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Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin our proceedings, first of all, I would like to recognize one of our Pages, Emily Conway, to my left who has been working with us with for the past couple of years. Today marks her last day as a Page in our Legislature and I certainly want to thank her for the amazing work she has done as both Page for the last two years and as a tour guide for the last three years.

Emily, I wish you the very best in our future endeavours.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I would like to welcome to our public gallery today a group of new graduates who are part of the Graduate Recruitment Program. This program is designed to provide opportunities for new graduates to embark on a career in our provincial public service. I had the pleasure of meeting with these fine folks earlier today and we gave them a little tour of the Legislature and they are here today to take in the proceedings and Question Period.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I'd also like to welcome to the public gallery today, officials from the Office of the Fire Commissioner of Newfoundland and Labrador, which is part of a Member's statement today.

Welcome to Fire Protection Officers Jim Barry and Jim French, as well as office administrator, Karyn Blackwood.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of

Humber - Bay of Islands, Labrador West, Lake Melville, Lewisporte - Twillingate and Placentia - St. Mary's.

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the Crush Volleyball Club from Corner Brook made its mark on the national stage recently by going undefeated and winning the gold medal in the U17 Tier 21 national volleyball tournament held in Calgary. Their skill and hard work was evident, as on the national stage they proved once again that they are a force to be reckoned with.

With the great leadership of their coaches, Jeff Hull and Mike Morris, players Kendall Jones, Keegan Park, Ava Gallant, Joelle Moss, Sophia Hull, Hannah Stone, Sophie Grant, Ashley Motty, Kylie McDonald and Bridget Mercer proved that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians can compete with any province in Canada.

These young ladies are great role models for younger female athletes, who inspire to play sports and giving them the confidence that they can compete at a national level. You can see when a group of young athletes come together with a common goal that grit and determination can pave the way forward for many other Newfoundland and Labrador teams, proving you can excel at any level.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating the Corner Brook Crush team on their golden performance.

Great job, ladies. I'm proud of you all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. POWER: Thank you, Speaker.

On January 27, 2026, we lost a friend and a great mentor of the fire service of Newfoundland and Labrador with the passing of Mr. Derek Simmons.

Derek was the beloved husband of Rosemarie. He was a proud and dedicated father to his daughter Stephanie, and his sons Adam and Andrew. He also was a cherished grandfather to his grandson Eric.

Derek Simmons had a distinguished career in the fire service. Derek began as a volunteer firefighter with the Pasadena volunteer fire department. He also served as a councillor and one term as mayor for the Town of Pasadena.

He worked as the supervisor for Fire Commissioner's office, Western region, deputy fire commissioner and director of fire services; fire commissioner with the Department of Justice and Public Safety; then served as deputy fire chief for the City of Corner Brook.

He was an active member of the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress; dedicating his life to the safety and well-being of his community and province. His leadership, expertise and commitment to excellence earned him the respect and admiration of colleagues across our province, country and beyond.

Derek leaves behind a legacy of service and respect that will not be forgotten. Derek, thank you for your service and answering the call. Though you are gone, your spirit will forever burn bright.

Speaker, with your blessing, I would like all Members to rise for a moment of silence for Mr. Derek Simmons.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: Thank you.

You may be seated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is with immense Labrador pride that I rise today in this hon. House to recognize Jolene Ashini, born February 25, 1989, a proud member of the Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation. She is daughter of Sheila Blake and the late, great Daniel Ashini, and sister to Jodie Ashini.

Jolene graduated from Acadia University in 2016 with a Bachelor of Science in Geology and began law studies at the University of Victoria in 2018. In 2022, she was among the very first graduates of the university's joint degree in Canadian Common Law and Indigenous Legal Orders. She was called to the Ontario bar in 2024 and to the Newfoundland and Labrador bar on May 25, 2026.

She now practises Aboriginal and Indigenous law with Olthuis Kleer Townshend LLP, representing the Innu of Labrador and has returned home to serve her community. Jolene pursued law out of a strong commitment to addressing injustices faced by the Innu, and was raised in a family deeply involved in advocacy. She was inspired early on by her father Daniel's legendary leadership.

Please join me in recognizing Jolene Ashini, the very first Innu lawyer called to the bar in Newfoundland and Labrador, for this remarkable achievement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. BUTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize our local volunteer firefighters and, more specifically, the volunteer fire department in my hometown of Twillingate.

Last week, they were called into action for an emergency response that put their training into play. With Newfoundland and Labrador, known for its rugged beauty, with that ruggedness comes danger. The Rockcut Trails in Twillingate are second to none but we are reminded of those dangers, as a hiker fell and needed rescue.

Under the leadership of Fire Chief Craig Clarke, the local volunteer fire department sprang into action. With the use of a rescue stretcher and the advanced training, the volunteer firefighters were able to reach the adventure-seeking hiker and get the medical attention she required.

Speaker, I am very proud of our volunteer firefighters. I am honoured to stand here and say thank you, and I am in awe of what you do. Let's all celebrate and show pride that we have and thank you to the volunteer fire department in Twillingate.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize a truly dedicated and community-minded individual from the town of Branch, Mr. Augustine "Gussie" Power.

For decades, Gussie has devoted his time and energy to helping others and strengthening his community. While serving for 50 years as a part-time town clerk, he also volunteered countless hours in support of residents and local organizations.

For 32 years, Gussie played a special role during the Christmas season as one of Santa Claus's main assistants, bringing joy to children and families throughout the community. He also served as a valued member of the local volunteer fire department and generously assisted residents through volunteer CRA tax return services.

Gussie continues to serve his community through his involvement with the Meadow Brook Cottages Board and is always willing to lend a helping hand to neighbours in need. Whether driving someone to an appointment, running errands or helping with everyday tasks, his kindness and generosity are well known.

Speaker, Gussie Power's outstanding service was recognized with the Confederation 75th Anniversary Medal. I ask all Members of this House to join me in congratulating and thanking him for his many years of volunteerism and community service.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I have a request here from the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development to present a Member's statement in his capacity as the MHA for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

Does the Member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 35th anniversary of the end of the Gulf War and to honour the Canadians who served.

From 1990 to 1991, thousands of Canadian Armed Forces members deployed with the

international response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians served during that period at sea, in the air and in varied mission support roles.

For those who served, the Gulf War is not distant history, it was real. It meant time away from family, uncertainty, long days, a relentless focus on duty and a willingness to stand with our allies in defence of peace and security.

As a veteran, I remember it clearly. I was serving on board HMCS *Margaree* with the NATO fleet at the time, providing rearguard Mediterranean support to Gulf War operations. I remember that service carries risk, even away from the front lines. During that time, we lost two divers, including Master Seaman William Hynes from St. John's. God rest your soul, Billy.

While Canada suffered no combat deaths in the Gulf War, we must never forget the burden carried by those who served and by their families who waited at home.

Today, we thank and honour them.

Lest we Forget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Before we get to the Statements by Ministers, I have a ruling that I had meant to do at the very beginning but there's so much going through this brain right now, I forgot – not a word, I say to the Deputy Premier. I can hear what you're thinking.

I'm now going to rule on the point of privilege raised by the Leader of the Official Opposition and Member for Windsor Lake on Thursday, May 21, 2026.

The Leader of the Official Opposition referenced a previous ruling that certain comments by the Government House

Leader were unparliamentary and questioned the consequences of posting a video clip of the House of Assembly broadcast with those same comments.

The Leader of the Official Opposition stated that while the Speaker does not have jurisdiction over a Member's independent speech outside the Chamber, the House does exercise jurisdiction over its own broadcast and video footage. The Leader of the Official Opposition referenced the House of Assembly's copyright and privacy statement in making his point of privilege based on contempt.

I have reviewed this matter, and the Government House Leader's Facebook page does contain a post, dated May 12, containing a clip of the Government House Leader's statements during Oral Questions which led to the original point of order and which were ultimately withdrawn.

The Leader of the Official Opposition is correct that this hon. House does have jurisdiction over the broadcast from this Chamber. The copyright and privacy statement found on the House of Assembly website is clear that while broadcasters and webcasters may make use of recorded excerpts of the proceedings in news or public affairs programs or websites or otherwise electronically post excerpts for the purposes of fair and accurate reports of proceedings, such use is subject to restrictions.

One such restriction is that the audio/visual material may not be altered or modified, except for length, or used in any form of undignified association. Further, any modifications for length must not change the intent, context, meaning, et cetera, of the original full-length portion. The copyright and privacy statement also includes a warning that a breach of these restrictions may be considered contempt of the House of Assembly.

After reviewing the post in question, I do not find that there is a prima facie point of privilege based on contempt. While it may have been edited for length, I do not find that the clip changed the intent or context of the full-length video of the Government House Leader's comments.

With respect to undignified association, at the time when the broadcast excerpt appears to have been posted, I had not yet made a ruling that the Government House Leader's statements were unparliamentary. While I will say that the timing of the post, knowing that the language was under consideration, is unfortunate, I do not find that it reaches the level of contempt.

Before using excerpts or clips from the House of Assembly broadcast, all Members should carefully review the restrictions contained in the copyright and privacy statement and govern themselves accordingly.

I would also remind all Members that statements made outside the Chamber can, in certain circumstances, be such an affront to the dignity of the House that they do reach the level of contempt. On several occasions, past Speakers have had to consider whether comments made outside the Chamber were a deliberate attempt to circumvent the *Standing Orders*, or to do through the back door what could not be done through the front door.

While I do not find a prima facie breach in this situation, I do not wish to leave Members with the impression that comments made outside the House on social media or otherwise, which directly relate to or reflect on proceedings inside the House, can never lead to a breach of privilege.

This is the third point of privilege resulting from the use of social media since this session commenced in March. As I stated in a ruling given on April 28, I have discussed this issue with the Commissioner for

Legislative Standards and I have written the Standing Committee of Privileges and Elections to request that it consider a review of the Code of Conduct for Members to possibly incorporate Members' conduct on social media.

I continue to implore Members to be circumspect and judicious when making statements about their colleagues or about proceedings in this hon. House on social media and elsewhere.

Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Seniors.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Today I rise to recognize June as Seniors' Month.

This is a time to honour the lives, legacies and contributions of seniors throughout our wonderful Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Our government is committed to ensuring seniors age with dignity and with the supports they need to stay connected, engaged and independent.

And we are making progress on that front. We committed to increasing the Seniors' Benefit by 20 per cent, which will happen on July 1, thanks to *Budget 2026*. It also includes wage increases for those who care for seniors in our province – self-managed home support workers and personal care home staff.

We continue to improve the quality of life for seniors through expanded dementia care, enhanced rehabilitation and restorative programs in personal care homes, and the development of age- and dementia- friendly

communities. We are also supporting social inclusion and community transportation through targeted grants.

Speaker, I look forward to honouring this year's outstanding seniors at the Seniors of Distinction Awards on June 11. These awards recognize seniors from all walks of life – experts in their fields, cultural stewards, volunteers, organizers, fundraisers and those who care for people in need.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in celebrating our province's seniors today, every day, and especially during the month of June.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: I'd like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement.

Speaker, the Official Opposition proudly recognizes June as Seniors' Month in Newfoundland and Labrador. Our seniors built and shaped this province and they deserve to age with dignity, supported by strong economic, medical and social programs.

We acknowledge the government's recent steps, including increases to the Seniors' Benefit and wage improvements for self-managed home support workers and personal care staff. At the same time, we urge government to address program thresholds that limit seniors' access to essential services.

We also celebrate the tremendous contributions that seniors make each and every day, and we congratulate all recipients of the Seniors of Distinction Awards.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Seniors built the communities we call home, raised families, strengthened our province and continue to contribute so much to our society. That's why we not only celebrate them and thank them for their contribution, but also call on government to show its gratitude.

Please work to make home care and long-term care accessible and affordable, and implement rent control so that seniors on fixed incomes can afford to stay in their homes for as long as they wish.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to a true pioneer of Newfoundland and Labrador's agriculture sector, Richard Oram of Wooddale, who passed away on May 25.

Speaker, Dick was known for his strong work ethic and unwavering devotion to his family. He worked with the provincial government as an agricultural representative for 35 years and helped shape and lead the province's cranberry industry.

In 2017, he was inducted into the Atlantic Agriculture Hall of Fame in recognition of his lifetime of work.

Dick and his beloved wife Arlene established a farm in Wooddale and founded the very popular Mark's Market. Over the last 15 years, he and his son Chris have worked together to continue growing their family business.

Speaker, Dick's colleagues will remember him for his commitment to expanding our province's agriculture sector. We know at this sad time, his family is remembering his strength, courage and dedication to those he loved. We extend our condolences to Arlene, their children Mark, Nancy and Chris, their grandchildren and many family members and friends.

On behalf of the provincial government, we thank Richard Oram for his dedication to our province and to the sector he held so dear.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Richard Oram will be remembered as a visionary leader whose contributions transformed agriculture in Newfoundland and Labrador. Over 35 years with the provincial government, he championed farmers, advanced innovation and played a central role in developing the cranberry industry.

His 2017 induction into the Atlantic Agricultural Hall of Fame reflected a lifetime of service. With his wife Arlene by his side, they built a successful Wooddale farm and founded Mark's Market, later expanded with their son Chris.

Richard's colleagues honour his dedication to the sector. His family honours his strength, loyalty and love. The Official Opposition extend heartfelt condolences to Arlene, Mark, Nancy, Chris and their grandchildren, and all who mourn Richard Oram.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Our deepest condolences to Mr. Oram and his family. His lifetime of work is something to be truly proud of. To honour Mr. Oram, I guess the best way to truly honour him is to build on his legacy by expanding the agriculture industry in this province. It's more jobs, more local food security and greater affordability in the grocery aisles. That is the best way to honour this gentleman.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, since assuming office last fall, our government has taken decisive action to unlock the full potential of Newfoundland and Labrador's energy sector. Advancing offshore natural gas development is a key part of that plan.

Earlier resource assessments completed between 2011 and 2021 estimate 330 trillion

cubic feet of natural gas in-place potential in less than 20 per cent of the offshore area.

New findings released this week through Phase II of the Natural Gas Resource Assessment of the Jeanne d'Arc Basin provide a clearer understanding of the province's recoverable natural gas resources and support efforts to advance commercial development.

Combined results from Phases I and II estimate total recoverable gas between 19.8 and 35.4 trillion cubic feet.

We have been actively promoting natural gas opportunities offshore and working to attract interest in exploration and development.

These resources are in shallow water, close to existing infrastructure, supported by modern seismic data, and in many cases already confirmed through discovery wells.

We will turn this potential into opportunity by launching targeted consultations on a new royalty framework and advancing feasibility studies.

Our government is committed to developing our natural resources for the benefit of all of us. We are working to create jobs, attract investment and strengthen energy security while positioning Newfoundland and Labrador as a leader in responsibly developed natural gas.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for his update and for the copy of his statement.

It is important, however, to recognize that the momentum he highlights did not begin last fall. The foundation for this work was

built under the previous Liberal administration, which commissioned and released the province's first comprehensive Natural Gas Resource Assessment back in June of 2025, a year ago. *Budget 2023* and *Budget 2025* funded this work so that the province could move forward toward commercial readiness with real data and not speculation.

Phase II builds on that Liberal groundwork. The identification of additional prospects and the expanded resource range were made possible because Liberals invested early, gathered the modern subsurface information and ensured industry had a clearer picture of our potential.

