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FIFTY-FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

Monday November 16, 2026

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

First of all, I'd like to welcome all Members back. I trust you all had a very productive week in your districts.

In the public gallery today, I would like to welcome Eithne Daly, who is the subject of a Member's statement. She is joined by her sister, Nora Daly.

Welcome to you both to our gallery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I would also like to welcome to the public gallery, Anne Beaumaster, who is the subject of a Ministerial Statement today. She is accompanied by Alicia Smith, Executive Director with Dyslexia Canada.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I would also like to welcome to our public gallery today, Patricia Hynes-Coates and Terry Coates, along with other highway enforcement officers from the Department of Government Services.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear Members' statements from Members for the Districts of Corner Brook, Fogo Island - Cape Freels, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Gander and Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Speaker, this past week, I had the pleasure of attending a wonderful Christmas tradition in Corner Brook that brings together our community in the true spirit of the season.

The Gingerbread House Christmas charity, sponsored by the Salvation Army, BayFM and Sterling Group, the owners of the Valley Mall, is a shining example of what happens when local organizations and businesses come together to help those in need.

For 45 years, the Gingerbread House has appeared in the Valley Mall. Each year, people drop off thousands of gifts and donations to the house to ensure that children of Corner Brook and the area experience the magic of Christmas.

The Gingerbread House is open now for donations and will remain open until Christmas Eve.

I want to thank the Salvation Army, BayFM, Sterling Group and all the volunteers, donors and supporters who make this event possible.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing everyone involved in spreading a little Christmas cheer to families in Corner Brook.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate the student athletes of Fogo Island Central Academy on their remarkable achievements at the 2026 School Sports Newfoundland and Labrador outdoor soccer championships.

Our community is immensely proud of the girls' soccer team for capturing the provincial gold medal in the A division. Winning a provincial banner requires hours

of practice and teamwork. These athletes demonstrated extraordinary skills and determination, bringing home a championship that the entire Island can celebrate.

I also want to recognize our boys' team, who represented Fogo Island with tremendous pride and integrity, earning a well-deserved individual sportsmanship award. Athletic success is measured not only by the scoreboard but by the character, respect and the fair play shown towards opponents and officials alike.

Behind every great team is a dedicated network of coaches, teachers, parents and community volunteers who make school sports possible. Thank you for mentoring our youth and fostering a spirit of excellence.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the athletes, coaches and staff of the Fogo Island Central Academy on an unforgettable soccer season.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to acknowledge Hayward and Raymond Blake on their contribution to the culture and heritage of the South Coast and to our province with the release of their book *Outport Woman: Life on the Ocean's Edge*.

Born in Pushthrough and resettled in Hermitage, the Blake brothers have made significant contributions to the academic world; Hayward at Memorial University Faculty of Education and Raymond at the University of Regina. Through *Outport Woman*, their contribution continues as more than a single biography; it is a tribute to the generations of women – mothers, grandmothers, daughters – whose lives built the backbone of NL.

From the book, the hon. Clyde Wells states: Preserving the lived experience of one woman, Minnie Blake, and her friends and their community in a remote part of the province, it honours all who built lives in places where survival depended on co-operation, endurance, resilience and hope.

Also from their book, Bud Davidge noted: Far more than the story of a single mother in a remote outport, the Blake brothers breathe light into history's silences.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking Hayward and Raymond Blake for their moving account of one woman, and countless others, who found extraordinary strength in ordinary life. It is indeed a great read.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you.

Speaker, I rise to recognize an extraordinary woman, Eithne Daly.

After becoming a firefighter at the age of 51, Eithne, a teacher by profession, created the Junior Firefighter Program with Gander Fire Rescue. Her goals were to provide meaningful volunteer opportunities for youth and to help develop the next generation of volunteers and firefighters, and she succeeded.

Over the past 12 years, approximately 175 youth have participated in the program. Through hands-on training and mentorship, they gain confidence, leadership skills and a stronger sense of community. For many, the experience proved life changing. Twenty-five former participants went on to serve as

firefighters into adulthood, becoming the next generation of remarkable volunteers.

While Eithne's vision may have launched the program, she gives credit to her fellow members of Gander Fire Rescue whose time, expertise and encouragement helped the program thrive then and today.

The program's success was recently highlighted at a provincial firefighters' conference to help other departments launch a junior program.

In recognition of her contribution, upon her retirement from the department, the Town of Gander established the Eithne Daly scholarship for participants in the program.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking Eithne Daly and Gander Fire Rescue for their outstanding service to young people and to firefighting across Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise to recognize an outstanding young volunteer from Harbour Grace, Ally Cleary, who was named Rising Star Coach of the year at the Special Olympics Canada National Awards on November 9, 2026. These prestigious awards celebrate athletes, coaches and volunteers whose dedication helps create a more inclusive world throughout sport.

A dedicated coach with the Tri-Con Gentle Giants Special Olympics team, through Special Olympics NL, Ally has made an incredible impact. Her journey began in high school when a special education teacher encouraged her to volunteer with the Unified Sports program and from that moment on, Ally was hooked.

Since then, Ally has helped establish soccer and basketball programs, revived the athletics program and taken on a leadership role with the team's executive committee. She has inspired a new generation of volunteers and coaches.

Having participated in both the Special Olympics Provincial and National Games, Ally says coaching has become a huge part of her life, creating countless friendships and memories.

Perhaps most inspiring is Ally's belief that her athletes have taught her far more than what she could ever teach them.

Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Ally on this well-deserved national recognition.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Before proceeding to Statements by Ministers, I also just wanted to acknowledge the passing of a former MHA for the District of St. John's North and a former Cabinet minister, I believe he served 10 years in the Legislature, the hon. Lloyd Matthews.

He also had a great contribution in the business world and in terms of the volunteer sector, as well, most notably I believe, with the Children’s Wish Foundation.

I certainly want to wish his family and friends all the very best on behalf of all Members of the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I rise today with sadness to acknowledge the passing of the hon. Lloyd Matthews, a former Member of this House, Cabinet minister and dedicated public servant.

Lloyd represented the District of St. John's North from 1993 to 2003, earning the trust of his constituents through three provincial elections.

During his decade in public office, he served in several Cabinet portfolios, including Minister of Health and Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

But, Speaker, Lloyd's commitment to public service extended well beyond his time in this Legislature.

A successful businessman and entrepreneur, he was also a dedicated community volunteer who helped establish the Children's Wish Foundation in Newfoundland and Labrador and supported numerous charitable organizations.

He understood that public service was not simply about holding office. It was about making a difference in the lives of others.

Those who knew Lloyd remember a man of kindness, integrity and compassion.

A true gentleman who earned the respect of colleagues from all political backgrounds.

And while his contributions to our province were significant, his greatest pride was always his family.

To his beloved wife Jean, their five children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren and extended family, I extend my deepest condolences.

Speaker, regardless of our political differences, we are united in our appreciation for those who dedicate their lives to serving our province.

Lloyd Matthews was one of those individuals.

His legacy of service, generosity and decency will not be forgotten.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I say to the hon. Premier, I didn't mean to pre-empt what you were doing. I did not know you were doing this today. It was not on my list. So I apologize for that.

My condolences just the same.

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement.

I join with the Premier in offering sincere condolences to the family and friends of the hon. Lloyd Matthews.

This past weekend our province lost someone who embodied the true spirit of what it means to be a Newfoundlander and a Labradorian. Mr. Matthews has been described by those who knew him as a true gentleman, and indeed he was.

Community-minded and compassionate, Mr. Matthews leaves behind a legacy of giving back to his community and his province, through his church, service on school boards, role in co-founding the Children's Wish Foundation, Mr. Matthews is known for giving generously of his time to enrich the lives of others.

His commitment to public service extended to the House of Assembly where he was elected three times and represented St. John's North for 10 years. During his time, he proudly served in several Cabinet

portfolios, including Health; Work, Services and Transportation; Municipal and Provincial Affairs; Finance; and Mines and Energy.

The hon. Lloyd Matthews will be remembered fondly by all who knew him and his contributions to our province will not be forgotten.

May he rest in peace.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

On behalf of our caucus, we offer our condolences to the family and friends of former Minister Matthews.

We also want to take this moment to reflect on his life of public service, both in this House and in the community, and we echo the sentiment of the Premier that, regardless of our political affiliation, we recognize those who have served in public office.

We hope that his legacy will inspire others to take up the challenge and contribute however they can in their community and to the province.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, today we remember those lost or who were forever changed by tragedies on our roads and highways.

This morning, we gathered at the Confederation Building with families, road safety partners, law enforcement and first responders to mark the World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims.

Road safety is often discussed in terms of laws, penalties and statistics. But today reminds us about its people. Someone's child, parent, partner, co-worker, sibling, friend or neighbour.

We stand with those who carry that loss every day and with the survivors whose lives have been changed forever. We also recognize the first responders, health care professionals and those unfortunate individuals who were on the highway to respond to those incidents first, who answer the call when a tragedy occurs.

Speaker, safer roads and communities are a responsibility that we all share. I urge people to slow down. Drive sober. Put away the phone. Buckle up. Be patient. Pay attention.

The most meaningful way to honour those we remember today is to make safer choices and look out for one another.

I ask all Members of this hon. House to rise for a moment of silence in their memory.

(Moment of silence.)

SPEAKER: Thank you.

You may be seated.

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, I join the minister in remembering those who have lost their lives and those lives that have been forever changed by tragedies on our roads and highways. I also join the minister in

recognizing our first responders. They are faced with circumstances no one should have to witness and the impact it has on them should never be taken for granted.

While it is important to recognize and honour victims, preventing future tragedies must remain a priority every day of the year.

We've seen an increase in the number of serious incidents on our roadways, particularly over this past summer. This should be a wake-up call to government that more needs to be done to protect residents and visitors travelling throughout our province. That means prioritizing the recruitment and retention of police officers, strengthening penalties for dangerous and distracted driving and ensuring vehicles travelling our roadways are safe and properly maintained.

Words of remembrance are important, but they don't make our roads safer. This government made a promise to build safer communities; it's time they started delivering on those.

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

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

Our caucus stands with survivors in their call for greater road safety. This day holds special meaning for my brother and me, since we lost our brother in a road accident as he was cycling home from work on the last day of school. It is especially poignant, Speaker.

We join the minister in saying, when driving put away your phone, be present, share the road, be aware of who is around you. We also ask this government to do its part, too, to ensure that we have adequate safety on our roads.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. DINN: Speaker, I'm proud to rise today and recognize Anne Beaumaster, a reading specialist at Topsail Elementary school in Conception Bay South.

Anne has been selected to receive Dyslexia Canada's 2026 Educational Excellence Award for her leadership, support and work on early reading screening in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, dyslexia affects how a person reads, spells and processes written language. It can be a frustrating challenge when it goes unrecognized, which is why early screening and support matter so much.

Early screening and effective instruction can make a significant difference and help people with dyslexia see their strengths and feel supported.

Anne was selected from other educators across Canada who are improving outcomes for students with dyslexia and other reading difficulties.

Anne has had a tremendous impact beyond her school. She worked tirelessly to help the province prepare for the implementation of universal screening this fall and trained nearly every kindergarten educator in our province on the new screening measure.

On behalf of all Members of the House of Assembly, I extend a heartfelt congratulations to Anne. I hope she understands the difference she is making in the lives of people with dyslexia and I

encourage her to continue to build on this remarkable achievement.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

The Official Opposition joins in recognizing Anne Beaumaster on receiving Dyslexia Canada's 2026 Educational Excellence Award for her leadership, support and work on early reading screening in Newfoundland and Labrador.

There is no doubt that Ms. Beaumaster's efforts have and are making a significant difference in enabling students with dyslexia to achieve success in the school system.

The importance of educators, combined with students' belief in their own ability to learn, combined with the grit, perseverance and a can-do attitude are an unbeatable combination, and educators like Ms. Beaumaster are great examples of the quality of this province's teachers.

Our party introduced the school-based reading specialist role in 2018 and we continue to support their valuable work.

Anne Beaumaster is certainly an example of the important role they fulfill in enabling students to achieve success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

My sincerest congratulations to Anne Beaumaster for her national award for her work in education and, as a former teacher, I appreciate her professionalism and dedication to her students.

However, so many students across our province are in desperate need of the work that Ms. Beaumaster does but never receive it. Schools continue to struggle to fill teaching vacancies and government must have a clear recruitment and retention strategy.

We, therefore, call on this government to give Ms. Beaumaster and her colleagues the needed support to hire more specialists so that once universal screening identifies the students who require extra assistance, they get it immediately.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I ask if the Premier agrees with his Environment Minister that the media twists the narrative?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I am very fortunate to have a team of dedicated, highly skilled people in Cabinet on this side of the House; people who care about the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, care about the departments they are running and making sure that we will deliver good policy

and good legislation on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

That's the focus of all of the ministers on this side of the House; that's the focus of this entire caucus and that is the focus of the PC Party and exactly what we're going to continue to deliver.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm asking the Premier if he agrees that everybody knows and it's nothing new that the media twists the narrative? Does the Premier agree with those statements?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me talk about the media today. Let me talk about the announcement we made to the media today. Let's talk about the fact that, today, we put forward another affordability measure that will put more money back in people's pockets – $500 per child tax free.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, 73,000 children in this province, over 46,000 families, will now have additional supports as they struggle with the challenges of the cost of living. These and other measures we will continue to do. We're up to $380 million right now. We're continuing to go.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the media had accurately reported that the government's climate action plan was a draft. The Premier now refuses to acknowledge, himself, that the media twist the narrative.

So I'd ask him then to explain, what in that media reporting was actually twisted?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I just said, our ministers and I are working hard on behalf of the people in Newfoundland and Labrador. They're working hard to develop legislation and policy that will improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We've seen it in the past session of the Legislature. We're seeing it in the legislation we're introducing in this session – things that are going to have people more access to health care, going to lower their cost of living and going to help with safer communities.

We will continue to do that and we will continue to bring that legislation forward in this House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, a member of the media said on a podcast released recently in relation to climate change, there was no plan from the PC government. So you understand why that answer would be unsatisfactory to journalists who were listening to what's happened in the House and who want to report accurately.

Does the Premier recognize it is important to allow the media to do their jobs without inappropriate and inaccurate criticism?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Once again, Speaker, we are developing plans, something that the former government was unable to do when it comes to planning. It was more of announcements but not much plans behind them.

But yes, we are focused in on planning. We're very focused in on all of the planning that we're doing in all of our departments. We're also very happy to say that we're at somewhere around 94 per cent of green energy in our province. I think that's an accomplishment that we should all be proud of.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I've asked four questions and I failed to get even close to a direct answer, so I'll try again, even though I know the result.

With the rise in AI and the misinformation, the traditional media is more important now than ever.

Why is the Premier doubling down on his fake news narrative and telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that the media is getting it wrong?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I've stood now for five questions – not one question about the cost of living impacting Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Not one question about the safer communities. Not one question about access to health care.

So we see where the priorities are for the Members opposite. It is not with the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and that's exactly what we're going to do. We're going to continue to work to deliver the programs that we said we would deliver and we're going to continue to deliver on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We're going to continue to deliver better access to health care. We're going to continue more cost-of-living measures and put more money back in people's pockets.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I believe it is a priority to respect the reporting of media and democracy in this province, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: A member of the media commented on a podcast as well that blanket statements reinforce the idea of how you can't trust the media. It's a direct undermining of what we do in the context of the larger democracy. We're fighting this on social media. It's a major problem.

Will the Premier acknowledge that these anti-media blanket statements are unacceptable to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, whether it's podcasts or Facebook or whatever, whoever is asking questions, we've been doing our best to answer them, unlike the Member across the way who, last October 14, had the longest mic drop in the history of Newfoundland when he lost the election, dropped the mic, walked out of the room and wouldn't talk to the media for weeks on end and now, all of a sudden, he makes a big issue of it.

