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FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA*

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

In the Speaker's gallery today, I would like to welcome Carol McDonald, former mayor of the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's.

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

**SPEAKER:** Carol will be recognized in a Member's statement this afternoon.

Also, in the Speaker's gallery today, accompanying Ms. McDonald are Charlie Hamlyn, the CAO of the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's; Robert Stapleton, town councillor with the Town of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's; Karen Stapleton, Colleen Rogers, Bobbi Ryan, Madonna Stewart Sharpe and Alex Rogers. They are all here to accompany Ms. McDonald today.

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

**SPEAKER:** I'd also like to welcome back our page, Emily Conway. Great to see you, Emily.

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

**SPEAKER:** As we embark on this first session of the Fifty-First General Assembly, let us take a moment to reflect on the freedoms that we enjoy in this beautiful province and give thanks to the brave individuals in uniform who have valiantly served our province and country – many of whom returned from service permanently impacted physically and/or emotionally; many of whom paid the ultimate price.

May we also give thanks for those brave individuals who continue to serve either domestically or in foreign lands to keep us safe. It is greatly due to their efforts, their commitment and their sacrifice that we are able to gather here today in this hon. House to engage in free democratic debate on

behalf of the citizens who have given us the privilege to serve.

Let us never forget their sacrifice, and let us always honour, through our actions, what they stood for by treating this hon. House as a place of dignity and respect.

### **Statement by Members**

**SPEAKER:** Today we will hear Members' statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Burgeo - La Poile, Burin - Grand Bank, Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair and Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

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

**M. KING:** Speaker, today I rise to recognize the remarkable work of the Ramea Volunteer Fire Department who saved two lives in their community in just over a month.

On January 11, 2026, firefighters responded to a cardiac arrest and acted immediately, restoring the patient's heartbeat and breathing before coordinating a medevac with 103 Search and Rescue Squadron. Only weeks later, on February 15, they responded to a house fire with an elderly resident trapped inside. With conditions making an interior rescue impossible, members carried out a difficult exterior rescue through a small bedroom window, bringing the occupant safely out to medical care.

The members involved in these responses were Andy Skinner, Boyd Keeping, David Kendall, Delilah Skinner, John Walsh, Kelly Keeping, Kevin Warren, Matthew Greene, Nancy Poole, Pamela Roberts, Sheng Ramos and Wade Durnford.

Speaker, in rural communities like Ramea, volunteer firefighters are often the first line of emergency response. Their training,

commitment and willingness to step forward at any hour to serve is to be commended.

Speaker, I ask all Members of this House to join me in thanking the Ramea Volunteer Fire Department and all firefighters across Newfoundland and Labrador for their courage, dedication and service to our communities.

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

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

**P. PIKE:** Mr. Speaker, I stand to acknowledge an outstanding Newfoundlander and Labradorian who has done so much to help our veterans across our country.

David Flannigan, from Lawn in the District of Burin - Grand Bank, was given an honourable medical discharge from the Canadian Armed Forces in 1975. He then joined The Royal Canadian Legion and began a career of volunteerism that exceeded half a century.

David has served at all senior leadership positions in the provincial Legion command. In 2007, he became involved in national leadership, culminating in being elected Dominion President in 2016. Under David's leadership, significant improvements to honour our veterans have been achieved.

David is appreciative of the opportunities he's experienced throughout this career, and he says he would not change a thing.

The medals and accolades David achieved are numerous and range from the Branch level to receiving the King Charles Inauguration Medal in 2023.

Among the many memorable events, David has participated in laying a wreath at Beaumont-Hamel in 2016 on the 100th anniversary of that historic event, and at

Vimy Ridge in 2017 on the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion.

David Flannigan has definitely enriched our province and nation, and especially the lives of our veterans.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

**R. BALSOM:** Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the extraordinary compassion shown by the Quilts of Comfort group from Bay de Verde in response to the Conception Bay North wildfires.

On August 27, 2025, Valda Aucoin and Anita Walsh came forward with a simple but powerful idea to partner with the Salvation Army, led by Michele Lynette Moulton Yates, to provide quilts to families who had lost their homes in the wildfires.

With the support of Father Julius and the Assumption parish in Bay de Verde, volunteers came together without hesitation to assist. What followed was nothing short of remarkable. Quilters and supporters from communities across the region, the province and the nation donated fabric, supplies, food and countless hours of quilting to assist the effort. By October 13, more than 400 quilts have been prepared and ready for delivery to those in need.

Speaker, these efforts of kindness reminds us that in the face of hardship, the people of our province and country will step forward with generosity, with compassion and with care.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing this group for their efforts this past year.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, as a proud citizen of the NunatuKavut territory, I often think of how we stand on the shoulders of those who first organized, protected our lands, our stories, our way of life and of the debt of gratitude that we owe them.

NunatuKavut does the important work of advocating for the rights, recognition and well-being of its citizens. It works to advance Indigenous self-determination and secure recognition of our identity, culture and traditional land use.

I was thrilled to join President Russell, the governing council and my fellow NCC citizens at last weekend's Annual General Assembly. The gathering celebrated the milestone of 40 years of leadership, resilience and advocacy. It was a meaningful opportunity to come together and reflect on the progress that NCC has accomplished and acknowledge the challenges we have collectively faced.

The assembly also allowed us to look ahead toward the tremendous potential and opportunities that yet lie ahead for our communities.

This milestone is a reminder that our past guides us, our present strengthens us and our future is ours to shape together.

I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in congratulating the NunatuKavut Community Council on its 40th anniversary and to recognize its enduring contributions then, now, forever.

Thank you.

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

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

**F. HUTTON:** Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a legend and trailblazer on Newfoundland and Labrador's political scene, and as you've already stated, she's with us today.

Last fall, Carol McDonald retired at 81 after serving two consecutive terms as mayor of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, but this was not her first time wearing the chain of office. Way back in 1978, she made history as the first woman-elected mayor of Portugal Cove.

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

**F. HUTTON:** That was before the two communities had amalgamated.

As a widowed mother of two, Carol stepped forward at a time when few women sought public office. She broke barriers and led by example. Though she served only one term then, she returned to public life back in 2017 and earned the trust of her community once again, winning two consecutive terms as mayor.

I have long admired Carol's tenacity and steadfast commitment to her hometown. She always fought for what she believed was in the community's best interest, served her constituents with integrity and never wavered from her convictions.

Working closely with Mayor McDonald as the MHA for Portugal Cove-St. Philip's was a true honour, Mr. Speaker, and it led to a friendship that I truly value.

On behalf of all residents from Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, thank you, Carol. Your service to your community and your province will not be forgotten, and your retirement is well deserved.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

**Statements by Ministers**

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

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

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

I rise today to honour the life and legacy of a proud Newfoundlander and Labradorian, a dedicated public servant and a respected parliamentarian, the Honourable Len Simms, whose picture hangs right here in our Chamber.

Len answered the call to public service in 1979, beginning a distinguished career that spanned decades and left a lasting imprint on our province. He served the people of Grand Falls-Windsor and beyond as a Member of the House of Assembly and, in time, would hold many of the most respected roles in public life, including Speaker of this Honourable House, Cabinet Minister and Leader of the Official Opposition.

No matter the title he carried, Len approached public life with the same steady sense of purpose: to serve people and strengthen the province he loved.

Following his time in elected office, Len continued to give back through his leadership with the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and his involvement in community and charitable organizations, he remained deeply committed to improving the lives of others, particularly those most in need.

Those who knew Len knew that public service was never about recognition. It was about people. It was about community. And above all, it was about family. He was a devoted husband, father and grandfather, and he often spoke about how his family

inspired his lifelong commitment to building a better Newfoundland and Labrador.

Len Simms represented the very best of public life – humility, dedication and an unwavering belief in the power of service. His contributions helped shape our province, and his legacy will continue to be felt for generations to come.

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, and all Members of this Honourable House, I extend our deepest condolences to Len's family, his friends and all who had the privilege of knowing him.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

I join the Premier in remembering the Honourable Len Simms and recognizing a life defined by commitment to public life and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

In his last day in the House of Assembly, Mr. Simms said, "Let me assure you that politics is an honourable profession. It is something worthwhile to get involved with, despite the negativity that is often associated with the profession and with the job."

Public service demands resilience, conviction and a willingness to put community before self. While we may have approached public issues from different political perspectives, there is a shared understanding among those who serve in elected office. We do so because we believe in this province and its future.

Mr. Simms clearly held that belief; his work in this House and beyond reflected a deep attachment to the communities he

represented and a respect for the institutions of our democracy.

After his time in elected office, he continued contributing to public life and community development. He was known for saying there were never problems, only solutions – a mindset that clearly shaped both his public service and his life.

On behalf of the Liberal caucus, I offer sincere condolences to Mr. Simms's family and loved ones. May they take comfort in the knowledge that his years of service made a lasting difference in our province and one that he cared deeply about.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the Premier for an advance copy of the statement and join him in honouring the late Len Simms.

Mr. Simms was indeed a dedicated public servant, and he also served as Member for Grand Falls, serving the people of Grand Falls-Windsor as an MHA for 16 years. It's no small achievement. He served as Speaker, as a Cabinet minister, as Leader of the Official Opposition and as the CEO of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

We recognize him for his service to his community, his contribution to the House of Assembly and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we offer our deepest condolences to his family, to his colleagues and his friends.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

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

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

**A. BARBOUR:** Speaker, our new government is positioning Newfoundland and Labrador to stand proudly as the tourism capital of Canada – where visitors come for an authentic, unforgettable experience. And behind every great visitor experience is a diverse and hardworking workforce.

Speaker, every year, as part of Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador's Trade Show and Conference, the Tourism Excellence Award recipients are announced. These awards honour our province's exceptional operators and demonstrate passion, innovation, dedication and creativity in their tourism endeavours.

We are proud to have many individuals, such as John Steele, Donna Butt, Christina Loveless, and Chef Roary MacPherson, and organizations such as Pollen Nation Farm, Happy Adventure Inn, Champney's West Heritage Group, Ride In Style, Ochre House Retreat, Cliff's Edge Retreat, and Lighthouse Picnics, who were acknowledged last week for their leadership, passion and contributions that continue to shape and elevate tourism in our province.

Speaker, tourism supports our broader vision. A strong tourism sector strengthens our economy and helps us invest in the health care people rely on, create safer communities and build a better future for generations to come.

Together, we will build a stronger, more vibrant arts, culture and heritage and tourism industry – for all of us.

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

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

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

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

I'm honoured to join in congratulating the recipients of this year's Tourism Excellence Awards. Close to my heart from the District of Gander was the Cultural Tourism Award presented to Gander-ite John Steele. Not included in the minister's statement was the Town of Red Bay, Labrador, that received the Cruise NL Vision Award which I was honoured, Mr. Speaker, to accept on their behalf.

I'd like to acknowledge – I'd be remiss if I didn't – Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador's president, John Devereaux, the board of directors CEO, Craig Foley, and the entire team at Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**B. FORD:** Their commitment to bringing industry together for another outstanding conference is truly commendable.

Thank you, Mr. 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 an advance copy of the statement and would like to, as well, acknowledge the many tourism leaders who received well-deserved honour at the Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador award ceremony.

New Democrats recognize the vital role our tourism sector plays, not only as a cornerstone of our economy and rural development, but as a powerful force in preserving and celebrating our culture and heritage. Despite touting the value of

tourism, the PC platform was completely silent on meaningful supports for the artists in our province – the very people who bring our tourism sector and our culture to life.

Therefore we call on this government to take meaningful action. If they truly value our cultural sector, they need to prove it with a real funded plan to support working artists here at home.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

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

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

While we're very happy to hear the Bay du Nord Project – that we fought so hard to get approved in Ottawa – is approaching a new milestone, but we do have questions about the deal that I think is going to be announced today.

During the election, the Conservatives promised that they would not sign a deal on Bay du Nord unless all topside work was completed here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Does the Premier stand by his promise?

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

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

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, yesterday marked 125 days since we've been sworn in as the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. A commitment that we take with great pride and honour from the people and are humbled by the people of Newfoundland

and Labrador, who elected us to represent them as government.

During that campaign and ever since, I've talked about the need to make sure that all of our resources in Newfoundland are developed by our workers and that we turn around, in fact, and will make sure that we not only have our workers working, but also develop new industries for Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

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

A hundred and twenty-five days and we're still waiting for the Premier to say he's going to fulfill one of the promises he made during the election campaign.

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

**J. HOGAN:** I'll ask him again: Is he going to stand by the promise he made for all topsides work to be built here in Newfoundland and Labrador, or is he not going to stand by a promise that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians voted for?

Tell the people, Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, I have always stood for the workers of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I will always –

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

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** I will always continue to stand for the workers of Newfoundland and Labrador, and I will always continue to work hard to make sure

we bring new industry to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that will actually create new work and more work for the workers that are right here in our province.

This will be a province where people want to come to, not simply come from.

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

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

**J. HOGAN:** I hate to break it to the Premier, this is not a new industry. This is an industry, the oil and gas industry, that so many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians have counted on and relied on and worked hard for decades in this province. There's nothing new about it.

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

**J. HOGAN:** What's not new was the promise.

For the third time, will the Premier stand by the promise he made, or will the first 125 days look like the rest of his mandate, promises made, but promises that he will not even stand up to say that he will commit to, in his own words?

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

What's not new is that they're still using their timesheet – they forget about everything over the last 10 years. There was no deal.

I can assure you that whatever deal and whenever it comes for Bay du Nord, it will be way better than what they had in 2018, and it will be way better than what they had in 2022.

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

**L. PARROTT:** And I'll remind the leader that *Advance 2030* disappeared – when they sat here for 10 years touting 650 rigs, it all disappeared.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** They've done nothing for oil and gas.

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

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

**J. HOGAN:** No problem, I'm not sure what a timesheet is, but in any event, we know that the Premier will not stand to the commitments that he made to the people in Newfoundland and Labrador.

