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Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

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The House met at 10 a.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we proceed with the Government Business for this morning, I want to welcome a new Page to the Chamber. He's actually been here a couple of times already, but he's always here in the mornings. I usually do the introduction the afternoon and, each morning he was here, I thought he'd be here that afternoon, but he wasn't.

So anyway, I want to welcome Ahmet Mumcu. Ahmet is from Turkey. He's currently enrolled in a master's program at Memorial University in political science. In May he hopes to start a work term with the Department of Jobs and Growth, and Rural Development.

Best of luck in your program, Ahmet, and welcome to the House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Government Business

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Order 2.

I move, seconded by the Member for Humber - Gros Morne that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 6.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997.

All those in favour of the motion, '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!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

We are now debating Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997.

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

CLERK (Hawley George): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to make sure we're in Committee for the Pension Benefits Act. That's correct, right?

CHAIR: Yes.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, perfect.

Thank you very much.

I'm just going to start off the way I started off last time. I was wondering if the minister can walk us through who can transfer what, and where can they transfer it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Yes, her mic is on.

CLERK: Recognize her again.

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I'll ask that again. I was wondering if the minister can walk us through who can transfer what, and where can they transfer it, please?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

In order for a pension to be transferred, it has to be done, ultimately, through the approval of the Superintendent. This is about transferring pensions outside the province.

SPEAKER: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

Last time I asked the minister who does the transfer, the minister said pension benefit plan holders. That's not a definition in the act. I was just wondering if the minister can elaborate on who does the transfer and what is transferred?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: This is about pension funds being transferred to another province. It would be done through the company.

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

Am I correct in the minister saying that the company initiates this transfer? So not the plan members, it's the company?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Yes, that's correct. It's transferred by the company as a group plan.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I'm wondering what the solvency ratio is when transferring a pension into the province?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Transferring into the province has to be 85 per cent, Chair, and it has to be up to 100 per cent in five years. That's reviewed by the Superintendent of Pensions.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So just to make sure I understand what the minister said, they can transfer it in when it's 85 per cent and in the first five years, after it has been transferred, it has to go up to 100 per cent?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Correction, it has to be 100 per cent coming in requested and, if not, it has to be within five years under the review of the Superintendent.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

So when we look at the act, the changes we're making today, and you look across the country, I'm just wondering if the minister can tell us why the government has chosen, "(B) has a solvency ratio that is (I) equal to or greater than 0.85, or (II) higher than the solvency ratio of the pension plan from which the assets were being transferred?"

I was wondering why that 0.85 was chosen, I believe that's one of the lowest in the country.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: It's ultimately about the safety and security of pensions, Chair.

If this pension were to be moved to Ontario, they'd fund it themselves. They're more protected at 100 per cent.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you. I might come back to that one.

I wonder if the minister could tell the House how many pension plans in Newfoundland and Labrador fall under this act, and how many have a solvency ratio under 0.85?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Is the question: currently there are no requests at this time to be transferred?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you. That's good to know.

I wonder if the minister has there how many pension plans fall under this act, under the minister's responsibility, and then how many have a solvency ratio less than 0.85?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Great question.

Thank you, Chair.

There are currently 150 plans in total. I'll be glad to follow-up on how many are throughout the threshold of the question.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I'm wondering if the minister can walk us through, I guess, why this change is being made at this time if there's no one who has asked to transfer?

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Chair, this change actually takes it from the regulations and puts it into the act to make it official.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

So the minister is saying it's currently in the regulations and this change is being moved to the act.

Is there any other impetus for this change right now?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

This is ultimately about moving the definition, again, like I said, from the regulations to the act.

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

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you.

I'm just wondering, I guess, why this change is being brought forward at this time?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: This change at this time is, ultimately, about protecting pensioners and their hard-earned money, Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So the minister said this is currently in the regulations and they're moving it to the act; if that's the case then, is there actually a change?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Yes, that's correct, and just to follow-up from my previous question, this is about harmonization and following along with the multilateral agreement that was put in this House in 2023.

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I want to just be clear. So the minister is saying there are no extra changes here, legally nothing is changing? They're just

moving things from the regulations to the act, is that the case?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: This is, ultimately, about protecting, again, the hard-earned money by pensioners.

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I'll just ask one more time.

I've heard the minister say that this change just takes things from the regulations and moves it to the act. I just want the minister to confirm that there is no – I'm just wondering, is there an actual change happening or are we just moving things from the regulations to the act, as the minister has said?

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

This is about moving definitions from the regs to the act, as stated.

Thank you.

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

S. STOODLEY: Okay, thank you.

So the purpose of this bill is to move things from the regulations to the act, and there is no change to what people can do? Okay, thank you.

I'm wondering if the minister can talk us through the disclosure requirements?

So, as we've heard, the company can initiate a transfer under this new legislation, assuming the Superintendent of Pensions approves the transfer. I'm wondering if the minister can talk us through how and when do the pension plan members – are there any regulations or what is the onus on company or the Superintendent of Pensions to disclose to the pension plan holders?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: The Superintendent of Pensions regulates most registered pension plans in the province and ensures that they comply with the legislation to protect members' benefits.

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I guess I'm just trying to think it through. If I was a member of a pension plan and my pension was being moved from Newfoundland and Labrador to Ontario or from Ontario to Newfoundland and Labrador, and the rules and regulations and the legislation governing the pension are changing, are there any requirements in the regulations or legislation for the company to disclose to the pension plan members what the change is, that there is a change and that the province of regulation is changing for their pension?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

This is only moved when scrutinized and reviewed by the Superintendent of Pensions, Chair.

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

So I assume, no.

I would encourage the minister and his team take that away, because I think it's important that there's appropriate disclosure to pension plan holders that their pension is being moved to another province if there are no disclosure requirements today.