It's no different than anything that we've done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: Fifty years is too long. It was the right amount of time for him. Speaker, $230 billion was enough for him; $277 billion is not enough. I think the Member across the way needs to concentrate on the issues and make sure we're doing what's best for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Another member of the media said, on the same podcast, not normally the kind of reaction we would get from the politicians. This is something we see in other jurisdictions. I'm not going to name any particular countries, although I think we know what he's talking about.

Will the Premier acknowledge that these blanket statements about the media are unacceptable and, in fact, they are quite dangerous?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, the danger is also in what the Members across the way have put on their Facebook. What they like, what they contribute to and what they say is okay. If we're going to talk facts in this House, we need to look at each other and understand that everybody here is responsible to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It doesn't go with this side of the room.

At the end of the day, we answer to the media. We answer the requests they have. We have been very accessible and we will continue to be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: On that note, the Premier stated in this House that he and his ministers will speak to the media – and I quote – when they have something to tell them.

Does the Premier agree that in a democracy it is a minister's job to answer questions when the public has something to ask, rather than only when the government has a prepared and controlled statement?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me be clear, the difference between this side of the House, now the government side and the Opposition side, is they were all about the announcements. We're not simply going to be about making announcements. What we're going to be about is developing plans. Real action that will help the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, including the historic new Churchill Falls deal; advancing Bay du Nord; $8 billion for 5 Wing Goose Bay; delivering a record investment in health care; tackling the housing challenge head on; expanding access to child care; making communities safer –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I only want to hear the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: – restoring 24-hour snow clearing; helping families lower their energy costs; modernized government

services' and delivering supports for seniors and persons with disabilities, caregivers –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier said – and I quote – I'll meet with anyone, anytime. Yet, he wouldn't even answer the MHA for Mount Pearl North when she was looking for a meeting on a serious health care issue for her constituent. In fact, the Premier didn't even respond to her question in Question Period.

Why didn't he respond? Is it because he shares the same attitude of the Deputy Premier that it's a waste of time for MHAs to ask questions in Question Period?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm happy to respond to that question.

That email was sent to the Premier, of course, and to myself. I answered on behalf of the Premier –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. WALL: I'm happy to answer the question as well.

I answered the question on behalf of the Premier and the Department of Health and Community Services. I was happy to do so.

Mr. Speaker, that issue, with respect to the constituent in Mount Pearl North, is being handled. It is being taken care of. Officials from my department have reached out directly to the patient and are working with her step by step to ensure that her issue is taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, again, I'm happy to answer any question, meet with anyone and, of course, to hear from the people of the province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador's Energy Minister said in this House in relation to his Churchill Falls deal that the deal is done. Yet, on Friday, Quebec's Energy minister said it isn't set in stone. Unsurprisingly, Quebec is going to try to get even more from the PCs than they already did back in August.

Again, the reality is Quebec is in a different place than Newfoundland and Labrador and we're hearing things different than what this Premier is telling people in our province.

Why does the Premier continue to hide what's really happening from Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and we had to hear about it from Quebec?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I have had a conversation with the Quebec premier. He knows exactly where my position stands. The significant material terms of this DCIA have been done. They're in the DCIA and we are not open to renegotiating any deal.

So the deal will not be renegotiated. We will turn around and make sure that the

definitive agreements that are brought to this House of Assembly reflect the material terms that were in the DCIA.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, it sounds like Quebec is saying it has time to continue negotiations, and that means Newfoundland and Labrador has time for an independent review, a debate in the House of Assembly, and the Premier can actually deliver on the promise he made to have a referendum.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: So why is the Premier really refusing accountability? It clearly isn't because of lack of time, according to the news we get from Quebec.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pretty rich coming from the individual that sat on the Muskrat Falls inquiry. Pretty rich from someone who wanted to ignore the recommendations of the LeBlanc inquiry and only gave in to them after pressure from Opposition at the time. Pretty rich from the guy who says $233 billion is enough; $277 billion is not enough. Pretty rich from the same guy who, last November, put out a letter complaining that we weren't on the major projects list and now we are – we are there.

All of the things that he couldn't achieve, we have achieved and now he's upset about it. It makes no sense. It's pure politics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, it sounds like Quebecers are getting another chance but, of course, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not.

Will the Premier use this opportunity to listen to the people who are critical of his deal, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who want upsides and off-ramps? Will he use this opportunity to talk to Quebec to get what Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve and to give back what he gave away?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier and his team have been listening to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. We've been listening very well. At the end of the day, we have brought back a better deal. Because they couldn't get it done, they're upset.

If the Member that sits across the way asking the questions, spent more time worrying about Newfoundland than he did about Quebec, perhaps he would have won the last election.

At the end of the day, we are here bringing a deal forward for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We've listened to them, we will continue to listen to them and we will deliver on our promises.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, according to *La Presse*, the premier of Quebec and Prime Minister Carney discussed the Churchill Falls agreement last week without our Premier in the room.

Is the Premier concerned that this deal is being negotiated without him, behind his back?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I have no concerns whatsoever because Prime Minister Carney has delivered for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and he will continue to deliver for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

What I find extremely interesting is the Member opposite was out campaigning on a previous MOU, out campaigning on an MOU that delivered less, that didn't have any federal government support. Now we have a new and better deal that has $3.5 billion in federal government support NPV for Newfoundland and Labrador, something that the MOU that they had, that he was promoting, did not have. It did not have a commitment for wind development. Now we do, a 2,000 megawatt farm and the federal government will –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Premier's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I find it ironic that the Premier is talking about what I campaigned on; yet, what he campaigned on, he has broken that promise to every single (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: So, Premier, you brought it up, you want to talk about a campaign promise, why won't you do what you promised? The reason that you're sitting over there –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Address the Chair please.

J. HOGAN: – and was elected as the Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador is because you promised a referendum.

So will you change your mind, fulfill your promise and do what you told Newfoundlanders and Labradorians you were going to do?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you how short his memory is and how many promises he broke: "For me, the answer is simple. The generational opportunity afforded to us by the Churchill Falls deal signed by our Liberal Government, which will create 10,000 jobs and allow us to invest more in our hospitals, schools and infrastructure. More for our Police, Firefighters and Paramedics, more for you and your community, and all while making life more affordable …. Our plan, with your support, will make the economy stronger …."

He voted against that. He ran on that, he voted against it and he has voted against it several times.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, also according to *La Presse*, the Premier of Quebec and Prime Minister Carney heard that Quebec plans to rework the agreement in relation to the federal investment. Quebec is already receiving twice the federal investment that we are, thanks to the Premier, for our resource.

So why does Quebec get to renegotiate even more and Newfoundland and Labrador does not?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I just want to clarify the record on what the Leader of the Opposition just stated, that Quebec is getting more money from the federal government than the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I spoke about it to my constituents this past week in Lethbridge, and I hope they're watching now. I also did in Bonavista as well.

The reason why Quebec is getting more back is because they are spending money. Newfoundland and Labrador are not spending a cent. Quebec gets their money back from the investment tax credit. You've got to spend money to get money back. Quebec is going to build Gull Island, $30 billion worth of work in Gull Island; we take 60 per cent ownership of it. They deserve to get a tax credit.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Does the Minister of Finance recognize that there is value in our resource. That is what we are bringing to the table.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Sure Quebec is putting money into it, but we are putting Churchill Falls into the deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: So why are we not getting our fair share from the federal government?

I will tell the Minister of Finance if his answer is that that valuation of Quebec's money is worth the resource in Labrador, he can try and explain that to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: That's a very good question that he asked. I've got to give him credit for the question.

Gull Island: Quebec will give us $3.5 billion as an equity in Gull Island, for it to be built. We get 8.5 per cent equity return on that, which will amount to about $7 billion that Quebec will pay us on Gull Island while they build it with their $30 billion.

On our resource in Churchill Falls, Annex D will show what Quebec is going to pay us each year over this PPA to the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I think it's a good deal. It's more than what the 2024 one was and we'll hit a billion dollars in 2033.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Can the Minister of Finance put a dollar value on Churchill Falls in relation to how he felt it fits into the negotiations on the DCIA?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We had four days in this House, three days of expert testimony telling us, every one of them said it was a good deal. Annex D they referred to, which was the heart of the deal, so we know in Annex D will be that we'll break $1 billion in 2033. By the time 2041 comes, it will be $2.67 billion per year that we get in. When we hit then the '50s, we're getting over $4 billion a year from the Upper Churchill.

I'm not sure what the Leader of the Opposition is missing. Did he not see Annex D?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the federal government is giving Quebec about $6 billion while they're giving our province about $3 billion.

So does the Minister of Finance feel that the Churchill Falls resource is worth about $3 billion to make up for what Quebec is getting?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I've got to repeat my answer before and my answer before is that Quebec gets more from the federal government because they are spending more money than we are. In fact, we're not spending a cent. We can't get the tax investment return because we're not spending any money.

So Quebec spends the money – $30-plus billion. They give us $3.5 billion as our equity piece in the Gull Island, but if we're not spending, we can't get money back as an investment tax certificate. So I don't know what the Leader of the Opposition is missing, Speaker.

You've got to pay money to get return.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, there are other ways for the provincial Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to get money. It doesn't just have to be an investment tax credit. It could be cash.

So what the Finance Minister is telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is that they didn't go to bat for Newfoundland and Labrador to get that cash. They said we can't value Churchill Falls in terms of tax credits, so give Quebec whatever it wants, let them spend the money and we will sell our resource down the river because he can't put a valuation on it.

Is that what the Minister of Finance is telling Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Enough with the imaginary narratives. I'll tell you what we're getting. We're getting a new project in Gull Island. We're getting our rights that have been refused to us for 60 years from Churchill Falls. We're getting the Kami project. We're getting the Labrador Trough. We're getting an $8.5-billion investment in Goose Bay for defence. We're getting the ability to attract people to come here.

I'll remind the Member across, if it wasn't for Twin Falls and Churchill Falls, we wouldn't have Labrador City and Wabush Mines IOC. There would be no mining industry in Labrador as it stands today.

We are getting a future for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and they still want to play pure politics with it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, this weekend Quebec revealed that it may not be able to supply American markets with electricity because Quebec is experiencing a shortage.

Will the Premier acknowledge what this extra leverage gives our province and renegotiate and get back to the table and get the market-based pricing back that he gave away?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: What I will acknowledge is that is the ebbs and flow of hydroelectricity throughout the entire world. I'll also acknowledge the fact that we negotiated in our deal 150 per cent premium tranche which allows us in times like this to sell Quebec the power at a higher price.

I will acknowledge that we have a better deal, a deal that far surpasses what they've done, and yet they still come in here and want to play politics with it.

At the end of the day, every year water levels are higher or lower. It's historically been that way since the 1960s. Don't take my word for it. Go back in the history books and have a look.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I'll be very clear, this is not a political question. This is a technical question, so please try to answer it with a technical answer.

The NECEC and CHPE contracts that Quebec may not fulfill are the very ones that the PCs claim get them US prices.

So I'll ask the Premier or the minister: What happens to that option if Quebec doesn't sell power to the US once those US and Quebec contracts expire? This has nothing to do with me.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: In the 173 days while he was Premier and the nine years before that –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – when nothing was happening in the province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – we sat and watched and what we've done in the last 13 months is not watch. We're attracting mines. We are attracting offshore oil and gas. We are attracting the things to help build the future here in the province. If that doesn't go through Quebec, guess what? We will find a way to utilize it for industrial purposes here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The more we can do in this province, the better off we are. If we sell no power to Quebec and we can utilize it here in this province for industrial issues, it serves everybody better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Technical question about the deal. Can't answer it or won't answer it, I'm not sure which one is worse, but I'll give him the answer. Because section 4(f) of his deal, if he read it and if he understood it, says the prices for those 521 megawatts will be determined by – get this – Hydro-Québec.

Not only has the Premier negotiated a bad deal, he actually negotiated a deal that lets Quebec set the price.

I ask the Premier: Can he really look Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the face and say this is a good deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what we have is a deal that allows us to retain power, to actually allow us to use the power how we choose to use it. We have the optionality to sell power to Quebec or we have the optionality not to sell it to Quebec.

Their old agreement, simply, had to sell all the power to Quebec. We're also getting power that we'll no longer be subsidizing selling our power cheaper to Quebec and they turn around and increase the price and sell it elsewhere. We'll get the same price.

But at the end of the day, as the minister has said, our goal is develop industry in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's what we're focused on and we're going to continue to do it – shipbuilding industries, repair industries and we'll keep going and going and going.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

In a response to a rash of crime in downtown St. John's, the RNC warned residents not to walk alone and to use a buddy system. This is not the safer communities promised by the PCs.

Why does the Minister of Justice and Public Safety accept this warning as a reasonable solution?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm really happy to have the opportunity to speak to this issue. It's good to hear questions that really matter, like safer communities in our province.

I can say, first of all, it is so important to our government and to me as Minister of Justice, that's why I joined the mayor of the City of St. John's and did a tour to meet with residents, meet with owners, meet with people in the area and to see first-hand what is happening there.

I can say that our government is committed to safer communities and all you have to do is look at the record investments that we have made in our criminal justice system –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: – historic, unprecedented and not what we've seen from the previous government.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Premier held a news conference in my district to announce affordability measures for families; yet, 20 per cent of people using food banks are employed.

I ask the Premier, if he's actually interested in affordability, will he increase the minimum wage for Newfoundland and Labrador so that it is a livable minimum wage?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Speaker, I can safely say that every option and every affordability measure would be on the table going forward between now and our next budget.

We're very conscious of the needs of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We would have a desire to do more. We often can do as much as what our coffers provide, but we do have a desire to make sure we control our expenditures and we provide as much relief to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador as we possibly could.

That's our commitment, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

At a recent Community Food Sharing Association breakfast, Lesley Burgess noted that increased cost of essentials and the pressure of inadequate income is being transferred to food banks, which are under increasing stress to fill the gap. Yet, it is the policy of the Department of Social Supports and Well-Being that, before a hungry person can be issued a food voucher, he must avail of the food bank first before he can be issued a food voucher.

So I ask the minister: How is shifting government's responsibility to volunteer-led, not-for-profit food banks closing the affordability gap?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

We were at the same breakfast that morning. When it comes to people going and availing of services within government, Mr. Speaker, we want to make sure that they can avail of all services outside of government as well.

After record investments, we are prepared to take on whatever we have to, to ensure that people get food on the table as they need it, but there are other groups out there that are very proud to step up to the plate as well. It's not a requirement that you go to these other places, but it's definitely recommended to utilize every single outlet out there to get food on the table, to get food in the fridge.

We depend on our communities as well as our government, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue to do so. It's an initiative that's led by all across the province. We'll continue to work with those community members.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, Chapter 9: Special Needs Benefits, subsection (v), Emergency Assistance, Procedure, reads: "The Client Services Officer must: determine if the applicant/recipient has absolutely no resources of their own available to meet his/her emergency need." What an insult to a person's dignity.

I ask the minister: Will he immediately change this policy so that food banks aren't the first line of defence and a person does not have to prove how desperate or hungry he is before he receives help?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

We can review our legislation. It wasn't written by us. I'm sure it's been there for quite a long time, but, at the end of the day, people with my department – it's not a requirement to go to these community outlets, it is recommended to see if there are – and there are many other community outlets, not just the food bank. It takes a full community – a rising tide raises all boats. We're only too happy to help as well.

It's a huge community across this province. We're extremely happy and thankful that we have so many community outlets out there that can avail and help out people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but it is not a requirement.

I, as minister, can say to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, we will be there for you no matter what.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, I spent this week canvassing in my district, speaking with constituents and one issue came up door after door – a deep lack of trust in this government and how it is handling the Churchill Falls deal. Now, today, we are hearing that Quebec wants to renegotiate parts of the deal, saying it is not set in stone.