However, the Minister of Energy is standing up and he's angry already. One question in, Speaker. I'm not sure why. Maybe it's because he knows what he said in the House is that we must push Equinor to bring the hull into the province and complete all other work, including topsides and subsea modules. That's his words, Speaker. It's not about the last 10 years; it's about promises that they made.

So will the Premier stand by his minister and those promises that they made to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

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

**L. PARROTT:** I'll tell you what I'm angry at. I'm angry at the last 10 years of ineptness. I'm angry that someone can stand on their feet after sitting in a party that voted raises in for themselves and sit here and question what we're saying.

There will be a contract announced in the coming weeks. You will see what it is. Perhaps you should reserve your questions until then.

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

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

**J. HOGAN:** The flaw in the minister's statement is that I'm not asking about what's in the agreement. I'm asking them to stand by the promises that they made. Easy to say stand up and say yes, a promise I made, I will keep as Premier of this province. It's not about the contract; it's about promises that were made during the course of the election that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians voted for.

So a simple question, not what's in the contract, do you stand by your promises?

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

**L. PARROTT:** We stand by the men and women who put us in these chairs. That's who we stand by.

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

**L. PARROTT:** When this contract gets released, you will see that they stand by us too.

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

**J. HOGAN:** I'll try it a different way, Speaker. Since they don't want to say yes, we stand by our promises, I think we know the answer is no, they don't stand by those promises, Speaker.

We have heard through the media, and everyone in this province has read it, that the deal will include a dry dock.

I will ask the Premier: Is he going to try to sell the dry dock as a replacement for the promises for topside that he made?

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**L. PARROTT:** After 10 years of listening to all this leaked video footage and all this stuff, he should know better. None of this is coming from AI. We didn't do any of our reporting from AI, so we're good to go.

When we make an announcement, we will be clear where we stand.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**J. HOGAN:** I've wondered what they've done for the last 125 days, and I'm still wondering. I can guarantee you it wasn't practising how to answer questions in Question Period, Speaker.

The Premier has been teasing this deal for months, yet even in the last few days, Speaker, our world has dramatically changed, and energy markets have changed tremendously.

Does the deal that will be announced today reflect Newfoundland and Labrador's increased strategic advantage and leverage and Equinor's now more favourable position, given what's happened over the last few days?

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**L. PARROTT:** We've certainly accomplished more in the last 125 days than they did in the last 3,650 days.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Any announcement that comes out, when it comes out, will have Newfoundlanders' and Labradorians' best interests at hand. We will be looking at ways to better health care, to lower taxes and make communities safer.

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

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

**J. HOGAN:** If the metric is about announcing cancellations, I can guarantee you they've done more of that in 125 days than we did in 10 years, Speaker.

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

**J. HOGAN:** I'll try this question again because, earlier today, Canada's federal Energy minister stated that nations all around the world are calling him about energy opportunities in Canada, given how secure this country is and how secure and stable Newfoundland and Labrador is.

Has this new deal, given the rapidly changing events over the last 72 hours, taken into account our new position that the world now sees as a stable oil energy opportunity?

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

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

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

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** Speaker, what I can assure the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, that what they will find and what

they will see is a deal that will put Newfoundlanders and Labradorians first.

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

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** And when it comes to offshore oil and gas, make no mistake about it, in the country of Canada, Newfoundland and Labrador is offshore oil and gas.

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

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** We are just getting started on the redevelopment of our oil and gas industry – something that was left abandoned by the former government.

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

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

**J. HOGAN:** I said it yesterday and I'll say it today. It certainly wasn't abandoned when we received a standing ovation for getting Bay du Nord through the federal environmental procedures.

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

**J. HOGAN:** I'll ask the Minister of Energy, in the Throne Speech, it talks about the government introducing local benefits legislation because our resources must always be developed primarily for the benefit of our province and our people.

I ask the minister to please tell us what will be in that legislation.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Great question.

In 2019, we introduced a PMR for local benefits, and we actually got a standing ovation from these guys. They voted 100 per cent in favour of it, and here it is 2026, and not one thing has been done.

You can be rest assured that the local benefits agreement will be done quicker than seven years – absolutely quicker.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

**J. HOGAN:** The minister either didn't listen to my question or he didn't read the Throne Speech.

I'm asking about the local benefits legislation that was promised in the Throne Speech. What will that entail?

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

**L. PARROTT:** And the Member obviously has memory loss over the last seven years, because I'll tell you what, I heard and read the Throne Speech and we will put people in Newfoundland and Labrador first.

Everything we do when it comes to local Newfoundland benefits will address business and individuals that work in industry. When that bill comes, we're open to debate.

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

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

**J. HOGAN:** I think he's starting to understand my point, when the bill comes.

My question is: The bill is going to come after we have a deal on benefits with Equinor; so will the deal with Equinor have the requirements in it that your legislation will be, or are you getting this slipped in before your legislation –

**SPEAKER:** Address the Chair, please.

Thank you.

**J. HOGAN:** – comes to the floor?

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

I would think, given the Member's background, that he would know how negotiations work.

So we are negotiating a benefits agreement and there are confidentiality things around that. When the benefits agreement gets announced, you'll have all the right in the world to go through it. We have made – what we will bring forward – the best benefits agreement that this province has ever seen.

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

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

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

**F. HUTTON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given the huge economic opportunity presented by Bay du Nord, similar to the Churchill Falls Memorandum of Understanding, and the need to get this deal right, will the Conservatives commit to debating this agreement in the House of Assembly before any deal is finalized?

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

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

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

Someone showed me on Facebook last week that the Member over there actually negotiated the deal, so I'm not sure why he'd want to have a debate. They've done it all, apparently.

We know what we're negotiating right now. When an announcement comes, we'll have the discussions we need to have.

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

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

**F. HUTTON:** Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted that the minister reminded the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that it was our party that got the environmental assessment –

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

**F. HUTTON:** – across the finish line, despite the objections from Ottawa and a federal minister who did not want this to go through. Our party did manage to get it to the point where they can finalize the deal, and we want a deal for Newfoundland and Labrador. But what we want to see is this party live up to the commitments they made.

They're not giving the answer on whether or not there will be 70 per cent of the topside work done here, as they had committed to in their election campaign – the campaign that did get them elected – but will this deal on Bay du Nord be reviewed by a so-called independent panel, similar to the Churchill Falls MOU? Will this happen before the deal is signed, the final deal? Will there be a panel?

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

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

I love the amnesia. It's just very, very funny.

Listen, when this deal gets presented, it will be the best benefits agreement that this province has ever seen.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** It will be an agreement that this government failed to put across the line in seven years, and we will –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** – deliver it to the people of the province.

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

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

**F. HUTTON:** If the Conservatives won't commit to a debate on the Bay du Nord agreement in the House here, or to have an independent review, I assume it's safe to say that they're not going to have a referendum.

So what's the double standard when it comes to contracts and deals worth billions and billions of dollars for this government?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador will absolutely present the best deal that the province has ever seen.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, in February 2023, the then-Conservative leadership candidate, now the Premier, said – and I quote – a full debate must happen before decisions are made that would lock the province into a deal that would sell the province short. This deal is apparently being signed tonight.

So why won't the Premier commit to the debate that he himself demanded?

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

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

I'll remind them of all the debates we had on Bay du Nord while they were in power. The other thing I'll remind you is that the same Member that just stood hired his own buddy, ignored the LeBlanc report during the MOU, and they presented an MOU that was full of falsities, and now they're going back and that's what they want us to do?

We're not going to make those same mistakes, Speaker.

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

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

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

I don't need to be reminded that we sat here for four days in this House of Assembly, something that's never been done in the history of this province, and debated a very important deal – a deal that we're now seeing slip through the collective fingers of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The leader, now Premier of this province, demanded a debate on Bay du Nord. Why won't he have a debate now that he's in charge?

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**L. PARROTT:** Mr. Speaker, there wouldn't have been a debate on the MOU if we never requested it; that's the bottom line. And then we came in here and we had requested to bring in people, special panelists, and it was denied. It was set up by them to operate the way –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. PARROTT:** – exactly how they wanted it to operate.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

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

I don't think we're going to get any answers from the other side with respect to whether there is going to be a debate on Bay du Nord or not but, during this past election, the Conservatives promised the topside construction. Now they're trying to tell us and sell us something different.

I ask the Minister of Jobs to confirm that this agreement will have the same number of jobs and the same type of jobs as would have come with the topsides being developed here in this province, right here at home?

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

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

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

**L. PARROTT:** Pretty eager today, first day.

Mr. Speaker, here's what I'll say: the Members opposite know the difference. There is no announcement made so we're not going talking about what's going to be in it, but I will say this, the announcement, when it does happen, will be the best announcement that we have made with regard to oil and gas. It will not be like the deals of Christmas past.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, in the Throne Speech yesterday, the Conservatives actually said they wouldn't focus on the bricks and mortar buildings in which health care is delivered.

So I ask the minister: Why doesn't she think that residents and patients deserve a new, modern provincial hospital?

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

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

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

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

I remind the MHA who asked the question, we are the Progressive Conservative Party of Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, at the end of the day, when we look at the deficit that we are facing, we actually have to address access

to health care and, in actual fact, a \$12-billion building is not –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. EVANS:** – the \$12-billion building is not addressing the needs.

The problem we are facing right now is a crisis for long-term care beds and alternate-level-of-care beds, Speaker. At the end of the day, we have to look after our citizens and we have to be fiscally responsible.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

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

St. Clare's was built over 100 years ago; does the Minister of Health understand that the equipment, staff and patient needs have changed in the last century and that renovating St. Clare's just won't cut it?

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

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

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, I have to remind the Member over there that, in actual fact, the proposed building that wasn't going to meet the needs of long wait times in emergency and lack of bed space – wasn't going to meet the needs; \$12 billion, Speaker, wasn't going to meet the needs – I remind the speaker that, in actual fact, if we had built this outrageous \$12-billion hospital that

didn't meet the needs, Speaker, it wouldn't have done anything.

It wouldn't have done anything in the next 6 years that it would have took to build the new hospital. What were they going to do with patients today?

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. EVANS:** What were they going to do with patients tomorrow?

In actual fact, this Liberal government left the patients vulnerable.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. EVANS:** This Liberal government left those patients basically with drafty windows. This Liberal government left the patients with hot buildings in the summertime. Speaker, in actual fact, you did nothing to address –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, the minister was talking about patient care and the Minister of Health said – and I quote – in a recent interview that I listened to, “I don't want anyone out there ... trying to put this on me....”

So my question, Speaker, in the House today is: Why won't the Minister take responsibility for her own portfolio?

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

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

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, if, actually, I can answer the question is the mess that we were left with; basically, the fancy, fancy, fancy, fancy, fancy proposals that –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. EVANS:** – wouldn't address health care.

Speaker, we have an obligation to our seniors to make sure that they're looked after. We have a responsibility to make sure our vulnerable people are responsible; but, in actual fact, when I was in opposition, I complained about the empty press releases.

We're dealing with Family Care Teams that weren't properly staffed; the costs that are tied into 10-year contracts, 10-year leases, Speaker, that's not going to meet the needs because they're not properly staffed.

In actual fact, Speaker, that's a shame, because Family Care Teams are the cornerstone that the Health Accord is built on, and you basically failed us.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

**L. DEMPSTER:** So, Speaker, the minister didn't really –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**L. DEMPSTER:** – answer the question, but I want to say, if she wants, ask the people in the new mental health hospital built by the Liberal administration how they feel about being in a new modern hospital.

I didn't get an answer so I will ask it this way, Speaker: If the Minister of Health isn't responsible for her own department, who is? Is it Dr. Des Whalen? Tell the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who is really in charge here.

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

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

**L. EVANS:** Yeah, let's settle down now; let's settle down.

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

**L. EVANS:** Let's settle down. Speaker? Get control of the House, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I cannot hear the questions; I cannot hear the answers. I'm asking for your co-operation.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

**L. EVANS:** In actual fact, Speaker, I just wanted to address the preamble about the new mental health hospital facility that was built. It was understaffed; it doesn't meet the needs, the mental health needs, of the patients here.

In actual fact, Speaker, if we're going to be building hospitals, it has to meet the needs, and also, we have to be fiscally responsible to the people of the province, Speaker.

Also, we have to be respectful for our seniors. Right now, we've got them taking

up acute-care beds, and they're not getting the proper treatment because they have to have what is called an alternate level of care. They have to actually have the need, Speaker.

So we have to be responsible, and we are actually going to take action. No more big, flashy announcements. No more –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

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

The Conservatives – sorry. The Progressive Conservatives, to get that right, have already cancelled a new hospital; they said there has been no work done. If there was no work done, how did the minister know what the project was going to cost?

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

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, for me, I am trying to address the patient needs of the province.

In actual fact, when we looked at what was proposed, with no real way to finance it, no planning, nothing in the budget – Speaker, in actual fact, it was just one of these big, empty promises again that didn't meet the needs but, do you want to know something? It was sexy. It was sexy; it was glamorous, and that's what this Liberal government has been talking about.

In actual fact, we need to address our seniors. We need to address our patients, Speaker. I am forced now to address this.

Speaker, we've seen a lot of announcements where it was really photo ops. I've met with stakeholders that the first

thing out of their mouths was, can we have a photo? In actual fact, health care can't be photo op.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

**J. KORAB:** Speaker, I wasn't asking how attractive the new building could be. I was asking –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. KORAB:** – the Minister of Health claimed the new provincial hospital would cost \$12 billion – she said it five minutes ago. Later, in an interview she did with CBC, she said it would cost \$12 billion to \$14 billion. The Minister of Transportation said it would cost \$10 billion when they made the cancellation announcement and then \$14 billion a few years later.

I'd like to know where these numbers are coming from, not how sexy the building is. Are you just making up numbers in your misguided decision? Is he just confusing this with the misguided Muskrat Falls?

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Public Procurement Agency.