Our caucus remains committed to responsible development that creates jobs and strengthens the province's long-term energy future, and we look forward to working with this government to further advance that progress that began under a Liberal administration.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

In response to the war in Iran and other recent turmoil, governments around the world are fast-tracking projects to replace imports of fossil fuels with renewable, sustainable energy. If this government truly wants to unlock the full potential of our energy sector and create good, well-paying jobs, it would expand these sectors and implement a just transition plan to grow the economy, protect our workers and communities and the environment.

If government is stuck for one, we, the provincial NDP, are willing to share ours with them, for all of us.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs, and Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, I rise today to recognize June as National Indigenous History Month.

It is a time to honour the stories, cultures and contributions of Indigenous Peoples whose presence and stewardship of this land span generations. It is a time to celebrate the history and the strength of traditions that continue to shape communities across the province and across the country.

Growing up in an Inuit community, emerged in the stories of the land and our peoples, I witnessed first-hand the strength of our Indigenous cultures, the resilience of our peoples and the knowledge that has been passed on through generations. These experiences have reinforced the importance of ensuring Indigenous Peoples are empowered to shape our own futures, while continuing to foster understanding and respect and reconciliation with all Canadians.

Speaker, the time for reflection is upon us. We must now take action to right the wrongs of past governments. We recognize the lasting impacts of colonization and we know our commitment to true reconciliation.

In partnership with Indigenous communities, our government is committed to implementing the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. We also have the opportunity to learn from the final report of the Inquiry Respecting the Treatment, Experiences and Outcomes of Innu in the Child Protection System and to take real action for improvements that can be made for children in care.

This month is about listening and learning, celebrating Indigenous languages and cultures and building a more just, equitable and inclusive future for us all, Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of her statement and I, too, and our entire Opposition caucus, join her in recognizing June as National Indigenous History Month.

As an MHA with many Indigenous constituents, I know first-hand the importance of ensuring that Indigenous voices are heard and involved in shaping the decisions that directly affect their communities and future. I was proud, Speaker, to be a part of a government that established the first ever premier Indigenous roundtable which brought in Indigenous leaders and governments together to discuss priorities and pursue solutions collaboratively, and I encourage this government to continue to build upon that foundation.

During Indigenous History Month, I encourage all listeners to take time to view the Indigenous artwork displayed in the front of the Confederation Building. These pieces are a testament to voices, traditions and stories of the Indigenous peoples of our province.

We must recognize that the diversity of our province is one of our biggest strengths and we are stronger when every voice, story and culture is valued and respected.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

This month is an excellent opportunity for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to learn from Indigenous histories, cultures and perspectives, while also reflecting on our shared responsibility to advance reconciliation through action.

We, therefore, call on this government to take the lead on reconciliation by listening to Indigenous voices, supporting Indigenous-led solutions and ensuring Indigenous communities have the resources they need to succeed.

Thank you.

Wela'lioq.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, we're hearing that the federal government has inserted itself into the Churchill Falls negotiations, but does not want to run the risk of putting time and effort into getting the deal only to see it fail in a referendum.

So can the Premier confirm that he has walked away from his referendum promise at the insistence of the federal government?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I can tell you is I've walked away from nothing. I have not walked away from the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: When the Members opposite wanted to push through this MOU, we stood up and said no, we needed an independent review. We got the independent review done, and we'll follow the independent review and the recommendations there to get a better deal for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, if the Premier hasn't walked away from his referendum promise, I give him another opportunity.

Will he stand by the promise he made or is he walking away because it wasn't recommended in the report by people, that he doesn't know, who gave the recommendations?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what I do know is the recommendations in this report are ones that we intend to follow. We intend to get more value, more transmission. Those are the kinds of things that we're looking for in this report for the people of Newfoundland; not just for the people that are here today, but for generations, for the next 10 years, 20 years, 30 years.

That's the kind of effort we are putting in and that's exactly what we are going to get done so that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador can have something that they truly believe in for generations to come.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, if people can't trust the Premier's first and foremost election commitment, how will they trust anything else he does during the course of his mandate? That's the issue.

Since the Premier won't agree with himself to bring his deal to the people, will he at least commit to bring in a new MOU or an agreement to the House of Assembly for an extraordinary debate, the same as our Liberal government did in 2025 when openness and transparency was a real thing?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I had committed to the people of Newfoundland to do an independent review of the MOU. It's an independent review that we did, and we have the report right here.

Let me turn around and read you page 28, one of the things we won't do: "In this situation, GNL oversight and intervention during negotiations effectively superseded the NLH board's governance role, contributing to a riskier and more expensive deal. In the opinion of the IRC, governance of the MOU negotiation process did not meet" –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: – "the high standards required by a project of this value, complexity, and importance."

We will get it right. We will get a better deal for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, this is my last question to the Premier before we break.

Will he commit to reconsidering, during the break, disclosing the names of the people who gave evidence at the MOU Review Panel; disclosing the mandate of Jerome Kennedy and Bern Coffey who were secretly hired in January; explaining the role Danny Williams played in the death of the MOU, conferring the Premier has broken his referendum promise; disclosing how the new dry dock will be paid for; state whether he agrees with his minister that people should sue the government when they can't get health care solved; disclose the cost of renovations for St. Clare's that they haven't disclosed yet; explain why he walked away from the share of equalization dollars; and commit to using MCP and public finds appropriately rather than for his own political purpose?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador elected us back in October to provide better access to health care, to provide a lower cost of living and to have safer communities. We've started down that road.

It is a road that was left to us, but we are going to make sure we deliver on that. The Minister of Finance is starting to do that already – \$15,000 tax-free money for everyone in the Province of Newfoundland

and Labrador that files their income tax, 285,000 people will benefit from that; paid work terms for students – let's see that benefit – 20 per cent increase in the Seniors' Benefits; 3,000 more children and families who will get added to the list so that they, too, could have cost of living (inaudible) –

SPEAKER: The Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, yesterday the Minister of TI said in this House he will govern the way he wants to govern. I'm not sure who that was directed at and who he says is telling him how to govern, but what people want are the results from good governance.

So when can the public expect results on the search for a new chief pilot, rather than just hearing the minister is aware of the situation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I remind the Leader of the Opposition, I've been working on this file since last week. This is not new to us. Like I said, we had a letter come in from the former pilot when he resigned, so we automatically put out an ad for a new person. We're having difficulties because there are other issues going on internally and we're dealing with those.

We had an anonymous letter come last week, which we've acted on immediately. As of when I left the department to come over earlier today, we are very close to having a chief water bomber pilot in place. We're working on those details today and, hopefully, we'll have it in place by tomorrow.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Speaker, there is a strike looming at Marine Atlantic. The Minister of Tourism has stated that access is the number one issue for the industries. Workers are asking to be declared a non-essential service.

What is the Tourism Minister's position on this designation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I think everybody in this Chamber will recognize the significant importance of Marine Atlantic to our province, not just for moving people back and forth, but moving our supplies, our goods and services that we depend upon. Those are the critical parts of that.

In our fishing industry right now, our crab industry, moving their goods to get them to market, to get our lobster to market, it's an essential part of what we do and what we need here. This morning I met with the minister of Finance federally and brought those exact issues to him to talk about how we get this issue resolved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Speaker, if this strike happens, tourism operators will suffer financial consequences of something out of their control.

I ask the Minister of Tourism: What is your backup plan if hotels, tours, restaurants, B &

Bs and adventure excursions receive cancellations because people cannot travel to our province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I said, Marine Atlantic is a huge issue for us. It's a method of transportation. We call it our highway. It's important that that highway be maintained, and that's exactly the message I've delivered to the minister of Finance this morning.

This is an issue that has to be dealt with sooner than later. It has to be dealt with, and we hope that the employees and the employer can get back to the negotiating table and get it resolved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Speaker, this is the start of tourism season, and government has declared a goal of making Newfoundland and Labrador the capital of tourism in Canada.

From a tourism lens, has the Minister of Tourism met with Marine Atlantic herself since word of the potential strike broke, and what support or intervention has she offered?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I said, tourism is definitely an essential part of the equation with Marine Atlantic, but it is much more than that. It's about making sure that the goods and services, that our grocery shelves are filled, that our other resources, our exports can move to market.

So this is a huge file, and that needs to be addressed. That's why I met with the

minister of Finance this morning to have those discussions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Speaker, a senior in my district received a bill that he cannot afford to pay for emergency medical care he received while visiting family in Alberta. He was assured there would be no cost to him, only to return to the province and get a \$12,000 bill. So unfair.

With the \$13,000 bonus paid out of MCP funds for a part-time political staffer in the Premier's office that no one can explain, will the Minister of Seniors and Finance commit to spending smarter and put his own words of targeting those who need it most into action and take care of this senior during Seniors' Month?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, we're aware sometimes when people are out of the province and they fall ill, that they need access to medical care. Unfortunately, the policy here is that if you're outside of the province, you need to obtain insurance, Speaker. Sometimes the first responders are not aware of the bills and they give false information to patients.

At the end of the day, we're willing to listen, to work, to try and help people. People need to be more aware when travelling outside the province to make sure that you do have coverage.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: I say to the minister, if it's a policy change, then that's on you to change that policy. You said in your response that –

SPEAKER: I would ask that you address the Chair.

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So will you say if you would change that policy –

SPEAKER: Again, I would ask that you address the Chair.

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, will the minister say they would change that policy and help this senior during Seniors' Month? Because I did hear from a former CEO of Central that MCP funds have been used for this purpose.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, although there was no question, I just want to address the preamble and the lack of question there. At the end of the day, government has policies. In actual fact, the Member was a minister in the past government that was in place for 10 years that had that policy in place. So if he's asking me, as a new Member of this new government, to change the policy, well then, he has the history and understanding that it's not that simple.

At the end of the day, we just have to make sure when people are travelling outside the province, that they do have coverage.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: I'll say to the minister, stop hiding behind the past, I say, Mr. Speaker, and if I was in Cabinet or in the government right now, I would approve that for the senior.

Will you do the same?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, in actual fact, I will go back to my department and ask them, what would be the process to actually allow for any resident of Newfoundland and Labrador to travel elsewhere, outside the province, into other countries and what happens if they get sick, what kind of cost would it be on this province.

I'm not hiding behind the past; I'm stating a fact that this past government, who is no longer in government, for 10 years did not make the changes, Speaker. I think it's basically, to be quite honest, quite cowardice of him to be accusing me of hiding behind the past.

In actual fact, I'm speaking sense. I will look at it but, at the end of the day, residents have to actually have coverage when travelling outside of province.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, my colleague was asking about a file that came across his desk now. He may not have even dealt with this in past years to be aware.

Speaker, last year, a tender was awarded and work started on the Cartwright school.

In January, I met with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and I was pleased when he reaffirmed his commitment to continue. But it's been since last year and no movement.

Can the minister reaffirm his commitment to residents and students to ensuring the completion of the Cartwright school and can he share some timelines?

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

To the Member's comments on the school, it was something we inherited. It was approved just before the election last year. We're running into problems. I told her last week I'd update her this week and I'll have an update this week.

There are challenges. Right now, there is very little work that has been completed and we've had a lot of challenges with contractors on various issues and we're back and forth with staff. That's why I told her, I committed to her, that I'd give her an update this week and I still commit to doing that in the next day or two.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Premier, I was pleased when the minister confirmed their commitment and the Labrador Affairs Minister's commitment in January, and I really hope that the people can hold him to that.

Speaker, Forteau health centre in Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair serves the entire district, and they have been without a doctor since last year. Given the remoteness of the region, we've heard again and again from leadership and residents that Teladoc alone does leave the residents at risk.

Can the minister confirm that she is actively working to ensure a doctor is placed back in Forteau health centre?

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, it was just yesterday we actually met with the Member who has just asked me the question and two of the mayors. We did address a lot of the questions and concerns that they had. We did say that we are committed to recruitment and retention, Speaker, of doctors and nurse practitioners and nurses for the region.

In actual fact, we are even looking at trying to have an MOU with Quebec to have some coverage, Speaker. What we're finding, unfortunately, with Quebec is they have their own needs. So then they're more resistant to actually have patients from other provinces use their resources.

But we are working on it, we're committed to it, and we want to assure the people that recruitment is a high priority.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, the Minister of Health stated that she was not aware of the concerns being

raised by paramedics. Given the seriousness of the issues they have identified that response is concerning.

Can the minister provide the House with an update on what steps she has taken since yesterday, and what action she is taking in response to the paramedics' concerns?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, I did go back to Health and Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services to sort of get an understanding of what the Member was raising on behalf of some paramedics. In actual fact, the paramedics are not tied directly into CorCare, but they do have access to information that can be communicated to them through CorCare.

Medavie is actually modernizing the ambulance system, Speaker. They're engaging CorCare in that process. We're looking at whether or not the paramedics need to be tied directly into CorCare, but that's something that we're reviewing and it's ongoing.

Right now, the paramedics have access to information of the patients to make sure that the patients are safe and that their response is actually adequate, Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, recently a resident of my district went to the Health Sciences Centre emergency room. After 14 hours waiting, they suggested he go home and come back in 10 hours. Tragically, he went home and passed away.

What can the Minister of Health say to his friends and family and everyone in Newfoundland and Labrador who relies on the Health Sciences Centre as the tertiary hospital in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, sadly, I wasn't aware of this tragedy. What I would say is my deepest heartfelt condolences when somebody passes away, especially somebody who's trying to access health care.

That's one of the reasons why we're trying to make sure that not only is the emerg fully staffed, but also our Urgent Care Centre down in St. John's is fully staffed and operational.

Speaker, we're working now to actually get the other urgent care centres up and running so that when people do go to actually access health care, they'll have a timely response.

My deepest condolences to the family, Speaker. We are trying to do better. We will be better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During Estimates, the minister stated that the immigration functions remain within the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism. Since then, concerns have resurfaced that work previously handled by the department may now be contracted to private companies.

Can the minister confirm whether his department has issued or considered any

contract, service agreement or delegation of authority that assigns immigration duties to a private company?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, first of all, immigration is a federal responsibility. They set the numbers and then we work with that. We have two streams here. We have the Provincial Nominee Program and the Atlantic Immigration pilot.

We have not delegated any responsibility outside of our department.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I'll ask the minister to explain, a local employer reports that at least one private company has had direct meetings between the company and the deputy minister. That level of access suggests coordination that would normally occur when a firm is delivering work on behalf of the government.

Will the minister explain what occurred?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, our department, with regard to immigration files, is in the process of meeting with all stakeholders that are conducting and supporting newcomers to our province, and that's the way it should be.

With regard to expanded meetings, we are in the process of updating, because we are behind the rest of the provinces with regard to immigration policy, and we are in the process right now of doing consultations right across our province.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Speaker, in Estimates, I asked the Minister of Education about the status of the Education Accord – a document that had over 120 inputs including Department of Education officials, teachers, students, Memorial University, NL Schools, early childhood educators, the Indigenous Education Advisory Committee and many others.

I ask again: When will the task of implementing this important document begin?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: I thank the Member for the question. Really, the answer hasn't changed from what was answered in Estimates.

It's an important document, no doubt about it, because of the input of those on the front lines, the many teachers, the many professionals that have offered input there. It's currently back to us in terms of a final review. Brack and Brine, I believe, was the consulting firm that did the initial assessment after the AI allegations. So we will take that.

We have our own blueprint in terms of our commitments with education. We will not be throwing out the Education Accord because

there will be pieces in that, once we get it back, that will be of value to us. Again, it goes back to the input from –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Speaker, last week, I asked about residents in my region unable to get appointments for blood collection at Carbonear hospital. The minister assured me that she was working on a plan. I have since heard from constituents who are frustrated that they finally did get an appointment, but two months out, which is not acceptable.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, we are working with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services to address a lot of the issues that's happening. We do understand the long wait times, but I do agree with the Member that that is unacceptable, and we will be looking into the long wait times and, hopefully, be able to have something back to her shortly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Speaker, in 2021, the Conservative platform actually said – and I quote – a PC government will renegotiate the equalization formula to end the discrimination against provinces that rely on resource revenue. If Ottawa will not negotiate a fair deal, we will sue for justice – end quote. That was the now Premier, who was the Finance critic.