So I ask the Premier: With so much confusion, frustration and mistrust across this province and so many people feeling like their voices are not being heard, how can he expect the public to have confidence in this deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as we have said, this is a deal, a new and better deal that we have agreed to with the Province of Quebec, and the federal government has stepped in and made that deal possible. Prime Minister Carney and his team have done an outstanding job of providing Newfoundlanders and Labradorians with additional resources to make this happen.

When I think about what this new and better deal will offer the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, not just now but into the

future – $273 billion. That's the kind of significant amount. Monies to be able to invest in the programs that the Member opposite wants us, as a government, to invest in. That's exactly what we're going to do. We're going to continue to move forward and move industries in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I give notice of the following private Member's motion, which will be seconded by the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi:

WHEREAS the cost-of-living crisis has put enormous strain on household budgets because wages and pensions have not kept pace with inflation; and

WHEREAS the most recent food insecurity by PROOF found that one in four households in this province has difficulty affording food; and

WHEREAS the same organization found that about 40% of children under 18 in Newfoundland and Labrador live in food-insecure households; and

WHEREAS these pressures are leading more and more people to turn to food banks, which themselves are struggling to keep up with demand; and

WHEREAS the war in Iran is fueling and will continue to fuel inflation, especially in food prices;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the provincial government to form an all-party committee to study the grocery industry in this province and identify means of reducing food costs, including, but not limited to, targeted financial supports for consumers, preventing predatory or differential pricing, expanding local food production, and creating publicly owned grocery stores and supply chains; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the final report of this committee be tabled in the House of Assembly.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

The motion just read by the Member for St. John's Centre on an all-party committee to study grocery prices will be the NDP private Member's resolution for debate on Wednesday, November 18. We look forward to the debate.

SPEAKER: Are there any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for Which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

The reasons for this petition are as follows:

WHEREAS residents, businesses and community organizations in Placentia and surrounding communities have raised growing concerns regarding drug-related crime, *Highway Traffic Act* violations, dangerous driving, property damage, vandalism, trespassing and the destruction of private property, with these incidents negatively affecting public safety, security and the quality of life; and

WHEREAS residents have called for greater police visibility, increased enforcement, timely responses to complaints and adequate policing resources to address these concerns and protect people and property; and

WHEREAS the provincial government participates in a provincial police service agreement with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police through which policing priorities, service levels and resources are established in consultation with the provincial government; and

WHEREAS residents believe policing resources and enforcement must reflect the current and emerging public safety needs of Placentia and surrounding communities;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, petition the hon. House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to: review policing resources and service levels in the Placentia region and assess the need for additional front-line, investigative and enforcement capacity to address drug-related crime, traffic violations, dangerous driving, property damage and public safety concerns; address any identified gaps and increase police visibility and enforcement in the communities experiencing recurring public safety issues; work collaboratively with municipalities, residents, businesses, community organizations and law enforcement partners to improve public safety and protect people and property; and provide clear information to residents on the actions being taken and how policing resources will remain responsive to the needs of the Placentia region.

Speaker, the police officers that operate out of Whitbourne are absolutely superb. They go above and beyond their job to do it. They have an extremely large geographical area to cover.

One thing I would recommend to the government so we can address what's emerging and presently happening in Placentia is, when a police officer is off on extended sick leave, that they be physically replaced. Having a position there is of no value if we do not have an officer there.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to respond to the petition.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, I'd like to thank the Member opposite for the petition.

I can say that greater police resources has been a very important priority for our government. I can say that we invested record amounts of funding for the RCMP and for the RNC. In 2026, there was $9 million annualized over two years.

I can also say that, with respect to policing, we understand the importance of having a visible police presence in our communities. That's why, as well, with the RCMP, we are also supporting and have an initiative for the auxiliary police. That initiative will be 25 RCMP auxiliaries that will be available to go out to assist with community policing.

So when we look at different initiatives that are in place, I can reassure the Member opposite that this is very much a priority for

our government in terms of giving that sense of safety to people in our community.

I know that you've mentioned that you would like us to work collaboratively, and that certainly is a priority for us.

In terms of meeting with the police, I can say that I have regular meetings with not only the RCMP leadership, but the RNC leadership as well, that police our province. So these are important things that we are addressing and I thank the Member for the petition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for and background of this petition:

WHEREAS the Department of Health and Community Services recently updated their personal care standards and, as of January 1, 2027, all service providers must meet these standards to maintain their licence; and

WHEREAS senior retirement homes have already interpreted the fire and life safety standards, taking all electrical appliances in residents' rooms to include electric kettles and microwaves; and

WHEREAS some senior retirement homes removed all said appliances from the rooms of the residents without consultation prior to January 1, 2027; and

WHEREAS residents should be treated with dignity and respect and have the continued ability to enjoy small comforts in their rooms such as a cup of tea in the evening; and

WHEREAS these rooms are truly considered their home;

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 provide more robust personal care standards to reflect the allowance within reason of safe small electrical appliances in the rooms of residents.

Speaker, I have three nursing homes in my district and I have met with other nursing homes in the region who have family members staying outside of my district in homes that have reached out to me with concerns regarding this issue. The largest seniors' home in my district, these are the people who have signed this petition, the manager and assistant manager in one of the homes.

Like I said, I'm in these homes on a regular basis and the seniors are not really happy. The manager in the home that signed these petitions are saying, for years, they've monitored people that lived in the home and if they felt that a patient had Alzheimer's or some reason why it wasn't safe for them to have an electric kettle or appliance or a toaster in their rooms, they didn't allow it. The manager always had the opportunity to talk to the family and take the appliance out of the home.

This is not what's going to happen moving forward, after January 1. I know that one of the homes outside my district have already taken the appliances out. I've been up in that home several times, meeting with residents and they're not happy at all.

The seniors can't enjoy their cup of tea in the morning or in the nighttime, whenever they want. Some of them can't get down to the kitchen because it's too long of a walk and if you use walkers and they can't get there.

I see my time is up again –

SPEAKER: The Member's time has expired.

L. STOYLES: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I think any time we increase and put the standards out in personal care homes and to come in long-term care homes is we want to make sure that the living arrangements for those residents who would be in the homes are as high and as comfortable as they possibly can be.

It wasn't due to the residents that this standard found it's way in. It was because of the fire and life safety officials who stated that it was a fire risk that they were concerned about.

We all in this House realize that they would like to have a cup of tea or a toaster in their rooms; I realize that. But when those people in fire and life safety state that it is a fire risk, the challenge then becomes what can we do to mitigate that.

Whether it be the National Fire Code of Canada, whether it be the National Fire Protection Association or the Life Canada code, all three were on board saying that there is a risk here that we need to be aware of.

It has to do with the electrical system that's provided. It is not the user and the resident; it is the wiring and the electrical system. We are looking at what we can do to mitigate, to make sure that the homes stay as comfortable as they possibly can and we're looking at the providers to be able to help us in that regard.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition for advancing non-profit, public grocery stores. These are the reasons for the petition:

One in four households in our province is food insecure because pay and pensions haven't kept up with inflation; and

Despite the growing need and unaffordability of basic food, grocery chain profits continue to rise; and

A public, non-profit grocery network and supply chain would drive prices down by competing with the big corporate grocers and grow our economy by developing local supply chains, employing unionized staff with good pay and job security and keeping more money in the province; and

The provincial government already has experience as a retailer through the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation;

THEREFORE we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to study the viability and benefits of creating a publicly owned, non-profit network of grocery stores.

Speaker, we've already seen plenty of examples of how the large grocery chains have colluded to fix the price of bread. A recent picture that went around showed two loaves of bread – the same loaf – one was just bread and the other one was bread for stuffing. The bread for stuffing was just about twice the price of the regular loaf of bread. There's something wrong with that. That's gouging. That's making it unaffordable for the people.

I know from listening to Lesley Burgess of Bridges to Hope, she said that because of the growing price of food and essentials, families are faced with impossible choices.

I volunteered with a food bank for over 35 years and we would deliver food and then people would come in, but I will tell you something that we noticed in that time. Because we're set up as an emergency, more or less, to help people get through the rough patches. We started to realize more and more people, including people who work, rely on the food bank as part of its monthly budget. That has increased. Working people are dependent on it, which means food prices are going out of reach. If you're dealing then with a rent increase of $150, where does it come from? It comes from the food budget.

So, Speaker, the only way to send a clear message to these large grocery chains is to make sure that we have competition here that will keep the price on food and essentials down and be competitive. That's what this is about.

My brother and I do remember many times going to the railway combine where any damaged goods or whatever on the trains were sold off to employees' families first and we were sort of the hired help – we weren't hired; we were conscripted. I tell you that's how families are doing it today and dealing with food banks. We don't need that. Let's bring this in.

Thank you.

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

P. PIKE: Speaker, these are the reasons for and the background of this petition:

WHEREAS outside of property taxes, local fees and grants, municipalities have limited ways to generate revenue to keep on with rising costs; and

WHEREAS while there has been a recent increase to the Municipal Operating Grant budget, municipalities note that, historically, adjusted levels remain below past decades relative to the actual cost of running local governments; and

WHEREAS much municipal infrastructure is past its life expectancy, soaring construction and material costs have made repairs increasingly expensive; and

WHEREAS towns and cities are expected to assume more responsibilities, such as regional and expanded fire protection, staff training and environmental and safety compliance without a corresponding rise in the operational funding; and

WHEREAS unique hardships, such as relying on volunteer fire departments or community fundraising for public safety, managing long-standing boil order advisories and dealing with washed out culverts or roads, make operational aid vital to keep communities viable;

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 adjust the Municipal Operating Grant to allow for increased costs associated with fuel, heavy equipment, fire and emergency services, aging infrastructure, safe drinking water, human resources and other related expenditures.

Mr. Speaker, during constituency week, both sides of the House, certainly Members on both sides, visited their communities in their districts and they talked to councils and individuals, but there was one main theme that came through when you were talking to councils, that was, they're facing the high costs of providing materials, products and services, and they're struggling, a lot of towns are struggling.

Government has to realize that the increases and cuts affect communities,

especially our seniors who cannot afford to pay higher taxes on restrictive budgets, because you only have a couple of ways to do it. You have to either raise taxes or cut something.

One of the councils in my district that I was talking to during last week is bordering on bankruptcy now and they are certainly looking to government for help.

Mr. Speaker, with the influx of money, let's get this done as quick as we can with the big influx of money we're getting so that we help residents in all –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time has expired.

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 1, introduction and first reading of Bill 35.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act, Bill 35, and I further move that said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved that Bill 35, An Act to Amend the Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act, be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act," carried. (Bill 35)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the Tobacco and Vapour Products Control Act. (Bill 35)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 35 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 2, Bill 36.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997 No. 2, Bill 36, and that said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 36, An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997 No. 2, be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Government Services to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997 No. 2," carried. (Bill 36)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997 No. 2. (Bill 36)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 36 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 3, introduction and first reading of Bill 37.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Jobs and Growth; and Rural Development, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, Bill 37, and I further move that said bill now be read a first time.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 37, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act, be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Government Services to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act," carried. (Bill 37)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act. (Bill 37)

SPEAKER: Bill 37?

L. PARROTT: Bill 37.

SPEAKER: Okay, I thought you said 35, sorry. Bill 37, okay, I just want to get it right for the record.

This bill has now been read a first time.

When shall the bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 37 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 4, first reading of Bill 38.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance, Bill 38, and I further move that the said bill now be read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 38, An Act Respecting the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance, be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance," carried. (Bill 38)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance. (Bill 38)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 38 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 5, introduction and first reading of Bill 39.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, Bill 39, and I further move the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that Bill 39, An Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act, be read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act," carried. (Bill 39)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Act. (Bill 39)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 39 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Motion 6.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, November 16, 2026.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that the House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m., today, Monday, November 16, 2026.

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.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 11, second reading of Bill 29.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, that Bill 29, An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province, now be read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 29, An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province, now be read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province." (Bill 29)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I'm proud to rise in this hon. House today to speak to the proposed *Cities Act*, Bill 29 – a bill that will help our cities thrive.

This legislation is an important step forward for municipal government in Newfoundland and Labrador. It gives our cities the modern tools, powers, autonomy and flexibility they need to serve the residents well today and for years to come.

The *Cities Act* will repeal and replace the existing legislation governing the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl. It will also create a modern framework for these cities and any future cities in our province.

Speaker, the *City of St. John's Act* will remain in force while it goes through its own comprehensive review. Our capital city has its own needs and its laws should reflect them. I look forward to advancing that work too in the coming year.

Today, we are building a stronger foundation for how our cities are governed across Newfoundland and Labrador. As a government, we believe strong communities build a strong province. When cities have the right tools to make decisions, enter into agreements, deliver services and plan

ahead, people benefit, businesses benefit, families benefit, all of us benefit. That is what this bill sets out to do.

Speaker, our government knows the vital role municipalities play in the daily lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. Municipal government is the level of government closest to the people. Municipalities maintain our local roads and infrastructure. They provide fire protection and waste collection. They make decisions about development and they help create places where people want to live, work, raise families and invest.

When city residents are worried about housing, snow clearing, recreation, public safety or local infrastructure, it is often their city council they run to first. Cities are expected to do far more today than they were just a few decades ago. Cities are managing population growth and population change. They're responding to rising demands on infrastructure, while supporting new housing development and economic growth. Cities are adapting to climate change and severe weather, and they are being held to higher standards for openness and accountability.

In short, cities are being asked to do more than ever before, yet the laws that guide our cities were written in a different time. The current laws for the City of Corner Brook and City of Mount Pearl contain provisions that are increasingly outdated and too rigid. In many cases, they reflect a way of governing that no longer fits the realities these cities face today.

As a result, cities can get tied up in unnecessary administrative processes, face limits on local decision-making powers and struggle to respond quickly to what the communities need. Speaker, legislation should not hold municipalities back. It should help municipalities succeed, and that is why the *Cities Act* matters so much.

This bill modernizes how cities are governed while protecting transparency, accountability and the responsible use of public money. The bill gives greater flexibility while keeping appropriate provincial oversight. It strikes the right balance between local decision-making and provincial accountability. Above all, this bill positions our cities to meet the challenges ahead and seize the opportunities of the future.

Speaker, this bill does not stand alone. Members of this hon. House will remember the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*. It came into force in January 1, 2025. The *Towns and Local Service Districts Act* modernized the rules for towns and Local Service Districts across Newfoundland and Labrador and it was shaped by extensive engagement with municipalities, Local Service Districts and stakeholders.

The *Cities Act* is a natural next step. Together, these two acts will give our communities across our province a more consistent, modern and enabling legislative framework that helps them succeed. Whether people live in a town, a city or a Local Service District, they deserve a local government that is effective, accountable, responsible and equipped to serve them.

Speaker, one of the great strengths of this bill is that it has been shaped by listening. The *Cities Act* builds on a multi-phased public consultation process, conducted between 2017 and 2020, extensive jurisdictional research, teamwork across government departments and reviews of municipal legislation across Canada. We've also worked directly with both the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl since the spring of 2024 and we listened closely.

Throughout these discussions, we heard clear and consistent messages. Municipal leaders want more flexibility to meet local needs, fewer administrative barriers standing in their way, stronger tools for

good governance and practical authority to solve local issues.

Speaker, this bill answers those requests directly and reflects what municipalities told us they need better to serve their residents and their communities. This bill also reflects our government's commitment to work collaboratively with municipalities and partners. That's right, Speaker. Municipalities are not just stakeholders. They are our partners and, together, we are building stronger communities and a stronger Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, one of the most important parts of this bill is that it is clear and modern. The *Cities Act* is written in plain language so it's easier to understand and use. This may seem like a small change but it matters. When a law is written clearly, councils, municipal staff, businesses and residents can better understand their rights and responsibilities.