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

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

The Member opposite and this government opposite, I mean, they've been out speaking –

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

**B. PETTEN:** The Opposition – the wannabes.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** They were in government but the people woke up and voted for the right people.

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

**B. PETTEN:** The former ministers in the department I'm representing now are questioning their own officials.

I came into that department on October 29, and I seen a figure of \$14-plus-plus-billion. We were trying to be moderate to say \$10 billion. No one really knows the figure, but I will guarantee you right now, it was out of our price range.

With a provincial budget with less than \$11 billion, how in the name of God could anyone think you can go and build a hospital on the Kenmount Crossing, the tower of power, for \$14 billion – roughly \$14 billion, maybe more.

In GTA, in Toronto, Ontario, same hospital of a similar size was \$14.8 billion; that was two years ago.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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.

Speaker, we have a billion-dollar deficit; by government's own admission, the fiscal situation of the province is much worse than they had imagined –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. DINN:** – usually, this means raising taxes or cutting services.

Now, government's slogan better, healthier, lower taxes, safer communities, suggests they plan to do neither; but I don't buy it.

I'm asking the Premier: Will he commit to not cutting public service employees and services in the upcoming budget?

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

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

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

I will tell the hon. Member opposite, the Leader of the Third Party, that, as a former public servant, I value the work of our public servants –

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

**PREMIER WAKEHAM:** – and the work that they do every single day.

I have met with NAPE and I have met with CUPE, two of major unions, and I have not talked about anything like that, and we will not be talking about job cuts, Mr. Speaker.

What we will be talking about is making sure that the people that work in our public service get the appropriate compensation they deserve, and that we turn around and look at how they're doing their jobs and what they're doing. We will work with NAPE and CUPE to make sure that our workforce gets its job done.

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

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

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

**S. O'LEARY:** Speaker, the Speech from the Throne rightly acknowledged the toll natural disasters and extreme weather have taken on people across our province. From wildfires to record snowfall to destructive winds, these impacts are real, immediate and deeply felt. Yet, the speech was silent on meaningful climate action to confront the root cause: climate change.

The NDP wrote to the minister in November on this important topic and received no response, so I ask the minister: When will this government deliver a real climate action plan?

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

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

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you very much for the question.

Mr. Speaker, we are working with communities across this province and I've had many, many conversations with our federal counterparts and our federal minister in Ontario about a climate action plan that works right here for Newfoundland and Labrador. But make no mistake, whether it's on the South Coast or throughout Newfoundland and Labrador, this climate action plan will be adaptable for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

We're going to be sure of that, but it doesn't happen without the communities of Newfoundland and Labrador so we can tackle climate change in the future, and our federal counterparts, and we're going to continue those conversations. We look forward to those conversations moving forward, but again, it doesn't happen without the communities here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We're going to come up with a

climate action plan and this House will know it when we get to it.

Thank you.

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

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

**S. O'LEARY:** Speaker, also absent from yesterday's Throne Speech was a commitment to affordable child care. While we support increasing the Child Benefit, families know that without real investment in expanding affordable child care, parents will remain shut out of the workforce, or forced to stretch their budgets beyond the breaking point just to return to work.

So I ask the minister: Will this provincial government commit to investing and expanding the \$10-a-day child care program in our province?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

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

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Member for the question.

Our greatest resource are our children. Those in child care, those in K-12, that's our greatest resource. That's what we have to look at. Child care and affordable child care and accessible child care is important to working families out there, especially mothers. Mothers are the ones who stay home, most times, and leave their careers.

I've had a meeting with my federal, provincial and territorial counterparts in Ottawa in January, to have a fulsome discussion on the sustainability of the early child care program. I've had discussions with ECEs and that here in the province. We're working on a plan to ensure that affordable child care continues.

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

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

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

Quick question without preamble.

**J. DINN:** Speaker, over the past several weeks, media reported on several outstanding safety infrastructure issues affecting the health and safety of our school communities: the lack of a functional surveillance system at Mealy Mountain; the lack of a functioning P.A. system at New World Island; and the lack of hot water at l'École Rocher-du-Nord.

I ask the minister: Has your department completed an audit of our schools to identify deficiencies that could affect the health and safety of our staff and students and if not, why not?

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

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

The Member opposite, our staff are constantly keeping and monitoring all our schools. It's a big operation through the province. We keep an active list of deficiencies. It's a constant battle of keeping ahead of the stuff, but our staff are full on, we're aware of all these issues and we work to try to fix them in a timely manner.

Sometimes that may not happen immediately that day but when we become aware – these issues happen within spur of the moment, we're on top and we get it done as soon as possible.

Thank you.

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

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

Before I move any further, I just want to make a note to all hon. Members that there were numerous times during Oral Questions where I'm hearing a lot of heckling. It's making it very difficult to hear the questions, to hear the answers and I'm trying to be reasonable and give some grace, especially, I know everybody is excited to be back, but this cannot continue and we will have order in this House one way or the other.

If I have to start calling out Members in the future, I will. I don't want to have to do that but I, please, ask for your co-operation.

**S. STOODLEY:** Point of order.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

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

I rise on a point of order under section 49. During Question Period, while not – he didn't have his mic on but the Member for Lake Melville repeatedly referred to the Liberal Party and Members of the Liberal Party as wearing lipstick on a pig and that the Liberal Party was lipstick on a pig. He mentioned it numerous times. That's unparliamentary.

It's unparliamentary to use offensive words against another Member of the House and I ask the Member to withdraw those comments.

Thank you.

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

**K. RUSSELL:** Mr. Speaker, I wholeheartedly withdraw the comment. I mentioned it to the Liberal Party, not to any individual Members.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** So the Member has withdrawn the comment?

Okay.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

### **Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees**

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

**R. BALSOM:** Thank you. Speaker.

On behalf of the Select Committee appointed to draft a reply to the Speech from Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, I am pleased to present the Report of Select Committee which reads as follows:

To Her Honour, the Lieutenant Governor, the Honorable Joan Marie J. Aylward, O.N.L., E.C.N.L., B.N., R.N., ICD.D.:

May it please Your Honour, we, the Commons of Newfoundland and Labrador in Legislative Session assembled, beg to thank Your Honour for the Gracious Speech which Your Honour has addressed to this House.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for St. George's - Humber, that the report be received and adopted.

**SPEAKER:** When shall the report be received?

**L. PARROTT:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the report be adopted?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**L. PARROTT:** Presently.

**SPEAKER:** Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted.

**SPEAKER:** Tabling of Documents.

### **Tabling of Documents**

**SPEAKER:** As required under section 35 of the *House of Assembly Act*, I hereby table the annual report of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards for January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for Which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### **Petitions**

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

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Thank you, Speaker.

The reason for this petition is as follows:

Orcan Drive wave wall in Placentia was built around 1992. It has an estimated life expectancy of 25 to 30 years. The infrastructure is corroded and deteriorating. Salt water is seeping through the wall and up through the adjacent manholes, thus flooding the roads and private property.

The wall has proven to be increasingly ineffective at protecting roadways and private property. Flooding issues have increased in severity. Sea water is breaching the wall at dangerous levels. Salt water is not escaping from the town as easily as it is entering the town. This poses a threat to public safety.

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 support the Town of Placentia to identify funding that will be made available immediately to rebuild the wave wall, protecting the Town of Placentia and its residents from the devastating impacts of flooding and climate change.

Speaker, the Town of Placentia – the Premier’s hometown – was established in 1662 by the French. It’s been around for some time. However, Placentia is particularly vulnerable to coastal flooding from storm surges, high tides and rising seas. Historically, the town has experienced flooding events, but this past year these events have increased significantly. This wave wall, Mr. Speaker, is a necessity, not a need.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, Speaker, and I gladly respond to that, actually.

When this happened, the wave wall issue, I reached out to the town that day and I arranged a meeting for them a couple of days later and they attended the meeting. We’re presently doing a study at government cost – and the Member opposite would be well aware of that – and we’re going to figure out what’s required, but we assured the Town of Placentia that we would not leave them behind. That wave wall is a concern. We have to figure out what’s involved, what the costs are, what’s needed to repair it before we make any rash decisions.

So we’re well aware of the issue and we’ve worked with the town; I think they appreciated the meeting and I assured them when we get these reports done, we’ll get back and we’ll discuss it and we’ll figure out a way to resolve this issue, like we are going to help any other town that’s in need.

Thank you very much.

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

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

In this petition, of course, the Official Opposition is calling for more provincial wildfire-fighting resources.

WHEREAS our province has experienced unprecedented wildfire devastation that places significant strain on existing firefighting resources, including greater volunteer firefighting time commitments from local members; increased call volumes, particularly associated with wildfire response; gaps in funding for equipment associated with wildfire response; growing need for enhanced training of firefighters for wildfire response.

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 increase funding for wildfire equipment, including additional wildland coveralls, to meet the current and projected needs of our community; enhance training opportunities for all firefighters to include specialized wildfire training; support the hiring of 50 additional wildland firefighters earlier in the season; and formalize a policy to provide compensation for volunteer firefighters that respond to wildfires, that acknowledges the efforts, dedication, courage and time commitment outside of their community firefighting duties.

Speaker, at this time, we know that we have certainly faced unprecedented wildfires like we’ve never seen here in our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I think it’s safe to say that wildfires have become a reality. It’s not something that’s simply happening in Alberta or somewhere else in the world; it’s happening here as well.

At this time I would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to every volunteer firefighter who stepped up and helped the people, in

particular in my region on the North Shore and Conception Bay North, and across the province were impacted.

We know there were great promises made, of course, in the Blue Book by the current government, and we will certainly be holding their feet to the fire – no pun intended, Speaker – to make sure that those promises are kept to support our volunteer firefighters and all firefighter personnel here in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, to protect the people of our province.

Thank you, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands for a response.

**P. FORSEY:** I thank the Member for the petition, and of course I'd like to also thank all the volunteer firefighters and people who were involved in last year's fires. We did see some devastating fires throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and especially in the Conception Bay North area and throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

I'm glad that the Member was reading our Blue Book because we did put in that we were going to hire more forest firefighters. We were going to hire firefighters. We're going to have the coveralls and work with volunteer fire departments in training to expand the firefighting equipment and training so that they can be prepared for this year's season and other seasons as we move along.

Of course, the fifth water bomber is supposed to be back in action in the fleet for this season, and we're looking forward to being ready and we are equipped to be ready for this year's firefighting season, but I do thank the Member for the petition.

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

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

**S. O'LEARY:** Mr. Speaker, I respectfully table this petition to bring back the Residential Energy Rebate, and these are the reasons for the petition:

In 2011, the PC government lifted the provincial part of HST from residential heat due to advocacy from the NDP;

The Residential Energy Rebate was later cancelled by the same PC government in 2014;

Heating in our province is a necessity, but many people cannot afford it because incomes have not kept up with inflation;

People should not have to pay tax on essential goods and services like home heating;

Living in a cold home puts people at greater risk for health problems like high blood pressure and worsening symptoms of diabetes or arthritis, adding to the strain on our troubled health care system.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to bring an HST rebate on home heating.

Speaker, we had several town halls where we heard from constituents on a regular basis with people with their power cut, people who were making choices between their power and food, and in a province that we live in, as we do, that is just unacceptable.

We hear, on a regular basis, since we've been elected in October, from constituents who are constantly struggling. Today, with minus seven and below temperatures, we are going to continue to see more and more people struggle with this particular issue.

So I respectfully ask that we table this petition and that the government consider that we bring back the Residential Energy Rebate.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for a response to the petition.

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

**C. PARDY:** I thank the hon. Member for her first petition in the House, and it's a good one because it is in our platform as far as lowering taxes and making life more affordable. We've heard it from all the doors we've knocked, and I'm sure we've heard it in every district that we represent here on affordability.

We will be making life more affordable via the taxes. When we look at lowering and reducing the basic personal amount that was in our Blue Book – that the Member read quite well – that one will affect and make a difference to reduce the taxes significantly paid and bringing it to \$15,000 by 285,000 tax filers. That will be significant.

The Member will know, as far as the frequency of the food bank visitations, with excess at over 15,000 people accessing the food banks in Newfoundland and Labrador, of which 4,700 are children, for the first time since 2002, we'll adjust the Child Benefit, the threshold, so that we can put another 3,000 children, to pay dividends to hopefully make a difference on the affordability in Newfoundland and Labrador.

So I would think that when the budget comes down, there will be measures that will be presented –

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the minister's time is expired.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you very much.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

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

I rise on behalf of some residents, some constituents of mine, to petition to relocate the school bus stop on the corner of Aspen Place to 17 Oakridge Drive. This petition is to NL Schools, Transportation Division, the hon. Members of the House of Assembly, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Education.

We, the undersigned, parents, neighbours and residents of Newfoundland and Labrador request the relocation of a school bus stop currently located at the corner of Aspen Place and Oakridge Drive to a safer location directly in front of 17 Oakridge Drive.

The current stop presents safety concerns for children, particularly due to the speeding in the area and hazardous winter conditions. It is also inaccessible for parents in the neighbourhood who have a physical disability, including those using mobility aids or devices.

As a community, we believe it is reasonable and necessary for this route to follow the same approach for morning pickup as it does in the afternoon. Relocating the bus stop would improve safety, accessibility and consistency for families in the area, and help ensure children can travel to and from school safely.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to move the bus stop to 17 Oakridge Drive.

I will forward that to the ministers responsible; I just received it the weekend from residents in my area. Some 30 residents have signed this petition and I stand on their behalf and express their concerns.

I visited the site; it was very treacherous during the significant amount of snowfall that we have had over the last little bit, but it

also stands to reason that, for consistency for the families involved, if the bus is dropping the children off in the afternoon at one particular location, they can pick up at that same location. It just makes it easier for the families.

Everyone in that area that would be involved from a school perspective or a student perspective have signed this petition. I will forward it to the hon. ministers responsible, and hopefully they'll make that change as required for the people in my district.

