to keep in mind is the *Fair Registration Practices Act* is also complementary with the Canadian Free Trade Agreement and the labour mobility across Canada. The more provinces that are going this route, we're going to basically reduce the restrictions as long as there is agreement with some of the regulatory bodies in moving interprovincial.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister.

I'm glad you brought up the chapter 7 of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement. I think that's an important piece and I'm glad that the piece of legislation is complementary to that. I think it's going to help but we've all heard, as MHAs, the stories of the taxi driver that's driving that's a doctor in their home country, a nurse in their home country, or a lawyer or just a skilled professional as a CT or an architect that does fantastic work.

How are we, as a people, going to help the professions that we really are targeting to try to fill the gaps that exist, ensure that those individuals – they be coming here as a refugee and they could be coming here from very tenuous situations that records may be a problem.

I know the regulatory bodies are looking into that. Is the government really working with them and will they work with them to try to ensure that the credentials – and obviously, we want to protect the residents that would be utilizing the services of these individuals as well. How do we balance those two, in some cases, competing interests?

We want the doctor in rural Newfoundland but we also want the doctor in rural Newfoundland to be very skilled at what they do and have those credentials, but in some cases they could be from a country

that those credentials are hard to get because they're in war or political unrest.

I know that's a lot to unpack but you said you could unpack those things when I do have a lot to unpack, so I'm giving it to you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Thank you very much.

There is a lot in that question but let me frame it this way. Each of these are a case-by-case analysis with each particular client and with each regulatory body.

For some, during our discussions with them, it is about looking to help them with the process as well. We've done that with the College of Physiotherapists, to help them streamline licensure pathways to help get more qualified professionals in the labour market.

It is understanding each of the regulatory bodies, what their challenges are and accepting internationally educated or educated across Canada and, likewise, in dealing with prospective clients, individuals themselves.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair.

I think we all want the same thing in trying to ensure that those individuals that want to choose Newfoundland and Labrador as their home or got credentials somewhere else, they could be, I guess, Newfoundlanders that got credentials somewhere else as well, that the regulatory body can keep moving through the process.

I think this is a good piece, if it can bring some customer service, lends to it. I say that not tongue in cheek. I'll use a fictitious example. If you have a person trying to, as you said, become an accountant here because they're an accountant in their own country, obviously the body has to have all the documentation to say that that person is qualified to do that job.

I think this piece of legislation, when it comes and the regulatory body comes in, then they would be able to have some performance standards on when an individual would just not sit in limbo waiting to hear from, in your case, you said certified general accountants, I think, as an example. I'm not suggesting they are delayed in any process; I'm just using them as an example because you brought them up earlier.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Again, a couple of pieces to that question. The act does specify timelines, the process with regard to review that a regulatory body would have to follow. This is ultimately, like you highlighted, MHA for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, about individuals and helping them with regard to a potential pathway for employment into our province.

So we've been promoting the *Fair Registration Practices Act* at our immigration events, at job fairs, because ultimately, like I said, we want to grow the size of the labour pool in the province and to improve productivity, to ensure that folks working here are working to their full potential.

CHAIR: I want to acknowledge the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville for a question and then I'm going to move to another person's questions and if you have questions at the end, I'll come back to you, okay?

B. DAVIS: We can do that now if you like. That's fine.

CHAIR: No, you can ask your question.

B. DAVIS: Okay, thank you, and thank you for clarifying Virginia Waters - Pleasantville. Thank you, Minister, and MHA for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: (Inaudible) scenic.

B. DAVIS: Scenic Green Bay, yes.

I think I'll only ask, the barriers that we talked about earlier contributing to workforce shortages in the professional sectors, the department would be having additional supports as we get the 21 other organizations put in. Obviously, you're going to have 21 more annual reports coming in to assess each throughout the year and ensure that they're providing that level of standard across the board that some regulatory bodies are doing very well and some others would need improvement and support from your department.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Fair question.

Currently, as you're most probably aware, we do have an office under the Office of Immigration for fair registration. As this continues to evolve, and if more regulatory bodies come under it and the workload increases, that would be assessed at that time.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you for taking some questions here. Certainly, my colleague has asked a number of questions that probably I would have had. However, I would like to just reference – but that's okay, given your expertise – I concur with the question and experience provided about professionals from other countries driving cabs. I cannot say how many professionals who have engineering degrees that I've gotten into a cab with who didn't have that. The idea of a case-by-case basis, I understand, but I hope that there will be a larger scope on how we can regulate a little bit more efficiently.

Having said that, this does reduce legislative burden. I think that's very positive. We do see the hurdles that people would have to go through, both for existing practitioners but also for promoting the labour mobility throughout our country. I think that's extremely important.

Having said that, I just wanted to see, as part of the discussions that you had with these professional bodies, did they bring up any other issues regarding how to make the registration more streamlined and efficient?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Yes, so in answer to the MHA for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, the only one yet where we've had, I guess, some varied discussion and challenges with was the College of Physiotherapists, and that's why we provided them some support so that they could streamline their licensure pathways.

We're in the process of having that discussion with – and they are part of that – an additional 21 regulatory bodies within the province, because they all look at it as this is a source of potential new membership.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: Of course, although this legislation is relatively new, do we have any data to show how the wait times for accreditation have decreased as a result?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: The act prescribes specific requirements of anybody coming in to be a part of the act, wait times with regard to review. Anything beyond that, I'd have to go back and look at it with staff and advise you. As of present, the wait times and what they're prescribing to in signing up to be a regulatory body under the *Fair Registration Practices Act* are prescribed in either the act and/or the regulations.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

S. O'LEARY: This will be my final question; I'm just curious about the other organizations.

Obviously, the Association for New Canadians, we know, is a fantastic organization doing great work to help people get in the fold and learn all of the things they need, language acquisition and get the supports they need to get settled. I'm just wondering if there are any other organizations that deal in particular with newcomers that you have had any consultations with about this to date?

One of the ones that I'm thinking about is the Expertise Hub, for example, who are very active at Memorial University.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Fair question.

My Office of Immigration does have engagement with a number of entities that provide settlement support, ANC, Amal. Some of them do receive a combination of federal and provincial funding.

If you like, we can give you a copy of that, but the intent here – I guess there are two intents, the settlement services with regard to settlement writ large; the act is with regard to being able to streamline joining a regulatory body.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi for covering some topics that I didn't get the chance to get to, which was good. That will limit my list a little bit, which is good.

Minister, when we were in our briefing, we had heard that the office has been received very positively by the regulatory bodies, which is excellent, kudos to the group who started all of that process, and that you've continued to grow it and bring forward legislation that's going to make it, we hope, significantly better.

There are 21 regulatory bodies that we are targeting now. Are there others on the horizon that you're not currently talking about but are out there that we see as potentials or should be, that we're hearing from constituents or individuals who are interested in getting involved? I know these are regulatory bodies and we should know all the ones we want to work with, but are there others out there that are just not ready and have not been involved in the consultation process?

I think one of your staff members, who's fantastic by the way, said that those who can't make the session that's coming up, because I think there's a session coming up, will be one on one with the staff, which I think is good. But are there any out there that are not on that 21 list or is that an exhaustive list that your department has put forward?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: That is the current list that our department has been actively engaged with. There are some potential others. We'd have to go back and confirm. Then we do have some entities that are looking to form into a regulatory body as well.

I note, case in point, town planners. There is an opportunity to continue to expand this. Based on the current regulatory body framework within the province, the evolving labour market needs of our province, there is an opportunity to continue to expand this. Based on the current regulatory body framework within the province, the evolving labour market needs of our province and then based on specific needs as things evolve with certain professional groups.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you.

I think the minister, as soon as he said something, he realized I was a going to ask a question on it next if he didn't give me an example.

L. PADDOCK: (Inaudible.)

B. DAVIS: Or read my paper, anyway.

I did want an example and I think that's good, the municipal planners, I did hear that before and I think my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi was excited when she heard that in the briefing as well. I think that any organization and groups of individuals that potentially could have a regulatory body established, it actually adds to the profession. I think it actually helps them and it helps regulate something a little bit easier.

I think the minister wants to make a comment on that, so I'll cede my time to the minister.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: We've reached out to these 21. As I said, it's not an exhaustive list. There are others potentially, depending on how they form. We do expect, as additional bodies come in under the act and are able to grow their membership, that additional regulatory entities will be interested and as this also takes root across Canada.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other departments that would have been involved in consultation with this development as well? Because I'm sure it touches many other departments across your government. I would think Energy and Mines. I would think others, like health care as an example of staff and positions that are hard to attract professions. I'm just more so wondering, is there any consultation with other departments?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: So let me just, I guess, highlight. With regard to the framework of the act, no. So that's been within our Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development; and Immigration.

Now with regard to specific needs and in dealing with various regulatory bodies, then we are across the whole of government – Justice, Health, Government Services, Education, early childhood educators – wherever we are experiencing notable gaps in filling certain positions, like health or early childhood educators, and where we can leverage either internationally trained and/or trained across Canada.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister.