Why is he now reversing his promise to sue for justice and letting Ottawa off the hook?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I stood in this House yesterday and literally said there is no equality. There is nothing equal about equalization, and I stand by that statement. We still need to negotiate a better deal with the federal government when it comes to how that type of equalization is carried out across this country.

Right now, we're working with the federal government and we're working with the premiers of the other provinces to see how we can make that happen. But I definitely think that, again, I will stand by that statement: There is nothing equal about equalization and it needs to change.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, the Premier and the minister promised MRIs for Labrador but have not provided a timeline on when they can be expected. We learned in Estimates that the first step is renovations have to be done at the site. We know right across the province there is not sufficient staff to run the MRIs.

Can the minister provide an update and let Labradorians know when they can expect this diagnostic tool?

Thank you.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, when we committed to MRIs. We put two MRIs in our very first

budget getting into government after 10 years of a Liberal government that failed to deliver a lot of infrastructure and services for health care delivery in our province, other than opening up of buildings and entering long-term leases and failing to actually recruit staff.

For me, I think this is a strong commitment to Labrador. It's a huge commitment to Labrador. It's in our budget. We are actually going to order the MRIs. We're going to actually make sure the infrastructure is there, and we're going to try to do something about the mess we've been left with in recruitment from the old government and make sure we're properly recruiting staff to make sure the MRIs are up and running.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Virgina Waters - Pleasantville for a quick question.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the Budget Speech, it talks about building a stronger workforce and creating opportunity for all of us, yet MUNFA has warned that the cuts to the mathematics department will reduce course offerings that are essential for engineering, business, science, technology programs.

How does the minister justify allowing cuts that directly undermine the very workforce goals his own budget claims to advance?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you.

A good question and I thank the Member for it.

As we know the university is autonomous; it runs through the Board of Regents, which I have a lot of confidence in, moving forward. They look at the challenges they have ahead. I take their word on it.

I've spoken with MUNFA, I've spoken with the president of the university and many other groups there and they're doing their best to ensure that the university remains a comprehensive university, offers all the programs that are needed to ensure that our economy is prepared for the future.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, parents are Riverside Elementary school in Clarendville are expressing concern that incoming kindergarten students may not receive adequate supports because of class size and complexity of needs and are seeking a meeting with the minister and stronger inclusive education supports.

The NLTA's wear red ad campaign already raised concerns that the 94 teaching units and 20 TLAs will do little to lower class caps and address class size and composition.

Will the Minister of Education explain how these positions will be operationalized to address significant class size and composition issues, especially considering the district was unable to hire the full comp of 400 last year?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

With regard to Riverside, we've had conversations with them. It's an issue that they're raising now. Their main concern is about being proactive rather than reactive and not doing these changes when it comes to inclusive education in the fall.

I will tell you, our professionals within the department are doing that now. They are going through reviewing the needs of the various schools around the province. They will then determine what the ratios are that are needed there. They'll have those ready for September.

However, we know that over the summer these ratios change because parents and students sometimes change where they're going to school. So, right now, our intent is to have the inclusive supports in place, as well as the classrooms –

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

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I can't help but think the ground work of figuring out the ratio should have been done before you picked the number to put into the school system.

Speaker, *Budget 2026* announced \$1 million to place social workers in schools as part of the provincial expansion of the DoorWays program to support student mental health. Meanwhile Memorial University announced a 20 per cent cut to social work faculty seats for the 2025-2026 school year.

So I ask the Premier: Where exactly does his government plan to get the social workers to address student mental health or to fill the vacancies in the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

It is of great importance that we have a sufficient number of social workers within government. I'm very proud to say that my department has reached out to the entire social work class and has offered positions to more than half the class.

Speaker, we have included this in 2026 budget to make sure that social workers are certainly within my department. That, of course, will branch out to other departments as well, but right now, in Social Supports and Well-Being, we certainly recognize the need. We are now at a percentage of just under 20 per cent vacancies within the department.

With these social workers hired, Mr. Speaker, that will lower that again. Very proud of this Premier, very proud of this government and very proud of *Budget 2026*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

We are seeing climate fluctuations with increasingly hotter and drier summers in this province, and we know, from experience, extreme heat can cause serious health risks for seniors, particularly those living in conditions where they have limited ability to cool their environment.

Will the government confirm that every long-term care and personal care home in this province has working air conditioning in all shared spaces and in residents' private rooms?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, I think that was a game of tag, but in any event, that's a great question actually.

My mom lives in a personal care home. I understand exactly where you're coming from. Those are parameters, those are guidelines that we've discussed. That's something we'll have further discussion on. Because, in order to do so, it's a huge cost impacted and it's also a lot of private operators as well.

So that would be a bigger conversation, but it's a point well taken and it's something we'll take under consideration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

The government's electric car rebate program shut down applications on March 15, and the sales of EVs have been growing every year because people want to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and lower long-term transportation costs.

Can the minister explain why government dropped the EV program and will it be revived?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

This province was very proud to give out EV, electric vehicle, rebates over the years. The simple answer is that the federal rebate is now on for anybody who wants to buy an EV. That just pretty much took the place of

provincial rebates, so anybody can apply for the federal rebate starting now as well.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's my pleasure to rise and table the Road to the North report – the prefeasibility study completed by Allnorth consultants regarding a potential road into Northern Labrador. It is a report that has been kicking around for a while – and it's my pleasure to finally put it to table it here in the House of Assembly.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Any further tabling of documents?

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

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

It is with absolute pleasure that pursuant to section 26(5)(a) of the *Financial Administration Act*, I am tabling five Orders-in-Council relating to funding precommitments for fiscal years 2026-27 to 2030-31.

SPEAKER: Any further tabling of documents?

Pursuant to paragraph 21(f) and section 51 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, I am pleased to table the House of Assembly Management Commission's annual report for the fiscal year ended March 31, 2025. This report includes the summary of the work of the Commission for the period of April 1, 2024, to March 31, 2025.

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

The reason for this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS roadway littering is a growing environmental and public safety concern that harms wildlife, pollutes waterways, creates hazardous driving conditions and diminishes the natural beauty of our communities; and

WHEREAS thousands of tourists visit our province each year to experience our scenic coastlines, rural landscapes, parks and communities, and litter along our roadways damages the image of Newfoundland and Labrador as a clean and welcoming destination; and

WHEREAS protecting our environment and keeping our communities clean is a shared responsibility, and stronger enforcement and preventative measures will help preserve our natural beauty, tourism industry and quality of life for future generations.

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned,

respectfully request the House of Assembly urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to review this matter, introduce stronger policies and take immediate action by increasing fines and penalties for littering offences; expanding public education and awareness campaigns on environmental responsibility; strengthening roadside monitoring and enforcement efforts; supporting community cleanups and volunteer initiatives; implementing stricter requirements for commercial and construction waste transport to prevent debris from entering roadways; and promoting tourism pride campaigns that encourage residents and visitors to help keep our province clean.

I think we can all agree that even just a drive on the Trans-Canada Highway, as well as in our respective communities across Newfoundland and Labrador, there's simply too much litter in all seasons: winter, spring – we especially see this during spring. So if the Minister of Environment could work with, maybe, the Minister of Transportation or even municipalities across our province to increase fines, as I had mentioned, stronger penalties, but also encourage volunteer initiatives.

I think we can all agree, we'd like to have a nice, clean, beautiful province. We have the best province in Canada, Speaker. I think we can all do our part and do a little bit more to make sure that we clean up, take care of our environment and, of course, increase that civic pride that we have.

I also heard an interview, actually, today, the Minister of Transportation talked about there was a couch – a full-size sofa – that was actually taken off the Outer Ring Road from the cleanup that happened just this past weekend.

There's lots more that we can do, so I call on the ministers to work with the municipalities, increase policies and fines and whatnot so everybody, of course, can

enjoy a cleaner, happier and healthier Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Before I go any further, I just want to note there that Ms. Susan Walsh, I believe, is joining us in the gallery today. She just retired as our Seniors' Advocate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I wasn't certain that it was her. That's why I had to ask the Clerk here. She is kind of hidden behind the thing. Anyway, she's still interested, obviously, in what's going on. Even though she's only retired a couple of days, she is here already. Good to see you.

Now, the Minister of Environment wanted to respond to the petition?

C. TIBBS: Thank you. Yes.

I'll only take a quick second here, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the Member for bringing it forward. We're continuously working with the department, the MMSB throughout all departments here to ensure that we have a better, brighter, cleaner Newfoundland and Labrador tomorrow. It's part of my mandate for the next four years when it comes to illegal dumping, when it comes to trash on our roadways. It's something that we do need to get a handle on, especially when it comes to tourism season and stuff like that.

We all want a more beautiful, cleaner province, Mr. Speaker, and it's something that we are going to look at over the next four years. I look forward to working with every single minister here, and even on the other side, to ensure that we get that beautiful province for tomorrow.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a lengthy one.

WHEREAS many individuals in Newfoundland and Labrador rely on extensive home support services, including up to 24-hour care, to live safely and with dignity in their homes; and

WHEREAS when these individuals are admitted to hospital for acute medical care, their home support workers are often prohibited from accompanying them or continuing to provide support in the hospital setting; and

WHEREAS patients in acute-care settings outside of intensive care or intermediate care units are not monitored continuously 24 hours a day; and

WHEREAS families are frequently expected to remain at hospital around the clock to provide supervision, communication support, personal care, behavioral support, feeding assistance, mobility assistance and other essential supports without compensation; and

WHEREAS many families are unable to provide this level of unpaid care due to employment obligations, distance, financial hardship, age or health concerns; and

WHEREAS the absence of familiar support workers can place vulnerable patients at greater risk of distress, injury, confusion, neglect of personal needs, prolonged hospitalization and reduced quality of care;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to permit approved home support workers to accompany and continue supporting their clients during hospital stays in acute-care settings, where appropriate, and requested

by the patient or family; and furthermore, to develop a clear provincial policy that recognizes the role of home support workers as essential care partners in hospital settings for individuals requiring continuous support and supervision.

Speaker, the petition speaks for itself. I understand the Minister of Seniors is presently reviewing the home care policy, so I certainly urge him to consider this request. We all know that there are not enough nurses in our hospitals today. So there's no way we can put this on nurses also to be responsible and have to stay with patients 24-7 in a room.

These are clients that require 24-hour care supervision at home, so I certainly and truly hope the minister hears me loud and clear today and will consider this request.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

M. KING: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

Route 480 is a vital provincial highway serving communities throughout the region. Overgrown brush and vegetation along the roadside have created serious safety hazards for travellers using the highway. Obstructed sightlines at intersections and curves reduce driver reaction time and increase the risk of collisions.

Residents and road users have repeatedly raised concerns about the lack of timely brush cutting maintenance on Route 480, and the situation continues to deteriorate. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, through the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, is responsible for the maintenance of this road.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to immediately undertake and maintain a regular schedule of brush cutting along Route 480 to restore safe sightlines and reduce hazards for all road users.

Speaker, I would note in this petition we have signatures from Burgeo – actually, I think they're all from Burgeo in this one. But I know there are other communities like Ramea and Grey River that use that route.

As many Members in the House of Assembly have heard from me a number of times here in this session talking about Route 480 and the concerns on that road, and I will say thank you to the minister for – I've been quite persistent with him lately about addressing a lot of the road conditions on that route, making sure they're being addressed in a timely manner for safe travel for many residents and visitors to that area, and brush cutting is also an important part of that. I do believe he had mentioned in the past to me that there will be some scheduled brush cutting this summer, so I certainly encourage him to keep on that timeline to make sure that we can address a lot of concerns.

A lot of the main concerns, just for some background here, Speaker, is on the first part of the highway. Usually the 90 degree turn is where you turn off to, we kind of have two parts of the highway there and a lot of the brush is on the first part.

So I hope the department and the minister will take those concerns from the residents seriously, and to make sure that we address a lot of the concerns for brush cutting this upcoming season to make sure that we can prevent, especially moose collisions. I travel back and forth on the TCH a lot, Speaker, going back to the district, and I've seen a number of moose now. Eliminating that brush creates a safer environment for people to travel on the route.

I, once again, encourage the minister to take action on that route to make sure that brush cutting can happen this season to provide safe access for residents and visitors to the Burgeo area.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Before I get to Orders of the Day, I also want to recognize Pamela Dawe, who is the new acting Seniors' Advocate. I don't know her by sight, so I apologize. Maybe just stand up and give us a wave so we know who you are.

I apologize. If I had known who you were at the time, I would have recognized you from the beginning.

Anyway, welcome.

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 2.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: I move, seconded by the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1), that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, June 2.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. today, Tuesday, June 2.

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.'

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 1.

SPEAKER: Motion 1.

The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board:

WHEREAS subsection 16(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* requires the appointment of an independent committee, named the Members' Compensation Review Committee, to conduct an inquiry and prepare a report respecting salaries, allowances, severance and pensions to be paid to MHAs once every General Assembly; and

WHEREAS some matters contained in the MCRC 2024 report, entitled *How We Value Democracy*, were considered by the Management Commission, but matters required to be considered by the House of Assembly were not addressed before the end of the 50th General Assembly; and

WHEREAS in accordance with subsection 16(2) of the act, the Speaker has consulted with the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and the Third Party on the appointment to the said committee; and

WHEREAS the Government House Leader, the Opposition House Leader and Third Party have agreed with the introduction of this resolution; and

WHEREAS under subsection 16(4) of the act, a Members' Compensation Review Committee appointed under this resolution must report to the Speaker on its recommendations within 120 days of its appointment;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

(1) THAT Heather Jacobs, KC, is appointed to the Members' Compensation Review Committee with the appointment to be effective June 15, 2026; and

(2) THAT in accordance with section 16 of the act, the Members' Compensation Review Committee shall inquire into and prepare a report respecting salaries, allowances, severance and pensions to be paid to the Members of the House of Assembly; and

(3) THAT in particular, the committee shall: (a) recommend the annual salary for Members of the House of Assembly; (b) review and make recommendations regarding additional salary provisions for positions identified in subsection 12(1) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*; (c) recommend a formula or means for making annual salary adjustments for salary amounts referenced in clauses (a) and (b) above; and (d) review and make any recommendations regarding the current transitional allowance policy for Members of the House of Assembly; and

(4) THAT the MCRC report for the 50th General Assembly, entitled "How We Value Democracy," shall form the basis of the MCRC report for the 51st General Assembly; and

(5) THAT the Committee shall: (a) review, update, revise or replace any of its previous recommendations, where appropriate; and (b) ensure that consultation is completed which includes current Members of the House of Assembly, former Members of the

House of Assembly and any other interested parties.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to take a couple of moments to speak to this. The review of the Members' compensation is required at least once in every General Assembly pursuant to section 16 of the *House of Assembly, Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*. It is a legislative responsibility.

The MCRC's purpose, in accordance with the act, is to conduct an inquiry and provide recommendations, as appropriate, respecting the salaries, allowances, severance payments and pensions paid to Members of the House of Assembly.

Prior to appointment of a Committee, the act requires consultation between you, the Speaker, the Government House Leader, the Official Opposition House Leader and the Third Party, and the approach recommended in this resolution is further to that consultation.