So I just want to ask again: Have there been any requests to transfer? Is there a queue of plans ready to transfer after this receives Royal Assent?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: I'm going to follow-up on the former. As the former minister had asked just then, every member is notified and it is disclosed, Chair.

I'd ask to repeat the question about Royal Assent.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

What was my last – so I asked about disclosure requirements? What was my other question? I've lost that train of thought. I can't remember what my last question was, apologies.

I'm wondering if the minister can walk us through who his department consulted with before making the change?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: I didn't hear the question.

CHAIR: I ask the Member for Mount Scio to repeat the question, please.

S. STOODLEY: Sure. Thank you.

I'm wondering who the minister and the department consulted with ahead of making this change?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: This would be a case-by-case transfer, Mr. Chair, and, again, back through the Superintendent to the plan members.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I'm wondering if the minister or the minister's team consulted with any pension stakeholders or any relevant parties before bringing that change to the House of Assembly?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you. That's a great question, Chair.

Being new to this, that was the first question that I put to my staff to see where we go with this. We discussed with other jurisdictions because this is something we want to take seriously to make sure that we're getting it right.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I remembered my question. I'm wondering if the minister could tell us how many pensions have requested this and, after this

receives Royal Assent, how many are lined up for the Superintendent to review?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: There are currently none in the queue.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I'll just ask the minister again, why did they choose a 0.85 per cent solvency? I guess is that in the regulations today and it's just being moved to the act? If not, I guess why did they choose 0.85?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

Ultimately, it is 85 per cent and it is, as the Member opposite said, moving it from the regs to the act.

Thank you.

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

The minister said that because they're moving it here, they're going to make changes to the regulations. So I'm wondering when the changes to the regulations will happen, or when are they anticipated to happen, and what other changes the department is making to the regulations?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Within the bill, this is here. It would be after Royal Assent.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I'm wondering if the minister has approved any changes to the regulations that are outside of the changes directly impacted by this act?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Government Services, and Labour.

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Chair.

The answer is no.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report having passed Bill 6 without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997.

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. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue and Chair of 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 to the House Bill 6, An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997, without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends that Bill 6 be reported without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move that Bill 6 be now read a third time, seconded by the Member for Humber - Gros Morne.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Pension Benefits Act, 1997," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 6)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I call from the Order Paper second reading of Bill 8, Order 5.

SPEAKER: Order 5.

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

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for Bonavista, that Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act, now be read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act." (Bill 8)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Forestry and Agriculture.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, this is an important bill. It's to do with the hunting regulations and the fines, so it's very important to our wildlife. Hunting and trapping certainly has always been near and dear to the hearts of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. As minister responsible for wildlife, it's my responsibility to ensure we are managing and conserving Newfoundland and Labrador's biodiversity and wildlife resources for sustainability for all of us.

As a long-time outdoorsman myself, I know first-hand how important it is to protect the important source of food and cherished tradition well into the future. We all know how much we cherish hunting in Newfoundland and Labrador. It's been mentioned here the last time we brought up a bill, how we enjoyed hunting and how we enjoyed the outdoors. We have to bring those legislations into the act so that it's there for the future for not only us, Speaker, but for our grandchildren to enjoy as we enjoyed, and many more along the way for them.

It's a great honour to be here and to be able to protect our wildlife way into the future. Whether you're hunting, cutting wood, trout, picking berries or just out for a walk in the woods, time outside is good for our physical and mental health. That's been proven time and time again. From a brief walk through the woods to Ski-Doo rides and all of our wildlife activities, it is great to be out. It refreshes you and certainly an enjoyment to us all. I know there are Members from every district who hear the stories, and they enjoy it themselves. That part of it alone is another reason why we need to be protecting the wildlife species, so that we can enjoy it for mental health reasons and for physical reasons, just for walking in the woods and other particular activities.

It always reminds us of where we came from and how lucky we are to be here. It's part of our culture, part of our heritage. We survived on it for years. Our ancestors knew the wildlife acts, cherished the wildlife and it's been passed down through the years, and many of us can relate to that. Hunting and trapping are essential to food self-sufficiency. These activities contribute to our economy and they are rooted into our culture.

We recently opened the 2026-27 big game draw. In just one day, we recorded nearly 40,000 hits on our website, and nearly 13,000 applications were filed. That will show the appreciation that people have for the game big licence. Everyone gets excited every time the moose licence draws. Everybody can't wait to get their application in. They look forward to the next season of moose hunting. That's part of this act. Chair, 13,000 applications filed in just one day. It shows the interest that people have in the wildlife and the activities that they enjoy throughout our province, so that was good to see.

That's why any activities that negatively impact our cherished wildlife species are unacceptable, and that's why we need to protect them. That's why we need to improve the acts, so that we can have this cherished moose licence application and other activities in the woods. We certainly have got to protect that. We have to put in some regulations and rules in order to keep that species there. You know, any activity outside of that is certainly unacceptable. We need to protect that.

So, today, I am bringing forward Bill 8, amendments to the *Wild Life Act*, which is important legislation that goes hand in hand with our amendments to the *Endangered Species Act*. A couple of weeks ago, we brought in the *Endangered Species Act*, basically on the same rules and regulations, especially on the fines and other illegal activities that can be contributed there, for our wildlife officers and for protection of the

species. Much the same pertains to Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act. It goes hand in hand with each act.

The amendments to the *Wild Life Act* modernize language, update penalties and improve enforceability. Those are the three main things in this act. Some of the language needed to be changed to bring it up to standards. We'll be bringing in some extra penalties and that sort of stuff but, let me say, it's to protect our wildlife, protect our forest industries and protect our animals. We need to be protecting and bringing our penalties up to date, so that's part of the reason for this act as well. We hate these stories that we hear sometimes, with regard to what we hear in the news.

So some of these penalties got to be brought up to date, and to improve enforceability. That will improve enforceability for our wildlife officers and some actions that they can take in order to act quickly on what they need to do as they do their job. It helps protect them. It also helps to protect them.