Is there a standard process that you would have for the consultation of your colleagues from those departments? Or is it just an ad hoc conversation with the Minister of Health, as an example, to say we're experiencing some concerns in this particular profession, can you put a focus on this or can you reach out to the regulatory body to see if there's anybody in the queue that's waiting to be assessed? That's just one example but I will let you respond to that, Minister.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: That type of engagement happens at a government official level. My department is engaging with the regulatory bodies and then engaging across the department with regard to particular hard-to-fill and/or significant gaps in government positions.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: I thank the minister for that response.

I think it's great that officials are doing that. I think there's also an opportunity for ministers to do that through – I'm not saying create another level of bureaucracy in this either, I'm just more so thinking it moves a lot faster sometimes when the people at the top hear that too, and I know your staff are hearing that as well. I think any opportunity we can to satisfy the needs – because it's for the people of the province that we all represent – I think that's really, really important that if there's gaps, we're fighting it on all fronts, as you said.

You quoted a general earlier about, it's probably not wise to fight on all fronts, but in this case I think this is an important one that we want to win for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: So let me reiterate what former General Hillier said. It was about a war on talent and winning that war on talent. That was about recruiting during a time for the Canadian Armed Forces. That is somewhat where we are now from labour force needs.

With regard to discussions at a ministerial level, yes, that happens on a regular basis. We continue to highlight across each other the specific needs of our departments, and that's why you're going to see some varied legislation over the next three weeks that will reiterate that cross-department engagement.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: I think I got one more question, I guess, and just a big thank you –

AN HON. MEMBER: Red tape.

B. DAVIS: Oh yes, sorry, getting to my red tape.

I think it would be good if the hon. minister could bring forward his ideas on how this implementation of this legislation is reducing red tape. It's always nice if we're going to be talking about that in this House of Assembly, which I know it's going to come forward, many other pieces of legislation. I think it would be ideal for you to highlight that in this case.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Thank you, Chair.

I guess it comes back, when we use the words “red tape,” this is about being more efficient and effective. Any time that we can reduce having to come to the Legislature to get either regulatory body added, then that’s a win. That’s a win for the regulatory bodies, that’s a win for prospective clients, that’s a win for the labour force.

So when we look at it wholistically in that manner, it is reduction of red tape. It is being more agile administratively to the current and future needs of our province.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: I’d like to thank the minister for the answers to the questions that I’ve asked. I think his former colleague used to mention leadership from the front as well, which is an important piece. I think that’s part of the reason why I asked the question about ministers talking together on this issue. It’s a big issue so we want to make sure that all the ministers are fighting in the same front on this one, especially if there are gaps, because sometimes those gaps can silently slip by and I just want to say thank you for the opportunity to ask those questions. I don’t know if any of my other colleagues have questions or if there are others down here.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John’s Centre.

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

Earlier it was said, Chair, that the minister talked about the number of professional engineers and it had been 286 in the previous year and, so far this year, 360 were approved. I think with regard to social workers, that increased from nine to 32.

Just out of curiosity, I guess, are there still people on that list waiting for approval? Would that be available?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Let me start by first reiterating the numbers. That was PEGNL, Professional Engineers, using the Labour Mobility application through Fair Registration Practices, that was 286 in 2024. In 2025, that number rose to 360. The College of Social Workers in 2024-25, it was nine and it went to 32 last year.

With regard to who’s on the list within each prospective regulatory body, each of the regulatory bodies holds that list. Where we are with the *Fair Registration Practices Act* is making sure that each of the regulatory bodies are abiding by the act with regard to the timelines that are prescribed in answering prospective clients and in a process for review for prospective clients.

Now, I will also add, the feedback that we’ve got from employers across the province has been exceptionally positive. This has sped up the process. This is working and this has been a success for our province. It’s something that we just need to accelerate based on the current and future labour market needs.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for St. John’s Centre.

J. DINN: I guess my next question is – I’ll try to be as clear in it as I can – I’m looking at it in terms of how. Was this a case that there were no timelines before and applications were languishing on someone’s desk? If there was, what was the reason for that, just not enough people to do the work or have more people been hired? I’m just trying – I’ll leave it at that for now.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Again, with regard to any delays, previously, that depends on each

regulatory body. The regulatory body are the ones that are deciding on individual membership cases. A number of us here in the House are members of various regulatory bodies. The *Fair Registration Practices Act* has provided a framework to help expedite opportunities, a timeline for review and a timeline for response. That is detailed in the act.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Chair.

There's a balance obviously between being efficient and getting people moving along and, also, the qualification, ascertaining and verifying the qualifications of a person from outside.

I would assume then that in this process, that the applicant probably has a certain amount of time to get all the necessary documentation and if he or she doesn't get it, then the timelines proceed and they have an answer to say, no, sorry, your application is rejected.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Actually, no, it's the other way. Once the client or future prospective member into a regulatory body has their information together and submitted to the regulatory body, then that regulatory body now, under the act, has a prescribed timeline in responding to them.

That's why, like I said, employers from across the province, what we've heard back has been very positive in how this timeline has worked for their employees.

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

J. DINN: When the person starts this process, they're pretty well sure they've got all the necessary documents ready to start the process and from that time the clock starts?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Yes, correct.

Again, it is on a case-by-case basis based on each individual with each regulatory body. If they don't have all the information, this act doesn't change the specifications for a regulatory body to be a member. The act prescribes timelines for response.

So if they get feedback that they need additional information, then they would have to submit it again and then would fall, again, under the act with regard to a timeline for a response.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member of St. John's Centre.

J. DINN: I guess I have a question more or less about the advice of these regulatory bodies to the people who are applying. I'll give an example that came to my attention. It's not dissimilar from others.

So a couple, both with Ph.D.s, from outside the province in an area, without identifying where in the province, where one spouse was approved to teach in the public school system. I think the other person had a similar Ph.D. but didn't meet their qualifications.

The part that was frustrating I understand was that he received no advice as to how to achieve a path forward as to what the person needed to be able to teach in the public school system – both very well qualified. In the end, both left the community and taught elsewhere now in the post-secondary level.

So I guess what I'm asking is the streamline – obviously, this community would have lost

two fine teachers in an area where it was difficult to recruit.

I guess what I'm looking at here is, what is the role then of these regulatory bodies, such as the Teachers' Certification Committee, in providing advice? You don't have the qualifications, but here's what you need to achieve; here are the courses you need or what you need to do.

I don't know if that's something that the minister has addressed or his department or if this legislation also helps streamline that process.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: So several pieces to this question. The individual case that you're referring to, maybe that's something that our office can, specifically, take a look at.

The act does not change the requirements for each of the regulatory bodies. Membership into any of the regulatory bodies will be set by that regulatory body, but what the act does is prescribe the timelines for response, review and appeals.

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

J. DINN: I'll end it with this comment, if I may, and to echo what my colleague said. I've met numerous people, I guess, who are doing jobs well below their education and who would desperately want to work here in their field, their expertise, and want to stay in Newfoundland and Labrador. I mean, in many ways, we're not the most populated when you look at it, yet, at the same time, this is where people want to stay.

If this is actually speeding it up and employers are happy with this, I think this is a good move, certainly to get more people to come into the province and build what we have here and contribute to our society. In other areas, I'm more or less trying and find ways in which – I'm hoping this bill is going to address this – to speed it up, but I think we also have to make sure that anyone who comes here, that they at least, not only know the timelines, but know the procedures they need to attain the qualifications that they need.

I don't think any professionals, such as that in the medical field that I've spoken to, just want to come in and just have their credentials recognized. They understand there might be gaps. What they want is an efficient and quick way to be able to train to work, maybe, and keep their skills up while they're attaining the credentials.

I'll leave it at that, Chair, and thank you for the minister's response.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: I have several points to make back there in response.

I think we all want the same thing, and that is improved productivity. We want to maximize people that have the skill sets so that they work to their full potential here in our province. That's why, for us, being fourth out of the gate across Canada, it will provide a median to that.

Secondly, you know, is helping clients be aware, particularly those that are internationally trained, of the options available to them, and that's why we are continuing to advertise the *Fair Registration Practices Act* through various mediums and anything that we do in Immigration internationally.

The act also requires, with regard to a case-by-case analysis, each regulatory body, as they come in under the act, to be very clear and concise as to what their requirements are.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Sorry, Minister, my colleague sparked a couple of questions that I missed. I apologize to all involved.

I think the MHA for St. John's Centre makes a good point. Does the department have a viewpoint into the requirements that the regulatory body would be putting forward to someone to be able to practise whatever profession they are trained in?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: With regard to the specific parameters of an individual regulatory body, my department has had discussions with some about that. I gave the case in point for the College of Physiotherapists where we, the government, provided funding to streamline their licensure pathways just to make it easier for new members in applying.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister.