As agreed to in the consultation that took place between you and each of the three caucuses, this resolution recommends the MCRC report of the 50th General Assembly that shall form the basis for the report of the 51st General Assembly, given the agency of the work and analysis completed for 2024.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your time and for the Members' attention.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll take a couple of minutes to speak to Motion 1, the Members' Compensation Review Committee, that's just been brought forth by the Deputy Government House Leader.

Time goes very quickly. I was sitting here reflecting back on the 2016 review, the 2019 that didn't happen – the minority government, and we went back to the polls in under two years – and the 2024.

Speaker, for anybody who might be wondering, we talk in acronyms. MCRC, what's that? What's a Members' compensation review? It is a review of Members' compensation, and it is required at least once in every General Assembly and that's pursuant to section 16 of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*.

Speaker, the purpose of it, the Members' Compensation Review Committee, or MCRC's purpose in accordance with the act is to conduct an inquiry and provide recommendations, as appropriate, respecting the salaries, allowances, severances, payments and pensions paid to Members of the House of Assembly.

Prior to appointment of a committee, the act requires consultation between the Speaker, the Government House Leader, the Official Opposition Leader and the Third Party, and the approach recommended in this resolution is further to a brief meeting that we had last week.

Speaker, a Members' Compensation Review Committee was appointed in the 50th General Assembly, and a report was delivered in April of 2024. Ms. Heather Jacobs, KC, was the candidate appointed by resolution of the House to complete the Members' compensation review.

Some matters contained in her report that was titled *How We Value Democracy* and there was a lot of interesting information that she had compiled in that report. Some were considered by the Management Commission, but the 50th General Assembly dissolved and some issues, I'm going to say, related to policy were enacted. There were some recommendations around pay raise and I think I'll speak honestly and

say the government of the day, we chose not to go down that road, recognizing the affordability issues in the province and would people have an appetite.

One of the things, Speaker, we have to do a Members' Compensation Review Committee. Legislation asked us to do that in every General Assembly, but there's something very flawed with the process that is asking Members in this House to vote to give themselves a raise. I think that's what we have heard again and again from Members of the public. They have a challenge with that.

That is not how it happens in federal parliaments. I haven't done a jurisdictional scan to see how it happens in other provinces and territories across our country provincially. But maybe as we move forward now to start the next steps of this MCRC, there may be a recommendation that will come before this hon. House that will take it out of the hands of people that serve in this Legislature, whether it's us or for decades to come because I know that people don't have an appetite for that.

Having said that, I also know, Speaker, the Members' Compensation Review Committee was brought in in 2007. We're just under two decades where this process was brought in and, legislatively, we do this review every four years. It's been 18 years since the salary of a Member of the House of Assembly in Newfoundland and Labrador has changed – 18 years.

Sometimes we say a dollar today is certainly not worth what a dollar was way back then. I know there is merit here, but I also would be remiss if I didn't share that I have strong views – and some on my team share that – that there's something wrong with a process that pushes Members of the House to vote for that increase.

However, what we're doing today, the government of the day – the government who are just finishing up their very first

sitting – have chosen, at this point in time, they have an opportunity to bring this forward in year one, year two, year three. It can be recommendations made that will be for the next sitting of the House of Assembly. In this 50th, they've chosen to bring forward right now.

What will happen is Ms. Jacobs, who I believe is very, very qualified, capable and competent, she did an expansive report in 2024. She will, maybe, revise some of those numbers. I don't know. I know that every MHA in this House will have an opportunity to sit and speak with her. I, personally, didn't avail of that opportunity the last time. Maybe this time I will.

There's such a huge disparity even in urban and rural, but that is what it is. We call it a privilege to serve, but there's also a sacrifice that comes with serving. What will happen is she will move forward and should this pass now today in the House and we vote, she will have 120 days to compile a report. She will come back to this hon. House with recommendations that were in the report.

Once the report is done, again, it will be up to the government of the day to bring it to the House. So anybody here today in this hon. House that is feeling like they want to have some say, they will have an opportunity. The House of Assembly – everybody will have an opportunity once this MCRC comes back.

Speaker, my first experience with the MCRC process, we had formed government in the fall of '15. Things were very, very desolate in this province. The deficit was massive. The recommendations came in; it was so negative. The entire thing was absolutely terrible. I believe it set people back at many different levels. In 2019, as I mentioned, we had the minority government and then, we were back to the polls before an MCRC was done, actually. In 2024, we chose at that time not to bring it into the House.

I just want to say, in closing, that I do hope we move to one of the recommendations for us to vote to move to a better process, to take it out of the hands of elected officials. I believe that elected officials, the most of them, their heart is in the right place, that they work tremendously hard. It's not always how it's interpreted in the public, so it's very difficult. We all have our different views on that.

I also want to say that – and I said this a couple of weeks ago for the record – despite how my own personal integrity and character have been on the line, and misinformation over the last number of months, I had one opportunity to vote. Since I have been a Member for 13 years, I have had one opportunity to vote – ever – on an increase. It was at House Management; it was televised live. Myself, my colleague for Windsor Lake, my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands, we voted –

AN HON. MEMBER: Mount Pearl North.

L. DEMPSTER: Mount Pearl North. We voted against and there were three Members that now sit on the government side that voted for. The only time I have ever had an opportunity to vote, I voted against. That is truth and it's important for me to get there because I've been questioned so many times by people when wrong information, mistruths have been out there.

Speaker, on behalf of our Opposition, obviously we're supporting. We know legislatively this is the next step is to get things moving for the 120 days. As I said earlier, it's up to the government when they call this. So this process will start now, and whether this comes in the House in the fall and everybody has an opportunity to debate, there might be a recommendation of something that is a certain figure and the House might settle on something that is half it. I have no idea. I can't prejudge. I just want to tell my colleagues on this side, in

particular, that there will be an opportunity for debate on this.

I wish Heather and her team very well, as she did a very extensive report the last time. The individual that's been chosen has been in the past the deputy minister of Justice. She's served as chair of the board of directors of oil and gas. She has a long portfolio. She has a Bachelor of Law degree from York University at Osgoode Hall. She has a Bachelor of Commerce. I believe she's capable and competent in doing the work that she has been entrusted here to do. I do wish her very well.

Thank you for the opportunity, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

We will be supporting this motion.

It's an interesting title for the 2024 report about how we value democracy. We often think that the greatest threats to our democracy come from outside, from other forces or powers, yet we've just got to look around to many countries and we see that the greatest threats come from within. Just look at what's happening to our southern neighbour and other countries.

I've often looked at and I've been thinking about the way we protect democracy by having strong institutions, strong legislatures, strong elections, a court system that's unbiased, but it's the institutions that we're a part of and the ministers who are in charge of those departments. We, as a collective here, are in many way responsible for the democratic system that we enjoy. Even here, within the House of Assembly, the various procedures are about, I guess, putting that value on democracy and protecting democracy and what it means.

There are countries where – when I was a teacher – parents and students, they didn't have the right to vote. We take it for granted. Actually, we take it for granted so much that – nah, I don't think I'll vote this time around or not. If it takes that much effort I guess, to get out and vote, imagine the effort it takes then if you decide I think I'm going to run for office. To go through the campaign, raise the funding and so on and so forth, get the donors and get the volunteers, and then sit in the House of Assembly for four years. Depending on what side you are and what position you occupy – well, we're all going to get the criticisms (inaudible) at us. It's a tough go and our families are very much part of it.

So the question comes down, should people be compensated fairly for their work? Yes, I would be remiss as a former union leader myself to say otherwise. It's something that, as head of a union, we fought for, that our members receive compensation and fair compensation for the work that they do.

Now, the process usually involved collective agreement negotiations and I can guarantee you that usually there were improvements into the contract but, at the same time, there were concessions. Rarely was it a case of we could come out and say man, we got it all. I don't know if that ever happened in my time as a teacher.

At the end of it then, Members would be kept abreast of it throughout the process but at the end the Members would have an opportunity vote whether they accept that package with both the improvements and the concessions. But it was a whole package that was negotiated.

I guess, though, when I look at this and this is the question it comes down to and this is the problem that we had last time, whether we should be voting to provide an increase to ourselves based on a report. I did, in the last report, express concern that maybe there's have to be a way we're not directly involved in voting for our own increases.

That doesn't mean we're not entitled to them.

But to the Member who spoke previously, it comes down to how do we take us out of the equation so that we get around that and make it at least somewhat fair or transparent or less self-interested.

I thought if the report came back that we were to vote for an increase, I often felt, well, why not vote so that the increase will come in effect with the next General Assembly, whenever that might be, whether it's one year, two years, three years? At that time, there's no guarantee that those who are voting on it would be re-elected or would benefit directly from it.

That's one option, I thought. Or why not tie it to the cost of living and that's been suggested so that from here on in it never has to come before the House of Assembly for a vote, but there's a process that's fair, transparent and above board.

The only thing is that, in many times, we find that contracts, collective agreements, increases will stagnate because the government can't afford it. It looks a little bit odd or, I guess, troublesome when you see the Members' increases are going up at a time that there's austerity.

The other option is that maybe it would be tied to increases to whatever the average is for the public service. I know in certain unions that when the members negotiate an increase, the staff automatically get that increase to their pay as well. It's an automatic increase; they reap the benefits as well.

I guess whatever process – and certainly I will contribute to this again and I will put in my suggestions but, 18 years, if I understand it, since there has been an increase, that's a long time of austerity, I'll say that much. I would suggest that there are many people in this House of Assembly here who could probably make a lot more

money in the private sector than they could here.

Obviously, they're not here just for the money alone, but there's also something else that calls people to this kind of a lifestyle. By the way, often the people who criticize us for being in this position are the very ones to say I wouldn't touch it for all the world, for all the money. I want nothing to do with it.

But I do think there has got to be some fair compensation, but there has got to be a way in which it's not tied to us voting on ourselves. I do have problems with that, voting for an increase for myself, but take us out of the equation. Like I said, whether that's any improvements come into effect the next Assembly, whether it's tied to the contracts or the collective agreements, the remuneration determined through collective bargaining, or it's, again, tied to the cost of living.

Personally speaking, for me, it's either we vote for the increase to take effect in the next Assembly, or it's tied to collective agreements. At least it's a recognition that, in the good times, yes, there would be an increase. In times where we have to show more austerity, it's tied to that.

So, Speaker, I wish Ms. Jacobs all the best, and her team that she appoints. It's not going to be an easy task. I think here the fact is it will start with the report that we have rather than reinventing the wheel and looking at updating it and making sure that the numbers and the conclusions are accurate, are up to date and current.

But I would encourage anyone, not just MHAs, members of the public, now is your chance. Engage, have your say. I know we'll probably get the trolls who will put their comments in. But I would say a lot of people out there will give us some very sound, very wise thoughts on this, and that's going to inform this Committee as to what it's going

to do and what the recommendations are that will be brought back here.

But I would argue that if we want to attract more people to this, to run, to be engaged in the process, to strengthen our own democratic institutions, then we've got to find a way to make sure that future generations who take on this role at least know that there's remuneration here that's going to support them and their families as well.

I will say this, despite the criticisms here that lobby at the government, I say at this point, not that I wouldn't want to but I have a great respect for anyone who's in a ministerial role because your life is really not your own. I would say for anyone who travels to come into St. John's – it's great for me. I walk home at the end of each day and I'm there with my family. For others, you're here for weeks at a time. Yes, sometimes I take the bus, sometimes I cycle and sometimes I drive.

AN HON. MEMBER: Up hill both ways.

J. DINN: Up hill both ways in the snow.

I will say this, I think it's time to have the discussion. No one can point to us and say you've been getting increases year over year. That hasn't been the case.

Speaker, I'll leave it at that. I'll wait to see what the report is and I hope at that time we can come with a way forward. I'm thinking really of future generations here who take on this job. You can see here we have both young people, we've got senior people, veterans – I'm going to regret saying that, I know; he's behind me – we have people in here mid-career.

Speaker, let's wish all the best to this Committee and looking at having further discussions on it down the road.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I wasn't going to get up to speak today because I think this is well in hand with my colleagues, the House Leader and Deputy House Leader. The Leader of the Third Party just made a few good points. I need to clarify the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair on some, probably, misinformation that we're hearing.

When the previous report was issued in the last session, by law, for the people out there listening – this is by law; we have to under the *House of Assembly Accountability and Integrity and Administration Act*. It's not choice, it's by law we have to do it every session.

They submitted a report respecting democracy. That report was sitting with the Management Commission. We had to either leave it collect dust at a \$340,000 cost. The public should realize that it was a \$340,000 bill come with it. We had the report sitting down. The government of the day – which the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair was a Member and one Member of the Management Commission – sat on that and was a part of the decision-making process. They were government.

All we ever asked for as Opposition was – me and my colleague, the Minister of Finance was a Member of the Management Commission of the day – bring it to the House of Assembly. We should not be sitting on this in the Management Commission. This should be forwarded to the House of Assembly. The House has to make their own rules. This is the House and, collectively, the 40 Members of this Legislature are the ones that decides it. Not one government, not one Opposition, not one Member, it's a 40-Member group, bring it to the House of Assembly, put it to the floor of the House, whatever formation you

want to do it, it needs to come to the House. It never should stay in the Management Commission. That's not the way it's designed; it's not the way it was.

For some reason, government of the day have chosen – that's their choice and we're government now, we'll make those decisions too and be criticized for it. They decided not to move forward with the report, and that's fine. No questions asked; we respect that.

On the Committee, myself, along with my colleague and the Member for the Third Party made a motion – I made the motion, to move the report to the House of Assembly for proper debate. We accepted the report. In doing so, then it come to the House of Assembly to make any decisions, yay, nay or what have you.

For some reason the government Members on the Committee, which the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair was a Member, voted against it. The Speaker broke the tie, which he was a Member of the governing party.

It was never about raises. It was never about onuses. Most of the stuff in the report – it affects a lot of rural MHAs travelling. It was more than raises; there was a lot collectively about that report. We had to move it to get it to the House of Assembly to make any decisions.

So we could have brought it to the House of Assembly, voted the report out and out the door it went. It costs us \$340,000. By law, we had to do it, but we never. That wasn't the reason. We just had to get it out of the Management Commission and get it here. This is where it belongs. Even now, when it comes back in the fall, whatever she brings back, we still have to bring it to here. This is where it belongs, the House of Assembly. Members decide these things.

We will be stuck at the same salary for eternity unless you come into the House of

Assembly and either say give us a raise, send it out to a tribunal, give us a decrease, whatever you want to do, do it for volunteer, this has to be decided by the House of Assembly. So it's not about raises, it's not about increases, nothing other than the fact that the House are the governor of their own rules.

When I hear comments – and it's twice I believe we've heard those now – about what we proposed and what we tried to look for a raise in Management Commission, it's not accurate, Speaker. It's not fair. It's not a fair representation. As a matter of fact, I would argue, we were doing our job. Government controlled the House of Assembly. They had the votes, so we really never had the choice anyway.

Obviously, the Speaker agreed because, legally, what we were doing was the right decision and actually the Speaker agreed with us. There were politics played at the time; that was fine. I've never been shied away from defending myself, which I'll do it again here today. That's who I am. Me and my colleague, the Minister of Finance, we feel strongly about that and we spoke about this before and we heard this come up a couple of weeks ago and we're speaking about it again today.

This is a process. This is bigger than anyone in this House. We won't be here forever – most of us won't. We gave some new Members. A lot of us are going to find our way out the door eventually and go off to another life, retirement, whatever we do. It's not fair to be undervaluing ourselves in the House of Assembly for political gain.