The bill also establishes clearer roles and responsibilities for city councils and municipal administrators. We can all agree that strong governance starts with clarity. Residents need to know who is responsible for what. Clear explanation and expectations lead to better decision-making, more open government, stronger accountability and better services.

The legislation also gives cities more say over local decisions. The City of Corner Brook and Mount Pearl will have broader authority to make bylaws in their areas of responsibility, and they will rely on routine ministerial approvals.

Speaker, local governments are often the best place to understand local needs. Issues faced in Corner Brook may not be the same as those faced in Mount Pearl, and future cities will have their own challenges and opportunities. This bill recognizes that reality and empowers local council to respond. At the same time, strong safeguards remain in place to protect accountability and good governance. We are not removing oversight; we are removing unnecessary barriers so cities can respond faster to what their communities need.

Speaker, another key feature of this bill is a modern way to restructure municipalities and to create new cities where it makes sense. Our communities, our regions and our province keep changing and growing, and so do the needs of the residents. This bill gives us a framework that can adapt today, tomorrow and well into the future, with room for growth and opportunity.

Openness and accountability are the heart of a good government. Whether provincial or municipal, residents expect access to information, openness and accountability from the people they elect, and they want to know how decisions are being made. The *Cities Act* strengthens these principles by enhancing requirements for open decision-making, supporting public reporting and electronic communications, requiring city bylaws to be online so residents can easily find the rules that affect them, improving how cities share information with its residents. These changes will build greater public confidence and keep residents informed and involved in their local government.

The bill also modernizes how cities collect taxes, manage their finances and municipal revenue should be flexible and clear and fit today's realities. For instance, the *Cities Act* will make business tax discretionary, giving cities more choice; let cities create residential and commercial property classes and subclasses; allow a tourist accommodation tax; replace water and sewer taxes with fees; allow tax relief for people facing financial hardship and for community organizations; and allow payments by instalments, making bills easier to manage.

Together, these measures give cities more flexibility to respond to their local needs.

They also support fairness and better financial management.

Speaker, delivering services is a top priority for every municipality. Residents expect reliable services, roads that are maintained, garbage that is collected and fire protection that's available when they need it. The *Cities Act* spells out services cities must provide, including waste collection, fire protection, maintenance and snow clearing of local roads and now also animal control. Making these services mandatory gives residents consistency and clarity about the core services they can count on from their cities.

In addition, the *Cities Act* lets cities provide services outside their municipal boundaries for a fee. This encourages neighboring communities to co-operate and share services. Working together often leads to better results because there is strength in numbers and this bill supports that.

Speaker, our government's vision is a stronger economy and stronger communities, and cities play an important part in making this vision real. The *Cities Act* recognizes economic development as a valid purpose for municipalities. That matters because cities are often on the front line attracting investment, supporting development and creating conditions for economic growth. The bill also puts safeguards in place for how cities get financially involved with private corporations. It strikes a responsible balance between encouraging economic growth and protecting public interest.

Speaker, residents also expect their cities to have practical tools to deal with local concerns and enforce community standards. The *Cities Act* modernizes city enforcement powers in several important ways, including strengthening how cities recover the cost of cleaning up problem properties, including the use of liens when costs cannot be recovered in any other way. This helps make sure taxpayers are not unfairly stuck with a bill for neglected properties.

Letting cities appoint bylaw enforcement officers and stating clearly that these officers do not have police powers, giving cities the authority to carry out inspections, removing the need for ministerial regulations before cities can set up ticketing systems and extending bylaw authority to cover non-moving traffic violations.

Each of these measures give cities practical tools to manage local issues quickly and efficiently. They also make it clear who has the authority and who is accountable.

Speaker, it is important to note that this bill does not pass new provincial responsibility to cities. It does not download additional services or shift provincial obligations onto local governments. What this bill does is modernize the legal framework that the cities already work within, giving them more flexibility to respond to local priorities, support for strong governance and an opportunity to cut unnecessary red tape. At the same time, the bill keeps provincial oversight where it's needed and where residents, property owners and businesses expect it. This balance is key because cities need both flexibility and clear, accountable legislative framework. This *Cities Act* delivers both.

Residents, families, businesses and local leaders depend on municipal services every day, and I'm proud to say that this bill is about the everyday work of governing the City of Mount Pearl and the City of Corner Brook. It is about the people who live in these cities and any future cities to come.

This bill reflects our government's belief that municipalities succeed when we give them the tools to succeed. It reflects our commitment to collaboration, accountability, transparency and strong governance, and it reflects our vision of building stronger communities and a stronger Newfoundland

and Labrador for today and future generations to come.

In closing, Bill 29, the *Cities Act*, gives our province a modern legislative framework to support current and future cities across the province. This bill empowers cities while keeping them accountable. It strengthens transparency while reducing unnecessary red tape. It supports better service delivery, stronger governance, economic growth and community development.

This *Cities Act* will equip the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl and any future cities to meet the challenges ahead and seize the opportunities.

Speaker, I look forward to hearing from Members and their support for this bill. Together, let us strengthen local government, improve services for residents and build a stronger future for all of us.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a good day for the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl. This has been, as the minister pointed out, some time in development. I know it follows on the work done previously on the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*.

As the minister mentioned, municipalities are the closest form of government to the people. They are the ones who have to keep the water going, the sewer flowing, the roads plowed and maintained. Cities bear a particularly different burden, of course, because there is more expectation, a higher expectation of services and being able to fix problems sometimes.

This legislation, again, comes on the backs of previous legislation. The City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl have had, for some time, their own acts, very similar but slight differences, of course, that was based on the Municipalities Act. Now, we're seeing a new act, this *Cities Act*, based on the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*, largely.

I do want to acknowledge the government's intention here to modernize this and the staff's hard work on this, as the minister mentioned. I know when I was mayor of Corner Brook, we were dealing with this in a few different iterations and now that the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act* has been in place for almost two years now, it seems like its time has come. I congratulate them on getting this through.

There are a number of things that this bill does get correct. The City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl did provide joint submissions on this to the department with regard to the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act* and, like that act, this act does include a great deal of flexibility when it comes to bylaw development. They are able to create a broad range of bylaws based on wide categories of issues that they face on a day-to-day basis.

It does get rid of a lot of ministerial approval when it comes to things like some expropriations, current account reserves and long-term borrowing. It does have some methods by which the local council can approve and conduct those affairs without ministerial approval, which is welcomed.

It also allows cities to create things like accommodations levies, which is an important step. This was brought out in the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*. It was available to the City of St. John's for many, many years. More recently in the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*, which allows these towns to collect a levy, like your hotel levy up to, I think, 4 per cent so that they can use that revenue to

improve their tourism offering. This is a very welcomed change to the cities involved.

There is a question about how much autonomy municipalities should have, in particular, how much autonomy cities should have. Cities, unlike many smaller towns, have substantial financial and human resources. They are acutely aware of the community's needs but they are able to manage their affairs with a great deal of expertise, experience and resources.

So while it does make sense that the provincial government and the minister is heavily involved in the sections around creating new cities and decisions of that nature, also in instances where there is a catastrophic financial disaster or such a thing; otherwise, though, these cities can be largely left to their own responsibility. They are responsible, solvent entities who know how to manage their affairs.

This act does, I would agree with the minister, strike an appropriate balance here. It does, like I said, relax some ministerial oversight and it does give the cities more power. However, there are a few little things and we'll talk about those later.

If the objective is to empower municipalities, we need to remove unnecessary approvals. It's quite coincidental that we're going to see, in this sitting, red tape reduction as a topic and as a bill coming forward as well. These things go hand in glove, as well, empowering cities so that they can be and reflect the needs of their community more directly.

It really follows the principle of subsidiarity, the idea that you take care of issues at the lowest possible level rather than at a high level looking down. I would encourage government to continue down this road when it comes to the cities and municipalities by reform of the Urban and Rural Planning Act as well so that the cities are able to reform their development regulations further and their municipal plans with more autonomy. I think that could be a very good way to provide more efficiency and less red tape as it's so called.

This bill does have some minor changes to governance. Largely, it's the same in terms of how elections are conducted, how meetings are run and things like that. There are some small changes but, largely, it is the same and it is reflective of these cities, not just the towns and Local Service Districts.

As the minister mentioned, one of the differences with the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act* and this *Cities Act* is that it does require mandatory services, and in particular it says that cities are required to have waste management, fire protection services, road maintenance, snow clearing and animal control services.

It does not, however, specifically limit those services or provide how those should be limited. I'll have some questions about that in Committee as well. Of course, we have to make sure that it's not a blanket or one-size-fits-all. It has to be reflective of the community. Cities are different. Corner Brook's offering and Mount Pearl's offering are different because of the relationship to their neighbours and what services they provide and how they provide services.

Likewise, economic development activities. Now, this act does have very limited abilities to provide services outside the city, but it does limit the ability for the cities to operate profit-motivated operations. There are some cities in Canada, like the City of Edmonton, for example, operates a utilities company, EPCOR, that does provide utilities to many other jurisdictions. They have based it on their experience in Edmonton and they've leveraged that to make it a method of revenue for the city. That's something that I would hope to be considered in this act.

The single biggest issue that I have some concerns with is around law enforcement. Currently in the *City of Corner Brook Act*,

there are municipal enforcement officers and these municipal enforcement officers, they do a wide range of services, including enforcing the bylaws, of course. But also enforcing rules of the Urban and Rural Planning Act, as well as the *Highway Traffic Act* and the *Off-Road Vehicles Act*, and are designated as peace officers by most other provincial legislation.

This act does change that title to bylaw enforcement officers, which, again, I'll have some questions about as well, to the minister. But it's important that these officers, to do this important work, doing enforcement, serving orders, are protected by the laws as peace officers. So that's something we'll talk about later.

As this is a follow on from the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*, I will be curious to know what lessons we've learned. So it's been in place almost two years now. I have asked many municipalities their experience. There has been some growing pains in terms of this flexibility to create new bylaws, to create mandatory bylaws, and I'm really curious to hear what the department has seen in the last two years and what lessons we've learned from this that we're bringing to Bill 29.

Generally, I'd have to say that this is a positive outcome and one I will very much support. I know it's something that we've been working on for many years. I do have some questions on the act, and I have given the minister some information on some questions and possible amendments. Of course, I'm hoping that he will be able to consult with the department to see what's possible, and we will have questions in Committee.

I think it would be worthwhile for the minister to provide these to staff, get their feedback on this and perhaps we can forego lengthy, unnecessary amendments this afternoon. So it might be worthwhile bringing it back to Committee tomorrow, perhaps. That's just a suggestion but, either way, I guess we do have a few peccadilloes we need to work through.

This act, the minister mentioned, has been built by listening, and I think that that's excellent. I think that there has been great work done here by the department, and I think we should just continue this. We're almost to the finish line. It has been a long time coming. So let's get this and let's do it right.

I thank you for that. I look forward to further discussion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: Speaker, I rise today with pride to support Bill 29, the *Cities Act*.

When we talk about the future of Newfoundland and Labrador, we often talk about our economy, our workforce, our infrastructure and our communities. Behind all of those conversations is one important question: Are our cities ready for the future?

I believe they will be thanks to this *Cities Act*. This legislation will ensure the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl can adapt, grow and meet the challenges and opportunities ahead.

Municipal governments, like the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl, are on the front lines every day. They plan for long-term growth while delivering the day-to-day services people count on. They are maintaining infrastructure, protecting public spaces, responding to environmental challenges and helping build communities where people want to live and build their futures.

The reality is that cities today face a level of complexity that previous generations could

not have imagined, and they deserve legislation that meets that reality. Speaker, good legislation should not be frozen in time. It must evolve as society evolves. The laws governing the City of Mount Pearl and the City of Corner Brook were written in a different era under different circumstances and a different set of challenges. This bill recognizes that. It creates a modern framework designed, not only for today's needs, but for tomorrow's opportunities. This bill creates a framework that can grow with our province.

Bill 29 is not focused solely on the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl. In fact, it's designed to support future cities as well. This matters because most of our province continues to change. Communities will continue to develop in different ways as economic opportunities emerge, regional partnerships grow and population patterns shift. Our government must be prepared for such changes.

Speaker, I can only speak for Labrador West, but if Labrador West gets the power and we expand and grow, I'm going to say in 10 or 15 years we may become a city. With every opportunity that we have in Lab West, this might matter to us some day in the future.

Bill 29 helps create conditions where these cities and future ones can think more strategically and act more efficiently. This is important because many of these decisions city council makes today will shape their communities for decades to come. Decisions about infrastructure, land use planning, housing and economic development are all choices that will influence the future of our communities. The *Cities Act* helps councils make those decisions with greater clarity and confidence.

Speaker, another important feature of this legislation is it focuses on accessibility and communication. Residents expect government information to be easy to find and easy to understand. The *Cities Act* meets this expectation as it supports greater use of electronic communication, requires greater public access to information and improves access to municipal bylaws and decisions.

All these changes may appear simple but they help strengthen the bond between local government and their residents. When the public is informed and engaged, communities will be engaged and stronger.

Speaker, as governments, we often talk about public trust and, as our number one priority, trust is built when people understand how decisions are made. This trust grows when governments are transparent, information is accessible and residents feel connected to decisions. This legislation supports that vital goal.

Speaker, the further success of communities also depends on strong partnerships. No government can succeed alone. Stronger communities are built through co-operation. This is why it is so important for the provincial government and municipal governments to work together and why neighbouring communities must work together, too. Community organizations, businesses and residents also play an essential role in strengthening our communities and our province.

The *Cities Act* encourages this collaborative approach by supporting regional co-operation and shared services. The bill also creates opportunities for cities to work together in ways that improve outcomes for residents. In a province like ours, collaboration is one of our greatest strengths.

Speaker, another reason this bill matters is that it creates greater certainty by reducing confusion, improving efficiency and strengthening accountability. Clear governance contributes to better decisions and more effective service because residents benefit when responsibilities are

clearly defined, city councils benefit when expectations are clear and municipal staff benefit when processes are straightforward. This *Cities Act* helps create that clarity.

Speaker, the bill recognizes that strong cities drive economic success. When communities are well planned, well governed and responsive to local needs, they become attractive places to live and invest. For instance, businesses look for communities with strong infrastructure and effective local government, while families look for communities with quality services that are safe and provide a high quality of life. Strong cities attract both.

I think it is fair to say that this is why municipal success is so closely connected to provincial success. The future of our province depends, in part, on the strength of our communities.

Speaker, one thing that I particularly appreciate about this legislation is that it was shaped by listening as municipal leaders shared their experience and identified challenges and opportunities. The result is legislation grounded in the experience of those directly impacted daily.

Throughout this bill, there's an understanding that communities are not static but, rather, they evolve to adapt and grow. The *Cities Act* provides a framework that is flexible enough to respond to changing circumstances while maintaining accountability, transparency and strong governance. The balance is essential.

I believe that this legislation is an important step forward. It equips cities to adapt, prepares cities for growth, supports innovation and creates a strong foundation for the future. For those reasons, I am proud to support Bill 29, the *Cities Act*.

I encourage all Members of this hon. House to support Bill 29, the *Cities Act*, as we continue building strong, resilient and future-ready communities throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always a pleasure for me to stand and represent my District of Mount Pearl North and to speak on the *Cities Act*.

Mount Pearl has always been treated unfairly. This year, the government brought in the changes to the Multi-Year Capital Works, leaving Mount Pearl, again, losing millions of dollars under the Capital Works program. Make no wonder the residents of Mount Pearl don't trust government.

The City of Mount Pearl has always worried about the issue around amalgamation. My main concern is that this act could give the power to amalgamate the City of Mount Pearl. Even since Southlands, the former property in Galway, was given to St. John's, we have kept these concerns in the back of our mind, especially in Mount Pearl, Speaker.

The very heart of Mount Pearl was given to St. John's by the government of the day in the late '90s in exchange for taking the responsibility of the Goulds. That's a fact. That's what happened back then.