I think one of the interesting pieces that's been uncovered throughout the debate this afternoon is that the legislation was working. It's being viewed very positively by both business and regulatory bodies. We're just trying to speed it up, which is an important piece. Despite the questions that we ask, I think all of us are very supportive of that whole approach.

The regulatory body, if they sign on, would have to follow the standard steps prescribed in the act, which will provide the person that's applying to become a member of that registered body and then, in turn, practise their skill set in our province. They are using those standards, so they would be able to practise by those standards. So they would know that on X day, they should receive a response from the regulatory body provided, as the hon. Member for St. John's Centre suggested, that if their application is complete, that they would have an answer by three months or 30 days or 45 days.

Am I correct in saying that, Minister?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: I thought in your preamble I also had red tape out of you but, yes, you are correct in the process. As I highlighted, we are the fourth province out of the gates on this. This is a war on talent. If we have people here, professionals that are somewhat stymied in a process, we risk losing them to either Alberta, Saskatchewan or New Brunswick.

In moving the way we are moving, taking the two schedules and putting them into the regulations, is making this act more nimble and allowing us to be more responsive to the needs of regulatory bodies, future regulatory bodies under the schedules and future professionals into those regulatory bodies, ultimately growing the labour force in our province.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister.

I think the Finance Minister will be really excited – he always talks about report cards. He's really trying to improve the red tape reduction report card that CFIB does, I think, with respect to this, which is not a bad thing.

To extend a little bit on my colleague from St. John's Centre, pathway is paramount and I would think that the example that he gave of two teachers is not something that – I think everyone in this House has had constituents in a similar situation, maybe not teachers. It could have been doctors. It

could have been a nurse. It could have been a lawyer. It could have been an engineer or any of those professions.

What are we doing as a department, other than this piece of legislation now, when the new regulatory body comes in or the existing ones that are already in – I think there are 12 already in the act that's moving over to regulation now. What are we doing to try to streamline so that there's a path for those individuals?

Because if they receive a negative from the regulatory body that you can't practise here, but what's next? Is there a possibility if you're looking as a nurse, as a PCA or working under somebody in consultation with somebody else? Those are things that would move someone to a position where they would make a decision to say I'm going to work here in Newfoundland and Labrador versus, as you said, New Brunswick, PEI or Nova Scotia.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: A fair bit to unpack there. Let me start with the teachers and the teacher example. That falls under the Teachers' Certification Committee. If you're under the act, like the Teachers' Certification Committee is, then they are responsible to provide alternate pathways to eventually lead to certification.

Ultimately, it will depend on each of those regulatory bodies. They set their standards. If someone applying does not meet the standards and if they're under the act, they will get a response in a timely fashion. If they do not meet the standards, then the regulator under the act are also responsible to ensure that have identified alternate pathways for them to reach certification.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister.

I think everyone in this House will agree with you, that we want every person who wants to choose Newfoundland and Labrador as their home to work, live and raise a family, gets the opportunity to do that. I think that's good if they can move through that process to work in their field of choice.

Let's change tact a little bit. Have we seen an increase in Labour Mobility within the country of Canada in the federation, based on the Canadian Free Trade Agreement that's put in place? Have we seen an uptick in individuals from other jurisdictions moving into this province?

I know it's early days but if you could sort of let us know what your initial thoughts are or what the department's initial thoughts are on Labour Mobility and if there's been any success with the Canada Free Trade Agreement with Prime Minister Carney moving that forward.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Okay, let me go back to the previous question and just add this supplementary first.

When we talk about alternate pathways, and it is ultimately about employing people here locally, we've had some internationally trained nurses come in. They did not meet the requirements under our nursing but they were able to be placed as PCAs. So that would provide them a pathway to a future nursing degree.

With regard to the CFTA, that only came in effect in August. We're continuing to monitor it. We're continuing to look to add that to our population tracking stat. We do track everything internationally. We have three mediums here to grow the population: natural replacement, which has been

negative over the last 10 years; interprovincial migration; and/or immigration.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you highlighted a couple of numbers earlier with, I think it was, engineers. Am I correct? Yes, engineers at 286 for 2024 and 360 for 2025. Then the College of Social Work: nine in 2024 and 32 in 2025.

Are there additional numbers from the other regulatory bodies that we have within the act now – the 12? Because I know those two are seeing progress based on this piece of legislation that was created in, I think you said, 2022. I thank the previous ministers for doing some of that work, too.

It's all about stepping on each other's shoulders and lifting it up, so I think that's an important piece. I'm glad that you, as minister, and this department decided to keep moving forward and trucking along with a piece of legislation that's good for those.

If you could highlight some of the other numbers, and I don't mind asking another question if it needs some time for the staff to give you some more information with respect to that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Unfortunately, I do not have that information at my fingertips. We will get that to you. So a breakdown across the current 12 within the act, based on their annual reports into us.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair.

I thank the minister for agreeing to those 12 areas. I mean, that's good growth potential we've seen, I think in 2026 and into 2027, with this change, I think the growth will continue to move faster. That's only the 12 that we currently have. I think when the other 21 come under this act, which I hope will be sooner rather than later.

I guess that leads to my next question to the minister, those 21, are there any timelines that you're looking at to try to – I know they've got to make the decision themselves, but are there any that are close to making that decision and is there anything that can be done to try to nudge them to do that because I think it's going to be better for the people that we all represent?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Good question.

We are encouraging them. We do expect additional to come under the *Fair Registration Practices Act*. It comes back to, again, what I said, this is a war on talent across the country. So having the medium for a number of our regulatory bodies, more regulatory bodies, to come under the act, and to do so now in a more efficient manner, I think more will. It will provide us greater flexibility in Labour Mobility into Newfoundland and Labrador from across Canada.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister.

You won't get any hold up from me with respect to the red tape reduction that you're trying to achieve here. I think it's really important that we continue to focus on trying to improve legislation. As I said many times,

legislation is a living document in this House of Assembly and it's incumbent upon all 40 of us to work together, as the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Arts said earlier today. It's incumbent upon all of us to work to develop the best legislation we can.

You mentioned the time frame. There's no specific time frame on how quickly we're going to try to move the 21 into the legislation. I know it's based on them. I understand there's a public information session.

Can you just let us know a little bit about that and what will be happening at that public information session? It's a good opportunity for us to get information out about that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: Again, I guess a couple of pieces to unpack here.

This change in the act will come into effect on December 17. If we had add another regulatory body that was primed to go, say, in January, we would have to wait until the legislative session in the spring.

We do expect additional regulatory bodies to want to join. That's based on active discussion. The information there with regard to public information sessions, that will be properly advertised.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Viriginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you to the minister.

It would take effect on December 17, which we will agree on. It's not entirely true that if we did this – because I think the minister next door to you, right here, your colleague, seat mate, who just brought forward a piece of legislation said he could bring that forward and do LGIC approval and then ratify it in the House of Assembly.

I think that process, we established earlier today in the debate we've been having, that that could work, it just wasn't done in this case, which is completely fine. It's two different pieces of legislation as we've established, but I do think that it could have been done that way and wouldn't have changed.

I don't think it would have changed the intent on the legislation; it was just a different approach on the legislation, that's all. Right?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Jobs and Growth; Rural Development; Immigration; and Francophone Affairs.

L. PADDOCK: That is correct.

The reason we chose December 17 is to make sure it had Royal Assent first and then if there's anything, to get it done before the end of the calendar year.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair, and I thank the minister for the fulsome response.

You're not going to get me holding this up to get it not passed December 17 for sure. We're going to work hard to try to move this fast as we can, but there are a few questions that we answered today that made me feel a little bit more comfortable about the briefing that we had, and I said in the briefing that we were going to ask a few questions.

I try to limit my questions as much as I could, but your responses were fulsome and sometimes my colleagues next to me maybe think of something that I had missed.

Thank you, Minister, for the response and I thank the Chair for the indulgence of calling out to me each time.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 4 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 4 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 4 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act. (Bill 26)

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report Bill 26 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 26 without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report the bill without amendment.

Shall the motion carry?

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 (Lane): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue and Chair of Committees.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee of Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that the Committee recommends Bill 26, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act, without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends Bill 26 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Changed your mind, we're going to do it now?

L. PARROTT: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Now, okay.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered read a third time presently, by leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: I move, seconded by the Minister of Jobs and Growth, and Rural Development, that Bill 26 now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 26 be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act. (Bill 26)

SPEAKER: This bill has now been read a third time and it is ordered that the bill do pass and its title be as on the Order Paper.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Fair Registration Practices Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 26)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Order 5, second reading of Bill 22.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3, now be read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3." (Bill 22)

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

As the MHA for the historic and wonderful District of Bonavista, I just want, again, to officially welcome Amelia Peddle from Lethbridge in the District of Bonavista to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I know her parents quite well and we're very proud of the youth in the district who achieved so well, and Amelia is an example of one of those high-achieving students. So glad to have you with us, Amelia.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Two of us here now from the District of Bonavista. That's good.