I mean to say, in regard to enforcing the fines, people look at it in a second light, you know, should I or shouldn't I? They know that they're going to be paying more fines, the jurisdiction for that goes up and instead of saying: Well, probably I will, they will just say: I'm not taking that chance because it's there. That reduces the risk of what the enforcement officers have to do, so it helps protect them along the way as well. We need to do everything, especially – and this was brought up lots of times during Bill 7 when we put the *Endangered Species Act*, with regard to our wildlife officers and the enforcement officers – how we could protect them.

There was lots of conversation on that when we went through that one. The same applies to this act there as well, the rules and regulations and the enforcement and the fines to help protect our enforcement officers for the great work that they do

during the season and all throughout the year.

I'd certainly like to thank those enforcement officers (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: It is a danger. Sometimes it is a danger to them to be out there in the field. We know that and we've heard the stories, so we appreciate that.

I'd like to say, speaking of our wildlife officers, there was one injured a little while ago, but he's doing fine. He's doing good, and we wish him all the best as we move along.

One change to this act is to add coyote to the list of fur-bearing animals. We work to ensure the public is understanding and complies with the laws that safeguard our natural resources. We believe these amendments would strengthen legislation and enhance support for conservation and protection of Newfoundland and Labrador's wildlife species. They will ensure our enforcement officers are equipped to better protect Newfoundland and Labrador's wildlife resources.

Again mentioned, as I previously did, the same as in the other bill. This will ensure that the resource enforcement officers are better equipped to protect Newfoundland and Labrador with wildlife resources. The better our officers are equipped to do their job, the more they can do to protect our wildlife species, which will be there for years and years to come.

All of this pertains to everybody's involvement; what we can do as a government, what we can do as people and what we can do as enforcement officers. Everybody working together will protect our wildlife species.

When we were consulted on the *Endangered Species Act*, in '23-'24, we also

consulted on the *Wild Life Act*. The two of them relate back and forth together. What happens in the *Endangered Species Act*, also pertains, basically, to the *Wild Life Act*. All the conversations and all the acts and all the things that we put in, the regulations, pertain to both acts.

With almost 260 responses from across the province, in general, respondents supported the increase of fines under the *Wild Life Act* and regulations, and the *Endangered Species Act*. There were 260 responses that came in, and everybody was in favour of bringing in the fines to protect our species. Everyone knows how important it is to protect our species, to protect our wildlife, to protect our wildlife officers and to protect the people in the system. That is something that was great to see, that there were 260 responses and everybody was in approval of that.

Many responded including the need for additional education and public outreach as part of their comments, so they even want more additional education of what they need to do and how it works. They need more education, and education and public awareness and outreach is what protects our species, Speaker. It's what protects our wildlife.

People need to know and they relay it. They know that they shouldn't do it, and other people are talking to them saying: B'y, it's not right to do that. We need to be able to enjoy it ourselves as well, so we don't want you to be doing the illegal activities that we need to be putting in those fines. We'd like to have that for our grandchildren out along the way. So public education, public consultations and public awareness are certainly great for all our activities that we do throughout the *Wild Life Act*.

Conservation concerns for big game populations and in-land species, salmon and trout, were shared by many residents over multiple questions. I thank those that did respond; most people who enjoy the

great outdoors through outdoor pursuits including hunting and berry picking, mountain biking, hiking, trapping or all-terrain vehicle operations – all the people that pertain to the wildlife, as I mentioned earlier, pertaining to the *Wild Life Act*, pertaining to wildlife and pertaining to our forest industries, the activities that we do and just enjoying the great outdoors that we have and the activities that we have there to enjoy it with.

That's the main reason that we have to protect our wildlife. We have to protect our endangered species so that they are there for years and years to come so that, as I said before, many of us and our grandchildren and, hopefully, our great-grandchildren can enjoy the great outdoors and what it has to offer. Doing so in those regulations will have that there for all of us to come and certainly protect the people who make it happen.

Amending the *Wild Life Act* would enhance public safety, deter illegal activities and further protect Newfoundland and Labrador's wildlife by enhancing a proposed fine structure. It will deter illegal activities that impact the species protected under the *Wild Life Act*. By increasing the fines, like I said earlier, it will deter those activities so that people won't do it, so that the species will still be here, the wildlife will be there, especially the moose. We just mentioned the big game applications, so by deterring people from pursuing illegal activities, we'll keep that remaining and everybody can keep applying for our moose licences and big game licences and even the small game, so that species will always be there.

Hopefully by increasing those fines, it will deter those illegal activities. Fines for resisting, obstructing or impersonating a wildlife officer would increase from fines not exceeding \$500, and in default of payment to imprisonment for a period not exceeding six months, to a fine of not less than \$500 or more than \$25,000 with the period of imprisonment maintained at no more than

six months. For corporation, the fines would be not less than \$10,000 and no more than \$50,000.

Those are fines for individuals and corporations increased by those amounts to deter illegal activity. That's what the fines are put there for, to deter illegal activity and cut down on the endangerment for wildlife enforcements. The less that's doing those dangerous activities, you know, that will deter them, so that the wildlife people can do their jobs and protect our wildlife as adequately as we can.

Increasing fines for big game penalties: First conviction from fines not less than \$1,000 and no more than \$5,000 or imprisonment for a term not less than one month or more than six months, or to both fine and imprisonment, to fines of not less than \$2,000 nor more than \$25,000 or a period of imprisonment maintained and not less than one month or more than six months; second or subsequent conviction that occurs within five years of a previous conviction, from imprisonment for a term of not less than one month and no more than six months and a fine not less than \$3,000 and not more than \$10,000, to a fine of not less than \$6,000 or more than \$25,000 with a period of imprisonment maintained and not less than one month or more than six months.