Let the report speak for itself. Let Ms. Jacobs do her work. When it comes back, there are 40 Members here. If it comes to the House of Assembly and it's brought in, whatever formation, our Government House Leader, we bring it in, or whatever the case, it's agreed upon, vote on it. If you don't agree with what it says, vote against it. That's your right; we all have that right.

It's not about looking or taking or what have you. If you want to set up a new process, do so. The House of Assembly is the place. We are the maker of our own destiny. This is what we do here. This is what the House of Assembly is about. It's not any backroom. It never belonged to the Management Commission; it should've never stayed in the Management Commission. Those things should be brought to the floor of the House of Assembly, either yay, nay or what have you, and done and over with. That's what needs to be happening.

This is not a secret society. This is a full, open and transparent process that has been done here now and the Committee will do the work. They'll revisit that report, and if she sees a change has to be made, well, fine, make them. That's her direction, not ours. The House will give approval today to let her proceed and do whatever she wants to do with that report. We don't have any say; we can be consulted. Ultimately, she's the one who does the report and we have the ability to say yes or no.

I've never agreed with us voting on raises. I have never agreed with that. It's very uncomfortable for anyone to vote on their own raise. I don't think it's appropriate. We can't ignore the House of Assembly. That's where this has to change. It has to change on the floor of the House of Assembly. That's where we have to do it. It has to be changed here.

Sitting on it in the Management Commission was not the place to be. That was the right move. We never voted for no increases or whatever. We crowed to get it to the House of Assembly so we could have that opportunity to have a full debate whether you do CPI index increases, whatever you do, you take a portion, you take no raise, you take a decrease – like I said, whatever – it belonged in the House of Assembly.

I stand by that when we did it before, and my colleague, the Minister of Finance, also supports that, and our caucus does. We'll

stand by it again. This belongs with the commissioner now to go and do the review of the report, and we, as Members of this House of Assembly, it's a responsibility for us and for any future Member coming in this House of Assembly to give them fair recognition.

Though, I will say this, it's almost 20 years – think about that – since there has been any increase in MHAs' compensation. That's just something that people need to realize. I'm not sure how appropriate it is or not appropriate, that's not for me to say, but you can just leave that out there. It's 20 years.

We can keep punting this down the road, what have you, but whatever way we do it, it's not about a raise, it's about this has to be put to bed one way or the other. It just cost us \$340,000 the last session because everyone was gun-shy. They wouldn't pull the trigger. They could have just left it alone. They should have brought the report in and let it die on the Paper, but they never even did that.

Again, this is not about a raise. It's about doing respect. This report was a good report done. Aside from raises, there was a lot of good things in that report that a lot of people thought there was a lot of effort put into it. It was a solid report.

Out of respect to Ms. Jacobs and her committee, I thought that we should have brought it into the House of Assembly, debated it and defeat it, vote it down. But I thought it was a disservice to those people and the effort they put in that we never followed through in the report.

So I just wanted to clear the air. Anyone who's listening out there, that's what this is really about. It's not about any backroom deals or nothing. This is full on transparency. It's a process we have to do. It's a process we let Ms. Jacobs complete. When she completes it, the Management Commission will get it in their possession, will release it to the House of Assembly and

then we'll open the floor of the House of Assembly, whenever the Government House Leader decides to, and whatever comes of that, comes of it.

I think it's important for everyone to have the clear picture and the facts. We should never muddy the waters with misinformation.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to take a few minutes to talk about this. I heard the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. I was always about process. I won't get into my personal situation, but the process was never followed. The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair is one who voted against it several times in the Management Commission about the proper process.

So when she stood here today and said that we never voted for a raise, I have to support the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. The process was never brought to the House to have a vote. When the Minister of TI stood and said that, I agree with you, I know what happened and what you said is exactly correct.

SPEAKER: Address the Chair, please.

E. JOYCE: Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

So for anybody to stand up here and say we never voted for that, but someone else did, is wrong. It's wrong. In the Management Commission, any report that you get should be brought back to the House of Assembly. That's where the decision is made in this House.

Then when a decision is not made in this House and someone stands up and says, well, we never voted for a raise, you never had an opportunity to vote for a raise. What you voted on was not follow the process to bring the report to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

E. JOYCE: That's exactly what happened – that's exactly what happened – and I know about the process. I know about that process; I know about the other process that was never followed. In the Management Commission, on the Liberal side, they voted numerous times, Mr. Speaker, not to bring it back to have a vote in the House with our proper procedures brought in the House.

I'm well aware of the process. I'm well aware of what happened the last time when Ms. Jacobs brought in that report. When she brought in that report to the Management Commission, it never came to the House. It just never came to the House.

Nobody can stand up in this House of Assembly and say they never voted for a raise on that last report; it just never happened. Now what happens on this next report, that's fine, however it's done; but everybody in this House of Assembly should have the opportunity to have a say in this House aye or nay and have their words about it. That's just the process.

Once we circumvent the process, which I know have been done personally, to keep a Member's integrity down, and again today make statements in this House about how we never voted for a raise, is fundamentally wrong. It's wrong.

I go back, Mr. Speaker, in 2018-2019, the minute you use the Management Commission for a political tool, the whole integrity of the House of Assembly is gone. We heard it here today, how other people tried to get the blame, to try to bring

something to the House of Assembly, and that's exactly what happens.

When we lose that integrity of this House of Assembly of following the rules in the Management Commission and we use it for political tools, every one of us are going to be a target. So I just want to support the Minister of TI, to explain what he's saying is absolutely correct.

I knew the conversations that were happening when the previous report by Ms. Jacobs was going on. I know there was a lot of dissention in the Liberals. Some wanted to bring it in and some didn't. I know now that some of them are lobbying the government to bring it in. I know that for a fact.

This idea to stand up and be holier than thou and blame it on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of TI, that they voted for this here and the Leader of the Third Party, that they voted for a raise, which never ever came to the House of Assembly, it's false.

When you make those false statements in this House, which is on camera, which everybody can see, it brings our own integrity down. That's why people are so concerned that sometimes we get such a negative review on politicians. When we can't stand up in this House of Assembly and approve a process and then we get into the proper atmosphere, at this time, was the Management Commission to follow that process and then you're blaming it on someone else who tried to follow the process, this is why people look down upon politicians. This is exactly what happens.

I'm an old hand at this. God knows if I'm going to be around the next election or the one after, but I'm looking at down the road. If we don't follow our own rules, if we don't follow our own regulations, how can you expect people to believe us and trust us? How can you do it?

When you use the Management Commission as a political tool, every one of you have a target, if that happens. I know people here who had targets, and I can honestly tell you – forget me, I'm a big boy. I can handle it. I know people that were targeted. I know personally, because I helped them out, to get the target off their back. I know that personally, and I know then, when we went through it, do you know what happened? Oh, sorry, a misunderstanding.

Putting people through that stress and strain because of political purposes coming from the Management Commission is fundamentally wrong. It's fundamentally wrong. For me, I'm fine. I won the last three elections. Last time I was at 75 per cent. I'm not worried about it, but I'm worried about the next person who the Management Commission – which just happened in this House just then for the Minister of TI and the Minister of Finance, to try to put some blame on them, what's going to happen is someone is going to be targeted by the Management Commission again, or by whichever government is in power at the time, and they're not going to be able to handle it. If you want to talk about targeting and bullying, look at when someone is targeted in this House of Assembly. Is that bullying?

I could give you a history on it. I could write a history book on it and I could go after Speaker after Speaker after Speaker, before this Speaker, who intentionally did things they should never have done. This is a lesson for this House of Assembly here now that everybody may not be as strong as some people. When you talk about bullying, when you talk about the Management Commission doing their job, if you don't do the job properly – not on what party you're with, not on who you like or dislike, you have to follow the rules. Because people who are targeted and who sometimes don't have the courage or the strength to stand up, you're going to see then the idea of someone drinking too much, someone then

doing drastic things to themselves. This is the prime time for me to speak up about the Management Commission.

I don't care what happens in the vote; I have no qualms with bringing something to the House and speaking when I think it's right or wrong. I have no problem whatsoever, but until we, as a group in this Legislature, stop using the Management Commission as a crutch and blaming it on other people and not following the rules that they were assigned, the oath that they swore to – and they know what I'm talking about; they know exactly what I'm talking about – when you don't do that, this whole House and the whole integrity, the whole idea of democracy is down.

When they see that, when people in the general public see that, that's why we don't have a lot of respect. That's why. Because I can assure you the people in this House of Assembly who is elected, all 40 of us who are elected in this House of Assembly, the people put their trust into us to do the job properly. They put the trust in us to follow the rules and regulations, and we should honour that.

The minute we stand up – because this may be a contentious issue – and starts covering and starts pushing the blame on somebody else, people see it. They're going to say they're just as bad as the rest of them. That's exactly what happens.

So I'm just going to give my last word of advice to people. If we're going to do something, let's do it together. The minute we start grating at each other, the minute we start pointing fingers at each other, the minute we start saying that I never voted for something when you never had a chance to vote for it and then trying to cast a shadow on anybody, it's fundamentally wrong.

You're doing a disservice to every Member in this House of Assembly. You're doing a disservice to the people who elected us to speak the truth, and you're doing a

disservice to the oath that you've taken in the Management Commission, in this House of Assembly or on any other Committee that you're in in this House of Assembly. Because I can assure you and you mark my words, as sure as I'm here speaking, the minute we don't follow the rule of law that's in here is the minute that everybody in this House better watch out for themselves. I've seen it. I've helped so many people, you wouldn't believe it, how many.

Just the threat and knowing some things came from a certain area where it shouldn't have come from to put people in the spotlight is fundamentally wrong. I'm just putting that out there, Mr. Speaker. I'm not worried about me. I'm a bit old in the tooth around here. I may not be around here for the next 20 years when the younger people will come up through, and we need to express our views on this floor, not behind closed doors and then come out and say here's what I did when that never happened because it's fundamentally wrong.

So I'll just take my seat, and I'll say to the Minister of TI, I know you're 100 per cent right, and the Minister of Finance, you're 100 per cent right. What they did, those two individuals did, with the Leader of the Third Party, they wanted to follow the process that we put in place. We put the process in place, 40 of us. Forty of the people at the time put the process in place. That's what happened. Once we put the process in place and they don't follow it, then they start pointing fingers, why it wasn't done.

Once you bring it in this House of Assembly, I just want to say to the general public, there's an opportunity for everybody to stand up and have a say into it. There's an opportunity for three of the parties to get together and say no, we're not even going to discuss it. There's an opportunity to have a debate and have division. There may be some on this side agree, some on the government, some with the Third Party may agree and then you cast your vote. That's the way it's done.

But we must follow the process. I can guarantee you the people of the province will be watching. They will be watching. If we don't follow the process, they're going to look at us and say, what do we have to follow the rules for, you don't? I can assure you. It's after being thrown up in our face, how many times? How many times have we brought in this House and we make a decision and then we know it's not right and then people say, well, you guys don't do it; why should we?

That's my only few words here today on that, Mr. Speaker. I hope everybody is going to follow the process on it all because I know sometimes when the process is not followed, there comes, almost like a pack of wolves, let's cover our own. Let's not find out what's right or wrong; let's just cover our own. This is not about me, because I went through all that and I'm still here. I'm not worried about, if I run again, if I'm going to lose or not, but I'm worried about the person who can't stand up for themselves; who may have a few issues; who may not be able to handle the stress and strain; who may do harm to themselves. We always talk about bullying and harassment in this place, let me tell you, a few people here should look in the mirror, I can tell you that.

So I'll just take my seat and I'll say to the two hon. Members, I support you, of what you said. I support you of what happened and I support you for bringing it to this House of Assembly, the proper procedure, because we should have this procedure.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Dare I ask, are there any further speakers to this bill?

I'm going to call the question.

Are the House Leaders ready for the vote?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

SPEAKER: All those in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 20.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that this House resolve into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 20.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act." (Bill 20)

CLERK (Hawley George): Clause 1

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

We're in Committee on this bill and when we look at what this does, I guess, the implications are not felt immediately. I wonder if the minister could walk us through the timeline, what happens next. I understand there has to be regulations and interjurisdictional agreements. I'm just wondering what that looks like, please.

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

C. PARDY: That's a very good question to start with.

This process began back in 2014; discussions really probably picked up energy around the Free Trade Agreement in 2017 and there have been meetings since then. You're correct in what this does is it enables the province to continue, if the desire is founded, to participate in an operating agreement with another province or provinces.

Really, it's an enabling legislation to enable us to move forward with further discussions. Without this bill being passed, there are no need for further discussions. I don't think we can participate in it because the legislation does not permit any movement of alcohol from outside into the province with the direct-to-consumer manner.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

So, just to clarify, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador would have to negotiate individually with each province and territory in Canada.

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

C. PARDY: The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador would set the engagement rules, through the NLC, as to what the engagement rules are and we would need an authorization or another reciprocating province to agree to the conditions that we would set forth in order to do a direct to consumer process, but yes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I am wondering if the minister and his team consulted with NAPE and the FFAW and other impacted unions.

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

C. PARDY: I know my staff are well aware that my predecessor had conversations on this matter. I know that what we're doing now, it's no different than what my predecessor could have communicated, the same.

We have communicated with NAPE, albeit recently, just to let them know what the bill is all about, to inform that nothing has changed from what have been informed in the previous government. We've also notified, via email, all our Indigenous partners as well as to what the process we're embarking upon here.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I am wondering if the minister and his team have considered, I guess, the local job industry and the impacts of allowing

producers outside of Canada to ship directly to Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

C. PARDY: Chair, 100 per cent, we certainly have. I know that in speaking to the president of NAPE, Mr. Earle, he was ultimately really concerned about it, but I think we've belayed his fears to the point the data suggests that even if we engage in an operating agreement, the data shows that the uptake may not be as significant as some might expect.

But, yes, we are very sensitive to the labour market.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

Then in terms of the reciprocal nature, I am wondering if the minister can assure the House that where outside provinces are able to ship alcohol directly to consumers in Newfoundland and Labrador, would Newfoundland and Labrador companies be able to ship out of province, and do you think our local industries would be able to compete with lost sales? Will they be able to make up the lost sales out of province that they would have lost by people buying from out of province?

Thank you.

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

C. PARDY: I would state that the reciprocating province or jurisdiction that we would engage in, we would have a mutual understanding as far as what the conditions would be.

I think one of the foundational items that were discussed prior to my arrival in the position, the previous government, and currently, was the fact that there ought to be no product that would come into the province that would be cheaper than what already exists within the province and some of our local producers. It's referred to as the markup in here. The markup would be an adjustment that would be put on a product that the reciprocating jurisdiction would have to comply with in order to send product into this province.

Would our producers be able to take advantage of this reciprocating agreement or operating agreement? They sure could. That's the nature of it; it would be two way. I would think that once they create this operating agreement, they would have to abide by the regulations that would be in place either way.

So, yes, they certainly could avail.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

My last question: I'm wondering if the minister can walk us through how they envision the tax would work? I guess people would still pay tax from the originating province. Would the Newfoundland Treasury miss out on lost tax revenue?

Thank you.

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

C. PARDY: I commend the Member on a good question.

Each producer that would seek to ship product into Newfoundland and Labrador would have to get an authorization, and that authorization, they would be registered and listed on the website of Newfoundland

Liquor Corporation for all to see. That producer would be responsible to pay what the markup would be on the product to be determined.

They would also have to pay for the bottle deposit, and they would also have to pay for the taxation that would occur here. So they would have the responsibility for submission to that in a time period that will be determined in the operating agreement for that submission to occur. If they went outside of that submission, they could lose the authorization to sell into the province.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Thank you to the MHA for Mount Scio for addressing a lot of the questions that I certainly would have put forward regarding the labour unions and the concerns that might have come forward there, so I thank the hon. Member for that.