Speaker, I rise in the hon. House to introduce amendments to the *Revenue Administration Act* to zero rate the provincial gas tax. For viewers at home that are watching, this is the act of which is going to bring the provincial tax on gasoline and diesel down to zero.

Now, I'd love to have a good, wholesome address here to start this bill off, and I know that the Official Leader of the Opposition is saying we don't ask lots of times, or we ask questions and we're not getting answers about the Churchill Falls economics of it. I would agree that we haven't had a whole lot of conversation with it.

I would ask permission or leave to know that sometimes under affordability, in my address here, that I may be able to bring in some of the benefits for affordability like this gas tax amendment would be. If I may have the permission from the Leaders of the Opposition.

The Third Party acknowledges it.

J. HOGAN: Will it be relevant?

C. PARDY: The Official Opposition?

J. HOGAN: No, keep talking to the bill.

C. PARDY: When we're talking about affordability, I'd just like to bring in –

SPEAKER: I would say to the Member, this is not a money bill. You need to be –

C. PARDY: I realize that.

So even with leave?

SPEAKER: Well, I'm hearing from the Leader of the Official Opposition that you're not getting leave, unless I misheard him.

C. PARDY: He just stated out to the media that he'd like to have some more information and discussion in the House. I'd like to start that off, if I may.

SPEAKER: Anyway, we need to be relevant to the bill.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

We're not having a conversation; this is not a debate club right now.

C. PARDY: Okay, no leave?

SPEAKER: I'm not hearing leave. We need to be relevant to the bill.

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

C. PARDY: Leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

C. PARDY: Leave granted, if that's good.

SPEAKER: So leave is granted now?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CLERK: It has to be unanimous.

SPEAKER: Do we have unanimous leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Yes, we have unanimous leave.

Okay.

C. PARDY: This is the collaboration that was talked about earlier in our tenure, and I got to love it. That's fantastic, good.

SPEAKER: I will add that this is a very unusual circumstance, but anyway.

C. PARDY: Oh, 100 per cent, but I will keep it narrow, just some –

J. HOGAN: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: Yes.

Over the last couple of months, Speaker, we've heard clearly from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that affordability remains one of our biggest concerns. We ran as a government and number one was affordability. We said it today that $247 million thus far of people's money is provided back to people in affordability measures.

We know that people are feeling the impact of higher costs every time they pay a power bill, heat their home, buy groceries or fill up their vehicle. Today, we're introducing legislation that will remove the provincial gasoline and diesel tax, as I mentioned, bringing it down to zero cents a litre.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We know that people are frustrated by the price they're paying at the pumps, and we do know that we're getting revenue from the excess oil prices that enables us to remove the provincial gas tax. Some would say, well, that's not really on us and we didn't have any factor in this excess money, it was the geopolitical matters and affairs that happened, that we were the beneficiaries of it, simple as that. How we allocate it is on us as a government.

Fuel prices have been at record highs and for many families driving now, it isn't optional. People need their vehicles to get to work, get their kids to activities, attend appointments and go about their daily lives. This measure will provide real savings every time someone fills up – every time.

When you factor in the HST, drivers will save a little over 8.6 cents on their gasoline purchase and those that drive or utilize diesel in the transportation of our goods will save nearly – it's really 10.925 – so say 11 cents on the diesel when they have it – 11 cents on the diesel.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Is that going to automatically bring groceries down? No, it's not. Will it help? Yes, it will.

I'm sensing from a scrum that occurred two hours ago where we're going to ask about keeping it permanent, keeping this gas tax permanent, I want you to keep in mind that the three biggest parts of our revenue in our government, in our province, the first big expenditure is 42 per cent of our revenue goes towards health care. We had questions on health care in the House and we want to make sure that we improve our health care system – all 40 of us on the same page.

So 42 per cent of our revenue. Speaker, 16 per cent of our revenue goes to education and, in third place, in expenses, at 12 per cent is the interest we pay on the debt. When we look at people saying, well, you should have started this earlier. You should continue and go later. We're working within the fiscal envelope that we have, that the oil provided, 20 per cent. Therefore, we need a

start and we need an end. That is what we've put in place.

When someone calls out and stands in the scrum a short time ago and says let's make it permanent, we would say that when you make it permanent and what we've had in doing, we've had times recently where the price of oil was down to a little below $10. That was during COVID. That was the reason for that – down below $10. Then we had it back in December of '25 where it was around $21 a barrel. Today, it's at $114. We can do it today.

Making it permanent is not the way you fiscally manage the people's money knowing that we want health care and we want education, and the debt that has been passed on to us, we have to service that. So that's the 12 per cent. Those savings that people make add up. Yes, I know we have support that every little bit matters and, when it adds up then, the culmination of it all is meaningful to residents of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. This is another measure that we have.

What's especially important about this legislation is that it doesn't exactly provide relief today but it will over a series of months to come in the winter. We are also building in a protection that brings the provincial fuel tax at zero whenever the fuel prices remain above a specified threshold, which is – full disclosure – $89 US per barrel. That is judging by the Brent crude.

I'm sure the question is going to come up when we get into Committee: Why $89? Where did $89 come from? That's a good question, but let me answer that question right now.

The only other jurisdiction that has this in the country is Alberta, and Alberta has their threshold at $90. We went lower than Alberta's at $89. While that seems so trivial, they deal with West Texas oil; we deal with Brent crude. If you google those two sources of oil in the world, you will find that Brent crude is $11 more expensive than West Texas; $11 is what we use, the Brent crude. So we're $89, $1 below Alberta which uses West Texas, and that is the rational for that.

So prior to the beginning of each calendar year, on the 16th of the previous month, we will use the 20 days prior to determine the average price for oil. Let's say the first quarter is January, in December, in a future year, on the 16th, we are going to take the average of 20 business days before the 16th and take the average. If it is $89 or above, the provincial gas tax on gasoline and diesel is removed.

I got to repeat that again just to make sure, repeat it for effect. On the 16th of the month, prior to the month we take the decision – so if it is January 1, on December 16, we are going to have the average on that day of the 20 days before – which are 20 business days, not weekends; 20 business days when the market is putting us out the value – if the average on those is $89 or higher, we eliminate the provincial gas tax on gasoline and diesel. It automatically happens.

Some would say take the politics out of it and just put it there and let it happen. Everyone on the 16th can calculate as to where the price of oil is going to be on that next month, and that is on a quarterly basis.

Simply put is that when fuel prices are unusually high, people shouldn't have to pay the provincial fuel tax, on top of all other elevated costs. This ensures relief remains in place when people need it most.

Addressing the gas tax is part of a broader affordability plan which, again, we have brought in lots of affordability measures, which, once added up, provides significant relief for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. This is the latest measure. It's $25 million projected. Don't make it a start and an end date. We don't know how many million it is going to be, but at least we got a

start and an end and we will work with the threshold going forward with the $89 benchmark.

Again, just last week, we had two announcements that we made; one was the Churchill River Electricity Rebate, which is 15 per cent off. Start and an end, but we're confident that the Churchill Falls deal will be signed at that time, so we'll continue on with the 15 per cent rebate on people's electricity as a start, when we see the revenues come in from the Churchill Falls agreement that would be signed.

As stated earlier, we said affordability will be our top priority and there will be more additional measures coming – and, yes, I can see the excitement across from me, Speaker. I don't want to say that maybe there will be another Monday when we have the parameters straightened out that we can introduce and bring forward to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: What ties all these announcements together is simply the principle that we are listening to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We're listening. It's affordability measures, the world is dealing with it, but I think that what we're doing here is being appreciated well by Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to bring affordability to their homes.

I'm sure that when the leader travelled around the district, I was itching to know, when he travelled around, which district out there talked so much about a well-respected lawyer, Bern Coffey, because that was the prominent thing that he came back with after his tour across the Island. It could not have been the District of Bonavista, but, anyway, I just wanted to make sure.

It couldn't have been the District of Bonavista, but maybe he can answer that one.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

C. PARDY: We got to settle down.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Order, please!

C. PARDY: Settle down, yes.

So, anyway, we talked about putting a smorgasbord of relief and that is what we're doing. I would think the targeted measures that will come forth will be more targeted than what we've had and I look forward to those.

At the end of the day, Speaker, this is about helping people keep more money in their pockets. It's about making life a little more affordable for families, seniors, workers and businesses across Newfoundland and Labrador.

J. HOGAN: Loyola, do I have the work done?

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: Let me say this, Speaker. Churchill Falls will bring us affordability. I look forward to hearing from the Member for Mount Scio who stated emphatically back at the 2024 MOU that we need it for our revenues and we need it for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. She pleaded with us to get the MOU across the line. That's fair.