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

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

I thank the minister for – or the Member. I got to reverse these roles now. I thank the Member for that petition.

We get requests every day almost for busing and safety issues or concerns, but I'll commit this, and I have stood – and unlike some other Members, when I was previously on the Opposition, I used to look at government side and I lobbied for 1.6 kilometre-kilometre busing.

If there's a child that's in an unsafe area – and I've proven it and the officials know in the department. I've changed several bus stops, numerous ones. If there's a justified reason that that's an unsafe stop and it's proven to us and our officials – I'd encourage you to reach out to our department and speak to them – I will change that bus stop. If it's proven to me that it's unsafe for any child in this province, I will commit to changing that stop.

We have to see the information first, which I haven't, but if that's justified to me, I will definitely change the stop.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

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

I have a petition here today on Labrador South Health Centre. These are the reasons for and the background of this petition:

WHEREAS the District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair has one health centre only that serves the entire district; and

WHEREAS the Labrador South Health Centre in Forteau houses the only doctor in the District of Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, and there is currently no doctor on site; and

WHEREAS there is a doctor interested in coming to the area, and that process has started; and

WHEREAS the Labrador South Health Centre in Forteau is home to the only X-ray and lab technician in the district;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to allocate measures to ensure these services remain in the district and ensure that every option is explored to get a doctor in that area.

Speaker, I have a lot of signatures here from St. Lewis, Forteau, Charlottetown, Pinsent's Arm, Lodge Bay. So you can see all the way down the coast; it's not just the Straits that's concerned about all this.

Speaker, it has been difficult in this province to get a doctor, and we know that. There is a doctor that has been interested, has applied, has shown interest since November or December, and we're continuously told that they're working through the process. I'm very worried that it's going to fall through if it hasn't already this week.

We have a lot of seniors in the area. We know that 40 per cent of our population is

seniors and we know that most of them reside in our nooks and coves and crannies. This time of year, Speaker, we're pretty much isolated. We are not the same as Flowers Cove or Roddickton in a health care centre right now when the ferry right now is not running; there is no icebreaker availability today and at least again tomorrow; we have had terrible weather conditions that we're seeing with climate change and endless disruptions with the one and only airline that's serving the area.

In addition to that, Speaker, just very recently we lost both our lab and our X-ray tech. So I really want to work with the Minister of Health to implore on her how serious this is. People drive seven hours, four or five or six hours, they need X-rays when things happen – students, seniors. We need to really ramp things up to get the – I believe it was January that the lab and X-ray tech position, that the folks that were filling those left.

Also, Speaker, something that could be fixed, such a tiny piece of equipment, such a significant value, is we, right now, don't have an INR machine on site. I had talked to Dr. Pat Parfrey about this and we were moving through the process. We did a first validation and a secondary the end of January. It's still not there. People need it to get their blood work done, especially this time of year.

I'll be up again on this petition.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I thank the Member for the petition, and I thank everyone who signed that petition. I realize that there's a feeling in Labrador that we're out of sight, out of mind, and that

applies to Northern Labrador, Southern Labrador and Lab West.

In actual fact, Speaker, I will be working with the Member to make sure the concerns raised in this petition are properly addressed. If there was any sort of work that was ongoing that hasn't been delivered, or she is questioning when will decisions be made or services delivered, I will work on her behalf to make sure those answers are coming shortly, and that we will be doing everything to work with the Member and the people in the district to ensure that Labradorians are not left out, Labradorians are not neglected when it comes to access to health care, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Petition: Anti-Temporary Replacement Worker Legislation.

These are the reasons for the petition:

Anti-scab laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and the federal government has introduced Bill C-58 to prohibit scab workers in federally regulated sectors.

The use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community, the local economy and the well-being of its residents.

Anti-temporary replacement worker legislation has been shown to reduce the length and divisiveness of labour disputes.

Since 2015, the right to strike has been clearly protected under the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* because it helps to stabilize the power imbalance

between the workers and the employer. The use of temporary replacement workers undermines that right.

Therefore, we call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to enact legislation banning the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or a lockout.

Speaker, we've heard how important labour is to the government, and this shouldn't be an issue here, because we know that good union jobs lead to a strong economy, stronger communities and certainly, as we've pointed out here, it stabilizes the imbalance between workers and employers especially with large employers, multi-national companies and so forth.

So if anything else, anti-scab legislation will basically ensure that we do not undermine the good, unionized jobs. Unions offer protections, they offer benefits, they offer security and they offer good salaries, and that makes for a good economy. The question really remains here is, can we expect to see anti-temporary replacement worker legislation in this province to match what is being proposed by the federal government for its federally regulated sectors but for all parts of the province?

Thank you.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Orders of the Day.

**SPEAKER:** Orders of the Day.

### Orders of the Day

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

**L. PARROTT:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting

the Seniors' Advocate, Bill 2, and I further move that that said bill be read a first time now.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, Bill 2, An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Seniors to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate," carried. (Bill 2)

**CLERK (Hawley George):** A bill, An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate. (Bill 2)

**SPEAKER:** This bill has not been read a first time.

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**L. PARROTT:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 2 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**L. PARROTT:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, Bill 4, and I further move that that said bill be read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that the hon. Government House Leader have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, Bill 4, and that the said bill now be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act," carried. (Bill 4)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 4)

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

When shall the bill be read a second time?

**L. PARROTT:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 4 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2, and I further move that that said bill now be read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that the hon. the Government

House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2," carried. (Bill 5)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 5)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**L. PARROTT:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 5 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997, Bill 6, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce

a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997, Bill 6, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Government Services to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997," carried. (Bill 6)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997. (Bill 6)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**L. PARROTT:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 6 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Endangered Species Act, Bill 7, and further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce

a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Endangered Species Act, Bill 7, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Endangered Species Act," carried. (Bill 7)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Endangered Species Act. (Bill 7)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**L. PARROTT:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 7 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act, Bill 8, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Wild Life

Act, Bill 8, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Wildlife Act, carried. (Bill 8)

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Wildlife Act. (Bill 8)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**L. PARROTT:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 8 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

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

I move, as per the Orders of the Day, that we now move into Address in Reply.

**SPEAKER:** Address in Reply.

The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Arts, and Sport, Recreation and Parks.

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

**A. BARBOUR:** Speaker, first and foremost, I give thanks to God for the strength to stand here today and for the honour of serving the people of the province.

I rise in this hon. House today with humility, gratitude and a heart deeply rooted in the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland and Labrador. I stand here as the Member for St. Barbe - L'Anse aux Meadows, and as the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, it is the greatest honour of my life. I do not stand here alone; I stand here because of the people in my district, their trust in me, and I stand here carrying their voices, their struggles, their pride and their hope.

I was born and raised in St. Anthony, Newfoundland and Labrador, in a three-generational household. My mom, my dad, my nan and pop, and my sister and I all lived under one roof with three bedrooms, one bathroom, an unfinished basement and a cat, Fluffy.

It was my home, filled with faith, music, laughter, storytelling and hard work. The kettle was always on; the whistle would rise above conversations, and the windows would steam from cooking Jiggs' dinner, pea soup and dough boys, seal with pastry – you name it. My nan's bread rose faithfully every week, golden on the outside and soft and steamy on the inside. I couldn't wait to get that first slice, and Nan would always laugh at me while we made bread together with drawers on our head.

That bread was more than food; it was love, it was stability and it was tradition. We did not grow up disconnected from where our food came from: moose, cod, seal, turrs, duck, squid, shrimp, crab, lobster, you name it. I love smelting in the winter, ice fishing down on the bay.

These were not menu items in a restaurant; they were sustenance harvested with respect. Berries were picked by hand, bakeapples out on the bog, raspberries

through the thorny bushes while the flies eat us alive. Vegetables came from our roadside garden. My dad and my pop provided for our family from the land and the sea, and everyone in our family helped with that garden and berry picking. Seal was a part of who we are. I wear seal and I eat seal. These are not statements; they are our culture.

On the Great Northern Peninsula, living from the land is not easy. It is real. It is practical. It is ancestral and it is ours.

My mom and nan were artisans. They sewed, knitted, crocheted, cross-stitched, baked, made clothes. My nan made Grenfell handicraft jackets and worked for the Grenfell women's association. Creativity was woven into daily life. That is where my appreciation for arts and culture began; not in institutions, but in kitchens and living rooms where traditions were passed down by hand.

Growing up I learned two valuable things: to be giving and to follow your heart.

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

**A. BARBOUR:** My past was created around volunteering. I volunteered as a Sunday school teacher. I volunteered as a candy striper at the John M. Gray Centre seniors' home and I also volunteered as a Brownie leader with the Girl Guides of Canada.

I grew up down the bay, ice fishing, cross-country skiing, skidooing and swimming laps in the summer. I raced in the summer and I raced in the winter. Deep down inside there was always a little athlete but, growing up on the Northern Peninsula, it was very hard to be seen.

After high school, I faced that same question many rural young people face: What's next? I moved to Corner Brook and began my studies at Sir Wilfred Grenfell College of Memorial University of Newfoundland. I was unsure of my

direction. I explored visual arts. I explored nutrition. I sampled courses searching for clarity, and then I discovered science.

Physical geography captivated me. Biology fascinated me. Mathematics challenged me in ways that I loved. I became deeply interested in how landscapes formed, how water moves, how ecosystems function and how patterns exist beneath what we see on the surface. Urban geography was always a huge interest of mine, studying homes, landscapes, secrets that still exist in plain sight, showing our history and our culture and how modernization has changed the way our communities look.

In my second year, I became a math tutor to first-year students at MUN, and I discovered something else: I loved helping other people succeed.

I later moved to St. John's and continued my degree at Memorial University in the Geography Department and completed a Bachelor of Science and Physical Geography. When I graduated, I applied to nearly 50 jobs across Newfoundland and Labrador, having no experience, I received no follow-ups. I was 25 years old.

I packed my bags and I left this Island for the first time in my life, and I moved to Iqaluit, Nunavut. I stayed on a friend's couch and began knocking on doors again, but this time for employment. Within two weeks I secured a position with the federal Government of Canada working in what is now known as Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada as a water management specialist. The Arctic changed me. It hardened me. It strengthened my character. I gained a deep respect for nature, for people and for independence.

Almost a decade in the Arctic was both harsh and beautiful. It demanded independence and rewarded courage. I learned to stand on my own two feet in a way I never have before. My work took me all over the Arctic, visiting mine sites,

standing on the Arctic Circle, attending national and international mining symposiums, attending Parliament in Ottawa, attending national hydrometric conferences and meeting thousands of people from all walks of life. I also took part in creating the water regulations for the Territory of Nunavut.

Beyond work, I learned how to build an igloo, make mitts out of seal skin, fish char in the middle of the winter and summer nights. I became close to nature; I felt like I was home, away from the city, back on the rugged shores of the North.

I later returned to St. John's and completed a graduate diploma in integrated coastal ocean management at the Marine Institute of Newfoundland and Labrador. I worked with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in ecological sciences studying aquatic invasive species, particularly the green crab.

I later worked as a junior biologist with Sikumiut consulting company in St. John's and, eventually, I returned back to Iqaluit to work full-time with the federal government again, but this time as a pollution policy specialist, taking on acting roles as water resource manager where I gained respect for meetings, budgets and leadership.

In 2013, I was accepted into the Canadian Border Services Agency in Rigaud, Quebec. For six months, I underwent intensive training in firearms, combat, customs, immigration and enforcement. Equivalent to the RCMP standards combined with customs and immigration specialization, I had the responsibility of enforcing all federal acts of 90-plus federal departments and the Criminal Code of Canada.

My first posting was in Calgary International Airport as a border services officer. Later, I transferred back to Newfoundland and Labrador to be near family, working at the Gander International Airport, and then to the West Coast. I worked at the Deer Lake

airport, Stephenville airport and conducted marine enforcement along the West Coast and the Great Northern Peninsula.

I trained in Halifax, Nova Scotia, for marine operations. Boarding cruise ships, container ships, fishing fleets, row-rows, you name it, for 16 years, I served Canada in both physical science and law enforcement officer protecting our borders.

In 2020, my life changed. I had a near-death experience. My appendix ruptured; I went septic. My lungs filled with fluid; I could only use about 20 per cent of my lungs and my heart was irregular. I was hooked up to monitors and in and out of consciousness for days. I had a glimpse of heaven in the midst of the darkness.

Shortly after, I became extremely ill with multiple chemical sensitivity, a disabling autoimmune disease that left me isolated in my home for two years, bedbound with severe migraines and reactions to everyday scents. I eventually hit rock bottom and, when you hit rock bottom, you face a choice: remain there or rebuild. I chose to rebuild.

I reflected deeply, examined my choices, forgave, released anger and heartache, committed to truth and I found my faith again. Through inner healing, mental, physical and spiritual, I restored my health. I studied yoga, Reiki, the Bible, meditation and mindfulness. I lost 100 pounds, changed my habits, changed my mindset and changed my life.

I shared my journey openly on social media, connecting with people worldwide, for its honesty and realness. By early 2025, I had over 80,000 followers and I was reaching 1.5 million views a week.

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

**A. BARBOUR:** During my healing journey, I returned to creativity. I started cooking, crocheting, painting and creating. This led to

my launch of my business called Rise in Love Boutique, at the time. I attended craft fairs, collaborated with local businesses across the Island and I sold my cookbook based on my nan's recipes filled with stories and joy.

I realized success comes from collaboration, not competition. I also rediscovered who I was, the small-town girl who had been bullied, shy and quiet, now finding her voice through experience, independence and decision-making. I became a creator of my own life and no longer give other people the pen to my story.

I learned that the value of integrity, gratitude and observation. I learned that energy, frequency and intention matter and what you put out is what you track back.

In the fall of 2025, I made the decision to run for office. I grabbed my yellow rubber boots and I deactivated my social media to focus on the doors, the community and the Northern Peninsula. I chose service over the spotlight.