Any time that the rules around production, trade, sale, consumption of alcohol are contemplated, of course, government has a responsibility to examine them through an addiction's lens. We're talking about alcohol here and we know that it is something that obviously is great for consumers, but it also has a lot of societal ills as well.

One of the questions that I just wanted to ask was in the race to remove these interprovincial trade barriers, which overall I think is good, we know that we want to start to open up the trade within our country and it will stimulate the economy, we need to consider whether or not, of course, the current rules inadvertently set up conditions that make it easier to become addicted, especially when we're thinking about youth, individuals legally barred from consuming alcohol.

So we're looking at strong safeguards and others, of course, that cannot use the new

system to go around existing restrictions and purchase beverages. Where there's a will there's a way. I guess my questions at this stage now, would be, did the department look at these amendments through an addictions-focused lens, and will the proposed changes make it easier for people to get their hands on alcohol? Will it increase the risk of developing an addiction? How will government address those factors?

Thank you.

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

C. PARDY: I think we're all conscious that alcohol is a controlled substance. We have to make sure, as we do in our province, that we have guardrails established any time that alcohol is sold in our province. When an operating agreement is signed, such as this DTC, that enables us to pursue and to go ahead, we've got to make sure that those guardrails are in place.

If you look at the act, section 73.1 makes it clear that in this process alcohol is not to be sold to a minor, never to be sold to any dry communities that would be in Newfoundland and Labrador and vice versa as well. These are the guardrails that I think have got to be established in an operating agreement that we would have with another jurisdiction. That is to be framed out. That would be all part of whether we're successful in the engagement or not. That is what has got to be framed out.

It is in this legislation, it is in our provincial legislation, the guardrails to do it responsibly. So nothing different, but the onus will be making sure that we've got all those guardrails up if indeed we do go to one of these operating agreements with DTC.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister.

How much paperwork will be involved in getting an authorization? So how thorough would the vetting process be for an out-of-province brewer?

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

C. PARDY: Again, that will be framed out, but number one, if they're in a good standing in the province – if in the Province of Newfoundland, we've got six distilleries, eight wineries, and they're all fully licensed within Newfoundland and Labrador, then I would think that is the most critical step that they would need in order to take part in an operating agreement with another jurisdiction, good standing.

I know there would be some other measures that would be included, such as making sure the remittances are collected on behalf of the other party, the producer, timely submission of those remittances to the province that is exporting the product.

These would all be factors, and we can deauthorize somebody as well, but your question on the authorization, nothing too extensive, and we're a government that aimed on red tape reduction. So we'll try to make it as simplistic as we can, making sure that we've got the guardrails up for this controlled substance.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Minister, you just led me into the next question, of course, which is what could happen when you're turning down an authorization? Do they reapply? Will there be some appeals process in the regulations? How would that unfold?

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

C. PARDY: Us, as a jurisdiction, we will always have the ability to deauthorize. How that would happen, if we follow what would be in the operating agreement when they are signed, then there is no need for consideration but what that process is, is to be framed out.

We will frame that out as far as an appeal. We do have a provision in this legislation here that we can extend the remittance payment and even though we might have 90 days on it, we can do an extension on that. We do have the flexibility to be accommodating, but that will be us as a receiving entity in this agreement.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 6 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 6 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 6 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act. (Bill 20)

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Chair.

Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 20 without amendment.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Lane): The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report the Committee recommends Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act, without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends Bill 20 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Presently.

SPEAKER: Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted. Bill ordered to be read a third time presently.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 21.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 21, the *Judicature Act*.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Judicature Act."
(Bill 21)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

It is something that we have said here on record, myself and I know the Third Party, that that we are supportive and we will be working with government, of course, and thank you to the minister for bringing in this.

Again, just for the viewers at home, speaking to Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act. In some areas, residents currently have a choice between filing matters in Provincial Court or the Family Division because those courts exercise concurrent jurisdiction. If these amendments pass, will that choice be eliminated?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Let me say this, first of all, with respect to this legislation and why it's needed. Families have been navigating for a long time two separate court systems, and that depends on where they live and what type of family matter they're dealing with.

Just by way of background, it means that divorce might be in Supreme Court while parenting issues are in Provincial Court. We know the problems there, as I indicated in opening remarks. This creates duplication, delays, confusion.

So to answer your question, yes, for the Island portion of the province, expanding the Family Division will resolve that families can resolve all of their matters in one place with a specialized judiciary.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister.

We'll also need to understand what transition plans are being developed for matters that are already before the courts currently?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: That is also an important question when it comes to the transition and how that will be managed. I can say that the transition will be managed by the Supreme Court and the Provincial Court. There is a delayed proclamation date, and the reason for that is to give the courts enough time to effectively implement the expansion.

I can also say that there is a transition committee for the expansion that will be formed, and that will also be led by the court to engage with partners and stakeholders. That is important to know. Before coming into force on April 1.

So I can also say, the Provincial Court is aware and advised that it will advise their staff to prepare for that transition, to prepare the files for the transition. That's going to be a big transition, and it is best managed immediately prior to the coming into force of the bill.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister.

Another thing to consider would be court capacity. Over the last number of years, residents have experienced court closures, as we know, service disruptions and challenges accessing judicial services in some parts of the province, with the abrupt shutdowns in November up until now, we see recently announced that there are plans to reopen some courts.

Before expanding the reach of the Family Division, is government ensuring that the necessary judicial and administrative and legal resources are in place?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So I think your question is with respect to the impact on the courts. Is that correct? I just want to clarify your question.

P. PARSONS: Yes.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Okay.

We are not anticipating any issues in that regard. At this time, we know that one additional judge will be required, based on feedback from the Supreme Court. There will be regulatory changes that will accommodate that. We're going to continue to work with the Supreme Court on any future expansion.

I can say that, with respect to whether resources are adequate – because I think that's also where you're going in terms of what the impact would be – just by way of background, Justice and Public Safety, we manage Supreme Court facilities and we hire administrative staff. We know that the Family Division will take on new responsibilities and so additional staff are needed for that. Therefore, we know that one additional judge will be required, and that's based on the feedback that we received from the Supreme Court.

Also, in addition to that one extra judge, in *Budget 2026*, funding was allocated for two additional permanent court officer positions to support the expansion. That was exclusively designated for the expansion of the Supreme Court – those two additional permanent court officers. I might add, as well, there was additional resources added in *Budget 2026* with respect to other court staff and a total of seven court staff were allocated, as well as \$7 million for audio-visual modernization. Basically, just better support for virtual appearances.

That, I think, is a way to explain what impact on court closures and additionally what resources would be needed to alleviate any impact.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Again, with the additional regions being brought in within the Family Division and, as you outlined, within this jurisdiction of the court, so you did mention that there will be an additional judge. So that answers that question. And court staff, as you mentioned, and support services provided. Fair to say that we're satisfied with that.

Will there be any impact on the wait times?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: So, again, we aren't anticipating any impact on wait times or any issues in that regard, given the explanation I just provided.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Minister, will residents have to travel further to access services?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: With respect to travel issues, I just want to give a little background about the Supreme Court Family Division services. They will be available at all existing Supreme Court locations. We have Grand Falls-Windsor, Gander and Grand Bank. Provincial Supreme Court buildings are located near one another.

As a result, the travel time issues that you raise, or your concerns, are anticipated to be minimal because of that, because individuals will be travelling within the same town or a similar distance between locations, as they would currently, as it exists.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Also it's noted that Labrador is not currently contemplated as part of the changes. Can you tell us why?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: I can say that with respect to Labrador, the Supreme Court is expanding the Family Division. It's through a phased approach to support the successful implementation throughout the province. While the initial phases are focused on the Island, Labrador is included as phase three of the rollout plan, with consideration given to the region's unique circumstances and including the long distance travel distances and Circuit Court operations in Indigenous communities.

The legislation allows for expansion to Labrador through the regulations and it will be, I would say, an easier process rather than through another piece of legislation. So when the time comes, it will be through regulations.

Again, like I said, Labrador's unique geography and the circumstances, it's going to require more consultation and different plans by the court to make that expansion possible.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Consultation was mentioned, discussions took place with judiciary, legal stakeholders, Legal Aid and others who work directly within the court system. Will we be talking about releasing those discussions or any of that finding – will that be made public either in the House or through other means?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Well, as I can say with respect to consultation, just to identify who was engaged, the Department of Justice and Public Safety engaged Justice Canada, the Supreme Court and Provincial Court on the need for the Family Division expansion.

Also, engagement was taken with the Canadian Bar Association, Newfoundland and Labrador PLIAN, the Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador and Legal Aid Newfoundland and Labrador. But there will be ongoing engagement with the transition committee. That will be established and led by the Supreme Court, so that will be under their purview, to work through operational issues.

There will just be normal discussions with the stakeholders as well.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

As I mentioned in my comments, the legislation appears to be largely a housekeeping amendment that updates the statutory framework governing Family Court in judicial areas. We certainly do support the modernization of this legislation, and I think that's it for me for now, so thank you.

Thank you, Minister.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act. (Bill 21)

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 21 without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act, be passed without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

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

J. DWYER: Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that the Committee recommends Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act, without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends Bill 21 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be now read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Presently.

SPEAKER: Presently.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Seniors, that Bill 2, An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate, now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 2, An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate, be read a third a 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.'

The motion is carried.

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

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting the Seniors' Advocate," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 2)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I moved, seconded by the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development, that Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, 2019, now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 11, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, 2019, now be read a third a 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.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, 2019. (Bill 11)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, 2019," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 11)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands, that Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Forestry Act, now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 13, An Act to Amend the Forestry Act, be read a third a 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.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Forestry Act. (Bill 13)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Forestry Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 13)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I moved, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000, now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000, be read a third a time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 16)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 16)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2, now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2, be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2. (Bill 17)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 17)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that Bill 18, An Act to Remove the Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law, now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that Bill 18, An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law, be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law. (Bill 18)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 18)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Pharmaceutical Services Act, now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 19, An Act to Amend the Pharmaceutical Services Act, be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Pharmaceutical Services Act. (Bill 19)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Pharmaceutical Services Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 19)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation, that Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act, now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 20, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act, be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act. (Bill 20)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 20)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety that Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act, now be read a third time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 21, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act, now be read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Judicature Act. (Bill 21)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Judicature Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 21)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader that this House do now recess until 4:30.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do now recess until 4:30.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

This House is now in recess until 4:30 p.m.

Recess

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Speaker, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador has arrived.

SPEAKER: Admit Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(The Speaker leaves the Chair.)

(Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor takes the Chair.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor requests all present be seated.

SPEAKER: Your Honour, it is my grateful duty on behalf of His Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, His Faithful Commons in

Newfoundland and Labrador, to present to Your Honour a bill for the appropriation of supply granted in the present session.

CLERK: A bill, "An Act Granting to His Majesty Certain Sums of Money for Defraying Certain Expenses of the Public Service for the Financial Year Ending March 31, 2027 and for Other Purposes Relating to the Public Service" (Bill 14).

HER HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR (Joan Marie Aylward, ONL): In His Majesty's name, I thank his loyal subject, I accept their benevolence and I assent to this bill.

SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the General Assembly of the province has, at its present session, passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the General Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

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

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 4)

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

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Endangered Species Act." (Bill 7)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Wildlife Act." (Bill 8)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Future Fund Act." (Bill 9)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act, 2022." (Bill 10)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Student Financial Assistance Act, 2019." (Bill 11)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Children's Law Act and the Family Law Act." (Bill 12)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Forestry Act." (Bill 13)

A bill, "An Act to Authorize the Raising of Money By Way of Loan by the Province." (Bill 15)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000." (Bill 16)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2." (Bill 17)

A bill, "An Act to Remove Anomalies and Errors in the Statute Law." (Bill 18)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Pharmaceutical Services Act." (Bill 19)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act." (Bill 20)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Judicature Act." (Bill 21)

HER HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT

GOVERNOR: In His Majesty's name, I assent to these bills.

I'd just like to take a few minutes of your time to have a few words. This summer particularly, Canada will unite on July 17, 2026, to mark the 100th anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion, will take time to recognize veterans and the Legion for all that they have contributed for Canada, and to honour the memory of those who served.

In recognition of this historic anniversary, Government House is partnering with the Royal Canadian Legion Newfoundland and Labrador Command to brand the Lieutenant Governor's Annual Garden Party to honour this centenary.

The Garden Party will take place on the grounds of historic Government House in St. John's on Wednesday, July 22, and will provide a welcoming setting for the public to embrace community spirit, remembrance and celebration. It is my honour today to

invite all Members of this House of Assembly and, indeed, all the people of the province to attend this year's Garden Party to thank veterans for their contribution to our province.

For 100 years, the Canadian Legion has stood as a champion for veterans, their families and our communities, and we owe them so much. There is an often marked expression that notes: Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it. Remembrance is a collective responsibility that we must pass down from one generation to the next. While so precious to all of us, we must remember that our freedom was not free. When we remember, we preserve an important lesson of history – the cost of war and conflict, which is so high, we will remember them.

I wish you all well as you return to your districts to spend time with your constituents, to the people who put you here in this House of Assembly to serve them as an elected representative. I also thank you for your deliberations this session. May you have a safe and healthy summer.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor leaves the Chamber. The Speaker returns to the Chair.)

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

You may be seated.

As is our tradition here in the House of Assembly, before we close, I'm going to call on the Opposition House Leader to say a few words.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak as we close out this session. As we wrap up this sitting of the

House of Assembly, it is certainly an opportunity to reflect –

SPEAKER: Sorry, I apologize – the Leader of the Official Opposition. I said Opposition House Leader. You know what I meant, anyway.

J. HOGAN: I wasn't listening to you, Speaker. Go figure.

It's an opportunity to reflect on the work that we've done over the last number of weeks and months and the issues that have been raised in the House of Assembly.

The questions that we asked are, has the government delivered for Newfoundland and Labrador? Has necessary, relevant and meaningful legislation been brought forward that will help better our province? Has the government risen to meet the challenge facing the people that we all represent?

I think back to March 2 when, I think, just about every Member who walked into this House, maybe except for a couple, were doing so with a new or different job when we finally got back to work after the fall session, last year, was closed. A lot of us on this side are fortunate to be able to say we can look across the aisle and honestly say we know the gravity of the positions that the Cabinet and the Premier face.

We understand the workload and the pressure, and we know that decision-making is hard and that governing is hard. Because the weight and the overall well-being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, those that are here today and those in the future, rests on this government's shoulders. It takes courage, strong leadership to put in the necessary work and to make decisions that they believe are in the best interests of our province.

As Leader of the Official Opposition, I also feel the weight of this responsibility. It isn't the job I hoped for, but it is a job I take

seriously and I will work hard at this job every single day.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: As the Opposition, it's our job to investigate, to question and to present ideas. Not only is it our role and our duty to scrutinize this government, it is fundamental to our democracy. We, the Official Opposition, walked into this House prepared to do that, and every Member of this caucus takes pride in the job that they were elected to do every single day because we all want what's best for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Now, there's no doubt, Speaker, that this session has featured some energized debate. There are 40 MHAs in this Legislature who are extremely proud to be Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and 40 people who want the best for our province and the people that we represent. There's no arguing those facts. While we tend to disagree on the path forward, I do believe we are all working toward the same goal of building a stronger Newfoundland and Labrador

In fact, when you look back, the most productive moments in this sitting have been when we all came together, reaching across the aisle to agree on important matters for Newfoundland and Labrador on establishing a Disabilities Advocate, one which all parties had committed and were proud to have supported; on calling on our federal government to extend the recreational food fishery, when all Members stood in this House to support that motion and have advocated for it inside and outside the Legislature. Thankfully, Ottawa has taken meaningful steps in that regard. This House unanimously passed a resolution urging the government to look at banning harmful social media for children in our province under the age of 16.