I'll be looking forward to her opinion now, when she states it again, to see where we are in relation to making this happen. Because if affordability is front and centre, I'd like to tell you what the Churchill Falls deal will bring to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

J. HOGAN: Now you're predicting the future. You can't do that.

C. PARDY: Not oil. I can't predict oil but this deal.

So let me say this to you, we had four days from September 15. We had 14th, 15th, 16th and 17th – four days in the House of Assembly where we had experts come into the House. They came in.

We listened very intently to what the experts – and people on the other side referred to them as experts. Not the government side, people on the other side referred to them as experts, but let me say this. This morning before leaving to come to work a little before 8, VOCM news was on. It was a clip from the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Let me tell you what he said. Let me share with you what he said, and I quote: We have no escalator, same as the 1969 contract. Now, let me repeat that – and people back home, I got to say we disagree with that and I want to rationalize it: We have no escalator, same as the 1969 contract.

Well, Barry Perry, who we class as an expert, far more superior than anybody we've got in this House with 40 Members, here's what he says – and just for the Member's reference, page 2283. He said – and I won't read it all – we've got a built-in escalator. He said it's a guaranteed one. This is the best of both worlds.

Then we had Natural Resources, the first time ever speaking in the House, from the federal government –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: They came in and said it was a great deal, the price we would get.

Power Advisory – Chee-Aloy came in here and said he has studied every contract for hydroelectricity across Canada. He referenced one in Ontario, the IESO contract. This one was a better deal than the best one he's aware of in Canada.

Then to come on and compare it to 1969, where there was no escalator, and we wonder what would confuse the people out in Newfoundland and Labrador. Why would they be confused if you stand and say something that we've had four days of experts saying that the escalator was there? Now we say there is no escalator. How can that be when you represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and you stand in the House and say no escalator when there is an escalator?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: So on –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. HOGAN: (Inaudible) Gull Island.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: So let me say this now – let me say this to you, we want, like the Member for Mount Scio, to get the MOU across the line because we need the revenue. If we want to have revenue to pay off our debt and provide affordability, I agree with the Member for Mount Scio, let's get it done and let's collectively bring that benefit to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We know how many billions, the Churchill Falls.

The escalator determines what Quebec pays for it. Forget the amount of power, they get a lot of it, but they pay us a lot of money. If you looked, which I'm sure you did, in

Annex D, Annex D tells you what we're getting. We don't need to negotiate in a definitive agreement like the market-based formula that they tried 10 months. This, Speaker, is what comes from Churchill Falls.

Therefore, by 2033, Hydro-Québec, the Province of Quebec, pays us a little over $1 billion in that fiscal. Before December 31, they've got to pay us $1 billion. If I had a little more time, I could tell you what $1 billion can do for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

C. PARDY: If I do, I'm going to get that.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: The only thing I would say, listen to this escalator, where the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island states there is no escalator. I can tell you that is factually incorrect – factually incorrect.

So let me share this with you, by 2038 –

AN HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

We need to have order and decorum in this hon. House. I should not have to be constantly having Members interrupted on chirping that's going on. I'm asking all Members for their co-operation. I have already had to take away speaking privileges from three Members. I do not enjoy doing that but, if I have to, I will.

I will also add that if a Member thinks because their speaking privileges have already been taken that that means you're fair game to continue chirping, I will take them away for the next day. So for the rest of the afternoon, I'm asking for order in this hon. House. The minister has the floor. If people don't like what he has to say or whatever, you'll have your turn to have your say. It goes both ways. I will also say that it applies to both sides of the House of Assembly.

Thank you.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Just another moment on this. In 2041, when the deal is to expire, we will get $2.8 billion paid to us in our Treasury from the Province of Quebec. That's in that year. So then when we go to the '40s, we're getting over $3 billion annually. When we go to the '50s, we're getting over $4 billion annually. When it goes to the '60s, we're getting over $5 billion a year annually, and thus it continues.

Now, for the people at home, what does $1 billion do? That's a fair question. That's a lot of money, but exactly what would it do? Maybe Members of the House might say, well, what does $1 billion do? Well, $1 billion can reduce the personal income tax 50 per cent by every Newfoundland –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask the hon. minister to address the Chair, please.

C. PARDY: Sorry, Speaker.

What $1 billion can do is, it can save 50 per cent off all taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador – cut it in half. It could also reduce the HST and the RST by 50 per cent, eliminate the provincial gas tax and all vehicle and driver's licence fees and, this one – 40 Members in the House, think of this one: What $1 billion can do?

It could increase the Child Benefit, the Seniors' Benefit and the Newfoundland and Labrador Income Supplement; not double and not triple, but it can increase that by six-fold for $1 billion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I would say to you, there is no escalator? That is Annex D.

I would say, if there was any questions – he was critical about the questions – the only question we had was a legal advisor that we had since we've got in; nobody asked what the financial implications were of this deal. No one has asked a question in this House of Assembly on what are the finances of this deal. Annex D, if you haven't seen it, look that up.

Then, while I was speaking, I could hear a very slight roar over there talking about Gull Island, talk about Gull Island

So then we have the Leader of the Opposition say our future has been sold to Quebec. Now, I am just saying. One Member stands up and says that there is no escalator; another one and says, we are referencing the 1969 deal is no different. If someone can show me income that is anywhere close to that at 0.02 cents, that is close to this, and you make a comparison with the 1969 deal? It is important that we remain factual.

I am fully aware that if you repeat something that is not factual enough times, people start to believe it. That scares me.

SPEAKER: Again, I would ask the hon. minister to please address the Chair.

C. PARDY: Oh, I am sorry. Yes, forgive me. I get excited sometimes when I speak, especially the passion on the finances.

The Member, again, Conception Bay East - Bell Island, says look at how much Quebec is getting compared to Newfoundland and Labrador. We can't get anybody to develop Gull Island, that was said by the head of Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. It was said by Barry Perry. He is doubtful anybody would ever do it outside of Hydro-Québec. He stated it; look that up.

So here's the way Gull Island works. The Opposition states we're losing market-based pricing, even though our experts say we've got market-based pricing. Our experts said it was too complicated; therefore, their recommendation was quit it and have something that would be an escalator, like we're talking about, that would give a definitive increase on Churchill Falls power. We've got that.

Gull Island goes this way: It's a $30-billion asset; it's a $30-billion investment. Our debt is around $20 billion.

My colleague from CBS talked about the hospital, adding $13 billion or $14 billion. We saw that we couldn't do it. Now, we're talking about us, as a province, we're going to build a $30-billion dam in Gull Island, but we don't have the ability to do it, but here's the way it goes, and the experts stated it. I can cite pages and if you read through, if you listen, you would know the experts stated it.

Gull Island: $30 billion. We've got equity in that because Quebec is giving us $3.5 billion for our equity share in this $30 billion. I assume everyone is aware of that. Then they're going to give us equity on that, which will be millions of dollars earned over the life of a protect – 8.5 per cent equity on that $3.5 billion.

So the cost of service model that all the experts said, whether it be J.P. Morgan, whether it be Power Advisory, whether it be Barry Perry, whether it be Natural Resources, that is the model that all hydroelectricity, or the most of it, developments would be utilizing – cost of service model.

Therefore, Speaker, what they do is, at the early start, the prices are high because they need to get the money back to pay off their debt – $30 billion – and make sure they get enough to give us equity on the $3.5 billion they gave us.

Now, that to me sounds like a pretty good deal. The Members across would say, well, we look at that graphic of Gull Island and the price is decreasing. That's what the cost of service model does. The first 10 or 15 years it's up high, they get so much principal paid off and, after that, it drops. Because at the end of the PPA, when it's over, we pick up 60 per cent of that asset. Now it becomes Newfoundland and Labrador's 60 per cent and the revenue starts then from Gull Island to come in. We've never put one cent into it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Not one cent.

I would repeat again: You stand up and say not factual things in this House and many people out in Newfoundland and Labrador are going to believe it. That frightens me. That's the second time. That scares me.

Transmission – they're going to build from Gull Island to Quebec. They're going to build from Gull Island to Churchill Falls. They're doing that. If someone said that we're being sold to Quebec, just think of it, if I were personally involved in that situation to know that I've got an asset, personally, if I had the money, I would want Gull Island for Newfoundland and Labrador. I would want that.

Churchill Falls upgrades – Barry Perry says he wonders about the Churchill Falls upgrades, whether we can afford it now. Churchill Falls upgrades are done – CF(L)Co. We own 65 per cent of CF(L)Co. So someone would say aha, 65 per cent, we're looking after that debt. But if Quebec is taking most of the power, the off-takers are paying for the upgrades that we do. We'll get 150 per cent, what he referred to as the premium tranche.

I would say in every aspect of this deal we do well. One thing that I'm sure a lot of people are missing, Speaker, the investment tax credit, Quebec will do well with getting money from the federal government with the investment tax credit on Gull Island. Do you know why, Speaker? You know why, but I just want to make sure for the House and the people. You can only get money back if you pay money in.