My campaign began with my mom and dad, Yvonne and Kevin Cull, in a pickup truck with a stack of signs and a cooler of drinks. We knocked on doors in 40 communities in three weeks from River of Ponds to St. Anthony and everywhere in between.

Thomas Coffin, Ray Norman and Wally Young joined us. Carol Anstey and her team came for support. Paul Shelley, Trevor Taylor, Stella Mailman, Tom Maynard and Premier Tony Wakeham's and his team, plus many more volunteers, stood with us. Chris and Ian Pynn generously opened up their old Yamaha shop, Raleigh Sports, as our campaign headquarters. My husband Matthew and my daughter Norah, family and friends supported me along the way.

At the doors, I listened from sunrise to sunset; through wind, rain; along bogs, shores, sheds and wharves. I heard about

the aging population; isolation; health care strain; medevac backlogs; six-hour drives for eye appointments; housing shortages; lack of child care; insufficient programs for children with disabilities; bad roads; poor cell service; water quality and quantity issues; and the high cost of living.

I heard from seniors who felt forgotten and young families struggling to stay, but I also heard love for the land, the ocean and the community.

Tourism is vital on the Great Northern Peninsula. Visitors come for Viking history, coastlines, icebergs, whales, hospitality and authenticity. Tourism drives our economy, supports small businesses and sustains our culture. I understand that tourism, culture, arts and recreation are deeply interconnected with community wellness, and I am committed to strengthening all of these areas.

I spent the previous months building my understanding of provincial government; learning, so I could bring solutions. I ask for patience as I dive deep, listening, observing and finding answers. Everything I heard at those doors is within me. I am here not only to be the voice, but to work with our government to bring change.

I also want to thank my CA, Jennifer Simms. She has been a blessing to my career and my life. I appreciate everything she has done, everything she does for the people in our district. Without her, I would not be able to do what I am doing for this district and the province. Together, we get back to each individual and group that reaches out to our office, and Jennifer is highly appreciated. She is my eyes and ears on the ground.

My life has taken me from the Great Northern Peninsula to the Arctic; from federal scientists to border enforcement; from rock bottom to renewal; from celebrity to politician; from entrepreneur to MHA and Minister of the Crown; and every chapter has prepared me for this role.

When I think back to that kettle whistling, and nan's bread rising, I see more than the past; I see the future. Bread rises in warmth, and Newfoundland and Labrador can rise in the same way, with unity, faith, truth, discipline and effort.

I believe with all my heart that I have been chosen. I have been chosen to inspire, to lift and help this province rise. I believe in collaboration over competition, and I believe there is a bright future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

As long as I stand in this House, I will serve with integrity, truth, compassion, strength and unwavering commitment to the people of the Great Northern Peninsula and for all of us.

Just for the record, Speaker, I loves it.

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

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

It's been a magical day and the best is yet to come.

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

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

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

**M. KING:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker and hon. Members of this Fifty-First General Assembly, it is with great privilege and honour that I rise in this House today and address the Chamber as the proud Member of the House of Assembly for the beautiful and historic District of Burgeo - La Poile. This moment would not be possible today without the vote of confidence from the wonderful people I represent. I want to sincerely thank them for the incredible responsibility they have entrusted in me.

This is the people's House, Speaker, and it is our collective duty to be their voice where it matters most. They have sent me here to bring their issues and concerns to the forefront, to be a strong representative so they can be confident that someone is in their corner. To the people of my district, I say to you: I will not let you down.

To my fellow rookie MHAs here in the House, I also want to congratulate you and indeed all Members of the House of Assembly on their success in the General Election held on October 14. I look forward to fulsome debate and even some banter in the common interest of the people of this province.

Speaker, I would be remiss if I did not take a moment to also acknowledge my family, friends, supporters and my entire team who helped me to succeed. I will forever be indebted to everyone who made a phone call, knocked on a door, showed up with food and kept me going during the entire campaign. Incredible friendships have been made from travelling in a speedboat to La Poile, the scenic drive down Route 480 or up and down the coastline on Route 470 in the Port aux Basques area.

I have spent a lot of time volunteering on campaigns over the years, but as a first-time candidate, I can truly say that it was the volunteers that kept me energized, kept me focused and kept me optimistic for the future ahead. They were behind me right from the beginning and never said no to my crazy ideas. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Speaker, I also would like to take a moment to thank my predecessor, the now former Member for Burgeo - La Poile, Andrew Parsons, for his incredible 14 years of public service. Many of my colleagues here would know Andrew as an impressive communicator and advocate for the people he represented and, to be frank, Speaker, I may not even be here today if he did not take a chance on a grade 10 student who

had an interest in politics and no shame to ask the hard-pressed questions to his local politician.

Fast forward many years later, and it was such a pleasure to work alongside him as his executive assistant. I learned first hand the importance of always getting back to your constituents and putting in those long hours to help the people you serve. I have learned a lot from him and will carry that with me as I continue my career.

Speaker, as a proud son of Burnt Islands, a small, rural community on the Southwest Coast, I have real insight and knowledge of rural living in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's not uncommon that people discount our coast or write us off because we are so far from the capital region, but to those people, Speaker, I say think again.

A coast that is rooted in the traditions and history that make up the fabric of our province; hard-working people who are always looking to support one another, the very values that have carried me to where I am today.

Like many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I had to move away to get a post-secondary education. It was at Memorial University that I began my career in politics, but your home never leaves you. The people you care so deeply about always stay with you.

Speaker, at a very young age, I always knew public service would be in my future, what shape that would take was to be determined, but giving back and supporting my community has been a part of my DNA my entire life. I was always someone known to volunteer for everything, not for the recognition, but because of the improvements I would make to my school, my community and the differences we could make in the lives of those in our province, country and the world.

My mom would often point out while I was in high school that she felt I spent more time on extracurriculars than my actual school work. Speaker, she was right in certain cases.

My early days of volunteering with student council, Youth Voices, supporting families in countries around the world facing significant challenges, Come Home Year events in my community, you name it, I did not miss an opportunity to get involved and give back.

After I finished my post-secondary education, it was no surprise to many that I began a career in politics. Supporting my party and many MHAs over a decade of work was some of the most rewarding experiences I have had but, Speaker, it was because of the values my family had instilled in me that made me who I was then and who I am today.

Like many families in rural communities and across this entire province, my dad was the only individual who worked. My mom stayed home and raised my brother and I. Recently retired after 46 incredible years as an ordinary seaman with the Great Lake ships, most of those with Algoma corporation, my dad has retired and spent a lot of time away from us growing up working sometimes three months at a time to provide for our family. He wanted my mom to stay at home with us to have some sort of normalcy.

My dad is my true inspiration for the work that I do today, Speaker.

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

**M. KING:** He taught my brother and I that if you work hard, give everything you can to what you do, be kind and have respect, you will go far in life.

Like many families, Speaker, we didn't have it all. No fancy cars, sometimes missing out on the toys that we wanted, but it did not matter to us. With the incredible family we have, we always had it all. I will be eternally

grateful to my parents for giving me the life I have today. Thank you, Mom and Dad, and I can say that, Speaker, because I know they are currently watching.

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

**M. KING:** Speaker, my family shares a history of hard workers. The King name is certainly synonymous with the fishery on the South Coast. Many would know Eric King, who was a giant in the industry, and many uncles and cousins worked in this industry for generations. Although my work takes place on land, I carry those hard-working values with me always.

On the Savoury side of my family, we were also no strangers to the tragedy that the sea can bring. My grandfather, Joseph Savoury Junior, was sadly lost at sea over 40 years ago while fishing off the Grand Banks – a tragedy that struck my family when my mother was only 11, leaving my grandmother to raise three children all on her own.

Determination, hard work and perseverance are words that are no strangers to my family, Speaker. I carry those values and the memory of those no longer with me always in everything I do.

Speaker, the District of Burgeo - La Poile is vast in geography and brings with it a quilt-like style of rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Every corner and community is different and unique in their own way. I am so proud to represent the people of La Poile, Rose Blanche-Harbour le Cou, Diamond Cove, Burnt Islands, Isle aux Morts, Fox Roost-Margaree, Port aux Basques, Cape Ray, Burgeo, Ramea and Grey River.

Visiting each community during the election brought with it a different story every day. From the senior who would invite me in for a tea and a fish cake to the students I met on the roads in Isle aux Morts, each experience

and interaction encourages me in the work that I do.

All of those communities make up such a diverse and rugged coastline – small, isolated communities that are only accessible by ferry or bigger centres, like Port aux Basques and Burgeo, that other communities rely on for a number of services. Rural Newfoundland and Labrador has many challenges, but these communities know how to work together to get things done.

Speaker, during my travels to all these communities in my district, I learned first-hand the issues and concerns that face many of the residents in our entire province: Our seniors, living on fixed incomes, having trouble keeping up with the cost of living; our health care workers facing significant challenges in their place of work; residents trying to access health care, facing delays, wait times and cancellations; residents and visitors experiencing challenging road conditions – whether it is snow clearing in the winter or deteriorating conditions in the summer – accessing some everyday services that are at the fingertips of many urban residents; and reliable ferry services.

People all across my district have shared their stories with me, what keeps them up at night and what makes them smile on a sunny day. I take these stories seriously, Speaker. Each story weighs heavy on my shoulders and, with that, I carry the immense responsibility as their newly elected Member of the House of Assembly to work with them to address the challenges together.

Working collaboratively with everyone here and across Newfoundland and Labrador will move this province towards a brighter future. Speaker, it is incumbent on all of us to do that.

Those challenges I mentioned a moment ago, Speaker, are not an inclusive list of the many concerns that Newfoundlanders and

Labradorians have – housing pressures, skyrocketing electricity bills, education and child care, public safety and the list goes on. In order to address these challenges, it is important for this government to hear from the people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador and to listen.

My district is already experiencing many challenges that need to be addressed. Recent closures of the court in Port aux Basques are creating significant gaps in access to justice. As I mentioned earlier, many rural residents must travel long distances at their own cost to access these services, and to take them away would be an injustice. The residents of my district are looking for answers from this government about how long this disruption will be and what are the solutions they are presenting to address the problem.

I've heard from hundreds of residents since last fall regarding the notable increases of their electricity bill; families who are not even home, facing a doubling of cost, having many questions on how that can be. One of the things this government can immediately do to address this concern is to remove the PST from electricity bills. This will not fix the entire problem, but it is one action that would provide meaningful financial relief to the people of my district and this province. I will continue to advocate the government to see these changes implemented.

The withdrawing of the national marine conservation area, or NMCA, MOU is also very concerning to a number of residents in the district. A process that began over 20 years ago and that was entirely community-led. This was not something a provincial or federal government was trying to force upon a community. This was the community coming together in the face of a cod moratorium, looking at creative, outside-of-the-box thinking to address the significant challenges from both an economic and social perspective that were faced in the community.

That process got cut short by this government. Not allowing this process to continue to lay out the facts and to get to a point where all the information was on the table to make a fact-based decision was disappointing. Was the process perfect? No. Did there need to be improvements? Absolutely. But that process should have been allowed to continue.

I understand as well, Speaker, the many industries from fishery to aquaculture who had significant reservations with this MOU. I represent many harvesters in my district and would not want to see their livelihoods destroyed. If this was the path it was headed down, I would not have supported it. But how do we know? This government denied that opportunity for a fulsome view of the potential for this area.

But as true Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, my communities now look to the future. There are extraordinary opportunities in many coastal communities in my district. Tourism is one of those industries that rural communities lean into to help support the local economy. It creates job and small business opportunities that help support the over billion-dollar industry in this province.

We have amazing parks, landscapes, sites and sounds that people from all over the world are looking for. From the Sandbanks Provincial Park in Burgeo, ecotourism increasing in the Ramea area, the Rose Blanche Lighthouse, the beautiful kiosk and music in Shark Cove in Port aux Basques, the historic Cape Ray museum and so much more in Burgeo - La Poile. I encourage all Members to make visiting my district a part of their travel bucket list. Even in the winter, Mr. Speaker, we have so much to offer.

Speaker, the Leader of the Official Opposition spoke in the House of Assembly about the job we will do as an Opposition and how we will not oppose for the sake of opposing. This is so important to me as well

because it is important that we work together to produce results for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

The MOU on Churchill Falls is one of those things. We want to see a deal, Speaker, a good deal, a great deal. A deal that will bring billions of dollars to Newfoundland and Labrador that will help position our province on solid footing and help address the significant fiscal challenges we face. I'm eternally hopeful that we will see a deal for the betterment of this province, and I urge the government to make that happen but by being transparent and open with the people of this province as they promised.

Speaker, I can certainly spend all day standing here in this hon. House speaking on issues, concerns and the opportunities that are within Burgeo - La Poile, but I only have a certain amount of time to do so today. There are many concerns that I have not even addressed in this speech, but I want to assure the residents of my district that, over the next four years, I will have a lot of time to do so.

It is because of those that put their trust in me that I get to even stand here in the first place, Speaker. I want to assure everyone in my district that I swore an oath to represent their interest. I promise to be accountable and accessible. I promise to always have their back and to work hard every single day to the best of my ability. This is a promise, Speaker, that I will keep.

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

**M. KING:** I don't have a historical quote to share in my speech, but I wanted to share a quote that I've always used personally: If this is life, I'm living it.

I've always viewed life with optimism and hope. Although it can come with significant challenges and obstacles along the way, we have to live each day like it is our last, for tomorrow is never promised. So today in my life, I'm living every moment. I'm standing

here where only a few have had the opportunity to stand before me. With it, comes an immeasurable amount of responsibility to the people who put us here.

In closing, I want to, once again, thank my family, friends and the good people of Burgeo - La Poile for putting their trust in me and giving me the opportunity of a lifetime. Thank you to the incredible team in our office, my caucus colleagues, our leader and everyone I work with for their support and encouragement. I could never do this without you all. I am forever grateful. I am ready to meet this moment.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**S. O'LEARY:** Well, Speaker, I rise today with deep gratitude as the newly elected Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi.