My concerns with this act are, can the government of the day, any day going forward, have the right to change ownership of municipalities' land from one municipality to another without going to a public hearing or holding assessments of public consultations?

Back in my day, this happened and I will fight to the bitter end to see that it doesn't happen again. The residents of Mount Pearl need to be heard and that's what they elected me for, to speak on their behalf.

I know this act, we've been waiting for it for a long time. I served on council for a long time and I know my colleague did a good job in his introduction, but we really need to make sure that everybody is treated fairly. My job is to make sure that Mount Pearl is not treated like they were in the past.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Dwyer): The hon. the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. BUTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I am pleased to rise today in support of Bill 29, the *Cities Act*. This bill is about the people of Corner Brook and Mount Pearl and any city that joins them in the future. It's about giving city councils the tools they need to meet the realities of today and the opportunities of tomorrow. When a city works well, people feel it in their daily lives. Families, businesses and workers all do better. Strong communities make a strong province.

The *Cities Act* will replace the old laws governing the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl. More importantly, it will set one set of clear rules for these cities and any cities that we have in the future.

Life in Corner Brook and Mount Pearl looks very different today than it did decades ago when existing legislation was written. These cities have grown and changed and, with its growth, expectations will rise. People expect quicker service, more transparent decision-making and longer term planning. Cities are being asked to do more than ever before.

Think about what cities handle today – housing pressures, infrastructure projects, climate-related challenges, economic development and the essential services people count on every single day. Yet, cities are doing these things under laws that no longer reflect modern realities. Speaker, legislation should support success, not get in the way. That is why Bill 29 matters.

We know that the challenges facing Corner Brook are not identical to those facing Mount Pearl. The future cities will have their own needs, too. Bill 29 lets these cities respond to what matters the most locally. Bill 29 gives these cities more room to act on local needs. The province keeps an oversight role and the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl stay accountable. This bill supports both. We want these cities to have the ability to make decisions without delay, but they should also look after public monies responsibly. This bill supports both.

Speaker, this bill draws on years of consultation, on direct talks with the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl, on research and on lessons from each jurisdiction across Canada. We listened. These cities told us they want greater flexibility, fewer administrative barriers, better governance tools and real authority to solve local problems. This bill answers that.

Good legislation is just not written for municipalities, it is written with them. Our relationship with local governments, like the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl, is a true partnership. Local leaders know their communities. They know what people need and what is possible. When the province and municipalities work together, our communities and residents benefit.

This bill is also written in plain language. This may sound simple but it matters. Residents, councillors and municipal staff should be able to read the laws that affect their city and understand them. Councillors should know what their job is. City staff should be able to apply the rules without guessing how they apply. I think we all can agree that clear laws build accountability and public confidence.

Speaker, people want to know what their city is doing and why. This bill helps. It makes cities' decisions more open and makes information easier to find. For example, the bill requires city and bylaws to be posted online, supports electronic communications, improves public reporting and it makes it easier for residents to stay informed, all of which are simple, practical steps that match how people look for information today.

Think about services people use every day, they rarely make headlines but they shape the people's everyday lives. For example, when residents wake up after a snowstorm, they expect the roads to be cleared. When garbage day arrives, they expect waste collection. When emergencies occur, they expect fire protection. When concerns arise about unattended animals, they expect action. These services clearly matter.

The *Cities Act* spells out the services cities must provide. That gives residents and cities certainty. It also encourages co-operation between neighbouring municipalities. The ability for cities to provide service outside on their municipal boundaries on a fee-for-service basis creates opportunities for regional collaboration. Many communities already work together. This bill makes it easier.

Speaker, a strong economy depends on strong municipalities. Economic growth does not happen by accident; it takes planning, infrastructure, partnership and local leadership. Cities frequently lead the way in attracting investment and encouraging development. This *Cities Act* recognizes economic development as a municipal purpose. It means cities can actively participate in building their own local economies. In turn, workers, businesses and communities all benefit.

Speaker, the bill also gives cities more flexibility in how they manage their finances. These are new tools that allow each city to fit its approach to their local needs and circumstance. Measures such as discretionary business taxes, property classes, tourists accommodation taxes, installment payment options and tax relief programs will help the cities of Mount Pearl and Corner Brook respond to their community's needs effectively, fairly and soundly.

One idea runs through this whole bill; strong local government builds stronger communities. When cities have modern laws, cities can spend less time on processes and more time delivering for residents.

In closing, Bill 29 is modern, practical and responsive. It sets Corner Brook and Mount Pearl up for success for years to come. I am proud to support this bill. It reflects our government's commitment to collaboration, accountability, transparency and strong communities. Bill 29 gives cities more flexibility while keeping them accountable and it cuts red tape.

Furthermore, the *Cities Act* gives the cities the tools they need for the opportunities and challenges ahead. I encourage all hon. Members to support Bill 29, the *Cities Act*.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

It is my honour to speak in this House on Bill 29, the *Cities Act*, to repeal the *City of Corner Brook Act* and the *City of Mount Pearl Act* and replace them with legislation that establishes a generic framework for how cities are established in their authorities.

Both acts are prescriptive legislation which grant the city and council power to regulate activity in the cities in a very limited scope.

So this is something, a long-time lobby effort of Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador, the cities. The collective cities of the City of St. John's, Mount Pearl and Corner Brook have been lobbying for quite some time to see these acts repealed and amended. This replacement legislation, I should say, gives more authority and flexibility.

We're specifically speaking, Speaker, to the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl. As representative of the St. John's East - Quidi Vidi District and as a former deputy mayor for the City of St. John's, I'll tell you there's a lot of excitement about seeing this move forward because, for a very long time, from my experience in the municipal sector, there has been a feeling that people have been handcuffed by the legislation, the inability to make sometimes simpler decisions.

So this, for both Corner Brook and Mount Pearl, will pave the way, hopefully then, for the *City of St. John's Act* to be addressed in the coming time, but, right now, I'm sure that the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl are very excited about seeing the changes come forward.

Of course, we'll have a lot of questions in the Committee, but supporting more legislative control at the city level is crucial because a lot of times, as I mentioned, the municipal leaders have felt like they haven't had the adequate authority to make decisions on a simplistic level sometimes. I think that is going to be a very positive thing.

Some of the things that we talk about, you know, the use of water for the purposes of conservation of water, expropriation no longer needing ministerial approval, that is something that I think is a very welcomed asset to municipalities and these two particular cities, I'm sure, will be happy to see that come. It really is a mechanism for future cities and will provide all kinds of flexibility, enabling provisions and accountability and, again, more authority on routine decisions. So that is going to be a big benefit.

One of the things I would like to reflect upon in my capacity as a former municipal leader is the designation and protection of heritage properties and practices and commemoration of historic events and people. This is extremely important. I know that Mount Pearl and Corner Brook certainly have their special assets as well, as the City of St. John's, and, of course, in my District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, very historic and has a lot of heritage concerns and historic issues, as well, to grapple with.

I look forward to this discussion. I know this is long awaited. I know that there has been many, many people and the legal teams and the municipal leaders who have been together working with government for an extensive period of time to bring these recommendations forward.

Again, a big hats off to Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador who's always there to represent all of the cities and the smallest towns to the largest cities and to advocate on such issues over the years. So hats off certainly to that organization.

One of the things I did want to just reference briefly in my final approach on this issue, this act and the repealing of the act is a conversation that I had recently, actually myself and my colleague the Member for St. John's Centre, had the great privilege of having a phone call discussion with Mayor Joe Preston of St. Thomas. This was in regard to how a city can actually run its programming when it's faced with housing and homelessness issues.

That is something that we had a very fulsome discussion with the mayor about and the balancing between economic efforts, the intersection of the city and the province and the economic and housing and how they can go together, especially when

a city has authority to be able to make some decisions in this regard.

I see this also as a pathway to help us with the housing and homelessness situation that we're all facing right across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador but, particularly, in the cities where we see it very prominently because this is where the services are provided.

The mayor had a lot of fantastic information to provide. He talked about his experiences with people who were unhoused, 16 people in one year previous had 800 police interactions. These were people who were inadequately housed or moving around. These are things that, when you have the authority in a city that you can actually start to take some action, I certainly think that that's welcomed.

He talked a lot about that experience and also about how handcuffing really, truly is not the solution to homelessness. I will state to you that this particular Mayor Joe Preston of St. Thomas was able to declare, after eight to 10 years, that basically they almost completely eradicated homelessness in their town.
That is because they had the independence and the authority, but they also were able to collaborate between the province and the municipality.

So I think that there are good things that could come out of this heightened independence, this heightened authority, legislative authority that municipalities can have. I certainly know that the City of Corner Brook and Mount Pearl have been lobbying for this for some time.

I guess the devil is in the details, as per usual, so I know that there will be some questions asked in Committee. But I see this as a very positive step going forward and certainly for the residents that I represent, looking forward to the *City of St. John's Act* coming forward shortly thereafter.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Seeing no more speakers, if the minister speaks now, he will close the debate.

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, I want to thank all the people who got up here and spoke to this legislation today. I know that the Member of Corner Brook who started off, the former mayor of Corner Brook, and if I'm not mistaken, I think he was around for the initial consultation. This is not a new piece or not a new process. It's been around for a long time and there's been a lot of happiness and a lot of relief from both cities that this legislation is being moved along.

I've heard from some towns that may be considering looking at city status as well, who are happy to see this legislation coming into effect or in the process of coming into effect because it's a modernization, it's enabling and it's bringing us up with the times. I want to thank the Member for Corner Brook, of course.

The Member for Lab West, my colleague, I think he's eyeing his own – Lab West may very well take it upon themselves, who knows. With the mining boom we're going to see in Labrador over the next few years, who knows, they probably will and if they do, good on them. With this legislation, they'll have the ability to do that and continue to strive to be a beautiful place in a growing community.

My colleague, the Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate also spoke. I'm not sure if any of his areas are looking at city status yet, but I thank him for his words and support. It is an important piece of legislation and its value

we strongly believe in, as do most people affected.

I think most people in the province, when you look at this, this makes sense. It's something that we have as a government – it's been around a long time. A lot of our legislation is archaic. We have a lot of legislation, and all governments are alike, it's just this long process to update your legislation. Each bill goes through a tedious, pretty thorough process and it's very time consuming. Most of them have to come to the floor of the House of Assembly and we see that it's a process. It's not a fast process but it's an important process and it's one I'm glad we're doing.

The Member for Mount Pearl North I was probably more surprised, I guess, than anything. I was surprised there because the mayor of Mount Pearl was very happy to see this legislation come forward. I had a message today that he was very pleased and looking forward to it and nothing but positives as we reached out to make sure if there were any concerns.

Actually, I reached out to both mayors several weeks ago – within the last month – and I wanted to bring them together and wanted to ask them the concerns. Because this legislation is not about doing something that's untoward. It's meant to be embraced by everybody involved. Mayor Breen brings it up to me lots of times about the *City of St. John's Act*. They want this legislation. They want these improvements done.

We're working and getting there. But it's not easy to get there, like I just said. The Member for Mount Pearl North raised the point of amalgamation and I can speak from my perspective and I can speak for my caucus and this government. There's no desire for amalgamation. That's not at all where we are. The reality is you have to give cities the ability to do as they see fit.

The mayor of St. John's may be concerned because the reverse effect can happen, too. This gives the city, with the proper authority – and this still has got to go through ministerial approval. There are a lot of things. This is not just you can amalgamate something tomorrow.

Actually, to get to the places that Mount Pearl supposedly, she refers to lost, this legislation would have probably prevented that. In fact, she should be happy to have this legislation in effect. This would prevent future incidents like this happening because the checks and balances to get up the line would have been done much better and arbitrarily as it was done before. I get where they're coming from and I've raised that point in conversation myself, but that's not what this legislation is about.

This legislation is progressive. It's enabling, it's modernization and that's not where we're to. I tell you, that's not what the City of Mount Pearl are to, or the City of Corner Brook are to. I just want to highlight that and any concerns that anyone may feel from the Member's comments, that's not where we're to.

We've got a great relationship with the City of Mount Pearl. I talk to the mayor and council on a regular basis and we support the City of Mount Pearl in a lot of projects. A lot of money have gone their way. A lot more will come their way. They're not losing money. They're going to benefit money and they're going to be very happy with this legislation as will we.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: My final thanks, I want to recognize – I shouldn't have to look at this all the time, but I do; I've been here too long for that – St. John's East - Quidi Vidi. The former deputy mayor knows the importance of the *Cities Act*, knows the importance of what these acts mean to the cities as she's referenced and Members for St. John's. We're working on that piece of legislation. I appreciate her commentary. It is important. It is good. It's a good day for both cities and

any future city. So I do thank her for her comments. I look forward to our further discussions as we move to Committee.

One final point – this is probably the one I should have started off with, Speaker. Staff – and the staff now that help us behind the scenes to get this legislation through – and, right now, they're helping me right this minute, helping me – they deserve a huge, huge thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: I have staff in the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, and my colleague from Grand Falls who was before me – I don't want to say predeceased; that wasn't the right word – he also experienced it. I have staff there that have put years into this. They have actually committed years and they're invested in this piece of legislation. When we get this done, they want to move on to the *City of St. John's Act*.

These are committed public servants. We're very lucky to have them and we should recognize them. Because, we stand up here and, like, all these papers here, there's a group of staff behind the scenes that provide us with all this information and provide us with good, sound advice and keep us, as I call it, on the straight and narrow. I'm very grateful to have their support. We, as a government and as a Legislature, are all better people to have them behind the scenes helping us out.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: On that note, Speaker, I'll take my seat and I'll look forward to Committee.

Thank you.

SPEAKER (Lane): Are all Members ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 29 be now read a second time.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province. (Bill 29)

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

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

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently. (Bill 29)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, Order 11. I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 29.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 29.

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.

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 29, An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province.

A bill, "An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province." (Bill 29)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

I have a few questions for the minister. Can the minister first of all identify in broad strokes what specific bylaw powers Bill 29 gives the cities versus the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to start this off right quick. This is the bill I have, so you're going to have to refer to your clauses and your sections because those questions are out in the middle of left field, you will have to provide me them, before we go anywhere. Otherwise, I'll just defer it for another day.

It's not about surprising, give me the clause and I'll give you the best answer I can give you but you have to zero in better than that. That's a very broad question.

CHAIR: I appreciate that, Minister, and to the minister's point, we are on clause 1. We ask questions on clause 1 going –

J. PARSONS: You can ask a question on anything.

CHAIR: On the whole bill.

CLERK: Yes, that is okay.

CHAIR: But, like I said for the size of the document, so we're leafing through it. Is it possible to have some guidance as to where you're finding that in the bill?

J. PARSONS: Absolutely.

CHAIR: Okay, I appreciate that.

CLERK: But in clause 1 we can go anywhere.

CHAIR: Yes, that was my mistake. I apologize for that. I know that in clause 1 we can go anywhere, yes.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you.

Specifically, section 7 and 8 of the bill do give bylaw powers to the cities. I was wondering if the minister could tell me how that is different than in the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act* generally.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: We're referring to bylaws, is that what you're referring to in section 7 and section 8?

We're replacing basically the word "regulation" with "bylaws." Basically, the broadened authorities listed in this section are consistent with the enabling language with the intention to increase autonomy and flexibility. So the idea is to give more

flexibility to cities, and the broad authorities replace the more prescriptive and discretionary regulatory provisions that was under the old act.

The bylaw restricting or prohibiting the use of water in the city for conservation purposes is not the *Town and Local Service District Act*, and the bylaw allowing the status of transportation commission is not in the *Town and Local Service District Act*.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: We'll jump around a little bit, but I'll give specific sections. Looking at the definitions under section 2, local roadways is defined. Now that definition is used throughout the act, specifically when it comes to the provision of services, like snow clearing and road maintenance. In particular, it defines local roadways as under the jurisdiction of.