A person convicted of an offence would be prohibited from holding any type of hunting licence for five years, and not just moose or caribou licence, that would prohibit them from holding any hunting licence. We believe increased penalties will act as a significant deterrent to illegal activities. Current financial penalties were set in the 1990s or earlier, so modernizing legislation for clarity and ease of interpretation.

Enforcement and fines, as a component of the wildlife management, are unfortunately necessary for improving resource enforcement officers' ability to do their jobs and would help maintain or boost public respect for this challenging and often

dangerous work. We expect that the interpretation will make this legislation easier to follow and more enforceable, thereby supporting natural resource enforcement activities and enhancing public safety.

As I said, Speaker, by enhancing those fines, it will decrease the illegal activities, deter those, and increasing penalties on the big game licence, and they won't hold a hunting licence, that is necessary to keep people from doing the illegal activities. I know the fines, some people might say: B'y those are big fines, but then don't do the activity – just don't do it. We don't want you to do it. That's why we're putting them there. That's why we're trying to protect it, by increasing those fines, and, well, that's why those are put in place.

We looked at the wildlife legislation across Canada and found that some fines of our province are lower than anywhere else. That helped informed the changes we were proposing. So we were probably lower than most of the Legislatures in Canada, Speaker. We needed to increase those fines to keep us updated, to keep the updated legislation there so that we could keep those fines in place and protect our wildlife species. That aligns our fines with other provinces, will help deter illegal activity and make it clear that these actions won't be tolerated in Newfoundland and Labrador.

This is just another reason that we're committed to protecting our wildlife, and we certainly don't tolerate any illegal activity. We want to protect our species. We certainly want to protect our enforcement officers. We just won't tolerate more of that, and I think that the fines will do that. I think any illegal activity like that, the fines certainly would change anyone's minds of doing something that they shouldn't be doing out there in the wilderness. That's the reason for this legislation.

As always, the provincial government wildlife staff, resource enforcement officers and regional service teams are committed to conserving and protecting our wildlife resources. Their work to promote safety, knowledgeable and responsible hunting and safety practices is crucial. The people in this department, Speaker, they do their jobs adequately and efficiently and professionally as they can, and even the inside staff are looking all the time to find ways that they can help the enforcement officers, help the people within the system and to help protect the species that we're trying to protect.

I'd like to thank everybody in the department for all the work they do, because they put a lot of work into this, and they appreciate the hunting values of our province as well. I think we all do, and I certainly would like to thank them for all the work they do and what they do for our department.

I'll close by saying how proud I am to be the minister of this department and to support legislative amendments that will improve how we manage and enforce our important wildlife resources. Speaker, I look forward to discussing this matter.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just reflecting on the minister's comments. I don't know, for the first time, probably a word I don't disagree with, what you just said, so that's a good thing right?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: That's a good thing.

The minister is making progress. He brought in protecting the Pipping Plover, and now – it was chicken yesterday and moose management today. Listen, you're doing a wonderful job, Minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: Nothing like a little bit of enlightenment on a Wednesday morning.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: It's April Fools Day.

E. LOVELESS: What's that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: It's April Fools Day.

E. LOVELESS: April Fool's Day.

Listen –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

E. LOVELESS: Laughter is a good medicine, by the way, I think for all of us, but in terms of listening to the minister's comments, the words that come to mind is certainly balance and certainly responsibility and certainly future.

The *Wild Life Act*, I guess, is not something that's discussed a lot in this House, but it is very important to the existence of Newfoundland and Labrador, from business, whether that's The Outfitters, or personal, or people just enjoying nature as such. Wildlife does support lifestyles in Newfoundland and Labrador, and I know the minister referenced that, and I think what comes to mind is investment today for benefits for the future.

This is Bill 8, An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act, as been referenced. The act sets the framework for how wildlife in Newfoundland and Labrador is managed, protected and harvested responsibly. That's three pillars, and I will speak to them.

The managed piece – being in the department before, certainly you get an appreciation for staff. I want to thank them for all they do and continue to do and for when they briefed us on the changes that are coming forward. I thank them for that.

Moose Management Areas, just as a reference, are certainly crucial to the population and truly reflecting the number of animals in Newfoundland and Labrador. The moose management area topic is not of interest to everybody, but just a couple of things on Moose Management Areas. Moose Management Area 10 and 20, which is Central Newfoundland, which the minister and I are familiar with, has its own quota of licences, specific season dates and rules for either sex, male only for hunting purposes.

Why do Moose Management Areas matter? They matter because it helps maintain sustainable moose populations, and this is just in reference to moose: control human-wildlife conflict, like examples of vehicle collisions; ensure fair distribution of hunting opportunities and allowing targeted management where populations are too high or too low. I know a lot of work goes on in the department which we don't really know about in terms of coming out with management plans.

Those management plans go back to the balance piece that I referenced earlier, and it's not just about moose, because wildlife entails a lot of species that the minister referenced earlier. I certainly know, in terms of Bay d'Espoir Highway, driving down that highway, especially late evenings, moose or caribou can become a scare. That's also important in terms of the moose management piece as well, as I referenced. The importance of it is population not too high, population not too low. I say the word balance, and I'll say it many a times in my references here.

I know the minister can appreciate this too, licences for non-profit are very important. Make sure that continues, and I know he

will. I know for Lions Clubs, they appreciate that because, believe it or not, that becomes fundraising for them in their efforts of what they do in communities.

In terms of the management piece as well, the Jawbone program, where you return the jawbone of the moose back to staff so they can do research and stuff; that's very important. We've been trying to encourage it over the years, to do that, because it's research. That information they retrieve from that helps them with their management plan and identifying diseases in animals as well. I think the lab is still in Pasadena that was there when I was minister, that I visited many times, where they bring animals in and do what they need to do in terms of their work to determine behaviours of animals, types, age. So a lot of good work goes on in terms of the management piece.

I know when I was there as minister as well, moving animals from one area to another. I don't remember the island now that was referenced in terms of allowing the animals to grow in certain areas and stuff. Again, that's the balance piece.