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

**S. O'LEARY:** To be entrusted with representing this district in this House is both an honour and a profound responsibility – one I do not take lightly. I accept that responsibility with humility and a clear understanding that public office is not about personal achievement, but about service. The truth is my life has been built on activism, and I've been advocating for social justice, equity and environmental stewardship my entire life.

I am indebted to my parents. Born and raised in the heart of this district, in Churchill Square, I was raised in a boisterous and competitive family of three older brothers and one sister. My parents, both from Newfoundland's West Coast, instilled in us resilience, fairness and deep respect for community. They lived the principles that would later guide me towards social democracy, and that dignity belongs to

everyone, that no one should be left behind and that collective well-being strengthens us all.

My father, Sean O'Leary, was an outstanding athlete who excelled in baseball and earned the privilege of a try-out with the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1949. It was there that he met Jackie Robinson, the first ever African American to play in Major League Baseball in 1947, and a man who significantly influenced the culture of the civil rights movement. Robinson's courage and composure left an indelible impression on him.

My mother, the 13th of 14 children, was French-Mi'kmaq from Stephenville. She grew up in a time when Indigenous identity was suppressed and prejudice shaped daily life. Schooled by the sisters at St. Michael's College in St. George's, she later trained as a nurse, met my father at the Glynmill Inn in Corner Brook, they fell in love and made their way to the big city to build a life, a home and a family. So I'm a first-generation townie.

My mother returned to nursing when I was four years old and worked as a nurse at St. Patrick's Mercy Home in this district. From her, I learned what it means to protect the vulnerable and to see public service as a calling. This is where I first learned deep care in protecting and caring for our seniors. She demonstrated that care is not charity, it is responsibility.

So within this athletic family, I grew as an adventurer and an outdoor swimmer. Each time I hiked that glorious Signal Hill trail in St. John's East - Quidi Vidi or swam in that cold North Atlantic Ocean, I was reminded about our great fortune, an understanding of how deep our relationship is to this place, this landscape, living on the edge of the world, resource rich and strategically located for the world's sustainability.

I reflect upon our ancestors and the newcomers who are still coming as we

continue to be enriched by growing diversity, and this spectacular District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi is exactly that: diverse. It is the heart of the heritage and cultural arts community in downtown St. John's, anchored by a harbour that has provided marine safety for centuries, and remains one of the most vital and iconic landmarks. The Narrows opens to breathtaking view planes from downtown, Signal Hill, the Battery and sweeping northward to Quidi Vidi Village.

The district is home to the historic Battery and the internationally renowned Signal Hill and Cabot Tower, protected under the stewardship of Parks Canada. It encompasses the ecclesiastical district, where churches stand as stone chronicles of immigration, world wars and enduring faith. It holds The Rooms, a monumental provincial tribute to Newfoundland and Labrador's arts, culture, museums and archives, with special reverence for our Indigenous histories.

From the commercial energy of Water Street and Duckworth Street to Churchill Square, and from the growing businesses and organizations along Torbay Road to neighbourhood shops and supermarkets, the district reflects both tradition and renewal.

Seniors reside in the heart of Tiffany Lane, while the vibrant Jelly Bean Row houses of downtown welcome visitors from around the world. The Grand Concourse trails embrace the beauty of Rennie's River as it winds towards Quidi Vidi Lake and returns to the harbour.

The cultural landscape is rich, but it is the people who form its true fabric. What truly makes this district special are its residents, young and old, prosperous and struggling, living side by side. It is not without its challenges but it reflects the evolving, growing community I know so well.

Speaker, my incredible education at St. Pius X girls' school and Holy Heart of Mary regional high school taught me to question everything, to be a life-long learner and to give back to community in whatever way possible. I am so grateful to the Sisters of Mercy and the many lay teachers that I had who paved the way and taught me that education can change the world by enabling critical thinking, addressing inequities and providing opportunity for personal growth and social progress.

So those early lessons shaped my belief that government must be an instrument of fairness and that belief found its political home in the New Democratic Party.

In the early 1980s, influenced by organizations such as Oxfam Canada and the growing New Democratic movement in Newfoundland and Labrador, I came to understand that social and economic inequality is not inevitable. They are the result of choices, and different choices can be made.

So the New Democratic vision is clear that health care and education are rights, not privilege; that workers deserve safe conditions, fair wages, and collective bargaining rights; that seniors should age with dignity; that housing is foundational to stability; that reconciliation with Indigenous people require action, not symbolism; and that climate responsibility is inseparable from economic justice.

These principles are not abstract to me; they have guided my life's work. Through more than two decades in the non-profit sector, beginning as a young co-organizer for the Peace-A-Chord youth festival, I saw first-hand how inequity limits potential, and how collective action can unlock it.

I began as an advocate working against the injustices of establishment, and have now forged myself a place to do the same from within. I stand on the shoulders of many former Members of this House, including

Gene Long, Jack Harris, Lorraine Michael, Gerry Rogers, and today collaborating with my colleague and leader Jim Dinn, who I am so proud to stand with.

My work in the arts for over four decades includes co-authoring *Island Maid: Voices of Outport Women*, a documentation of rural women's lives on the coastline of the Island. It helped to reinforce my understanding that economic shifts, like the cod moratorium, are never just economic. They are human, and policy must account for that.

Producing a photo exhibition, *More Than Meets the Eye*, in collaboration with the Down Syndrome Society of Newfoundland and Labrador proved to be a successful media campaign, with the goal to eradicate the stigma of persons living with Down syndrome. My work as a photographer enabled me to develop and express values of community engagement and equal rights.

So, Speaker, it was time to take it to another level and, inspired by another friend and mentor, the former St. John's mayor, Shannie Duff, I decided to take my passion for equity to the City of St. John's Council Chambers.

As a municipal leader, first elected in 2009 as councillor-at-large, and later serving as deputy mayor, I saw how decisions about infrastructure, housing, transportation and public services shape the daily lives of residents. Municipal government taught me that collaboration is essential and taking the path of least resistance is not an option.

Raising my children, sometimes as a single parent, for over two decades, with their mom in a very public space, has been challenging but a calling that could not be ignored. Leadership requires clarity of values. That clarity led me to champion initiatives in mental health advocacy, including founding, organizing and swimming the Tickle Swim for Mental Health in support of the Canadian Mental Health Association of Newfoundland and Labrador,

a deeply personal commitment to swim a five-kilometre channel in Newfoundland waters.

After 10 years as founder and co-chair of the Tickle Swim, I passed the baton on to new organizers, the Dinn sisters, where the fundraiser and mental health awareness event continues to thrive and has raised thousands and thousands of dollars for local mental health programming.

Mental health is health care. It must be publicly supported, properly funded and free from stigma.

Three years later I was re-elected as the sole female councillor on the St. John's City Council and, in 2017, gender parity was finally reached at St. John's City Hall.

Throughout my entire public life, I have worked to expand political participation for women and gender-diverse people. As co-chair of Equal Voice NL, founder of the Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Caucus, and spearheading the first ever Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador Women's Leadership Summit with capable women from across the province, from the smallest towns to the biggest city, there was finally a space for women to celebrate and support women and gender-diverse political leadership in this province.

Sitting as a board member at both the Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and Federation of Canadian Municipalities boards demanded a commitment that our institutions reflect the strength and the diversity of the people they serve.

Speaker, we are living in a time of widening inequality, rising costs of living and increasing polarization. Too many families are struggling to afford housing. Too many seniors are choosing between food and medication and heating. Too many workers feel insecure in jobs that do not provide stability or fairness, and too many communities face the growing impacts of

climate change without adequate support. These are not isolated challenges. They are all interconnected.

The New Democratic approach recognizes that economic justice, environmental stability and the social equity must all advance together. We believe in building an economy that works for all people, not only for those at the top.

A lifelong learner and with a curious mind, I returned to post-secondary school, completing my Master of Fine Arts at Grenfell Campus, Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2024. Prioritizing education in all its forms is a key to success.

Speaker, I am indebted deeply to my family; to my children Eamon, Maren, Eoin and to my supportive husband, Jeremy; to all of my extended family, Dana, Michael, Olivia and to my larger family of choice who believe in the principles of social justice; to the many, many volunteers and staffers at the caucus who are the true bread and butter; and, of course, my constituency assistant, Anna Kean – I have to give her a shout-out.

We will continue to fight for affordable living and housing; for our seniors' rights and for workers. We will support those impacted by intimate partner violence, because the rates are far too high, and climate action with a just transition for workers – because oil depletion and a turnaround is inevitable – and ensuring healthy communities for all.

We do live in deeply troubling times politically, and despite the weightiness of this politic, I first commend the people by actively getting involved and voting. Care and kindness is an act of resistance.

To the people of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, thank you for placing your trust in me. I will bring your voices into this House with integrity and determination. I will listen carefully, work collaboratively where possible and stand firm when required. We

need to call out the creeping fascism wherever it rears its ugly head, and it's on our doorstep.

Leadership to me is service rooted in values. It is about aligning policy with fairness. It is about ensuring that opportunity is not reserved for the privileged few, but extended to every worker, every senior and every newcomer who calls this province home. Truth, transparency and accountability.

As Ursula Le Guin wrote, "Injustice makes the rules, and courage breaks them."

May we have the courage, each and every one of us, to not only challenge injustice, but to build something better in its place together.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Government Services and Labour.

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

**M. GOOSNEY:** Thank you, Speaker.

Before I start, I just want to say, today was quite the experience in Question Period. It's notable that a lot of the colleagues here have a long history and are passionate about this province and that everybody cares. So I just want to say thank you to each of you for what you've done and what you've endured over the last years in your service here. It's an honour to stand here to speak.

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

**M. GOOSNEY:** Speaker, it is with deep gratitude and genuine humility that I rise in this hon. House, a House intrusted by the people of Newfoundland and Labrador to serve not ourselves but every citizen beyond these four walls.

Before I speak further in my maiden address, allow me to acknowledge the weight of this very moment. There's a huge responsibility put upon myself, but I'm happy to have a group around me, led by a Premier that's entrusted me, that's believed in me and, I can say this: In the very short time, all these Members feel like family, so thank you.

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

**M. GOOSNEY:** Speaker, to speak here, to stand here, to serve here is a privilege I will carry in my heart and my being for the rest of my life. Today I do not stand as one voice, but a voice of many; the voices of our towns, our neighbourhoods, of our regions and our province; of the young and the old; of those who still believe that service is sacred.

I've heard a lot of acronyms in this last four months. I've been in a lot of industry and I thought I heard them all, but there's one that stands out the most and that's HOPE – and I turned it into an acronym and I think we can all do better if we remember this. I've heard this in the House numerous times as I watched online, and my acronym from HOPE is: Hearing Other People's Experience, and I think that's how we find solutions to improve the lives of others.

To be the Member for Humber - Gros Morne is not a title; it is a trust. To those who placed their faith in me, thank you, thank you, thank you; and to those who did not, know this, I am here to serve you equally and the same.

I make this oath: I will put people above politics, service above self and truth above convenience.

My journey to this Chamber did not begin with ambition; it began with purpose. The day I became a father, something shifted in me like a freight train.

In 2011, when I entered public life as a town councillor in Labrador City – no bright lights, no microphones, no cameras really, just neighbours helping neighbours – what I learned there was simple but profound, when you truly listen, you earn something more valuable than any vote; you earn trust.

From councillor to deputy mayor to mayor of Deer Lake, I discovered that leadership is not about being the loudest voice in the room; it is about keeping the most open ear. Titles will fade, but good deeds endure a lifetime. Local government taught me that progress is built one conversation at a time, one handshake, one hard decision, one act of service.

Now, as one of 40 Members in this hon. House, I say respectfully, if we seek change in this province, the best place to begin is right here. Public service is not about being someone; it's about doing something.

My late father, a proud army vet, wore his service, not his armour, but is honoured. He taught me that measure of a person is not what they achieve for themselves, but what they give when no one is watching.

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

**M. GOOSNEY:** If he were here today, I believe he would smile that quiet smile and remind me that sometimes the third try truly is the charm and the fact that I never gave up – you made it, Son.

To my mother, whose faith has never faltered and whose love never tired, this moment belongs to you. Through early mornings and late-night conversations about this very day – this very day – you're my anchor. You taught me that perseverance is born, not from power or ego, but from purpose and, for that, I am forever grateful.

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

**M. GOOSNEY:** Humber - Gros Morne is more than a district; it is a living poem carved in rocks, lakes and sea. From the ancient mountains of Gros Morne to the harbours that cradle our fishing boats, the land and sea, its beauty humbles my soul but it's true magnificence is found in its people – resilient, kind and fiercely proud. The fishermen who never miss a tide, the nurse who stays beyond her shift because compassion outweighs the clock, teachers, tradespeople, service sector workers, public employees, neighbours who clear drives that aren't their own. That, Mr. Speaker, is the Newfoundland and Labrador I know, where humour is our anchor and hope is our heritage.

To my campaign team, the dreamers, the doers, the believers, you are the wind at my back. Students stood by seniors, friends became family and determination became my destiny. You reminded me that politics at its purest is not about climbing ladders; it's about building bridges. For every door knocked, every hand held and every heart lifted, I will never ever forget what you gave to this journey.

Speaker, before I conclude, allow me to speak plainly. I'm not naïve; I know the words I'm about to say will be difficult to live every day, but what if? What if every one of us chose respectful decorum, chose to remember nothing said in this Chamber is ever forgotten, chose to rise above the rhetoric and resist the games.

There are more than 500,000 citizens beyond these four walls, who need us – who need all of us – to succeed. We're not all on the same political team, that is obvious, but we are all on the same side of service. The public service, the public we serve, would welcome better conduct from all of us, and I include myself in that responsibility. These Chambers are designed to create pressure, but pressure can build diamonds or division. That is our choice.