Is that intended to be just the physical jurisdiction or, as it states later, owned and otherwise vested in the city?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: This legislation is meant to be clear in the sense that we're not opposing new requirements on the cities. So when that concept is up, like, under the jurisdiction or in the city, that's not an expectation to do every single road. It's what's currently done within the city limits and what have you. We're not adding new responsibilities to the city, so to speak. It's what's currently there. It's kind of an overlay, really, but it's not meant to be adding on.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: That's great to know. There is an issue, I guess, with private or some disputed roadways that, obviously, as there are mandatory requirements now by the cities to maintain and snow clear those roadways, that could be a concern.

With regard to that, there are mandatory requirements for the required services required by the cities. Are they limited in any way and are the cities able to limit those services by bylaw, for example? So have, say, a street bylaw that limits how the snow clearing service standard is determined or how it's done with regard to resources?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs**.**

B. PETTEN: You're required to provide snow clearing like you are to provide garbage collection or what have you. So I don't think you can move away and have bylaws, it's clearly written you need to provide snow clearing so you provide adequate snow clearing. The residents will come back and tell you if it's not adequate, but I don't think there are any bylaws around permitted to interfere with – these are mandatory services. The cities are expected to provide those services.

So the short answer is no, but just to explain the conversation. Instead of saying no, that's why, they're mandatory services expected that the city provides to their residents.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: I think we both understand generally that these are required services. Unfortunately, something like snow clearing, for example, you could snow clear once a month or you could snow clear twice a day and, obviously, that is determined by limited resources sometimes or conditions or whatever.

From a legal standpoint, would a city be able to define a service standard to limit their liability with regard to those mandatory services in the bylaw itself?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs**.**

B. PETTEN: No, I don't think you can counter away from the responsibility. If you shall provide snow clearing, that means every time it snows you shall provide snow clearing. Just as a fact, once a week you should pick up your waste collection, unless there's an exception to that rule, that's a shall, too.They're shalls for that reason.

Just so I'm clear, you're saying if you could bylaw that you're only going to snow clear once a month as opposed to every snowfall or specify exactly when you're going to do one of those – I don't know if mandatory is the word – services. Is that what your question is?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: I think this is really concerning then because almost all of these, the five mandatory services, are not absolute. There are things like animal control. There are things like fire services and so on, they're not one thing. They're defined differently depending on the jurisdiction, the city itself.

I guess what I'm asking is, how can the cities define their service requirement for that particular service, if you know what I mean?

Yes, generally, providing snow clearing is fine to say, but if the city has, I don't know, a catastrophic event and it's only able to deploy a certain amount of resources to that issue and there's some incident or there is legal action brought against them, how are they to defend themselves if this is an absolute service, if not defined in a bylaw?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Yes, I guess the spirit of this legislation is meant to be – I mean, the old legislation was probably very prescriptive. When you say animal control, it's your constituents, ultimately, that will dictate to you what level of service you provide, no matter if you're a province, a federal government or a municipality. This clearly states there, it's snow clearing, maintenance of local roadways, waste collection and removal, fire protection, I think it's what's expected to be a normal level of service.

As for any variances to that, I think, bylaws or no bylaws, the level of service you provide will be dictated – every town and every city has an electorate to answer to, too. I don't know how we move away from that responsibility.

As Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, I'm responsible, and our department is, to clear the roads on the highway. There are no bylaws. Do you know what I mean? We're out there and we're trying to add the routes and we're trying to do whatever. It's an expectation, I guess, and that comes with this act. There's an expectation that you shall provide those services. If it's not up to standard, I guess a judgment will be made on that by your constituents.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Absolutely, I understand that the constituents and voters determine, I guess, how well a council is performing, but, legally, I guess, is my concern.

So if a homeowner for some reason does not currently receive a service in the manner that they think they should get, when it comes to waste collection or snow clearing or maintenance, the act doesn't define any way to limit that.

I know there is public policy immunity, usually, for municipalities when it comes to provision of services, and some of these things are mentioned in section 7, I think

there might be one on fire protection bylaws for those things.

I'm not sure, I guess, how we can protect the city from liability on those issues if we don't define some sort of service standard, is what I'm saying. I don't know if the minister has an idea of how we could do that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Well, a lot of this is pertaining to enabling legislation. It's giving the cities more power. The cities want to have that ability not to be, I guess, suppressed by the federal government and by me, as the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs. It's giving them more freedom to operate on their own. That's what all cities have asked for, and future cities would want.

If you're being asked to clear snow or collect garbage or to look after animal control, again that's your responsibility, just like my responsibility is to clear the roads in this province. If you opposite or anyone out there on the street – I get lots of concerns and complaints. That's part of the game. But there's no actual bylaw. It's an obligation of us as a province to provide a service. We provide lots of services provincially, just like a municipality would.

To have any bylaws, we don't have bylaws or laws – every staff are under contract and their employees but they have to abide by the rules there. Providing that service is very subjective and it's the way it should be. Cities have that enabling legislation to be able to have the flexibility to that, but they have to provide those services. If the person is not getting the service they want, well, I guess the first call they'll be making is to city hall and the next call might be the media or what have you. They have those avenues, which we all know, we live in the public life world, to get their concerns raised.

So there is nothing really changed there; it's just that the requirement is clearly written, simplified for people to see, these are the services you're required, are mandatory and expected of any city to provide and the cities have to find a way to provide those. If it's not up to scratch, again, I'll go back to it, the residents of each individual city or people in that city or driving through it will have to make their voices known.

I don't think we want to be too prescriptive. I think it's meant to be enabling, it's meant to let a city kind of stand on their own and provide the services as in the spirit of the legislation.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Okay, let's move right next door. We're talking about really 160 was that section; let's go to 161. It says: "Subject to section 402.3(1) of the *City of St. John's Act* …." So this is around St. John's Regional Fire Department, obviously.

How does this clause pertain to, say, Corner Brook? Obviously, they don't have anything to do with the *City of St. John's Act*?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: I guess to clarify it is, under the *City of Mount Pearl Act* fire services are provided by the City of St. John's. Right now, the City of Mount Pearl are the only city or only town in the province that doesn't have that ability to do their own fire services due to the *City of St. John's Act*.

We've consulted, once again, and the City of Mount Pearl are very content and happy with the service they are provided. They pay a fee to the City of St. John's and everything is working great for them. Really, it doesn't apply to the City of Corner Brook, if you know what I'm trying to say. I know when you read it – but it's more put there in subject to the fact that the City of St. John's

provides fire service to Mount Pearl. Otherwise, everything flows from there. I don't know if that makes sense to you –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. PETTEN: No, Corner Brook provides their own fire service, so it's not an issue. So that clause is just one of them legalese clauses subject to the *City of St. John's Act* where they provide fire service to Mount Pearl and then everything flows from that, if that makes any sense to you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: So just to be clear, I guess, it is confusing in terms of reading the legislation because it does refer to under the act. But the intention is that this will not affect the City of Corner Brook in any way.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Yes, that's right. It doesn't affect Corner Brook at all. It's subject to and this clause applies to Mount Pearl only, their relationship with St. John's and Mount Pearl and that was done back in the day when they were amalgamated.

Like I said, the City of Mount Pearl, through consultations and some conversations, are very happy with the service being provided by the City of St. John's. If it's not broken, why fix it? And we left it alone, through the consultation process but this does not apply. It's only subject to that for Mount Pearl and nothing to do with Corner Brook.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Okay, I'll try to go back. Do you know what? (Inaudible) more in order, I'll try to follow in order. I'll jump back to section 41. That's around privileged meetings or private meetings.

The only question is, I guess, about there is a broad swath of things that should be covered in a private meeting versus a public meeting. Again, I think, generally, both councils are aware and currently use a method similar to this now.

The only question is, in terms of section 41, one of the things says, "personal information that is protected by the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015*." There are other protected things from the city. I'm assuming those would also could be covered in a private meeting, not just personal information.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: I guess the question is, and I've asked staff to even look at this, we're struggling to understand. ATIPP only protects personal information. ATIPP is there – this has been reviewed by ATIPPA. This has a had a full, thorough review leading up to being in the House. So there's a loss to somewhat understanding that the ATIPP legislation only protects personal information. They reviewed it twice and it's already captured in section 41(1)(a), "information of which the confidentiality is protected by law."

So, to your concerns – the question that you had sent to me – I know you had mentioned this earlier, that's where we are with it. It has already been dealt with under ATIPPA. They reviewed this and personal information is protected under ATIPPA and, under section 41(1)(b), it says, "personal information that is protected under the *Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 2015*," and it also says, under section 41(1)(a), "information of which the confidentiality is protected by law."

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: So you're saying, between those two, you feel that it's sufficient to cover that?

Because, of course, ATIPPA does cover more than just personal information, right? There are certain government documents that are protected as well. That's why, I guess, there's the confusion of why it would specify personal information.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Yes, I get where you're coming from.

I guess private meetings became somewhat over prescribed and overused by a lot of municipalities. We sit in this Legislature – what we're doing right this minute – and we debate in this Legislature for all to see. It's the way it's really supposed to be done. Sometimes, I think it became a bit of a problem when under review, and it was being noted throughout and a lot of concerns were being raised that a lot of councils, municipalities were making decisions in private and then relaying them to public.

So you had to kind of find a baseline, really, to constitute what should be discussed in a private meeting, and this was felt to be a safeguard to any of those concerns: personal information or anything private, anything under ATIPP of course. There's a broad range, I get your point, but we're talking about personal information. That's meant to capture all of those issues so they should be discussed in private meetings but, by clearly stating it in the legislation, it leaves nothing to chance or to interpretation.

The idea behind this legislation is to provide clarity. People can pick up this bill, when it's finally passed, and be able to look at this legislation and see that it's clearly written there and this is where your protections come in.

I hope that answers your question.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I'm going to roll back to section 1, and please excuse me if there's something that may have already been asked, but these are a few questions that I had itemized.

Under section 1, while this legislation will empower municipalities to engage in more activities and services, there really isn't much of a point if we're not going to provide them with more financial resources to do so.

Is there anything else coming regarding legislation, grants, et cetera, that the government is looking at to provide to cities?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Chair.

Just one quick point, when you say section 1, are you under clause 1?

S. O'LEARY: Yes.

B. PETTEN: Under the *Cities Act*?

S. O'LEARY: Yes.

B. PETTEN: Okay, no problem.

Not as a rule right now, no. This will come with the operation of government, whatever grants, no different than what it is today, really. That's an evolving thing as we move along. Any infrastructure spending, any needs the cities have, they have a bigger population, most of them do. But no, there is no specified funding as such. It's meant to enable the cities basically to get more freedom and autonomy to do their own business and be less restricted by

government, which is what cities want. But as for the funding piece, no.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Continuing on that, given that municipalities are expressing concerns, obviously, about the housing crisis, as I mentioned in the previous discussion, as well as the lack of coordination sometimes between levels of government on that front, housing, it's a huge concern, obviously, for our caucus in particular.

Is there anything specific in this legislation that allows them to deliver affordable housing quicker and more effectively?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: I don't think there's anything new here. I think it's probably more of a broader question with all towns and cities throughout the province. There are new programs that's come out over the last number of years with the Canadian Housing Infrastructure Fund meant to accelerate housing in different communities and whatnot.

It probably gives cities more power to move things along quicker, but I don't think there's anything clearly in this legislation that directly deals with housing, other than the fact that housing is a huge issue in every municipality and every city out there, but, basically, it's whatever purpose that the city may have.

This is another point, too, and I don't think it's picked up in the legislation. The city is the natural person here, not the council. So it moves away. The city actually stands as being like a natural person. The elected officials change over time, so the legislation is done that the City of Corner Brook is like the natural person as opposed to – everyone referred to sometimes the council that changes over time. So it's something that, as the purposes are required, they would address – in some cities, the housing issue may not be their number one issue, but it's still within the city's day-to-day operations.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Just to follow-up on that, certainly that was our experience from our conversation in St. Thomas, from the mayor of St. Thomas, about that collaboration happening from all levels to address housing, so that's why that particular question was referenced.

Under section 2, the definition for remuneration under clause (ee) says it includes pension contributions, but the word includes implies that there are other types of remuneration not mentioned here.

I'm just wondering if you, Minister, could give more detail on what else might be included in that?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: I don't know if any municipality have any pensions right now but, again, I think this gives the ability – from my read of that, they want to have that ability. I asked the question when I was going through this, the cities now have pension plans or what have you. I think this is more the enabling piece. That will be something the city will decide. That will be done within their own scope of operations.

Again, it gives the authority more back to the city as opposed to being anything prescriptive or restrictive for that matter.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Under section 15, now that the completion of a feasibility report will be at the discretion of a minister, do you have specific situations already identified where drafting reports will be mandatory? In what cases will the requirement be waived if so?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: The short answer to that is no. I know that, for instance, we just had an LSD, Tilt Cove, everything was in place. You have that option now that you can, you don't have to, but everything was well-documented in place. It was only basically to shut off water, so we never went through the process of incurring expenses, forcing expenses on the province or the towns, and this would be a city.

There's nowhere where they're waiting to do a feasibility study, so to speak. That's not where it's to, but it's enabling and it's more modernization. It gives more flexibility that you don't have to if it's not deemed necessary, and these incur costs.

A lot of these studies come back on the municipality, too. We've already heard from a couple of municipalities who went through considerable costs for them, a smaller municipality, and they're not happy with the results of the feasibility study. That's under *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*.

It's one of those things, but there is no one waiting, for instance, for a feasibility study to my knowledge. It's about bringing it in line and this brings it in line with what is already in the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*. This is called an overlay anyway.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

So this one is just about the intersection of ministers and, certainly, the municipality.

So this is section 15. Could a future minister use subsection 6 to avoid public scrutiny of a controversial proposal?

We know that oftentimes municipalities have to deal with controversial proposals. Thinking about a following scenario: a future minister, for example, could be against a given proposal by a city. So awaiting a while to appoint the people to do the study or otherwise take some time to run down the clock until the public hearing gets cancelled and no further hearings. Just those checks and balances to make sure that there's no conflicting between the minister of the day with the proposal and the appointment at the municipality.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: I guess the short answer to that, as I understand, is any minister that succeed me and down life's road, it's a piece of legislation. But, basically, if there's no interest, you don't proceed anyway. It's not about delaying and waiting for the clock to run out. This is usually brought on by interest. This is usually generated – I don't sit at my desk waiting for a – and no minister would, obviously.

It would be driven by an interest and it is incumbent on any minister, if that's your duties and responsibilities, to provide or to facilitate that. I would hope that any minister – I know I would proceed and try to do that under my responsibilities.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

Certainly, this was about a future potential. It's certainly nothing personal to the existing minister.

Okay, I'll move onto section 25, Chair.

Why is it mandatory that a town council have at-large members?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Mandatory at-large, so you're outside the wards. Yes, it's an odd number but we make sure we have an odd number, but that's a question I think that just goes with the norm of the wards.

I'm trying to figure out, where are you seeing the at-large? That's my question. Where are you seeing this at, they have to have?

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I'm trying to find the exact section here now. My apologies, there are a lot of subsections here; I'm just trying to find the exact one.

Chair, I will try to find that section so that I can pinpoint it better for the minister, if that's okay.

CHAIR: Okay.

Did you want to move to another question?

S. O'LEARY: Yes.

CHAIR: Okay.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

This one is a topical one. Given that we, as MHAs, are often reluctant to talk about our own compensation and bring in others to study the matter for us, was there any consideration paid to setting up a similar mechanism for determining compensation for city councillors?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: No.

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

S. O'LEARY: Under section 44, why are town councillors generally prohibited from abstaining, apart from conflicts of interest?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Basically, the rationale is to provide that councillors may no longer abstain from voting except where they are required to do so in a conflict of interest. I guess what other rationale would you not vote, do you know what I mean? What other rationale, if you don't have a conflict of interest, I guess is clearly stating – it's being clear about it – you have to vote 'aye' or 'nay.'