We don't pay a cent on Gull Island; we get revenues. It's all Quebec money that's going to build that power plant – all Quebec money. If you put $30 billion into building it, you deserve an investment tax credit back from the federal government. What's up with that? We won't get any of that money back because we're not paying a cent. If someone said, well, what's up with that? It's a good deal.

Gull Island will be ours, 60 per cent of it, when it's due. They need to get their money back for the $30 billion. The Opposition says we're not in favour of this deal because we don't have market-based pricing. We've got market-based pricing, but every expert said we recommend not doing it. Still, their stand is Quebec is getting more and we don't have market-based pricing.

Imagine, four experts walked in here and stated that that wasn't the way to go –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: – cost of service model was the way to do it, but they remain. I would say again, if you repeat something that's not factual so many times, people start to believe it and that, for the third time, causes me some concern. It certainly does.

So when we talk about the $1.2 billion that we're paying in interest on the debt – $1.2 billion – we will have that in 2033. In 2033, we're going to break the billion-dollar mark with the escalator for Churchill Falls power, that Quebec is getting most of it, because they're going to pay us and we're going to benefit from the revenues. That looks after the debt that we are paying today.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, just to conclude, I would say, ask the right questions – ask the right questions in the House of Assembly. Unless you're afraid of the answer, and I would think that what we've put out here is the Churchill Falls deal that we stand behind, and it's going to benefit the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I think that, maybe, the first speaker might be the Member for Mount Scio. I look forward to hearing her speech, so I know that I'm going to close mine out. I do look forward to hearing my colleagues speak. This Bill 22 removes the provincial gas tax off gasoline and diesel to bring relief to the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador who own the resources of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

So for anyone watching, just to give you some context of where we are and how we've gotten here, we are debating Bill 22 about removing the gas tax, which we support the concept of removing the gas tax which I'm going to speak about.

What also, actually, just happened, for anyone watching, is we all gave leave to widen the scope of debate and the Minister of Finance has widened the scope of debate very wide to include all significant elements of the Churchill Falls debate.

From my perspective, and I know on our side of the House, we have been desperate for a Churchill Falls debate. Now, I would love to be prepared today for a Churchill Falls debate. I can go off the top of my head on quite a bit of Churchill Falls, but I will say that, hopefully, I'll have time to come back. I know my colleagues will also be preparing for a Churchill Falls debate because we have not had the opportunity to have a real debate on Churchill Falls.

When we had our special debate, we were given a limited amount of time to speak. There was no back and forth. I know Members of the government – the first time they heard my personal opinions on the Churchill Falls deal and the thoughts that I had, was on the last day.

I think this is an excellent opportunity for democracy where, now, I, certainly, and I believe many of my colleagues, will be taking a fulsome opportunity to have a Churchill Falls debate. Thank you very much to the Minister of Finance for an early Christmas gift. This is amazing.

I also look forward to hearing what all the Members of the government think about the Churchill Falls deal – any areas of strength or weakness. I really look forward to in-depth review from all the Members of the government on their Churchill Falls deal.

What is really important, though – and I do want to circle back to this gas tax bill and I'm going to start there, Speaker, because I know the Minister of Finance just covered a wide range of scope – in terms of the gas tax change that the Minister of Finance – my brain is going all over the place. I'm just hurriedly scrambling lots of notes.

I do support the idea of reducing the gas tax and eliminating the gas tax. I don't agree with the approach the government is taking in this specific example, which I will tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians why. But let's just walk through what the government is planning on doing in this bill. Again, we fully support removing the gas tax. The government is making a significant amount of money on the price of a barrel of oil from the Treasury that they get, so they

are removing the gas tax off regular gasoline and diesel, which we fully support.

So the bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 3, which we are debating, officially, says that "a person who acquires gasoline at a retail sale in the province on or before March 31, 2027, shall not pay tax on the grades of gasoline referred to in" other paragraphs, which I'm going to get to.

So when this starts, and this would take effect December 1, 2026, which I also think is too late, we believe that any reduction in gas tax should happen sooner or earlier, as soon as the minister can. So we believe that it should happen before December 1, 2026, Speaker, but that is the date, according to the bill, where the retail sale for grades of gasoline and diesel will be reduced as per the bill.

The change that government is implementing adds a threshold, which will be in regulations, which the minister has defined at $89 US a barrel, and the government will be looking at the price of a barrel of oil over 20 trading days prior to a quarter – so this is going to be done in four quarters. Every quarter, the government will look at the last 20 days, trading days, and the average price of a barrel of oil – we don't know the regulations yet, so we're going to ask the minister more about that in Committee, but at some point around $89, whether it's more or less, we're not exactly sure how that technically will work – then gas tax will be removed or gas tax will be added.

We know that Alberta has a similar system with their gas tax system, but they have a tiered approach. So there are different rates. It's not all or nothing. There are tiers where, at a certain price of oil, a certain price gets added or removed, and when gas goes up – it's kind of like a ladder rather than an all on or all off approach.

This approach, again, I can see what the government is trying to do. They don't want to be involved every time the gas price goes high or low. But what they're doing is they're moving the threshold into regulations. It still gives them that opportunity to change the threshold.

So the government are still involved. I understand it's easier than coming back to the Legislature to either add tax or remove tax, adding a threshold in the regulations still gives the government that power, that choice of what the threshold is, of whether or not there is gas tax or no gas tax. They're maintaining control. They're putting a threshold in the regulations.

I was thinking, wouldn't it be cleaner and simpler to just have the gas tax amount in the regulations and give the government the power, in Cabinet, of just changing the gas tax percentage? Essentially, it's the same mechanism whether or not gas tax is applied or not and they're just adding a threshold in regulations. But we'll get into more detail in that in Committee.

One thing I find really interesting about this approach, and I know we talk a lot about red tape in this Legislature, the government is adding red tape. I know that it's affordability, fine, and they're removing the gas tax, but they're also, in doing this, in adding 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 lines or so many clauses in a bill and adding additional regulations, that adds red tape.

So when the CFIB – if you go through their report – part of what they actually do is count the number of regulations and the number of legislative clauses. So in this, the government are adding to their regulatory burden by adding the mechanism this way. So rather than just eliminating gas tax, they are interestingly increasing red tape to add this threshold. They're making it more complicated, adding a threshold in regulations, which Cabinet then controls, to decide whether or not gas tax is applied or not. I think that is very, very interesting.

I'm sure everyone in this House knows, we have a very complicated gas pricing system in Newfoundland and Labrador, which I, hopefully, will look forward to discussing further with the government in Committee, because the tax on a litre of fuel is one component of the gas price. I know we're not talking about the *Petroleum Products Act* but it's still all about the gas tax price.

We have a very complicated gas tax system. The Public Utilities Board regulates that. The government have now created an also complicated mechanism which they say the threshold is going to be $89 a barrel but we don't know the exact specifics of how that's going to work yet, because that'll be in regulations which we haven't seen yet and, obviously, we wouldn't see.

They're adding another complicated mechanism on top of our already complicated gas pricing system to figure out how much tax will be applied. Then we think, okay, retailers are not going to know how much tax to apply to a litre of oil in any quarter of the year.

We heard in the briefing, which was this morning, that the department is going to try to give retailers 10 days notice, but that notice is not going to be in the regulations or in legislation. So the government doesn't legally have to give them a notice, although I'm sure they will. They legally don't have to give them notice, so retailers won't know in any given quarter, I guess until 10 days before, whether or not they're going to have to add tax or remove tax.

That's all based on the price of a barrel of oil over 10 trading days before the quarter, and if the government decides to change the threshold that it outlined in the regulations – assuming they won't but they certainly can – you're taking already a very complicated gas pricing system and making it more complicated and less transparent and less predictable for retailers and residents across Newfoundland and Labrador.

There are a few consequences and issues about that. Currently, with our gas pricing model, when fuel goes on a ship and goes to Labrador, the people in Labrador that buy the fuel from that ship pay the price of oil – now I'm not talking about the tax but the price of oil before tax is based on the price of a barrel of oil when they bought it. It's not based on market prices. It's kind of a point in time. They put it on the boat and it goes to Labrador and then people pay that price.

Sometimes half the year they win, so half the year they actually pay less than maybe a lot of people on the Island because the price of a barrel of oil when that tanker was filled was less. So half of the year they do well, half of the year they pay too much, or they think they pay more than what people on the Island are paying. If it's costs a lot of money to fill up the tanker of oil, then the people at the pumps in Labrador pay more money. They pay more than, let's say, what the Island is or what the global price of oil is.

That same concept could apply in this instance because the government is just looking at a 10-day window before a quarter, which, in terms of global politics, is a bit of an arbitrary financial number. Like a year in a quarter, it's just an arbitrary construct. You're dividing the year into four quarters, fine. But the government are going to look at the 10 trading days before the end of that quarter, and they're specific days of the week, I think. It's kind of an arbitrary quarter and they're going to take 10 days.