I know personally in terms of hunting – I was never a hunter. I've never shot out of a gun, never, and the first time I went moose hunting with my father, who loved to moose hunt, he shot the moose and I was kind of, like, very upset. I was like: Moose, get up, get up.

I guess I look at it – love moose meat, no doubt about it, but I'm not a hunter in terms of looking at an animal that is a source of food or whatever. It is a source of food for a lot of people, don't get me wrong, but I'm not a hunter. I guess I'll use the hockey analogy, you're not a fighter, you're a lover, but it is a way of life, as the minister talked about, in terms of lifestyle.

The other part of the three pillars that I talked about was, protected. Protection is very important, and that goes to the enforcement piece in this act. The

enforcement officers are definitely doing great work, but equipping them with the resources they need to do their job is very important. I attended a lot of trade shows during my time as minister, and not as minister, just being there out of interest. I know the first question I used to ask those enforcement officers: Do you have what's required to do your job?

Most of the times they would say, yes, but at times they would give us feedback and we would take that back to ensure that they do have what they need to do their job. Mr. Speaker, I reference section 18, obstructing or resisting a wildlife officer, which is unacceptable and, in this act, I think, it is strengthening for sure. I'll read it, section 18, "A person who obstructs or resists a wild life officer, licensed guide or warden while the wild life officer, licensed guide or warden is engaged in exercising the powers or discharging the duties conferred or imposed under this Act or regulations is guilty of an offence... a fine of not less than \$500 and not more than \$25,000 and in default of payment to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 9 months."

This is being substituted because the act is being reappealed, and it's a very important part of the act because it protects those officers who are out there trying to do their job and trying to reach that balance that I've referenced several times.

The other piece, I call it pillar number three, is harvesting responsibly as well – I will reference, in terms of section 19(1), as well, impersonating wildlife officers. I think we're saying that won't happen in Newfoundland and Labrador. Well, I bring people's minds to the unfortunate event that happened in Nova Scotia a few years ago, impersonating an RCMP officer. We never thought that would happen, but it did. Here, in this act, it references, "falsely represents to be a wildlife officer." There are fines for that as well. We can never underestimate that this could happen here in Newfoundland and

Labrador, and that's a protection for that person out there trying to do their job.

Pillar three references the harvesting responsibility. Again, I say, hard work by staff and by individuals but, as the minister referenced as well, we know that people break that law, people poach unfortunately.

Another thing that has always disturbed me, I guess, in terms of people, as referenced in the act here, prohibition of waste, "A person who, having taken or killed wild life appropriate for food, wilfully or intentionally allows its flesh to be destroyed, wasted, or spoiled, and a person who, having taken or killed a fur bearing animal, wilfully or intentionally allows their skins to be destroyed, wasted, or spoiled...."

There are fines for that as well and, again, that goes back to the balance piece, because that has to be enforced as well. It's important to do that, to strike, again, that balance. It all can be achieved by good management protection and harvesting responsible plans.

There certainly are other pillars that fall within the three that I have mentioned, because the Act to Amend the Wild Life Act also establishes licencing requirements. I think the key, and that goes to the balance too, is not to issue too many licences but, again, to achieve a good management plan. That goes back to people in the department doing their work to make sure that that balance plan is there.

Also just a few comments to conclude, the intent of all of this today is to modernize an older piece of legislation which the minister has referred to. It's a good step forward, for sure. Public consultations began in 2024 under our government, in *What We Heard* report, following up to now, it has reached the House of Assembly floor. We got great feedback. Feedback determines where we go in terms of policy, and that's a good thing.

As we know, it has been referenced, the key changes, certainly, in the bill are increased penalties, hopefully discouraging behaviour that none of us want to see in Newfoundland and Labrador; stronger enforcement powers, which are important; telewarrants are referenced, as well, and we'll have some questions for the minister during Committee stage; updated definitions, modern provisions and responsible wildlife management, which goes back to the piece on the balance around all of this.

What's happening to this bill here today is a good thing. I know they were broadly supported through consultation, and that's a good thing. Feedback from people determines where your direction is going. With that I'll take my seat and thank the minister for this opportunity on a very important piece of legislation for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I certainly thank the minister for bringing forward this opportunity to clean up an obsolete clause, modernize the act to address new technology and increasing fines and penalties for offences.

Look, wildlife officers' jobs are dangerous, and I love to hear the recognition about how we are going to support those people who do invaluable work out there, oftentimes in the nighttime – that's where the technology certainly comes into play – and of course dealing with people who are armed, we don't know.

I think it's incredibly important to give a huge shoutout to our wildlife officers for the work that they're doing in the field. Of

course, while this act does a lot to expand the ability for them to effectively do their work, we must ensure that they can do the work safely. This certainly is a step in the right direction in terms of giving them the supports that they need to do their job on behalf of us all.

So, Speaker, I come from a hunting family. Even though I'm a townie, I come from a hunting family from the West Coast. I have lots of family members who have been very, very active, and continue to be, in moose hunting, fishing and farming, actually, and in lots of methods; however, what I would like to kind of bring into it, as the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, is, again, the intersection of wildlife with the urban setting.

We are starting to see coyotes growing all the time. I do need to give a shout-out in my former role as municipal leader with the City of St. John's, I invited the provincial wildlife officers to come and they hosted an information opportunity, a session in Airport Heights, because we were starting to see a proliferation of coyotes starting to come into the area, in Airport Heights, obviously via Pippy Park. We're also seeing sightings in Bowring Park and Pippy Park, Airport Heights and, of course, in the heart of the District of St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, we're seeing them in Signal Hill and the areas around there.

Cuckolds Cove, we're seeing, of course, eagles' nests and all kinds of different things, but specifically about coyotes, we know that that is becoming an ongoing issue. That particular issue there, about coyotes, and I will say, and I'm sure many of the hon. Members will recognize, that we're starting to see species starting to shift and develop – we're seeing species where wolves and coyotes now are starting to come together – and how we're going to try to address some of those changes, because nothing is fixed. This is evolution. This is nature and how species continue to evolve.