With the abstention within the city council, when you're into your numbers of seven or nine members, they could influence decisions to go one way or the other. So the ultimate rationale is it's more norm. A lot of this stuff is done across jurisdictional scans as well.

In flicking through my notes, to your point on at-large, that's across the country. That's the norm they take from all cities with the at-large in wards. That's the explanation of that. It's across the country but the same thing applies with this voting thing. It's more standardized. It's moving across to all levels.

In municipalities, sometimes, you'll find there may be issues that are, I suppose, contention and that. I guess I'll go a step further too – probably making my own assumptions too – with municipalities, cities

and towns, every councillor, mayor and deputy mayor are their own individual. They're singular people and their votes are singular. So, I guess, in the sense of this aye or nay, ultimately, that's the responsibility when you sign on to become a councillor, it's a bit different than somewhat in other levels and whatever. I don't know if I'm answering your question clearly, but that's pretty much the rationale.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you.

And, to follow up on that I know that there has been, in my experience, previously lots of dialogue about the ratio of ward councillors with at-large councillors who are absolutely necessary and the fact that at-large councillors can oftentimes be the umbrella kind of vote in a particular decision that hypothetically will have no specific vested interest, whereas a ward councillor obviously has a particular bias, like we all do in our own districts, for example.

Anyway, that's why I posed that because there's been a lot of discussion and debate about that I know within our own council, formerly with the City of St. John's, and I'm sure it's not the only one. That's the reason I just wanted to state that as to why that question was being asked.

Chair, I'll have one more question for this, if that's fine, thank you.

CHAIR: Yes.

S. O'LEARY: Just like under section 49, just like MHAs, city councillors have to make a disclosure statement every year to help identify potential conflicts of interest. Are they included in any of the categories listed in 49(1) and, if not, why?

So just looking for some clarity on the potential conflicts of interest identification with a disclosure statement.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Just so I'm clear, can you repeat that again? I never fully got your question.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Just like MHAs, city councillors have to make a disclosure statement every year to identify potential conflicts of interest. Are they included in any of the categories in 49(1) and, if not, why? Because, obviously, we know conflicts of interest is such a hot issue and it's really prevalent concern for a lot of municipalities and cities.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: You're referring to 49(1)?

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

S. O'LEARY: Again, I'm going to have to take some time, Chair. My apologies for that. I'll just have a look and find that particular section.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

We'll move back a little bit now, section 14. This is about the formation of new cities – or actually, it's a number of powers. So it's powers to annex, powers to amalgamate and those sorts of things.

The question is – I guess that's given to the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, of course, that power – can that be done without any consultation or feasibility report? For

example, a part of a municipality that borders on another municipality, could the Cabinet decide and say this neighbourhood now should belong to the city in question?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: I would think they'd do some kind of feasibility report. So, just to be clear, you're saying a neighbouring municipality. There has to be a process to go through before that ever comes to be in the restructuring aspect.

I don't think any minister or any government would ever want to do something like that, so I think that would be done in a more proper manner. I would think that you would offer some kind of feasibility study or what have you before you'd ever go down that road, so yes.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Okay, so now going back over to the more procedural things, section 44. One of the things that both the City of Corner Brook and the City of Mount Pearl requested, in the current acts of both cities, the procedure for tie votes used to be that when there was a tied vote, it would go to the next meeting and if there was a tie, then it would fail. Now, in the new act, it's like the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*, a tie is a fail.

Could you describe the rationale for why that change was made or why the preferred change by the cities couldn't be kept the way it was?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: I guess it's about making the cities more productive. You're bringing stuff forth and you've got councils that are absent, I mean, if a vote is made, it's considered to be defeated. But you've got the option, too, that motion can be brought back to the floor. There's never eternity. That can be revisited. You would know from your time as mayor. You can bring those motions back to the floor any time you want.

So I think if you're looking at rationale, the rationale is – I might have something here, I've had that much information coming at me – my review of that, and when we discussed it during our briefing, basically, it's just move it along.

It's not saying you can never bring that motion back for eternity. If you want to defer it, then you come back the next day and you're going to redo it. If the vote's not there or a tie vote or people are missing it, it's considered defeated. That doesn't mean it's dead in the water, it can come back the next time. You can come back in the next council meeting and bring it back again.

I think it's more about moving things along. I guess, realistically, if you're going to bring a vote to the floor, probably the lesson behind the scenes in that one is make sure you got your numbers. I'm being factious there now, but I think it's more about just being more efficient for councils and their voting and whatever.

Again, it's not a matter of we're saying this can never come back. It's just that, for the process moving forward, a tie vote is considered defeated. It's just clearer. It's this clarity piece that we talked about. It's more clear and it's not so cumbersome, bring it back another time. It makes it more efficient for cities to move along when they're making their motions.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Yes, I guess, in my experience, this does come up quite often, usually because of a temporary absence, not because of a conflict of interest or something like that, someone is sick or something like that. The problem is, a

motion to reconsider, under our typical Rules of Order, is not that simple and it does require, I guess, others who disagreed with the motion to allow to bring it back.

Again, both cities wanted that method in there because they're familiar with it. I think it actually relates to the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, the question about abstaining as well. Sometimes it has been rumoured that the councillors may not show up when there's a certain controversial decision or something like that. So this mechanism, of course, somewhat prevents that occurrence. I know it is a very common thing, but, again, I hoped that it would remain in place.

I'll move on to section 45, though, and right next to it while we're there, in section 45(11), it talks about – I think this is conflict of interest. So where there's a conflict of interest determined, the person can appeal it. Of course, that appeal may go before the Supreme Court. There is a section there where it says that the person who has filed an appeal under the section is not entitled to sit as a councillor while the appeal is being heard.

Is that to be interpreted as until the appeal is decided upon?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: I mean, this is following standardized legislation, it would have been when you did a cross-jurisdictional scan but – you're on 45(11)?

That's not what my 45(11) says. I'm trying to give you the right answer because there's a lot of information that's available.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Sorry, Chair, I do like this informal, being able to talk, but we get out of control sometimes. Yes, 45(11), "A person who has filed an appeal under this section is not entitled to sit as a councillor while the appeal is being heard."

I guess the only clarification there is, sometimes these decisions take quite a while and I assume the intention is that the councillor cannot sit until the decision is rendered, but while the appeal is being heard is somewhat ambiguous.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: So I guess, in a nutshell, if you've been removed and it's in the Supreme Court, appeal or not, what have you, until it's fully cleared and goes through its process, your seat would be considered vacated until such a time.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Okay.

There's section 82. So this is, again, about finance and certain controls.

So section 82(2), it says: "All cheques, orders or electronic payments withdrawing money from the bank account of the city shall be authorized by a councillor and one of the following persons:(a) city manager; (b) city clerk" and so on.

It's usually, in these types of things, the mayor and deputy mayor are the signing authorities. I wonder is this possibly an oversight carryover from the Towns and Local Service Districts Act or is there some particular reason for it?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: No, I don't think it's an oversight. There's no clear description, but, basically, your city manager is also cosigning. I guess that makes more being so prescriptive. Maybe it's only the council

that's around to be able to sign a cheque and maybe an important expenditure needs to be paid.

If you have the approval of council, if it's an approved expense, it gives the authority. It's not just one person either, it's backed up by the city manager or a designate.

I think that's more about more flexibility for ease of service, so to speak, for any city to be able to carry on their business, as being prescriptive and probably causing delays.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Jumping over to section 85 there now where this talks about, where there's a discrepancy between a budget or a substantial – it's actually where "actual revenues and expenditures are likely to be substantially greater or less than estimated…."

Is there another rule of thumb here when it comes to how much greater or less before the council has to file a new budget to the minister?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: No, there's no set amount so to speak, no.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Okay.

Section 91, the period for financial statements was previously required on June 30 but now it's changed to June 1 preceding the year end. Again, is there a certain rationale for that?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Chair.

You're referring to 91(1), Financial statements?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Sorry, what was that?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: You're referring to 91(1) under Financial statements?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Is the minister answering or –?

CHAIR: He asked you –

J. PARSONS: Oh, yes, it is.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: There's no real reason other than the fact of – I can get some clarity on that for you. There's a reason for it but I don't have the real reason here, I'll get that for you, that's no problem.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Yes, it's just sometimes difficult to get your financial consultants engaged in a timely manner. So getting that June 30 deadline is sometimes difficult, but I think both the cities did request it to be left as the 30th as well.

Section 156 is the next one. This is about sales on properties in arrears. There was, again, some change here in this section, which was good, for sure. This is about conveyance of properties being sold in a tax sale, and section 156(2)(b) says it shall have the effect of vesting the real property in the purchaser, the purchaser's executors,

administrators or assigns absolutely free from encumbrances, but then it adds except a claim from the Crown and an easement.

Now, I notice that isn't in the *City of St. John's Municipal Taxation Act*. Could you tell us what the rationale is? Again, it may encumber a sale.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Again, this has nothing to do with the *City of St. John's Act*. There is no carry-over. I think that was a question you had raised with me earlier on section 156.

To your question, nothing has changed. It's a direct carry-over. That's a direct carry-over from the existing legislation, so there's nothing changed. That's one of the ones that came from the City of Corner Brook. It's always been there and we just continued on. There's no real need to change it. There's nothing new added there, do you know what I mean? That's just one of the carry-overs. No doubt, it's a legal reason it's there.

One other point to the Member, it's always been five months, to your question on the timeline, June 30. It has always been five months. That's consistent with the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*, that same piece. That has always been five months.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Yes, you're talking about the auditor's report. Yes, that's the five month thing. This is the financial statement, that's the slight difference there, but that was always five months in the previous act as well.

Anyway, with regard to the sale of the properties and making them free and clear, again, I think that was a wish on the wish list from the cities to make those sales happen more efficiently.

Section 160, we've been through. Section 161, we did that one as well. Section 167 outlines that the minister, by regulation, prescribe minimum standards for services. This goes back to our discussion earlier about setting out the service standard through bylaw by the city. It does appear that the minister can, through regulations, set the minimum standard for snow clearing or road maintenance or fire services, et cetera.

Again, I don't know if it's anticipated to put those in place. Do you have any idea whether or not you would, or it's just there as a safety net?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Sometimes this is kind of a playing around issue. We've been back and forth on this one. You're asking what I think everyone out there knows. Again, it's giving flexibility to a city not being restrictive. When we say enabling, in clarity, that's really the theme of this legislation, this new *Cities Act*.

So if you're bringing in minimum standards, I guess you can apply it if you want to. We were asking you to snow clear your roads. So is once a week enough? No. If you want to try that, I would hazard to guess they will have a line up at city hall. Is once every month enough to collect garbage?

Again, it's about your elected mayors and councillors to run a city and these are your responsibilities. So instead of me, the minister, or the government or anyone dictating to the city, you have that responsibility. You have that responsibility to do those things, and we expect to give you the ability if you need minimum standards, we need to bring in something around that, your responsibility is to the people who put you there to carry out those services.

So it's not meant to be totally so prescriptive that you're literally handcuffed. You have

that ability to do as you please, but ultimately you are responsible for providing those services and that's where it stops. But as for anything else around, as long as you're providing those services – like, is minimum standard black pavement or is two cuts a night or a day on snow clearing? I don't know. That's just one example.

I just think that we're probably talking about the same thing but, ultimately, the city has to provide those services and we would hope they would do them in a manner that's acceptable to the residents they serve.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: I agree that that is absolutely appropriate. But, I guess, I'd like the minister to confirm that he doesn't have any intention then on setting a minimum standard for that. If it's really about the voter and the city determining whether or not council is doing a good job.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Again, it's a legislation piece that that's the last thing any minister, especially me included, wanted to do but it gives you that ability. If these are not being properly delivered, I do have the ability to force minimum standards.

But, again, these cities are well incorporated, they've been around for a long time and I have no doubt that them and future cities, when they move along to become a city, will provide those services to the satisfaction of the residents that live there.

It's always a protection for all residents across the province, which we ultimately represent, to make sure that they get the proper services. I have every faith that the City of Mount Pearl and City if Corner Brook will do exactly as they're supposed to.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: I know this is very tedious but I am very involved in this and, like you said, we've been working through this for years and years and years. We know how long it takes sometimes to get it changed. So we want to get it right.

I will jump right to the bylaw enforcement. In those sections, now what used to be municipal enforcement officers is changed to bylaw enforcement officers and they do have inspection capability. They've had some of that before, but they do also enforce more than bylaws. They do enforce the Urban and Rural Planning Act and, as I mentioned, the *Highway Traffic Act* and the *Off-Road Vehicles Act*.

What is the intention here of the department to somewhat limit their abilities? It seems to limit their abilities in this act.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: There's no intent on reducing or limiting their abilities or their responsibilities. I'll speak – because there's no legislation – as a resident and minister and someone who has been around this conversation for a while. I do believe we do have to be very careful in how we empower a lot of municipalities with these extra responsibilities. I know that a lot of municipalities are coming to me, they're coming to us as government and they want more powers. When you were government opposite, you dealt with the same questions.

I think it's good conversation but we need to be very careful in how we proceed, in fact, because it's a dangerous world out there now. We hear about it every day in the news. We can't have people feeling or thinking they're police and they're not. They're not empowered. They're not trained

and putting themselves in danger. That's the last thing any of us want.

So, basically, right now, what we're dealing with here it's like they're not peace officers and they're not police officers. They're, basically, meant to enforce bylaws and if it's anything to do under the *Highway Traffic Act* – nothing changes in the sense of we're not reinventing the wheel here but they're still keeping what they already had. We're not empowering them to be peace officers or police officers.

I know my colleague, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety and myself and a few other colleagues, we've been discussing this issue for a while. We're planning on moving a piece further along when it comes to the overall municipal enforcement that won't be part of this legislation. It will be part of it at a later date and that's already explained, I think, in the beginning part of the legislation. This is two parts, really, but this is the main piece, when it's ready and when we have the proper consultations that gets in place.

There are a lot of good things moving up along in Justice and Public Safety that will work with the municipalities. A lot of the municipalities have similar concerns, probably bigger concerns than what we're hearing from cities.

It's a piece that we're very concerned about, but, as for this, this is basically standard business. They will do the bylaws now, as they always do. It will be under the *Highway Traffic Act*, any regulations that they had there, it will stay there. There's nothing new being put on top of them, but we are aware of the bigger conversation and we will be making good changes with that, hopefully, in the future.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair, and thank you very much for the in-depth questions and answers that are happening here.

I'll just go back to the 49(1), the question that was asked there about having city councillors make a disclosure statement every year. The question really is just that. In the list under 49(1), the following documents that are required, that are made available by a city council for public inspection for pure transparency. This is why these documents are put out there. The disclosure statement isn't in there.

That's the question. City councillors, they have to make a disclosure statement every year. They're not included in the (a), (b), when we see here the bylaws, the city plans, the tenders, the budgets, the reports and the contracts. Just wondering why the disclosure statements wouldn't be listed there as well?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

I think that comes with the confidentiality piece. They provide their disclosure.

Are you asking for the actual disclosures to be put on for the public to see, their actual disclosure statements?

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Yes, these documents are generally available to the public, through a request process. It's just about transparency and public access. Certainly, the Members of the House of Assembly go through that same process as well, so I'm just looking, in regard to council members as well, it's just absent in that list and, of course, we know it's important.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: So now I'm clear.

With all the lists, people can view them but they can't copy them. It's under the *Municipal Conduct Act*, so residents can view them, but you can't copy them. So that answers that question. There is an avenue that people can view those statements but they can't copy them just for whatever they're looking for. It falls under the *Municipal Conduct Act*.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

My colleague has already asked a number of the questions around auditing, but under section 96 regarding the adequacy of a city's safeguards against fraud, does this department currently provide training or other supports to municipalities so they can prevent fraud or quickly identify suspected cases of fraud? As we know, these incidents occur more frequently.