Today, I look around this Chamber with respect for the 29 returning Members whom I've watched debate in this very House not long ago, and to the 11 new Members who now take their place. To those who served in the 50th General Assembly, to every Member who served before them, thank you for your service. To every new Member here today, thank you for stepping up.

I once met a vet while I was here visiting, during my time as the mayor, and it was always like myself to go up and thank them for their service, but in this time, he thanked me for my service. I had a bit of a struggle to understand it. I didn't go overseas. I didn't join the military like a few of my colleagues here, which I highly respect, but he did say something to me that made total sense, and the more that we advance in a digital world and politics that get towards weakening democracy, he said, it's hard to get shot at with words when you can't get away from them.

I respect that man and, if I ever get to see him again, I'll say those same words. I think that's why I say it here, that I have respect for each of us, because none of this is easy. Those words stayed with me. They weren't a slogan and they'll stay with me forever.

I just want to speak about three Members that I also had the pleasure to watch in this House, to call friends – one sat there, one sat here, one sat over there. We all know these names: George Murphy, Derrick Bragg and Kevin Parsons.

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

**M. GOOSNEY:** When I think of those fine, stellar gentlemen, colour didn't matter; partisan didn't matter. I get it; I get all of this, and I'm very glad to be grounded with this team, but when we find ourselves home with our partners and our children, with stress, remind ourselves of George, Derek and Kevin, and they're probably smiling down and saying guys, you got this. You'll be okay. Just work through it. So may we

honour their legacy not only with words, but how we conduct ourselves in this Chamber moving forward.

Mr. Speaker, the true work begins now. There will be challenges, there will be difficult days, but I have faith – faith in people I represent, faith in this province we love, faith that together we can meet whatever comes our way, faith in the people in the public service. And my department staff, I can't thank you enough. In four months, I have learned a lot and it's because of their expertise. Each of them have also come to feel like family. We all do this on behalf of this place we call home. It's because we're proud to be Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

To my EA, they often say – anyone that's sat in this portfolio – they're your left hand, right hand. Well, I like to think he's been every part of me. So I just want to say thank you to him.

To my CA, if she doesn't call every Member looking for a solution, I'd be very surprised because she doesn't take no for an answer when it comes to service and I can't thank her enough. That goes to everybody in the public sector because there's always a solution. So thank you, Dayna.

I'll stand here and beyond this Chamber, I will fight, as all of us will, for the betterment of the people. I will listen and I will serve every single day because Newfoundland and Labrador is the place I love and I call home. Let the record show on this day in this House, I stood not for myself, but for the people who believed in me, helped me to become me.

Lastly, I have to speak about another person, and I left it for last because they always say save the best for last. To my partner, Tina – probably not going to be pleased that I'm bringing her name up in public but she's been in the background forever. But as everyone knows here, you have to have support that's nearest to you.

Many times, I felt like we were opposition to each other because I didn't like her answer. But she's never misguided me and she's always given me the right answers and the right path to follow. I know this isn't easy for everyone's families, so hats off to you, Tina, and hats off to all your family members.

Speaker, it is the honour of my life to serve the people of Humber - Gros Morne, and the strong unbreakable, unforgettable people of Newfoundland and Labrador. In closing, in the words of the late George Murphy, a late great friend: There's 'nudding' like it, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

**R. BALSOM:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, allow me first to offer my sincere congratulations to you on your election as Speaker of the House. I wish you every success.

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

**R. BALSOM:** I rise today with deep gratitude and humility. I want to begin by thanking the people of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde for placing their trust in me. To be chosen to represent one's home district in the House of Assembly is an honour beyond words and one that I will never take for granted. I am aware that this seat does not belong to me but, instead, it belongs to the people I represent and it is their voices I intend to carry forward every day.

I also wish to extend my heartfelt thanks to my family and friends for their unwavering support, patience and encouragement throughout this journey. Public service is never undertaken alone, and I am profoundly grateful to those who stood

beside me and continue to do so every step of the way.

To the volunteers and campaign workers who gave their time, energy and belief so generously, thank you. Whether it was knocking doors, making phone calls, offering advice or simply being there to talk to, your dedication and commitment made this possible, and I am beyond grateful for your efforts.

I would also like to acknowledge the former Members of the House of Assembly that have represented both Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, Trinity - Bay de Verde and Carbonear - Harbour Grace. Thank you to Charlene Johnson, Jerome Kennedy, Steve Crocker and Sam Slade for their service to this district and to the people they served. Their dedication to public service deserves recognition and respect.

I also wish to congratulate all Members on both sides of the House on their election. Regardless of party affiliation, each of us have been entrusted by our constituents with a serious responsibility, and I look forward to working with all Members in a spirit of respect, collaboration and a shared commitment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, the story of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde is one of resilience. From the early settlers who built communities along the shores of Trinity Bay, to those who fortified Carbonear Island against attack and to the generations who made their livelihoods from the cod fishery, this district is filled with heritage and history. We are home to landmarks that tell the story, as the Heart's Content Cable Station stands as a powerful reminder that our district once connected continents as we housed the first successful transatlantic cable. In Carbonear, the C.N. Railway Station reflects generations of industry and transportation that helped shaped the economic and social development of the region.

While our history is rich, our responsibility is present. The same resilience that defended Carbonear Island must now guide us through modern challenges. Across Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, small businesses are at the heart of our local economy. From the storefronts along Water Street in Carbonear, to seasonal tourism operations such as the Heritage House in Bay de Verde or the Wooden Boat Museum in Winterton, to tradespeople and family-run enterprises throughout the district, these businesses do more than create jobs, they sponsor local sports teams, support community events and help keep our towns vibrant and alive.

Many of these businesses have told me they are feeling the pressure. They are managing rising operating costs, workforce challenges and ongoing uncertainty. In rural communities like ours, when a small business struggles, the impact is felt far beyond the business itself; it affects the whole community.

Supporting rural economic development in districts like Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde means continuing to improve infrastructure, strengthening connectivity and to ensure that local entrepreneurs have the tools they need to grow and succeed close to home because when our local businesses succeed, our communities remain strong.

During the campaign, I had the privilege of knocking on doors throughout my district, and I spoke directly with the people I now represent. What I heard was clear. I heard about health care, about long waits, difficulty accessing primary care, concerns about emergency services and the need to ensure seniors can age with dignity and comfort in their own homes. I heard about crime, about property damage, public safety and the importance of ensuring that our communities remain safe places to raise families and operate these small businesses.

I heard about the rising cost of living, about families struggling with grocery bills, fuel prices, and the everyday expense that continues to climb faster than the income. I heard about cell service and connectivity, about dropped calls, dead zones, and the frustration of living in a modern world without reliable access to communication. In 2026, connectivity is not a luxury; it is essential for safety, business, health care access and opportunity.

These are not abstract policy debates. They are real concerns raised by real people at their kitchen tables, on their doorsteps or in their sheds. I want to sincerely thank every resident who took time to open their door, share their concerns and speak honestly about the issues affecting their families. Those conversations were thoughtful, candid and deeply meaningful.

One concern I heard repeatedly while knocking doors in Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde was about the future for young people in our communities. Parents spoke about wanting their children and grandchildren to have the choice to stay here, to build careers, raise families and put down roots in the same communities that raised them. Young people spoke about wanting opportunity, affordable housing and the confidence that they can build a good life without having to leave the district and the towns that they love.

Our region has always produced hard-working, capable young people and the challenge before us is ensuring that the opportunities exist here at home to match their ambition. That means supporting the skill trades, strengthening key industries, investing in infrastructure and ensuring communities remain places where young families can thrive. If we want Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde to remain vibrant for the next generation, the work of building that future must come now and must continue now.

I stand here today committed to working hard on their behalf. I will carry their voices to the House of Assembly clearly and consistently and, most importantly, I commit to being accessible and accountable. My door will remain open to anyone who wishes to speak regardless of political affiliation. Representation does not end on election day; it begins there. The people of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde deserve a representative who listens, who works tirelessly and who never forgets who sent them here. I intend to be that representative.

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

**R. BALSOM:** Throughout the campaign and in the years before it, I have been continually reminded that the strength of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde lies not only in its history, but in the people who quietly serve their neighbours every single day.

Across our district, volunteers form the backbone of community life. Whether it is the volunteer firefighters who answer calls at all hours, the service clubs that raise funds for those in need, the recreation committees that keep our facilities running or the countless individuals who organize community events, their contributions often happen without recognition but never without impact. These individuals do not serve for credit; they serve because they care about where they live and about the people who live there with them.

As a Member of this House, I believe we have a responsibility to support and empower that volunteer spirit, wherever possible. Strong communities are not built solely through government programs; they are built through partnership between governments, local organizations and the people who give their time generously.

No discussion of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde would be complete without speaking about the fishery. For generations,

the waters of Trinity and Conception Bays have sustained our community. The fishery is not simply an industry in our district; it is part of our identity. It builds towns, it fed our families and it shaped our culture.

While the cod moratorium of 1992 changed our province forever, our district adapted, but the challenges remain real. Harvesters face rising fuel costs and uncertainty in global markets; plant workers depend on consistent seasons and stable pricing; coastal infrastructure requires ongoing investment; and younger generations need to see that there is a viable future in working on and around the water. If rural Newfoundland is to remain strong, the fishery must remain strong. Our past was built on the water and our future, in many ways, still depends on it.

Speaker, allow me to briefly share a little bit about my own journey and what brought me to the House of Assembly. I am proud graduate of Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, where I earned a bachelor's degree with a major in history and a minor in French. Studying history gave me a deep appreciation for the struggles, achievements and decisions that shaped our province and country. It also taught me that the future is not something that simply happens to us; it is built by those willing to step forward and accept responsibility.

My first experience in public service came at the municipal level, where I was honoured to serve as the youngest councillor in history for the Town of Heart's Content.

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

**R. BALSOM:** That role reinforced for me that the government works best when it is close to the people. When you see directly how decisions affect roads, recreation, local services and community life, it strengthened my belief that leadership is about listening first and acting with accountability.

I chose to enter provincial politics because I believe it is up to the younger generation, not simply to comment on the future, but to build it. If we want stronger health care, safer communities, economic opportunity and vibrant rural regions, then we must be willing to step forward and shape those outcomes ourselves.

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

**R. BALSOM:** Now, make no mistake, I did not enter politics because I believe I have all the answers. I entered politics because I believe in responsibility – responsibility to contribute, to serve and to ensure that the next generation inherits a province stronger than the one we were given.

I stand here today because I believe deeply in my district, in this province and in the capacity of its people, especially its young people. We have the tools and the capacity to lead, to innovate and to build a future defined, not by decline, but by opportunity and growth.

I was raised by parents who believed in hard work, personal responsibility and giving back to your community. They taught me that if you see something that needs improving, you do not complain from the sidelines, you step forward and try to make it better. Their support and encouragement and example shaped the values that guide me today. I would not be standing here without them.

As I grew older, I began to pay closer attention to those who are already serving our district and, at the young age of 14, I volunteered to help Charlene Johnson with her election campaign. I was particularly inspired by her work and platform as she represented the district with strength and conviction. Watching someone from our area serve at a high level reinforced for me that leadership is not reserved for others; it is something that can emerge from our own communities when people are willing to put in the work.

My journey here has been shaped by family, inspired by strong local leadership and grounded in the lived experiences of the people I now represent. Those experiences will remain at the heart of my work in the House of Assembly.

I believe in community spirit, the kind that defines Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde; the kind where neighbours check in on one another, where volunteers step up without being asked and where people rally together in difficult times. I have seen it in our towns after storms, during community fundraisers, in our churches, our fire halls and our recreation centres.

We saw that spirit clearly during the wildfires on the North Shore this last summer when communities across our district and province came together to support one another. People opened their homes, volunteers organized supplies, local organizations stepped forward and neighbours helped neighbours without hesitation.

In the aftermath, as rebuilding began along the North Shore, that same sense of unity and determination continues to shine. Those moments reminded us that the strength of our district is not found in buildings or roads, but in people who stand together when it matters most. That spirit is not just something to admire; it is something to protect and strengthen.

I also believe deeply in helping those in need. No society is judged solely by its success at the top, but by how it treats those who are struggling. Government has a responsibility to ensure that no one is left behind. I do not see this role as a position of status; I see it as a responsibility to serve with integrity, to act with compassion and to work every day to ensure that the people of my district feel heard, supported and represented.

During the campaign, while knocking doors in the district following the wildfires, I met

someone who had become a small but powerful symbol of resilience. Sizzle the sheep had been caught in the wildfire but was saved and nursed back to health by a local rescue. In the midst of loss and uncertainty, this story became something people could hold onto; a reminder that survival, perseverance and healing are possible after hardship.

What struck me the most about all of this was not just Sizzle's story but the strength of the people telling it. These were residents who faced evacuation, damage and disruption, yet they spoke with determination about rebuilding their homes and supporting one another. They shared stories of volunteers arriving without being asked, of communities organizing supplies and people looking after each other in every way possible.

The North Shore wildfires were a stark reminder of both the vulnerability and the strength of our communities. For many residents, those days were filled with uncertainty and fear; families were forced to evacuate with little notice; homes, properties and livelihoods were placed at risk. In moments like that, the distance between policy and people becomes very real, but what stood out most is how our communities responded.

Volunteer firefighters worked tirelessly on the front lines, often for long hours under extremely difficult conditions in a summer that refused to cool down. Emergency responders, municipal leaders and provincial officials coordinated quickly to keep people safe. Local organizations mobilized to provide food, shelter and support, and ordinary residents stepped forward in extraordinary ways – opening their homes, checking on neighbours, transporting supplies and offering comfort where it was needed most.

That is the North Shore I witnessed; that is Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde.

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

**R. BALSOM:** In the weeks and months that followed, the focus shifted from emergency response to recovery and rebuilding. That work is not always visible and it does not end when the headlines fade. Families continue to navigate insurance claims; communities continue to assess damage; infrastructure and natural landscapes continue to recover.