One criticism of the Alberta model is that it could be an artificial – that 10 days might not be a good indication of what's actually going on with gas prices, what's going on with the price of oil and that it's an artificial – for example, if there was a blip, it could be artificially high, artificially low. So then Cabinet is going to have to come in and do kind of a price adjustment. They're going to have to revisit the threshold to balance out the system again, if these 10 days shows like a blip in the price of oil.

I think it is overly complicated. I do note that the CFIB criticized Alberta's model. They say that it relies on backward looking averages – that's the wording they used, it relies on backward looking averages – to set whether or not to charge tax. That is the approach the government is taking for fuel, which I think is not very streamlined and not very simple for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I do want to reiterate that we fully support eliminating the gas tax. The government are making a significant amount of money off a barrel of oil and it's right for them to give it back to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I would strongly recommend that this is not the right approach. They should just take the gas tax off, because they're adding this other complicated layer which adds more red tape. The way to stop adding red tape is to not add it in the first place. They've created now this new layer of gas tax complexity on top of an already complicated gas pricing model.

My head is still spinning from the wide scope of things that I could possibly discuss, which I will get to.

The other thing that this model does not account for is exchange rate. We know, because the government's new proposed gas tax model relies on the US dollar price of a barrel of oil – fair enough, that's what it is based on. But the exchange rate between the Canadian dollar and the US dollar is also an incredibly important factor in what the price at the pump is for consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

My understanding is – and I'm sure the Minister of Finance will correct us if I'm misspoken here later or another Member of the government – if there is a one-cent change to the exchange rate between the US dollar and the Canadian dollar, over a year that equates to a $35-million difference to the Treasury of Newfoundland and Labrador.

So the exchange rate has an incredible influence on the price of oil and the amount of money the government makes, so it's a bit – I don't know. Clumsy is the first word that comes to mind, in terms of we're now going to have this sophisticated system to decide whether or not gas tax is applied, which looks at a barrel of oil bit it doesn't consider, whatsoever, exchange rates. So I think that that is kind of a clumsy execution, where that's not even considered.

Again, if there's an unintended execution of this complicated formula, then Cabinet can go and change the threshold; but if Cabinet is going to intervene anyway, which is the government's prerogative to do, then why not just decide whether to charge tax or not or the tax rate rather than manipulating a threshold in regulations. I don't logically follow how that is a good idea, Speaker.

I look forward to hearing more from the minister, hopefully, in Committee about – he mentioned a threshold of $90 in Alberta and ours is $89. I know they're West Texas and ours is Brent crude, but hopefully we can pick at that a bit more in terms of why $89 was chosen, other than it's very similar to Alberta's. Hopefully the government here had some discussions with the Government of Alberta and we know a bit more about why that was chosen.

I'd also like to hear more, hopefully in Committee, from the minister about the exchange rate impacts, what exchange rates they're anticipating and what exchange rates throw this system out of wack, and I guess Cabinet will then get to change the threshold to overcompensate for whether or not the government wants to have a gas tax or not. I don't think the execution is spot on here, Speaker.

I do think Newfoundlanders and Labradorians want savings as soon as possible. I know that the gas tax bill sees this change come into force on December 1, 2026. I do know that retailers do need some notice, but we believe – let's say that they

actually come into force November 6, for example, or a modified version of the act should come into force November 6 – December 1 is too long.

The government is getting an extra, potentially, $7 million from the next month based on Newfoundlanders and Labradorians paying the provincial tax at the gas pumps when they could remove it earlier. If they could have a simpler model and remove that price earlier, that would save a lot of headache for, I'm sure, a lot of retailers, the Public Utilities Board and everyone involved in gas pricing.

The government has a majority so they can vote this through. I hope they take our suggestions on board as we go through this debate; although, I am wondering now how much we are actually going to talk about the very important gas tax bill, because the minister has given us a gift in discussing the really more important Churchill Falls agreement.

So what was a gas tax bill, which is incredibly important to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians – I would be remiss if I did not recognize, at least myself, personally, that I feel an obligation to kind of pivot somewhat to talk about the importance of the Churchill Falls deal, and as I believe the government wishes us to do because the Minister of Finance did so quite significantly in his opening remarks for this gas tax bill.

I wish I had better prepared for a Churchill Falls debate. I do not have my Churchill Falls debate notes here, but that is okay. There is a lot that we can get to in the next 20 minutes.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Oh yes, it is all good. My throat is a bit scratchy. I had my flu shot and my COVID shot, which was paid for by the government Treasury. So thank you very much to the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's been just recuperating from my flu shot and my COVID shot this week, which I'd recommend that all Members get their flu shots, and anyone watching, to protect everyone. That is my public health – I went a bit off relevance there, so I am going to come back to relevance now.

In terms of Churchill Falls, we have not had a chance to have a significant debate about Churchill Falls. We had our four-day session where we did have experts come into the House. I believe it was framed as an information session. We asked questions; we got some answers. We have a lot of answers that we did not get, so hopefully we can maybe revisit those questions as part of this debate now. Maybe we can get the answers we were looking for.

I did reflect, because I was on the government side, I was a backbencher and, as a Member of the government, you don't necessarily understand every nuance of every bill. I personally strive to do that. I paid specific attention to the Churchill Falls file.

I spent many nights in the basement of the QEII Library finding every single book I could on Churchill Falls; reading all of the BRINCO, reading everything I could possibly find about Churchill Falls, looking at maps and making sure I could visualize the whole thing. I went through every single thing to do my due diligence as an elected Member for the people of Mount Scio to make sure that I was doing my due diligence, my fiduciary duty to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in making sure that I put forward an appropriate argument internally within our government. Now I'm on the other side, in Opposition, and I believe it is our duty to use every opportunity we can in this Legislature to ensure that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do get the most value out of a Churchill Falls deal.

I do support a deal; we do need the money, as the minister said, but we have significant

concerns with the current deal. I said in my closing remarks in our four-day thing, and the Members of the government only heard my concerns on the last day. I was reflecting, some of them, I think, were surprised, but because of the nature and the very tight construction of the Rules of Debate, we couldn't even have a back and forth. The government didn't have an opportunity to challenge me on my thoughts. The four-day information session we had on Churchill Falls was so tightly restricted that we couldn't flush out what was right, what was wrong, who was saying something accurate and who was saying something not accurate, as the Minister of Finance has talked about. Hopefully we'll be able to get to that in this debate.

So it's not that I have all the answers, but I was reflecting on the fact that the first time that anyone on the government side would have heard any of our personal thoughts – maybe the critic focused on Churchill Falls got to speak more than some of us, and rightfully so, as well as the MHA for Windsor Lake and Leader of the Official Opposition, but a lot of us had significant concerns. The Members of the government, the first time they had to hear our concerns on the Churchill Falls deal was on the last day of that debate in the four-day information session.

Yesterday, we had our private Member's resolution, and I had lots of notes prepared for that. I was hopefully going to try to get it into five minutes. I know many Members of the Opposition had very valid points yesterday to use in our private Member's resolution, and now I'm very grateful to the Minister of Finance that we will get the opportunity to raise those points in this debate, which is excellent use of the Legislature.

So I thank you very much to the Minister of Finance.

L. DEMPSTER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Yes.

I only have some of those notes here, so I won't be able to go to all of them, but I think I'm going to get a chance the next time this is revisited, which hopefully will be on Monday. I don't think I'll get to my full time while I'm here speaking today, which is great.

We have not had an actual debate on the government's proposed Churchill Falls DCIA. The government have said it will not come back to this House, but we are so desperate to debate it. We are desperate for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to get into the weeds, to get into the details, which I hope now the government will do with us. I hope now –

L. DEMPSTER: If it's so good.

S. STOODLEY: Yes, if it's so good, if the government is so happy, if they're very proud to stand behind I'm sure the millions of dollars they're paying to promote it because every time I go to the website, I see – I was on the CBC website and the four ads I saw were all those kind of bluey-turquoise, the ads the government are running in the Churchill Falls deal.

I look forward to a fulsome debate on Churchill Falls. This is more important than the gas tax bill. The Churchill Falls deal is more important than the gas tax bill. While I fully support the government reducing and eliminating the gas tax, this is a kind of nuanced but I do want to recognize the gas tax.

I don't want that to get lost, but the Churchill Falls debate that we've been hungry for, I'm very excited that we can have and I'm going to prepare for it the next time I can come back and speak. I know my colleagues will be prepared as well. I look forward and, hopefully, we can hear from the government Members. Because I do think the government Members – some are in Cabinet and some are not in Cabinet. In

Cabinet, you get extra briefing. You get extra information and maybe everyone in the government understands every nuance of this deal and I really, truly hope that they do.

Hopefully, at the end of this, when we are concluded with this now Churchill Falls debate, also gas tax, but I hope that all Members of the government and the Members of the Opposition get all of our questions asked. I hope that we do understand every single nuance that we can of this significant agreement. Obviously, everyone appreciates the significance of the agreement, so it's just incredible.