Now, our former Liberal government was proud to have successfully introduced amendments to the Future Fund as well.

We strongly disagree with the Conservative government's changes to avoid investing in our province's future, but we were able to insert transparency, requiring disclosure of any public funds that are withdrawn in the future. These steps show that it is possible to work together, for the common good, for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Unfortunately, Speaker, despite having once sat on this side of the House, I fear Members opposite seem to have forgotten the significance role of Opposition and, more concerning, they seem to have little patience for questions that we ask about their decisions, their policies, their priorities and their path. That's not only frustrating, but it can be disappointing. Time and again, we've heard, just trust us and, Speaker, this is a dangerous sentiment. There has to be accountability and there has to be leadership. That's how democracy works.

Last week, a minister questioned why we were asking about inappropriate spending a second day in a row. He was right; we shouldn't have to ask that question two days in a row. But when no answers are provided, we have to keep asking. We have to keep pressing. If there are legitimate answers, then there's no need to ask the question on a second day; but if we don't get answers, what we get is political rhetoric and we get a focus on the past and not the future.

Government is accountable to this House and, through this House, we are all accountable to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. During the election, we know that significant promises and costly promises were made and, understandably, the public expects those commitments to be delivered on. Speaker, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are still waiting. The budget that was delivered fell short on the very reasonable expectations that they created.

Let's look at health care. *Budget 2026* invests in more equipment and technology,

but less in health care professionals needed to operate them. Despite ongoing staff shortages across our province, there was a cut in funding for recruitment and retention of health care professionals. You simply cannot improve health care without the people who deliver it.

Let's look at taxes. To their credit, the Conservative government maintains several Liberal cost-of-living measures, including the gas tax reduction and the elimination of the sugar tax, but made no new tax cuts themselves. While we welcome the continuation of these policies, the only new tax relief offered by this government amounts to \$28 a month and, by the admission of the Finance Minister, will not help all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We look at safer communities, prolonged court closures, cuts to the highway budget and no improvements to recruitment and retention for police officers. That is what we are seeing from this government that promised safer communities.

Speaker, a number of other high-priority files were all ignored in this budget, despite being included in the campaign promises. Little to no support for educators and students in the K-to-12 system. No further investments in compensation and benefits for early childhood educators. These two areas in education for our children – the future of our province – have been left out. So you can understand when the government Members say children are our most valuable resource and parents, teachers and ECEs hear the words but don't see the commitment.

From this side of the House, we will continue to advocate for them, for health care professionals, for patients, for first responders, for seniors and for families looking for relief in the cost of living. We'll stand up for educators, the municipalities and tourism operators, and we will also continue to offer ideas and solutions.

In this sitting, as I already noted, I was proud to bring forward a PMR to restrict dangerous social media for our children. I was even more proud to see unanimous support in this House, and I thank all Members and hope to see the government act on this direction very soon.

Our Liberal Opposition has proposed legislation to help lower the cost of groceries in Newfoundland and Labrador. We urge the government to consider these measures, as other provinces have, to quickly address the rising cost of food in our communities.

Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador has significant opportunities, as we all know, in oil and gas, hydroelectricity, fisheries, mining and defence, and it has never been more important to ensure Newfoundland and Labrador takes advantage of the opportunities in front of us.

The government blames a lot of the budget shortcomings on the province's financial limitations. Imagine what we could do for our children, for our families, for our seniors if we had more revenue from Churchill Falls. We have talked a lot about Churchill Falls and the MOU in this sitting. While it's clear the Official Opposition stands where we stand on the government's handling of this tremendous opportunity, we will continue to press for openness and transparency.

For months, with each passing week, we feared more and more that a deal on the Churchill River that gets us out of the 1969 deal is slipping through our collective fingers. There has been numerous delays and stalled negotiations, so maybe we are finally in a place where we at least know that a negotiating team is moving forward and they have been charged with restarting negotiations, but based on what?

I cannot stress enough the concern we have about the lack of transparency, the so-called Independent Review Committee report has. We have authors who won't speak to their

own report, a report that references secret experts and secret experts with unknown qualifications. The most worrisome part is the Premier and his Cabinet don't know where the advice came from. They don't know who recommended a new deal should only be signed if we get wielding rights through Quebec, that we only sign a deal if it's shorter in length and that we only sign a deal if we own more, thereby potentially giving up our protection on cost overruns.

I tell you what, Speaker, if this government was on this side of the House, they would not accept that – not a chance – yet they say, rest assured, these people are experts. We don't know who they are and we don't know how they were qualified. Who is the expert that provided the advice on market pricing, arguably the most important component that will go into any deal by any government on the Churchill River?

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve answers and they deserve a government prepared to earn their trust. Now, it does seem like they're going to move forward, finally, with negotiations on the MOU. On the very first day of the election, the Premier promised a referendum on any deal for the Churchill River, but he's completely walked that back and refuses to confirm whether or not he plans to follow through on this commitment. Why?

Speaker, that's why scrutiny matters. That's why debate matters. That's why strong Opposition matters. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve a government that's prepared to answer difficult questions when billions of dollars and our entire future is on the line. We will continue to ask those questions and we will continue to push for better.

We do a lot of important work here in this House of Assembly and none of it would be possible without the many people working behind the scenes every single day. So I want to take a moment to recognize and

thank those individuals for their hard work throughout the session.

Speaker, you too, stepped up in a new role and I think it's fair to say that you've had your hands full at times. Thank you and thank you to your staff and your office for all the hard work this sitting. Thank you to the Clerk, the staff in the Clerk's office, the Table Officers, our new Sergeant-at-Arms, Legislative Library staff, Hansard, the Broadcast team and our Pages. I want to recognize the security staff and Commissionaires who keep this building safe and operating smoothly every day. Of course, thank you to everybody in our public service whose hard work often goes unseen, but it does not go unnoticed.

I want to give a special shout-out to my caucus for their commitment to their districts and our province. They are passionate and knowledgeable and incredibly dedicated team members, and I thank them for their hard work they put in every single day on behalf of the people they represent.

I can't forget everybody's constituency assistants and political staff who work so hard behind the scenes to support our constituents, our team and help ensure we're prepared each and every day for the House.

Finally, I want to thank my family and the families of all Members. When this House is sitting, MHAs spend a lot less time at home and I know this can be difficult. As we head into the summer months, I'm looking forward to spending time with my family and around the province. I want to thank all hon. Members for their commitment to the House of Assembly.

Speaker, before I finish, I have four or five points of orders I'd like to go through – I'm kidding.

In all seriousness –

SPEAKER: It will have to be next session.

J. HOGAN: – when I have been asked about decorum in the House and I was asked today, I said there are more good days than bad. The media doesn't report on the good things that happen in the House of Assembly all of the time and the relationships that have been built across the aisle, so I want to thank Members opposite for the healthy debate, for the understanding about our roles, good luck to everybody and have a safe summer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, it's been an interesting session, that's for sure. Lots of intense debate, lots of disagreement, lots of areas where we concurred as well.

I said earlier in relation to another motion about the value we place on democracy, and I think one thing that we're all committed to here, and all those who support us, is a commitment to the democratic process. Regardless of this, we have our roles to fill here and that's what we took on.

I think, if nothing else, we've got a room full of very strong personalities who believe in serving the people of their district and, by extension of this, service of the people of the province. It's interesting, I know we represent our districts and the people of our districts but every time we're speaking, a lot of the issues are not necessarily particular to the district but they're problems that are in all districts. When we're trying to solve the problem of one district, we're hoping to solve the problem for a lot of other districts as well.

Certainly, in my career as a teacher, I've had the pleasure of teaching in multiple communities so you get the taste of both, as a townie teaching outside and seeing what

the challenges are in smaller communities, as well as the challenges that are in larger urban centres as well.

One thing, though, that sustains us, I guess, as the NDP, and I would hope all in this hon. House, is the fact that a belief you've heard me say multiple times that I do well, we do well, when the people around us are doing well. So we have safer communities, we have healthier systems when the people around us are doing well and are healthier.

Food Banks Canada issued their report recently and why these are so important, and Newfoundland and Labrador had a D minus in this. I won't go through all of it, but it's certainly a wake-up call that we've got a ways to go yet in addressing the issues. I say we, not only government, but we, collectively, as well.

So it's one of the reasons why my colleague and I focus so much on affordability, on housing, on food security and affordability, why we brought up the idea, like a notion of a publicly owned grocery store and operate them throughout the province in certain districts. But we also know that if we want to have better health care, lower taxes, safer communities, then it starts with having housing.

We still have people who are sleeping in the rough and we still have people who are on fixed incomes, seniors who are looking forward to their retirement and are watching housing arranged for them and are in dire fear that they are going to be now forced into homelessness. We've got younger families as well dealing with this.

So this is a significant issue. I'm looking forward to seeing where the plan goes over the next year with regard to addressing this. But, Speaker, make no mistake, it's a problem that's been certainly prevalent since I was here, since I was first elected, and I would bring up the issues of rent control and so on and so forth, and my colleague from Labrador West and my

colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, it's a problem we've got to resolve, and we've got to do it sooner than later.

We've got challenges with climate change. It's upon us, and we've got to make sure that we have a place here that's going to sustain life for not only my children, but my grandchildren. Many, many years ago, we talked about the word "stewardship." In many ways, what we are, we're not owners of this land; we're stewards of this for the future generations.

So while we're looking certainly with the developing the economy and making sure we have a robust economy, we also must make sure that we have an environment that is able to sustain life. So much of it, our fisheries, our agriculture, our forestry, our way of life is very much tied to the environment. One of the issues, I think, we still have to look at is certainly the transition to a renewable, sustainable, just economy.

Education, of course, I can't go on without saying too much, without emphasizing the fact it's something that's near and dear to my life. It's who I am. It's how I identify myself, still, as a teacher. We can see there are already challenges but if indeed the children are our most important resource, they're the next generation then let's not look at spending on them but as much as investing.

Health Care as well, it's been a problem. It's a challenge that's still faces us, but I think if we're moving towards addressing the issues in the Health Accord and primary health providers for people, then we're moving a long the way where we need to go.

My colleague is very much interested with the arts community and supporting our artists. You know, we sometimes think we can be dismissive or not treat our artist community with the respect they have but until you look at, in our province, right now the amount of industry that's related to the arts, whether it's film, music, the rich,

diverse nature that we have here, it's a selling point.

I think, in many ways, since it's the artist who are producing this, we need to make sure we're supporting them, certainly with regard to regulations around artificial intelligence and the use of materials that are not created by actual people, living, breathing artists.

The MOU is something we will continue to question about and it's something that I resolve back in late January, over a year ago, is to look at this, basically, does the deal make sense? Whether we get the most out of it, everything we want or there's a balance, but in the end do we get a deal that's better than what we had in the original deal? Will this benefit the province? Will this create work? We've been resolved to keep politics out of this and one of the ways we can do that, Speaker, is certainly to make sure it is as transparent as possible.

All those are the issues we debated, or some of the issues we debated this session. I would say that, come the fall, we're going to be debating them again and I think that's the only way in which we're going to make sure that the people of this province are well served.

At this point, though, I'll finish with a few thank yous. First of all, to my family and my friends, on behalf of my colleague as well. I know that, for many of us, we could not do this without them, without their support. Again, I keep saying for those of you who travel into this city to do the work and you're here for extended periods of time, you have a very patient family and people who obviously believe in you and believe in us and believe in what we do.

To the district, the people in my district who entrusted me with the responsibility of representing them, thank you. To those, even if you didn't vote for me, I still thank you because, in many ways, it comes down to you're the ones who are probably calling

in with a few well-pointed criticisms and that can only make me better as well. To all those across the province, thank you.

To my caucus family, to my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, we've got St. John's Centre locked up now and we can only go from here. To my constituency assistant and to all of constituency assistants, let's face it, folks, we could not do the work we do without them. They're the ones who are basically carrying the heavy load in many cases. To our caucus staff, the communications people, our researchers, our chief of staff, our administrative staff in the office, they keep us making sure that we have the resources we need and keep the office running.

To you folks, my colleagues in the House of Assembly, thank you. Even when we've been on the opposite side of an issue, the fact is it does force you either to up your game and make sure that you're understanding the issue as well as you should, challenging the comments, challenging the ideas and I think that's how we grow. That's how I feel I grow, but that's how we grow as a group as well. So thank you for that, for your debate and for the times when, even after the debate, you've been open to providing help and assistance as well, so thank you very much for that.

I don't know how many of you remember the Bugs Bunny, Roadrunner show, with the sheepdog and the wolf –

AN HON. MEMBER: Sam and Ralph.

J. DINN: Sam and Ralph, they go in each day best of friends, check in, the whistle will blow and then they go after each other, hammer and tongs, the wolf trying to steal sheep and the sheepdog, more or less, getting after the wolf. But, at the end of the day, they check out and they walk away friends. I think, in many ways, not only are you colleagues, there are many of you on both sides of the House I do call friends,

especially certain people who happen to be family related as well.

To the House of Assembly staff, to our Table Officers, to the Speaker's office, Pages, the Sergeant-at-Arms who's equipped himself quite well, I must say. We'll pass on our approval that you've done well to replace your predecessor.

To the security and the Commissionaires and the police here, we take our security for granted in many ways but they are there to make sure that we are able to do our work safely. To the people at the Broadcast Centre who help us with the publication and broadcast of the proceedings, to the members of Hansard who I sometimes got to give them credit in trying to figure out what in the name of God a Member was saying at that time because how they understand it, even, is amazing, to the workers in the Legislative Library with providing us with information we need, to the public service as well.

In particular, I want to end with, to the cleaners, to the custodial staff who keep this place clean. Every now and again you walk in, they're here vacuuming, cleaning up and keeping the place spic and span. So to all those who made this session and future sessions successful, thank you very much.

With that, have a good summer and I might see some of you on a salmon river somewhere, who knows.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

As this sitting of the House of Assembly comes to a close, I, too, want to begin with gratitude. Firstly, gratitude to my family because taking on a new role and taking on

more responsibility, we all here, as elected Members, all 40 of us sitting in this House of Assembly, know that this is not a job that requires normal business hours. It is a job where you're on call continuously and you're responsive to your constituents on a continuous basis. It is not an easy task, but I think it's one that when you put your name forward, you do so with the understanding that you want to try to do what's best, not only for your district, but for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Secondly, I want to thank the people of the District of Stephenville - Port au Port who, again, showed their confidence in me to elect me, once again, to be their MHA in the House of Assembly. To me, it's always been humbling and an honour to represent them, and I look forward to continuing that role.

I also want to thank the people of Newfoundland and Labrador because they sent us here as their new government, representing them with a clear mandate. They asked for better health care. They asked for lower taxes. They asked for safer communities. They asked for a government that would stand up for Newfoundland and Labrador, and they asked for a government that would get to work.

Speaker, that is exactly what we have done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: By the time this sitting concludes, this House will have approved 21 pieces of legislation, including the *Disability Advocate Act* –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: – which created the Office of the Disability Advocate as an independent statutory office of the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: That is the most legislation passed in a spring sitting of the House of Assembly since 2018. That is not a small accomplishment, that is not routine; that is the results of focus, discipline, preparation and hard work.