That's under section 96.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Section 96, yes.

Well, I can talk about that in general. We deal with fraud – I wouldn't say it's regular, but one case is one too many, but it happens and that's the reality. In any of those events, it's a lot of education and it's a lot of support from the government and staff. I mean, I already spoke to staff. The staff in the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs are very hands on. They do great work. There is not a lot of them but it's amazing what they accomplish.

A lot of this is supports, educational supports. We send out circulars. Being a deputy mayor, you would be familiar with the circulars that come out, and it's encouraging. So we're trying to help, but we're also trying to caution. If you need any support or you need any help or if there are any concerns you have, it's more about the communication. It's a good open line to communication, which I do find that, with the staff in a lot of municipalities, that's the way it is, and it's evidenced. I noticed that at MNL recently, there a couple of weeks back, there's a great relationship there and it's one that we're very fortunate to have. It has developed over a lot of years and a lot of trust and a lot of respect on both sides.

So, to your point on fraud, it will happen at times, but you can't control it, unfortunately. It's more about supporting, education and trying to deter and try to get to the root cause. I mean, sometimes we know the root cause, unfortunately.

It's a tough one, but we do everything in our power to support any municipality that deals with fraud or to help prevent fraud or whatever supports they may need. We are very open and always there to help.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

From my experience, that has been my experience in previous, there is good communication there with Municipal and Community Affairs regarding these kind of things, but we know that they're becoming more prevalent. So they better be prepared for the phone calls and emails.

Thank you, Chair.

I'll go to section 119, and this is not because I want to tax farmlands by any means, but I'll ask the question. Why are farmlands and woodlands within town boundaries exempt from taxation?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: My quick answer to that, I know farms have always been exempted because of the homestead. That's the revenue based or agricultural leases and sometimes they will turn into homesteads. People who live there and they'll farm it and do whatever. It's meant to be an incentive more than anything else. It's always been that way.

I think that's kind of the standard practice. I think woodlands are kind of a similar thing. It's about supporting the industry and supporting the people; that's their livelihood. It's not meant to be a taxation source for the city because it's more individualized.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Yes, I agree certainly, I just wanted to ask the question, but I do believe that farmlands should be given special circumstances as the food producer.

Under section 127, I'm going to pull it up before I ask the question, just to make sure. Why does subsection (8) stipulate that the tourist accommodation tax revenue must be used solely in connection with tourism? That's an interesting one, because section (8) says "A city council that imposes a tourist accommodation tax shall use the proceeds of the tax collected for the purposes of tourism."

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Your question is you wondered why can't you use it for other services in the city or the town, because they both got it?

I guess most of this is collected from tourists, who travel through the area. I think this is standard again for tourism accommodation tax. It's meant to be put back in to develop tourism.

I don't think there's any intention there to use it as another revenue flow for water and sewer, roads, even though I know municipalities would like to see that.

Every municipality we have talked to, certain towns already apply the tourism accommodation tax and their goal is using that money to develop other tourism attractions in their communities and what have you. It's meant to build on an industry. A good example is, if my own community has got one motel – Mount Pearl, I don't think, got any hotels, so they will not be beneficial. I don't think Paradise would benefit from it.

So the whole idea is if you have hotels – Gander is a prime example, as a town, and they would do quite well, but the whole idea is to build that cluster to develop the tourism industry. That's where the money is coming from. I think it's keeping it within for the right purpose and it's meant to be supportive of where the money actually comes from, it's going back into its origins.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Certainly no offence to our Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation and I concur with that. I do believe that it should, actually, be focused back into where it comes from, and that's very pointedly.

Under section 161, is there any legal possibility that a city might choose to contract with a for-profit company for fire services?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: That's kind of an obscure question. I never really thought about that.

Under 161, I remember from Corner Brook – I brought it up earlier. This is a subject to clause. So right now, the City of St. John's provides fire service to Mount Pearl for a fee. That's going to continue on, but Corner Brook is not included in that. So that's inherent in the *City of St. John's Act* and we left it there.

Really, it does not apply to any other municipality. This is more about their own requirement to provide fire services in every town and city throughout the province but the subject to clause was just a one-off for Mount Pearl where they receive fire services from St. John's under the Regional Service Board delivery and they pay for that service and they're happy with that service.

As for that question, I don't think that would be a for-profit service amenity. I don't think that's the intent or spirit of the legislation,

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Certainly, for the Northeast Avalon, I get it; I understand. But, for Corner Brook, obviously, it would be a major concern if it went out to a for-profit, especially when we're talking about fire services – something so important as that.

Thank you for that.

Just a few more questions, Chair. Under section 176, shouldn't it be mandatory for cities to require all houses and buildings to have numbers attached to their property? I know that that has been, really, a big point of conversation for a lot of municipalities, certainly in the city, and it also ventures into safety protocols, when we're talking about fire emergency response vehicles coming to homesteads and unsure of the actual number and address.

So I'm just wondering if that should be mandatory for cities to require all houses and buildings to have numbers,

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: That's a fair point. I see your question, but I think it's about flexibility and geography of the individual city, what have you, but it is a fair point. I think that, for the most part, most municipalities as they move along now, I think that's not an issue anyway. I think that that's pretty well standard practice, especially if you're in the city level, that you would provide it anyway.

I think it's more about flexibility, letting cities come up with their own solutions. But I think numbering, again, there's a lot of intent behind this to not be so prescriptive and letting a city kind of use their own judgment. I would think that any city out there would have a numbering system on any home, I would strongly suggest.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

I know that we've run up against it a couple of times in the City of St. John's, but I will agree with you that, again, it's not about being so prescriptive.

I appreciate the time. That's my final question.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

Just a couple of last questions back to the bylaw enforcement officers. As mentioned, there are certain other acts like the *Highway*

Traffic Act and the *Off-Road Vehicles Act* that define peace officers as a member of a municipal police force.

Could the minister confirm that these bylaw enforcement officers would still be considered members of a municipal police force as described in the *Highway Traffic Act* and the *Off-Road Vehicles Act*?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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 Committee of the Whole.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

L. PARROTT: Presently.

SPEAKER: Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again presently, by leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that this House do now recess for five minutes until 17:12.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that this House do now recess until 5:12 p.m.

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.

Recess

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 11, Bill 29.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, that this House resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 29.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 29.

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 29, An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province.

A bill, "An Act Respecting Certain Cities in the Province." (Bill 29)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Chair.

So just to continue on before our break there, the question was about, really, section 208 and about the municipal enforcement officers. As I mentioned, in the *Highway Traffic Act* and the *Off-Road Vehicles Act*, it refers to peace officers, including members of a municipal police force.

I just wanted to ensure, I guess, that the bylaw enforcement officers in the new *Cities Act* are considered a municipal police force for the purposes of the *Highway Traffic Act* and the *Off-Road Vehicles Act*.

CHAIR: Then Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Thank you.

Yes, the bylaw enforcement, this act does not affect the authorities under those other acts. That's not affecting the ones under the *Highway Traffic Act* or the *Off-Road Vehicles Act*. That does not interfere with those.

Is that your question?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Yes, I guess I want to ensure – because, currently, they are doing duties as a peace officer with regard to those two acts, in particular. I wanted to ensure that they can continue to do those same duties.

Currently, in the *City of Corner Brook Act*, there is a section that says, "A municipal enforcement officer has the powers of a member of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary with respect to the enforcement of this Act and regulations made under this Act with respect to the city."

Again, my assumption is – I'm not a lawyer – that's why that power is conferred to them in the other acts, that they are considered part of municipal police force and, therefore, that's why they're considered peace officers under those two acts I mentioned.

So I just wanted to confirm, I guess, from the minister that they will continue to be able to carry out their same duties and definition as a peace officer under those two acts.

CHAIR: Then Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: As I said, the *Highway Traffic Act* and the *Off-Road Vehicles Act*, those acts are not affected by this and whatever authorities and powers they have to abide by in those acts, that remains the same. We just enforced the bylaw enforcement, as it's stated here, but they're separate and they're not affected, so they remain the same.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Okay, it's good to know that they are still able to resume those duties. It's important, of course, that they are recognized as peace officers because it affords them some protection under the *Criminal Code* as well.

They do things that are sometimes somewhat dangerous. They have been doing them for some time and I totally respect the idea of not handing out those authorities willy-nilly, especially police powers, but, at least in Corner Brook, they have had and exercised these powers for quite some time and would continue to do these things. It's very important that they have the protections as a peace officer under those acts.

Again, if you're able to confirm that, that is excellent. Thank you very much.

I think that's it for now.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs, you're good?

B. PETTEN: Yes.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Deputy Speaker.

I thank the minister for answering all the questions so far today. I have a couple that sort of stem from one of my colleagues asking questions earlier.

I think section 14(2), Incorporation and Restructuring of Cities, section 14(1)(a) through (e) and then (2) and (3), just for context of where we're to. I'll let the minister get there.

First of all, I'd say that it's a great piece of work; a significant amount of work has been put into this by the staff I know over many, many years. I'm excited and happy that it's coming. I know my colleagues on this side of the House are happy about what's coming next, potentially, with the *City of St. John's Act*. I know one stems from the other.

I think the minister mentioned that this was a new section that was added?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Yes, this is a new section. I guess the idea behind it, they were separate acts before, *City of Mount Pearl Act* – I was going to say St. John's for some reason. The *City of Mount Pearl Act* and the *City of Corner Brook Act* were separate acts. This is bringing them under the *Cities Act*, but it's also enabling, that other essential towns that want to become cities can use the same legislation. It's not boxed in to one particular city. That's why it's called the *Cities Act* and that's why this clause is a new clause, it deals with new cities coming on board.

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

B. DAVIS: From the consultation, Minister – thank you for that answer by the way – who brought this forward? Did it come out of the department or did it come out of the two cities or did one city ask for it versus another?

I'm more so just wondering where it came from because it is new, and I'll get to why I'm asking that question as I read through because there's pretty strong powers that come with that as well, which is good. So I just wanted to sort of know where it came from, if you could shed some light on that for me, please?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: The short answer to this, this comes from a lot of research and a lot of consultation, cross-jurisdictional scans. Under the modern legislation, without any municipalities, this is the standard with restructuring. Restructuring is a broad word, as we know, and there are a lot of things listed there. But this is more in keeping with, through research, through consultations, this is pretty much the norm across the board.

A lot of this legislation is to bring it modern. We, staff, obviously, went outside and went across and did those jurisdictional scans, which we tend to do with any good piece of legislation, and this is much in the same line as that. So that's where it originated from, and its intention is, of course, to open the door for future towns or municipalities throughout the province that want to become cities, this will be the book.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister.

That's great. We want to see progress in making legislation stronger and to create new cities, if that's what happens in the area.

I got to be honest with you; I never knew much about annexing until the fellow down south of the border started talking about annexing Canada. When I read that in this section, section 14(1)(c), annexing cities, towns, Local Service Districts and unincorporated areas to cities, and then I read (d) to establish and alter boundaries of cities and disincorporate a city, those are three things that led me to my question.

So if a city currently exists, would this allow the LGIC to take a piece of a city that currently exists, without the city's involvement, and provide it to another municipality that's neighbouring to that, because that's sort of how it reads?

I don't know if that's the intention, obviously. I think it's more the intention of creating new cities. I stand to be corrected. I'm not, as you said earlier, legalese, I'm not that. But when I read that, I sort of said, you know, there are a couple of cities that boarder each other that I represent and when I see those three things lined up together, I just had a question based on that from your standpoint.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: Yes, and further to the point you made earlier, just now, about this legislation, another point I should make is we never ever had any legislation, any ability to create new cities. So if there's another municipality – we're bringing in this act – we never had any legislative ability for new cities to be created. So that's underneath this new section. That's what drives it.

This is a standard reason to come in the *Towns and Local Service Districts Act*. If you read that to the finest letter, like any piece of legislation, I guess you could make inferences. I guess the reality is, any sitting minister, and I happen to be there now, there's no appetite for any minister to be taken in cities and combining – the book

has been written on amalgamation in this province and I think that we are all well-versed on it.

It's more some power for the province to have some control, if the worst-case scenario would happen. There's more about this piece of legislation. It's done through consultation, legal consultations. The only intent of this is this will be driven by the municipality. This will be brought to us.

Again, I won't be out looking for it. If stuff comes in, it'll be a process of feasibility. It'll be a lot of work done there before this ever comes to be, but it won't be the case where I'm going to wake up tomorrow morning and we're going to amalgamate; we're going to take the boundaries in any neighbouring communities within the province. That's not what happens there and I don't think that's anyone's intention.

I guess anyone can make any interpretation of any piece of legislation, but I can guarantee that's not what's inferred there and I don't think any government or any minister down the road would ever do it.

I think it's meant to be there to protect. I think the full intention and spirit of any legislation is to give some powers to the province, in the case of that, which you can't predict what could happen, that really unfortunate situation that may have to use that, but, hopefully, let's never have to use it. It's probably the most extreme case you made but I don't think that's ever going to become an issue, but it just gives the province that little bit of ability.

Ultimately, municipalities operate under the province's authority, as we all should know here. They operate at the pleasure of the province. That's the way all municipalities are set up. Their standing is because of us, so we have to maintain some ability, should need be. There's no agenda. There's no ulterior motive here.

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Minister.

I assumed that, based on what you're talking about anyway, that that wouldn't be an agenda. I was just wondering if, by having it in there in that way, does it allow for – an example would be if a municipality had said I would like to take this piece of property because it makes geographic sense for me to have, wrote the minister and made a good case for it, can that happen without consultation – and I think what you're saying is it won't – without the other municipality where it currently has that piece of property, or can an individual request a parcel of land that has been deemed for some municipality and it be deemed to go to another municipality because of proximity?

I mean, we all have municipalities that could potentially have that or LSDs that could have it. I know what you're saying, that it's not intended for that. I'm just wondering, can it happen? If it can't, perfectly fine. That's the question. When I read it, that's what came to my mind and sort of sparked by a question that my colleague asked earlier. Your answer was fine; it just sparked my mind to think can it go that way. If everything aligned that way, can it happen?

What your saying is it can't happen that way or could it happen? I know extenuating circumstances but – sorry, Minister. That's a bit of a long-winded question. I apologize.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Municipal and Community Affairs.

B. PETTEN: I think it's incumbent on any minister, you have to do your own due diligence to any of this. I mean, you have to hold up to court. Everyone ultimately has the court as the final decider no matter what decisions are made, as we know.

The reality is, this is a very hypothetical situation, but this would be, once again, driven by a municipality. So if you have a municipality that wants to encroach, they want to take over a section of another municipality or a neighbouring municipality's property, I mean, that's not just going to happen by the stroke of a pen. This will turn into a consultation process and may very well end before it ever starts.

Again, I think the stretch here is the fact that with the ministerial powers. Ultimately, like I said, they can go to court anyway. The ministerial powers are just giving that ability in the worst-case scenarios, because you deal with certain things – and you were a minister at one time too – and you think have some powers or you don't like how certain things went, and then you go in and you talk to your deputy and you find out we don't have that power. You don't like the decision and you have a really good reason why you don't like the decision, but this more of a protection piece.

We wouldn't be the only place with this part of our legislation either. It's across the board and it's a pretty standard practice. I think it's just one that protects any government and, really, ultimately, it protects the municipality. It protects the municipality. That's the whole intent of it, trying to protect municipalities that some untoward decisions are not made and, ultimately, government are responsible to do just that.

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Chair, I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report Bill 29 with progress and ask leave to sit again.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Lane): The hon. 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 progress and ask leave to sit again.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

L. PARROTT: Presently.

SPEAKER: Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again presently, by leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that this House do now recess until 6:30.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that this House do now recess until 6:30.

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 carried.