Wildlife officers have an incredible job ahead of them to ensure safety for not only the conservation efforts of the animal kingdom that we want to make sure to conserve, as the minister so aptly spoke to, but the reality is that we also want to make sure that they are safe when they're out there as well, especially when we're seeing these evolving species.

Another thing I just wanted to reflect upon – so that's coyotes. That's one species there but we're also talking about, down at Quidi Vidi Lake, again within the district, the cormorants on Quidi Vidi Lake, which are growing, and then, of course, as I mentioned, as an avid hiker, seeing the eagles' nests and things like that that are starting to grow. We're seeing a lot more eagles on the coastline. This is all venturing into urban areas. It's all coming together. We're seeing that more and more and more all the time.

I, too, will have some questions in the Committee around, especially, those intersections, as the representative for an urban district but knowing that this is something that really is a benefit to the entire province of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's very, very welcomed to see this cleaning up of this bill. We do want to make sure that everybody is safe, the wildlife officers with conserving the environment and the wildlife as it should be and, of course, for the public who enjoy it.

I do agree with the minister that this is a mental health issue as well too. This is something that keeps us all grounded. I know for myself, I need to connect with nature. I need to get out and hike and be in nature in order to be mentally sound. That is something I think, with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, that we are very, very in synergy with. We all love to get out there and connect because it gives us peace of mind.

There are so many different layers to this, but the reality is that this is a good step

forward. I will have some questions that I will ask when we get to the Committee level, but I am very interested in the intersection of urban clarification and intensification of the regs. The seizure and forfeiture and all of those things, they're really important, very important issues for everybody in our province.

I want to thank the minister for bringing this forward. I'll certainly have some more questions on behalf of the NDP to ask in Committee.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: Thank you, Speaker.

Bill 8 amendments to the *Wild Life Act* are about upholding our shared responsibility to safeguard wildlife and natural habitats that are part of who we are in Newfoundland and Labrador. Hunting and trapping are always near and dear to the hearts of Newfoundland and Labradorians.

Speaker, I'm one of those people who recently applied for my moose licence. I was one of those 13,000 on the first day to put my name in and filled out my application. I do a lot of hunting and fishing. I do that much fishing in the summertime that I'd say I wastes \$2,500 a year in lures and I break off about five fishing rods every summer – that many for sure.

If we didn't have rules and regulations when it came to fishing and hunting – like, when I go fishing down in Labrador West, we go out and there are so many certain species that you're allowed. You're allowed two lakera. Those lakera actually have to be 24 inches long in order for you to keep; anything under that has to go back in the

water. We're allowed 10 pounds, plus one trophy fish, when it comes to Ouananiche and speckled trout. You're allowed two Northern pike, and you're allowed shore lunch, which is the best tasting fish you're ever going to have in your life. Haul the boat up on the beach and throw the frying pan out and cook up a nice fresh fish, best you're ever going to eat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: Speaker, if we didn't have the regulations that we have, just those few there that I just named out about how many fish you're allowed to have, how many you're allowed to keep and that, there would be no fish left in Labrador. There wouldn't be fish left in Newfoundland if we didn't have those regulations and if we didn't have the fisheries officers that we have out there to protect those regulations.

I'll give a big shout-out to the fisheries officers. I know a lot of them throughout the whole province. I know what they do. They need extra help, not only when it comes to fines and regulations. Probably a month ago, I was down over the Trans-Labrador Highway. I was ptarmigan hunting and – you're only allowed 25 of those too, by the way, in case anybody is wondering, daily bag limit – the wildlife officer stopped. We were having a yarn and he asked to see my licence, so I showed it to him.

He was by himself, and we had a conversation about that, but I actually thought that was sad for a young man. He was probably 30 years old. He was out trying to do his job, but by himself. It's sad to say but there are lots of people in this world now this day and age that – I'm just trying to word this right – that wouldn't mind pulling a gun on a young man if he had to or if he was going to get fined or if he was going to get in trouble. It happens, right, so we need to ensure that these wildlife officers and fisheries officers have the support and have the staff that they need to do their jobs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: A change to the fines will actually deter – hopefully deter – hunters.

I'll go back to the wildfires we had here last summer. When the fines started going up past \$100,000 for lighting a backyard fire, a lot of people were deterred. Believe it or not, they were. So if you increased the fine from \$1,000 or \$5,000 up to \$25,000, hopefully that will deter people from poaching moose, taking too many fish or killing too many ptarmigan.

A couple of weeks ago when we started to debate this, our colleague from Lake Melville there, he mentioned the George River caribou herd. We stopped hunting; I think it was 17 years ago in Lab West that we weren't allowed to hunt caribou.

We could go over to the Esso station, walk in, show them your driver's licence and you'd get two licences. I could get two for me, I could get two for my wife and I could get two for my father-in-law. All gone, 900,000 animals down to less than 100,000 in 15 years; it's unreal. A lot of them did drown and a lot of them did die off, but a lot of them got killed that weren't supposed to be killed. A lot of them are still getting killed today that are not supposed to be killed. We have to change this and we have to make it harder for those poachers and people who don't want to follow the laws.

Again, as our minister said, the amendments to the *Wild Life Act* will modernize the language, update the penalties and improve enforceability. It's important to assure our laws are effective as possible because they set clear expectations. When rules are clear and consequences are meaningful, people are likely to respect them.

Again, resource enforcement officers do important and often difficult work in the field. These amendments ensure the laws support them when they are carrying out

their duties. Updating the penalties reflects the seriousness of offences that harm wildlife and undermine conservation efforts across the province. Taken together, these changes reinforce public confidence that wildlife protection laws are fair and enforceable.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. STOYLES: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm certainly delighted today to get up and represent my District of Mount Pearl North, and I certainly couldn't sit here without getting up and speaking about this bill.