It happened because this government came into this House ready to deliver. It happened because our ministers brought forward serious legislation. It happened because our caucus stayed focused on the people who sent us here. It happened because public servants across government and here in the Legislature worked long hours to support the business of the House. It happened because despite the noise and the delay tactics, we never lost sight of what we were elected to do.

Speaker, this sitting has shown the difference between a government focused on results and an Opposition focused on process and spin. The Opposition had every opportunity to debate the future of this province. Too often, they chose distraction. They had every opportunity to explain why they defended the 10-year record of the former Liberal government. Too often, they chose deflection. They had every opportunity to stand with us on affordability, health care, safer communities and fairness for Newfoundland and Labrador. Too often, they chose politics.

But, Speaker, our government stayed focused. We delivered. We delivered a budget built around the priorities we campaigned on: better health care, lower taxes, safer communities and opportunity for all of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: We made the gas tax reduction permanent. We increased the basic personal exemption. We brought back the tuition freeze. We invested significantly in health care. We invested in emergency preparedness. We invested in policing. We supported volunteer firefighters and search

and rescue. We strengthened accountability. We supported students, seniors, families, workers and communities and we did that while being honest about the challenges our province faces.

Speaker, that is important, because leadership is not about pretending everything is easy. Leadership is not about issuing a press release and hoping people forget about the details. Leadership is about making decisions. Leadership is about cleaning up difficult files. Leadership is about standing in this House and being accountable to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and that is what our government has done.

I want to thank every Member of our caucus. I want to thank the Government House Leader and Deputy Government House Leader for managing a very busy legislative agenda. I want to thank our Cabinet ministers for the work they have done to bring forward legislation and advance the commitments we made to the people of this province.

I want to thank Minister Pardy and the Department of Finance for their work on *Budget 2026*.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, a budget is never the work of one person; it is the work of an entire government. It is the work of officials, analysts, policy staff, ministers, departments, Treasury Board, Finance and many others who spend long days and late nights making sure the decisions of government are reflected responsibly and clearly.

This was our first budget and it said something very clear about this government. It said we will focus on health care. It said we will lower taxes. It said we will make communities safer. It said we will support people who need government to

work better. It said we will respect taxpayers and it said we will govern for all of us.

Speaker, I also want to thank you, the Deputy Speakers, the Table Officers, the Clerks, Hansard, the Pages, security, Broadcast staff, legislative staff, caucus staff, department officials, communication teams, Legislative Counsel, policy teams and everyone who supports the work of this House.

The public sees what happens on the floor. They see the debate, the questions, the votes and sometimes the theatre, but they do not always see the people behind the scenes. They do not always see the staff who prepare the bills, the briefings, the speaking notes, the amendments, the schedules, the rulings, the motions and the answers. They do not always see the people who keep this place functioning, often under pressure and often with little recognition.

Today, I want them to know that we see their work and I think I speak –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: We value that work and we thank them for it.

Speaker, I also want to thank the Members opposite for their participation in debate. We do not always agree. That is the nature of this place. We will have difficult exchanges. That is part of the democratic accountability, but I know deep down that every single Member in here comes here with the intent of making lives better for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the people they represent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: The people who sent us here expect us to do the work. This sitting, despite the disagreements, it has produced results. Twenty-one pieces of legislation, as I said, the most since the

spring of 2018, a budget passed, commitments delivered and a government that is only getting started.

Speaker, one of the clearest examples of our approach this sitting was the Churchill River MOU. The former Liberal government signed an MOU and told the people of Newfoundland and Labrador it was the best possible deal. They defended it. They promoted it. They expected people to accept it.

But our government did what we said we would do. We ordered an independent review. We released the report of the independent committee and tabled it here in the Legislature. We put the facts before the people. What did the review show? It showed the MOU needed more power. It needed more transmission. It needed more value. It showed serious risks. It showed that Newfoundland and Labrador was being asked to accept terms that were not good enough.

Speaker, the people of this province remember 1969. They remember what happens when governments rush into agreements that do not protect Newfoundland and Labrador. They remember what happens when political timelines matter more than generational value. This government will not repeat that mistake. We will negotiate from a position of strength. We will demand better terms. We will protect the interests of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: We will not be pressured into accepting a deal just because the former Liberal government wanted a headline.

Speaker, this sitting also made clear that our government understands the pressure people are feeling. Families are dealing with high costs. Communities are dealing with infrastructure challenges. Health care

workers are dealing with pressure on the front lines. Students are thinking about their future. Seniors want to live in dignity. Businesses want confidence and people across Newfoundland and Labrador want a government that understands their reality.

That is why our budget mattered. That is why the legislation we passed mattered. That is why the work of this sitting mattered. We are not here to simply manage decline. We are here to build. We are here to restore confidence. We are here to make government work better. We are here to ensure that the next generation sees a future in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I am proud of what this government has accomplished during this sitting, but I am even more focused on what comes next. There is more work to do in health care. There is more work to do on affordability. There is more work to do on housing. There is more work to do on public safety. There is more work to do on resource development, energy, fisheries, mining, tourism and economic growth.

There is more work to do to ensure rural Newfoundland and Labrador is heard, respected and supported. There is more work to do to clean up what was left behind by the former government. We will do that work. We will do it with discipline. We will do it with purpose. We will do it with the same focus that guided us through this sitting.

Speaker, 21 pieces of legislation, as I said, is a record this House can be proud of. But the number is not the point. The point is what the legislation represents. It represents action. It represents momentum. It represents a government that came here to work. It represents promises kept. It represents a clear message to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador: Your government is focused on you.

So, again, as this sitting concludes, I want to again thank everyone who has contributed. We know why we're here; we know who we serve and we know the work is not finished.

Speaker, I know as well as all other 40 Members, all 40 of us here in this House, sometimes people have a perception that when the House closes, we just go on vacation. Nobody in this House of Assembly does that. Everyone here goes back to their districts and keeps the work going, what matters to the people that got them elected. Just because the House closes doesn't mean that we don't continue to work on and we will continue to do that.

This sitting was an important start. It showed that our government is serious. It showed that we are prepared to make decisions. It showed that we will stand up for this province. It showed that when we say better health care, lower taxes, safer communities and opportunity for all of us, those are not just words. They are the work of this government; they are the mandate we were given and they are the commitments we will continue to deliver.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Well, normally, here in this Legislature in my role as Speaker, I don't get to say a whole lot other than Order, please! Order, please! I'm going to take advantage of this opportunity, but I won't keep you too long.

I can see the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville shaking his head already because that used to be a point of order. That used to be something I used to say all the time as a Member that I wouldn't take long and, of course, I'd go on and on and on.

If you were to ask me, I guess, a year ago if I thought that I would have the honour of

sitting here in this big chair, I would have said no, there's not a chance. There's no way it's going to happen. When the opportunity did present itself, I can honestly say, while it was something that I, obviously, had an interest in – I'm here. It was something that I really did have to think about quite a lot.

Because, after being here for 15 years in this House of Assembly, like everybody here, I'm a very passionate person. I'm very opinionated, again, like I'd say, most people here. I have a strong opinion and I like sharing that opinion.

One of the biggest challenges for me, before I even decided to put my name forward, was would I be able to sit in the House of Assembly and listen to all the debate on so many important issues and not really be able to be part of that debate?

I have got to be honest that there have been times in this House of Assembly where I might have had to bite my tongue because I wanted to say something because the issues are important and they do impact people in my district and they impact people throughout the entire province.

Sure, I have an opinion on all kinds of stuff but I also understand that, in taking this role, it is a different role, something I had to learn in a hurry and the Clerk can attest to that. She told me you got to change the way you think. Change your head space around the role you have. You're no longer a Member per se, you're the Speaker of the House of Assembly.

There was a big learning curve for me in doing that. Admittedly, I can say, my first couple of days I came here sitting in the Chair, I was absolutely petrified – frightened to death, really. Am I going to say the wrong things? Am I going to forget what page to go to in the book for certain procedures and so on that's going to happen? I think for the first couple of days I was frightened to death to take a sip of water because I was afraid I

might have to go to the washroom. What would I have to do then?

So there's no doubt it was a big learning curve. I have to say that there's no doubt we had our challenges early on, and we have had issues with decorum that occurred – some unfortunate incidents. But I have to say that over this week and last week, I've seen drastic improvement. I think it does go to show that if we stay focused on the issues and not on the personalities, that we can all do much better and we can operate this House with great decorum and dignity, which is the way this House is supposed to operate.

I thank all Members, certainly, for the efforts. I know there's been a concerted effort on both sides, in the last couple of weeks, to really improve things. I've really noticed it and I believe the Leader of the Official Opposition sort of noted the fact that that's not something that necessarily gets picked up in the media. If we have a bad day, that's what makes the news. But when we have a lot of good days, that doesn't make the news.

I think it's fair to say that more often than not in this House of Assembly – and that's not just this sitting, that's in general – more often than not, both sides tend to agree on more than they disagree on, quite frankly. Much of the legislation that you see goes through unanimously. There's always a contentious piece here and there or there may be a certain clause here or there that someone has an issue with.

But, generally speaking, I think it's fair to say that it does go smoothly because I think we all want what's best for this province, regardless of political stripe or if you have a stripe at all, as we have an independent Member. We all want what's best for our constituents and we all want what's best for this province that we all love dearly. I know that we all do. So thank you, everyone, for your co-operation and I really do appreciate that.

Certainly this House of Assembly couldn't function if it were not for the team of people that I have behind me. Some are in front of the cameras. Some are behind the cameras. Some are in a corner office away from everybody that people may not even know it exists. But they all contribute to the success of this House of Assembly.

Not just when the House is in session, but even when the House is not in session, because we have lots of staff that are responsible – for example, Corporate and Members' Services, in terms of dealing with Members and their travel and their expense claims and policies around all those things and assisting Members and your constituency assistants and so on with any number of matters.

There are lots of people behind the scenes that make this whole entity function. Some of those would include – and I just wrote them down because I didn't want to miss anybody – our Corporate Members' Services, as I said; our Legislative Library and Information Management team, including Hansard and the Records office; Policy and Communications Division, including our Broadcast Services.

We also have our staff in the Clerk's office. I want to say thank you to Sabrina, Emily and Kimberley there. Our new Sergeant-at-Arms – of course, Bob Escott was here for a number of years and did a tremendous job. We thought he was going to be a hard guy to replace but I've got to say that Alex has stepped in here and he's done a tremendous job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I really appreciate him. I really do. Great guy. Besides the work, he's also just a wonderful person.

I also want to thank our Pages, our Commissionaires and they work that they do for us; the security and, of course, the RNC as well who are all there to keep us all

safe and keep everything in order. I really appreciate all you guys also.

Of course, I would be remiss if I didn't give a special shout-out to my Table Officers and they do such a tremendous job and, again, what you see here in the House of Assembly is only a very, very small portion of the work they do. They do so much work when the House is not in session.

I can tell you that they've been a tremendous resource for me in this House of Assembly in terms of having to rule on different matters and so on and keeping me on track of procedures and what we have to do at different times in the House and so on. Beyond that, when the House is not in session, they are tirelessly at work, working for this Legislature.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Certainly, to the Clerk, Kim, and the Table Officers my heartfelt thank you for all that you do. I think when we came there first, there was a little bit of a feeling out period. We kind of knew each other, I suppose, as I was a Member, but not on that level. I can say that, not only are they tremendous workers and colleagues but I consider them friends now. I really appreciate them. I truly do.

I also just wanted to throw out a shout-out to our statutory Officers because even though the statutory Officers, they work independently, they are Officers of this House of Assembly and they report to the House through the Speaker's office. Of course, we know the tremendous work that they do.

So I also just wanted to give a shout-out to our statutory Officers: the Auditor General, the Child and Youth Advocate, Seniors' Advocate, Commissioner for Legislative Standards, Chief Electoral Officer, Citizens' Rep, Information and Privacy Commissioner and, of course, the new Disability Advocate.

They play such an important role and while I certainly don't deal with them on a day-to-day basis, so to speak, there are times that we have to communicate back and forth with various reports and work that they do because, as I say, they do so through the Speaker's office to the House of Assembly. So I just wanted to thank them for all their great work.

Of course, lastly would be all government employees. We have so many throughout the province that all do great work in keeping this province going. Public Service Week is coming up, I believe, in the next week or so. It will be an opportunity, but I just wanted, in advance, to thank all of our provincial government employees that work so hard throughout the province delivering services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As others have talked about, I guess – actually, before I get to that, there is one other person I did want to single out and that's my executive assistant in the Speaker's office, Linda Walsh. Many of you would have an opportunity to deal with Linda with various things. She comes in in the morning, puts her head down, and she doesn't stop until the day is out, I've got to say. Especially when the House is in session, very, very, busy, and she plays a very important role. I just want to thank her so much for all of her support.

And, of course, Marianne up in my constituency office, and the work she does in assisting constituents in my district of Mount Pearl - Southlands. Thank you both to those wonderful ladies.

I guess finally, as Members have talked about, the toll that this kind of life takes on family, and there's no doubt about it. I've been at this for 15 years. That's provincially; I was at it municipally for eight years prior to that. Public life can be a drain. We all know that. The public I don't think necessarily always get that. But you are kind of living in a bubble. Every move you make, you're

always the MHA. Even on your own time, you're still the MHA. That's something that, you know, you're the one who signed up for it. Your family didn't necessarily sign up for it.

Certainly, when times are not so great for you in the political realm and you're taking some kind of criticism for one reason or another, whatever it might be, it's your family members, your wife, your kids, your partner, who have to hear that sometimes and see that and it's not very nice. We couldn't do what we do if it wasn't for our supportive families and partners and so on that support us every day. So, in my case, I just want to thank my wife, Charmaine, and my family for all the support they've given me over the years.

I think that is everything I had –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: – other than to say that I hope all Members, you get a chance now that the House is closed, get out to your district, talk to your constituents, get on the barbeque circuit, like I know you all will, and spend a bit of time, take a bit of downtime for yourselves and with your family as well, and I hope you all have a great summer.

Now, with that said, before I conclude, my first day in the Chair I read this and I'm going to read it now before I conclude because I think it's important. It's only short.

As we conclude this first session of the 51st 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 return 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 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, let us always honour, through our actions, what they stood for by treating this hon. House as a place of dignity and respect.

With that said, I'm now going to call upon the hon. Deputy Government House Leader to lead us in the "Ode to Labrador," followed by the hon. Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave who will lead us in the "Ode to Newfoundland."

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Dear land of mountains, woods and snow,
Labrador, our Labrador.
God's noble gift to us below,
Labrador, our Labrador.
Thy proud resources waiting still,
Their splendid task will soon fulfill,
Obedient to thy Maker's will,
Labrador, our Labrador.

We love to climb thy mountains steep,
Labrador, our Labrador.
And paddle on thy waters deep,
Labrador, our Labrador.
Our snowshoes scar thy trackless plains,
We seek no city streets nor lanes,
We are thy sons while life remains,
Labrador, our Labrador.

When sunrays crown thy pine clad hills,
And summer spreads her hand,
When silvern voices tune thy rills,
We love thee, smiling land.

We love thee, we love thee,
We love thee, smiling land.

As loved our fathers, so we love,
Where once they stood, we stand;
Their prayer we raise to Heaven above,
God guard thee, Newfoundland.

God guard thee, God guard thee,
God guard thee, Newfoundland.

SPEAKER: You may be seated.

That was beautiful, thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the hon. Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being; Housing; Poverty Reduction; Deputy Government House Leader and the MHA for beautiful District of Cape St. Francis, that when this House adjourns today, it stands adjourned to the call of the Chair.

SPEAKER: All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

This House is now adjourned until the call of the Chair.

On motion, the House adjourned to the call of the Chair.