What a gift the Minister of Finance has given us, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, elimination, hopefully, of gas tax and now a Churchill Falls debate. Thank you very much, Minister of Finance.

The minister also talked about Mr. Coffey and Mr. Perry. So I think it's very concerning for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, given the importance and significance of this agreement, that we do not know who, at any given time, is leading the charge.

I understand that it's not appropriate to give the public every single piece of information at all times like on every day, but significant changes that have happened it's just laughable, Speaker, that they have not been disclosed publicly. We don't have the information about Mr. Coffey. I know that the government are mocking our even bringing that up, but it is very important.

For example, in the last election, when we all went knocking on doors, Mr. Wilson's letter, the advocate, the letter that he wrote and what was in the letter, that was a significant deciding factor in a lot of people's votes in terms of everyone having an opinion about what was going on with Churchill Falls. They respected Mr. Wilson and they wanted to hear what he had to say.

These are all puzzle pieces in terms of, is this the right deal? Can we trust the government? Is the government negotiating the right deal? Do they have the right process? Do they have the right people in place to make sure that Newfoundlander and Labradorians get the right deal for the next five or six generations? I think these are all incredibly important puzzle pieces.

Does Mr. Coffey have an NDA? Why is he not here anymore? What is Mr. Wilson's role? These are all incredibly important puzzle pieces that can unravel or not, or they make the puzzle look beautiful. These are all incredibly important pieces in the overall picture.

Mr. Perry, for example, has an excellent reputation. In my discussions with industry experts, the fact that Mr. Perry's name was associated with his deal, they said, oh, well, it must be good if Mr. Perry is the lead negotiator. I talked to people who made more experience with Mr. Perry than I did who only had amazing things to say about him.

But now to find out, I believe in the last 24 hours, that during the four-day information session that we had on Churchill Falls, the Premier knew that Mr. Perry was not continuing on. It's laughable. So Mr. Perry was not going to be the lead negotiator and he knew, answering questions, that he was not going to continue on to be the lead negotiator.

I mean, that's just unfathomable that the government would have this four-day session – and this is the referendum replacement. Then there's already a mutual understanding between the lead negotiator and the government that this individual is not continuing on in their role. It's almost unfathomable.

These incredibly significant puzzle pieces in the puzzle that will be what this government – hopefully, there are a lot of different things that have to happen yet. In Quebec, we

don't know who the next government is. I don't believe Cabinet has been chosen in Quebec yet. I don't believe the Indigenous governments are on board yet.

There are a lot of puzzle pieces still to fall in place. So, personally, I'm not willing to accept that what the government has is necessarily what is going to be legally binding at some point in the future. There are still a lot of puzzle pieces left to put into place, but all of that is in the spirit of making sure that Newfoundland and Labrador has the best deal possible, 100 per cent.

I don't think the government needs to throw it away, but there are key components that we don't have answers to. We sat here for four days; we did not get answers on. There are key pieces that we still don't know, and we're still learning. The government only made the announcements yesterday that they did because of our private Member's resolution, so now we have to take this advantage. What are we going to learn from the government about the Churchill Falls deal because of the gift that the Minister of Finance has given us by this new gas tax/Churchill Falls rebate, which I'm so excited for?

I have to go revisit my notes and my questions, and I know my colleagues will be as well. I don't want to diminish the importance of the gas tax but, obviously, that is significantly less important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador than the Churchill Falls debate. Speaker, it's just incredible.

Getting to some of the Churchill Falls items that I'm remembering off the top of my head, in my remaining time before I get to go back and recoup to have more concise arguments with my remaining time the next time we come back to this bill, I spoke with an industry expert when we were having our information sessions, and I said this in the House already. The industry expert called me, and he said, Sarah, the government are giving all the upside to Quebec.

I don't remember, I have it in my notes and I'll have it for you next time, but they said, okay, well, if electricity rates skyrocket to something, Newfoundland and Labrador does not benefit at all from that price increase. We already know what the price we're going to get is. They said we can just pack up and go home and global electricity prices will be irrelevant to the people in Newfoundland and Labrador in terms of the Churchill Falls, Gull Island and the collection of assets in Labrador. The price of global electricity will be irrelevant to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for the length of this agreement if this proceeds. That's what the industry expert said to me.

So knowing and all the conversations I've had with constituents and with Members of the general public about Churchill Falls and what we need to get right in terms of the next deal, yes, we need a lot of money, we need to benefit Newfoundland and Labrador, but the public does not have any tolerance for a deal where Quebec wins and Newfoundland and Labrador loses. I also know that. I know that the public does not want Quebec to benefit.

Now obviously, there's a negotiation, and I think everyone understands that Quebec has to benefit and Newfoundland and Labrador has to benefit. Quebec wouldn't agree, wouldn't sign on, unless there was something in it for them, but the idea that global electricity prices can skyrocket and Newfoundland and Labrador is like oblivious to that for the length of this agreement, in my opinion, is unfathomable.

I look forward to hearing from the Members of the government maybe, hopefully to clarify that and to answer all the questions that we have that we are now going to prepare. There are so many little bits the Minister of Finance touched on that we need to regroup on.

The government was so confident in this deal. If they are so confident, why not have more of an open debate? We had a

Question Period at the end of each day of our four-day information session, why not have a structure – I don't think we were asking for anything more than what we offered the first time. But we could not have that. We could not freely ask reasonable questions. We wanted a Committee of the Whole style questions, back and forth, a respectful discussion about this incredibly important file and the government was not willing to allow this Legislature to have that debate.

We can have it on a gas tax bill. We can have back and forth, Committee of the Whole, respectful debate, questions, discussions, but we could not have that for the most important deal in this province. So I think we are going to take full advantage of this opportunity now that the Minister of Finance has presented to us.

Because that is what we want. We want a reasonable, rationale debate that is important for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. If the government was so confident in a deal, why the restrictions? Why not have a regular Committee of the Whole style debate? We weren't asking for anything out of the ordinary.

Why now will the government not agree to bring the definitive agreements back to the House? If they are so confident that it's the best deal, that they have all the answers, why are you so afraid to talk to us about them? Why are you so afraid to answer our questions? Why is the government so afraid to have another vote? Are any other Members going to come over across the floor?

They don't have to join us, but the House of Assembly can make a desk over there very quickly for any Members who don't believe that this is the right deal for their constituents, for their grandchildren. I think having lots of questions, that is the only way to tease some of that information out.

I believe I have three minutes left right now. One final thing I did want to say is in the DCIA in our PMR, one clear reason to me why the definitive agreements need to come back to the House for a final vote is the Government of Canada's involvement.

When we were in the briefing, I specifically asked the negotiating team, in our briefing that we had, is the Government of Canada signatory to any agreements as part of what we're talking here today? Are they a signatory to any agreement? The definitive answer I got was no, the Government of Canada are not a signatory to any of these agreements.

Now, though, in the government's news release yesterday, they talked about – I don't have the wording with me, or I might, because I wasn't prepared for a Churchill Falls debate, but that's okay, we will be next time. The news release from the government from yesterday talked about agreements with the Government of Canada.

I'm not saying it's a bad thing, but there is a fundamental difference between no agreements with the Government of Canada and agreements with the Government of Canada. That is a clear black-and-white position that has now changed between the briefing and the four-day information session we had, and now the government's position, from their news release yesterday, said agreements with Canada, which is a fundamental change to what we were talking about from our four-day information session.

Speaker, I would have raised this in our PMR yesterday, but we heard a lot from the government, which is great. But now, during this gas tax bill, we will have the opportunity to raise all of those important points. So I completely disagree with any suggestion that our four-day information session that we had replaces a vote of this Legislature on whether or not the 40 elected Members

agree with the definitive agreements and the DCIA.

I'm a Liberal Member; I don't just represent Liberal. I represent many, many Conservative voters. I represent many people who don't vote. Those people deserve a vote and they deserve to hold me accountable for their vote, absolutely 100 per cent, but I think it's disrespectful to the people, the voters of all parties in all districts, for the government to say, oh, well, we've got it taken care of. It doesn't need to come back to the Legislature. It's exactly the same. You already voted.

I think it is incredibly disrespectful for the government to suggest that, and it's disrespectful to the Conversative voters in my district and in our districts, and to the people who don't vote and to the people who voted for the NDP and the people who voted for independent candidates. The Churchill Falls agreements need to come back to this House.

We will have a lot of questions for the government on the Churchill Falls agreement. I do want to conclude that I support reducing the gas tax, and I thank the Minister of Finance for two gifts he has given the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

B. DAVIS: Don't forget, you have to move in the closing minutes.

S. STOODLEY: Oh, okay.

I move to adjourn debate, seconded by the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, so that I continue next time, please, Speaker.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that debate now be adjourned.

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.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, seeing the time of the day, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that this House do now adjourn.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House is now adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, November 2, 2026, at 1:30 p.m.

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