Of course, we all know, and my colleagues certainly mentioned, how important it is to make the changes and do the necessary work that needs to be done on the *Wild Life Act* and things like that, but I don't want the government of the day to forget how important it is on the management of moose here in our province and I mention the number of people that have died on our highways and our byways or are injured every year because of wild animals. We know how much Newfoundlanders and Labradorians love to hunt, and that is part of our culture, but we cannot forget how important it is to saving lives here in our province.

I want to quote an article that my dear friend, Linda Bishop, who passed away over a year ago. She was so involved in the Save Our People Action Committee, and back then there was over 100,000 moose, overcrowded moose on our highways, and we met with every government over the past number of years to talk about moose management. We know how important it is to have our hunters out, and anglers and bringing people in to hunt from other provinces. We understand and accept all of

that, but when it comes to managing the population of our animals, moose and coyotes and whatever, that causes people their lives.

I want to mention Brent Cole, who was a wildlife officer. I met Brent's wife and Brent back a number of years ago, out in his home in Whitbourne, after he had a moose accident. Like I said, he was a wildlife officer and spent his life looking after the wildlife and protecting the wildlife. A couple of years after, he lost his life. I attended his funeral, as well.

Last summer, there was two young people in their 20s that were killed on the Trans-Canada Highway because of moose. So Brent Cole, Linda Bishop, Morrissey Johnson, Ben Bellows, Hugh George and I could go on and on and on for generations. I remember one year we had people come travelling from outside of Canada and two family members died because of moose accidents.

So I know the Save Our People Action Committee will be lobbying government to continue with the moose fencing. If we're going to have those animals in our province, that we brought here years ago for hunting, we need to protect the people; we need to make sure that the fencing is going to continue. Other provinces in Canada, not only Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, but out in Banff, when they got the big animals, they put the money into saving the people's lives.

Besides the money that we need to put in for moose fencing, we also need to look at brush cutting. I know the Member for Ferryland stood up here in the House of Assembly a number of times and talked about brush cutting, how it wasn't done on the Southern Shore. Well it needs to be done in the whole province to protect our people, and we will be lobbying government to make sure that that continues.

Besides that, the money it cost, I know and I always say, until it happens to you, it don't affect you, because when we have a crisis, everybody says: Oh my God. They feel so sorry for everybody when we had the helicopter crashes and we had all the different disasters and the fires out on the North Shore last year where I grew up – I dealt with probably more calls than most people from the North Shore last year with the fires – but after weeks and months go by, unless it affects you, it's gone; it's over your head and it's over. When it happens to you and you live with it every single day; because, besides the people who died from those accidents, the people who survive and their families are the ones that are suffering. The cost to our government in health care is billions and billions of dollars.

I know first hand what that's like because my daughter was in a coma for 17 days, was months in hospital and is still recovering from a moose accident. Every time I hear about a moose accident and someone that has been injured or hurt, my day is ruined, because it comes back every single time, when that police officer came to our house that Sunday evening and a knock came on the door: You can't drive; we're taking you. My husband got the keys, and said: No, we're going – no, you can't drive; you have to come with us.

So I'm urging the government to not only look at what they're bringing in today, but look at what else needs to be done in this province because safety is always first.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I'm not certain what capacity in which you're speaking.

I'm going to say Minister of Labrador Affairs, how's that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker, and I won't go over my time.

I was just listening to the Member in the Official Opposition there talking about moose accidents. I think everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador can relate to what you've said. It's so important.

For me, Speaker, coming from Northern Labrador – I just want to take a couple of minutes, it's not going to take very long, just to put things into context.

For me, I grew up in Makkovik, Northern Labrador, an Inuit community with great ties to the land, to the sea, to the animals. For us, life is different in Northern Labrador. It's still different today than it is from most places in the rest of the province, because we still hunt and fish and that is our mainstay for our food source. So anything that impacts our ability to hunt and to be able have food from the land is important. That's why I'm speaking today.

We are all about preservation. It's really good to see some changes to increase enforcement, and also to increase the protection of the wildlife officers. Now, just looking at that, recently in a few years, we actually had Quebec hunters come in over the border hunting our caribou, and very little was done to address this. Right now, in Northern Labrador, and anywhere in Labrador, we don't have the ability to hunt caribou. In my district, people's food source is greatly impacted.

I remember when I was a young teenager, I used to go hunting with my dad. The caribou was kind of far inland, in north, so we used to have to get ready in the middle of the night. My dad has been passed away now for 25 years; I still remember those days. Me and my dad used to get ready in

the middle of the night and, what we'd do is, we'd start off and we'd drive all the way up to Nain. We'd probably stay in Nain, gas up and then we'd go into the country, we called it, and we'd go into the height of land. We'd go up and we'd actually get inside, you know, going towards Quebec.

We used to hunt caribou. We used to bring back probably about seven caribou, and we'd share that amongst our family. I remember dad cutting of the legs and the forearms and things like that and taking it to the elders. Everybody who came back from hunting north would do that; they would actually take parts of the caribou, and depending on who it was given to, the elders got the best parts.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, that's what we did, we shared, especially in the largest community in Northern Labrador, Nain.

We don't have the ability to do that anymore. We don't have the ability to bring back caribou. People who can afford the gas, can afford the snowmobile, can afford the rifle, and even to be able to afford the bullets, the cartridges, now that's a challenge for people. So the people who could go off and hunt and bring back and be able to share, we don't have that option. The caribou is not there and, the ones that are there in small numbers, we're not allowed to hunt.

Sometimes that happens; we hear about it. I tell you, there's nothing more uncomfortable than coming up across somebody who's coming back from somewhere, and you don't know what they have. When you look at who they are, it's probably a real poor family or somebody who is going to share with a really poor family.