As we move forward, it is important that we continue to support those affected and that we apply the lesson learned. Preparedness, emergency coordination and support for volunteer fire departments and local response capacity must remain a priority. Because, while we hope to never face events like this again, responsible leadership requires that we be ready.

Speaker, the wildfires tested Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde, but they also revealed its character. In the face of uncertainty, our communities chose co-operation over panic, compassion over hesitation and resilience over despair. In many ways, the story of Sizzle's injuries, yet still moving forward, mirrors the story of the North Shore itself: scarred but not broken; tested but never defeated; and always determined to move ahead together.

Before I conclude this portion of my remarks, I also want to recognize the many public servants and front-line workers who served the people of Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde. From health care professionals at the Carbonear General Hospital and the A.A. Wilkinson health centre to the municipal and provincial staff workers maintaining roads and services to emergency responders and front-line staff, their work often happens quietly but its impact is deeply felt in our communities.

Time and time again, the residents have spoken to me about the professionalism and dedication of the people who keep our services running; their efforts deserve

recognition and I look forward to working alongside them to ensure residents continue to receive the support they need.

It is the absolute honour of my life to stand in this House representing the people who call Carbonear - Trinity - Bay de Verde home. I carry with me their stories, their concerns, their resilience and their hopes for the future.

From the history that shaped our communities to the challenges we face today to the opportunities ahead, I am committed to working with determination, humility and respect on behalf of those who place their trust in me.

I thank the House of Assembly for the opportunity to serve and I look forward to working with all the elected Members to build a better future for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

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

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

I'm standing before you today filled with immense gratitude and humility. It is such a great honour and privilege to serve as part of this Fifty-First Assembly as Member for the great District of Labrador West.

First, Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate yourself on being elected as Speaker of the House.

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

**J. POWER:** I'd also like to take this opportunity to congratulate all MHAs that were elected in their districts as well. I'd like to especially congratulate Premier

Wakeham on becoming the sixteenth Premier of this great province.

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

**J. POWER:** Mr. Speaker, it was also an honour to be sworn in as parliamentary secretary of Labrador Affairs. I would like to commend all the candidates who put their name forward in the last election in October. I want to acknowledge my opponents in Labrador West, Todd Seward and Shazia Razi for engaging in a fair and respectful campaign.

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

**J. POWER:** I want to thank the people in Labrador West who believed in me, supported my campaign and voted. I want to reaffirm my commitment to promises made during the campaign. I'm dedicated to working tirelessly to fulfill our shared vision and addressing the issues that matter most to our communities in Labrador West.

I want to send a special thank you to my incredible campaign team. I would especially like to thank Corina Furlong, Leah Patterson and Nick Hillier. Their dedication, hard work and unwavering support was the backbone of our campaign.

I also want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the volunteers and supporters who gave their time, energy and resources. Their dedication to our shared cause was truly inspiring.

Speaker, I would also like to thank my family and friends for the endless support and encouragement. Thank you to my wife Jamie, five kids: Natasha, Matthew, Ocean, Leah and Emma.

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

**J. POWER:** Their love and understanding have been my source of strength throughout this journey and many before. I couldn't have done it without their sacrifice and

unwavering belief in me. The decision to run itself is a difficult one. I found myself making the decision at the kitchen table with family, not knowing their reaction, and finding out I was the last person in the family who knew I was running in this election.

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

**J. POWER:** The love of a beautiful family who know me and what I would do before I did is something I wish for many more. I would like to thank Michelle Boland for taking on the role of Constituency Assistant in Labrador West.

Speaker, I also would like to thank the Clerks and the staff here at the House of Assembly that provided us with great training as new MHAs.

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

**J. POWER:** Just a little background on myself, Speaker. I was born and raised in a little town on the Burin Peninsula called Mortier-Fox Cove.

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

**J. POWER:** As mentioned, I come from a large family. My father, Ondre William Power, worked with Fishery Products International as captain on a fishing trawler. My mom, Elizabeth Marie Power, was a stay-at-home mom who raised 12 kids, which was not an easy task.

Growing up in a big family means living in the heart of chaos, something almost like Question Period was here today. It provides you with a lot of skills at an early age. You learn to be responsible, compassionate, patient, a little competitive, an expert in conflict resolution and a master negotiator.

After graduating high school, I went to work myself with Fishery Products on a fishing trawler. A couple of years later, I attended Marine Institute here in St. John's and was certified with a master's class three ticket.

Then I continued fishing until the cod moratorium was implemented in 1992. During the first year or so of the cod moratorium, Fishery Products sold most of its fleet to companies all around the world, allaying me a chance to sail from here in St. John's to Cape Town, South Africa. It was a 56-day voyage to complete this trip, a great experience.

Speaker, during this trip, I was given an opportunity to have a swim on the Equator, but I resent the fact that many of my ocean-going experiences were ruined by the movie *Jaws*.

For the next four years, I worked on Vancouver Island, fishing out there as well. I then moved to Labrador City, and I've called it home ever since. First year there, I worked with Department of Forestry in summer and worked for Labrador winter trails in the wintertime. In 1999, I went to work for the Town of Labrador City, and in 2002, I transferred over to the Labrador City Fire Department.

This is where I found my true calling in life. I worked my way through the ranks from firefighter to inspector, chief training officer and up to fire chief. The role of fire chief was one I proudly held for 13 years before retiring in June of '24. During my time as fire chief, I also proudly served on the board for Newfoundland and Labrador Association of Fire Services, six years as regent, six as director and two as president. In June of 2024, I worked as a safety supervisor for Johnson Controls until the election of 2025.

Speaker, becoming a firefighter is more than just a career choice; it's a commitment to protecting lives, property and environment from the devastating effects of fire and other emergencies. Firefighters are often seen as everyday heroes, and the role comes with immense responsibility, challenges and rewards. There is a saying that heroes need heroes too, Speaker, and my heroes are the 6,000 volunteer

firefighters that serve our province every day. Most of them (inaudible) –

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

**J. POWER:** Volunteer firefighters serve as unspoken heroes within our communities, providing a vital shield against the devastating effects of fire emergencies, accidents, hazmat, medical incidents and, now, natural disasters. These brave individuals stand as pillars of strength, responding to calls for help with unparalleled courage and resilience, illustrating their indispensable role in securing community safety. The role of a volunteer firefighter demands an extraordinary level of commitment, unwavering dedication and substantial personal sacrifice.

Speaker, at this time, I'd like to commend all my colleagues and firefighters and first responders from across this great province that responded to the wildfires here on the Northeast Avalon last summer.

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

**J. POWER:** Speaker, I would like to get back to the reason why I am here today, and that is Labrador West. First of all, I would like to thank all those MHAs that represented Labrador West before me.

Labrador West is a unique part of this province. Sixty years ago, the potential to develop many untapped natural resources of Labrador was the driving force behind many relocating to the Big Land. The area quickly developed from forest and mountains into industrial towns. Within an industrial environment and camp origins, both towns have proven their unique sense of place.

In the early 1980s, the privately owned company towns of Labrador City and Wabush became municipalities, each with its own respective elected officials, administrators, government and tax

schemes. All of the impressive potential mining in this province, perhaps, none is more greater than what is in the Big Land in Labrador West.

As you all know, we're a hub for mining activities, particularly in the iron ore sector. Our region is already world renowned for the various iron ore operations and it's home to significant iron ore mines, like IOC and Tacora Resources. We have a stream of upcoming projects, like the Kami Iron Ore Mines and the Julienne Lake project, which reflects our confidence in how we operate.

The mining industry in Labrador West is the driving force behind the province's economic success, making vast contributions to our rich natural resources industry, creating high-paying employment opportunities, supporting local communities and help building prosperity.

With ongoing innovation, responsible environmental practice and strategic global partnerships, Labrador West's mining sectors continues to thrive, driving forward long-term growth in the region's economy. Just last year alone, the Labrador Trough shipped a value of \$3.32 billion. That, Speaker, is more than half the province's total mineral shipments.

Yes, mining is the main reason we live in Labrador West but for too long, many people and governments thought that the mining industry should sustain our communities. Many have wondered how long we would exist here, but guess what? We're four or five generations in now, with hundreds of years to go.

It's time we address the economic challenges and social implications of development in Labrador West, with focus on key issues such as energy, housing, health care, travel, education, labour and mining.

We're not mining towns; we're towns with mines, and our towns are ready to grow and develop.

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

**J. POWER:** Labrador West is poised for growth throughout mining, renewable energy and infrastructure expansion but the future depends on addressing power, housing and health care challenges. The region is exploring opportunities to expand mining operation and transition to our green steel production which will require over 1,000 megawatts of additional power to support decarbonization and industrial growth.

Local leaders and companies emphasize that securing this power is critical for maintaining competitiveness in the global market. Currently, Labrador West is served by two power lines; the third lined is planned to meet growing industrial and residential demands. The expansion is essential, not only to mining, but also to support housing, health care and other community services.

Speaker, the cost of travel in and out of Labrador West is outrageous. Air costs have risen by 47 per cent since 2019. The rise in air fare costs have led to increased frustration among residents, especially those who rely on travel for essential medical appointments and other travel. The situation has prompted discussion and even protest to address the rising cost and improve air travel accessibility to our region.

Every time I travel from Labrador West to work in this House, once a week it costs me \$1,700 – it costs the people of Newfoundland \$1,700 for me to come out every week. Labrador West Minor Hockey Association sent 11 teams to this Island for an Easter tournament break at a cost of \$385,000 to get 11 hockey teams out here. It's outrageous.

Another issue for Labrador West is senior housing. More seniors are wanting to stay in

Labrador West now after retiring. Many seniors are forced to move away due to the lack of affordable senior housing. Many projects for seniors have been rejected and delayed for years. Since October, we have been working with the Labrador West Pioneers, municipal governments, both provincial and federal governments to make proposals and secure funding for housing in Labrador West. I'm hoping that together we all can be successful in moving this project forward for our seniors.

Government officials, industry leaders and community representatives need to collaborate to create a roadmap for sustainable growth in Labrador West, with a long-term focus on planning that balances economic development with a quality of life.

Speaker, beyond industry, Labrador West offers pristine wilderness, recreation opportunities and a high standard of living. Labrador West has so much to offer to both residents and visitors. It's a great place to live and raise your kids. The crime rate is low, and you can still let your kids play freely around town.

We want to talk about tourism? Let's talk about Lab West. We have the largest winter playground in the backyard. Smokey Mountain offers a diverse range of skiing experience for all levels. We have all-natural snow and it's open from November to April, with the longest ski season in Atlantic Canada.

The Menehik Nordic Ski Club provides a high-performance training centre for Canadian, national, provincial individuals and international cross-country ski teams. With over 34 kilometres of groomed trails, Menehik trails caters to skiers of every skill.

The White Wolf Snowmobile Club in Labrador West allows snowmobiling enthusiasts to travel the White Wolf and other adjoining trails to experience Labrador's extraordinary wilderness. You can enjoy 800 kilometres of groomed trails,

including those in Fermont, in addition to several thousand kilometres of off-trail riding.

Cain's Quest snowmobile race has been described as the ultimate in extreme racing. Cain's Quest is the true northern adventure that gives racers the experience of a lifetime. The event has earned a global reputation as the world's toughest and most respectable snowmobile endurance race. Cain's Quest is more than a race; it's a powerful showcase of Labrador's rugged landscape, resilient communities and deep-rooted spirit of determination and teamwork. Every time this event is held it places the well-deserved spotlight on Labrador and the people who call it home.

Speaker, we also take part in the Labrador Winter Games, often called Olympics of the North. It happens every three years in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Games bring together nearly 500 athletes, hundreds of volunteers and spectators from across the region to compete in both traditional and modern sports, which showcases Labrador's culture, pride, spirit and friendship.

Speaker, it's not all winter in Labrador. We also have some world-class fishing, and we have anglers from across the province, country and world coming and seeking these massive specimens: brook trout, lake trout, white fish, northern pike and ouananiche.

The area is also a prime location to catch the Northern Lights, adding an allure of the fishing experience. Mr. Speaker, you say you heard tell of a fellow going fishing before when he says he got a fish this big. In Labrador he's not lying. It's true. We also have a great golf course, Tamarack Golf Club, which offers golfers a unique and challenging experience. It's a must-play destination for golf players.

Recreation is part of the social fabric that binds the two communities of Labrador City

and Wabush. Ask anyone and they'll tell you our recreation facilities are the hub of community life. Sports enthusiasts or not, you will find something that will pique your interest and consume your leisure time.

Speaker, I have to give a big shout-out to the Labrador West Chamber of Commerce for putting off any successful MINEx. MINEx provided a phenomenal platform to showcase the vibrant communities of Lab West, the future of mining and the challenges and solutions shaping our industry. It was an inspiring gathering of brilliant and passionate minds, all committed to driving positive change. It fostered a strong sense of community by supporting local businesses and bringing people together to collaborate and connect.

In closing, I just want the people of this House and the people of the province to know that Labrador West is known as the land of the hard working. Labrador West has evolved into a thriving region and now it's home to fourth and fifth generations of mining families. Yes, we are mining communities, but we are communities that have the same wants and needs as other communities in this province. We believe that the mining industry should not have to sustain our communities in Labrador West, but government should focus on not only the resources but the people who live there as well.

Western Labradorians believe that Labrador West has given so much to the province and it's time for the province to reinvest in Western Labrador. I invite the constituents of Labrador West to stay engaged, share your ideas and work with us to create the positive change we envision for Labrador West. Let's move forward together with determination and hope to build a brighter future for Labrador West.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I move, seconded by the Member for Lake Melville, that we now adjourn debate on Address in Reply.

**SPEAKER:** It has been moved and seconded that we now adjourn the debate on Address in Reply.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

I move, seconded by the Member for Lake Melville, that the House do now adjourn.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

This House does now stand adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, March 4, at 10 a.m.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.