Speaker, the thing about it is, we can't afford to buy the food in the stores in Northern Labrador right now. We do it, but we can't afford to do it. When you put all

your money into food, it's taken from somewhere else. So, really, we talk about choosing which bills to pay. You're going to pay to heat your house. You're going to pay to eat. You're going to put clothes on your child to go to school.

Right now, I say we see the greatest impacts to equity and equality in our communities, because if you got a good job, you're doing a hell of a lot better than anyone else. If you're on income support, people are really struggling. Then what happens is not only are you and your family hungry, you're unhealthy, because the food that you buy usually is not very nutritious, but the caribou is a lean meat. It's high in protein, high in iron, huge and delicious.

I remember when they brought in the moratorium for caribou, Speaker. When they brought in the moratorium for caribou, the reason why they brought it in was because overhunting – not with my people and not with the people from Labrador. There are very few people in Labrador who poached or overhunted or was wasteful. I'm talking about everybody; I'm not just talking about the Indigenous people there, basically the settlers and people who come in and work, when you're in Labrador, you understand the value of the land and you understand the value of the food source.

The reason why the moratorium was brought in for us not to be able to hunt caribou as a food source, for us, was because of overhunting and lack of legislation, lack of protection. We used to have Quebec hunters coming into Labrador and the wild life officers looking at them. Looking at them and not actually doing anything. Speaker, also Hydro-Quebec, with the release of all that water back when I was really young, all the thousands and thousands of caribou drowned. That impacted the population as well.

So it's really important for us to be mindful and bring in good legislation to make sure that our wildlife officers are protected and

have the power to actually enforce legislation, but also we're conserving. We're basically protecting the animals, because it's too late for the caribou, really. Right now, I'd say we're never ever going to get back to numbers where we can actually hunt them freely without actually having to do something illegal.

I remember when the moratorium was being brought in, and I remember mom saying to me: Lela, like, really, what are we going to do? She said, as my colleague said, caribou is delicious, but also you could cook caribou multiple ways. You could roast it. You can fry it. You can bake it. You could dry it. It was a food source every day for us. The thing about it is, not a lot of food you can do that. She said, like, Lela, what are we going to eat now, she said, because you can only eat so many partridges. You can't eat partridges every day, three times a day. You could eat a caribou every day, three times a day.

So, for me, in my district, the decimation of the caribou population that happened in the past, and trying to recover the herd so that we can actually use it as a food source, is so important. It's so important, really, I would say, to the survival of the people in Northern Labrador.

Speaker, other things now – I think somebody mentioned cormorants. We have a lot of invasive species coming up. The cormorants now are coming into Northern Labrador, and they're taking over the nesting sites of our waterfowl, the ducks, and they're driving out our food source. We hunt and, like most people in Newfoundland and Labrador, we eat the waterfowl.

These invasive species, they're coming in and they're pushing out our population. I would say, in actual fact, we should actually be probably looking at taking further action where we can, actually have some sort of cull or some sort of protection. People will say that's natural but, at the end of the day, it's basically the changes to the environment

that are causing this migration of these species north, and the thing about it is, if we're not careful and we don't control these invasive species populations, they're going to push out our food source. That's going to really impact the people of Labrador, because it's not only the people in Northern Labrador that hunt and eat caribou in the past, and also wildlife.

It's so important for us to be mindful of the changes and the impacts that are impacting our animals in our regions, especially our food source. Most of the animals in Northern Labrador, Speaker, are a food source for us, so it's important and I just wanted to speak a little bit on that. A lot of times I stand up and speak, not because I'm trying to make a point, but because I'm just trying to share. The thing about it is Northern Labrador is a lot of times is out of sight, out of mind and we need to be mindful of the impacts that are happening, and how our legislation can hurt or hinder the people of Northern Labrador, the Innu and the Inuit, because the lifestyle is so different than most of the other regions. The impacts can be quite significant.

It was really good to see the penalties there in section 27, but also, I am mindful – I think the minimum penalty now for section 27 is, for a first offence, a fine of not less than \$2,000 and not more than \$25,000 – there are a lot of people who would probably create an offence to put food on their table and will not be able to afford that \$2,000. So I think we need to be mindful of the context to which we're implementing legislation and we need to make sure that people are not being harmed because of the past inactions.

I remember, just recently, when we were having Quebec hunters come over the border – they were actually posting on Facebook. Everybody knew where they were, where they were travelling and they were decimating the population. In actual fact, there was a couple of small populations, their subspecies that they were driving into extinction.

The thing is the wildlife officers were flying around in helicopters following them and they said that they couldn't do anything because it wasn't safe to land. Whenever they got close to the Quebec hunters, the hunters would take out the tarp and the tarp, if it got caught up in the rotors, would cause a crash and fatality, and no one wants that. We have to make sure that our wildlife officers and the pilots who are there flying helicopters are safe.

Speaker, the thing about it is it was tunnel vision. The only thing we could do was fly around in a helicopter and that's the only way we'd be able to enforce legislation, and that was tunnel vision. In actual fact, I said in the House of Assembly that if you know where they are, you don't have to approach them in a helicopter, you can actually just have wildlife officers on snowmobile in the area and actually be able to apprehend them. You could chase them back to the hotels. They were staying in hotels. They were taking the caribou back and the thing is nothing was done, Speaker. It was a lack of action.

I think now with our new government in place we'll will take further action. We'll actually able to deter this hunting of our species that are very vulnerable to extinction by other provinces like Quebec. Because it's not only people in the province that we have to be mindful of and make sure they respect the regulations and the hunting conditions, we have to be mindful that our species who are threatened, like the caribou, are not decimated into extinction by hunters who come from another province.

Just because the action is not there, basically when we take action that's actually a deterrent, Speaker, because the impacts are so great.

Anyway, Speaker, with that I'm going to take my seat.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to take a couple of minutes and speak to the importance of the management and protection of wildlife. Hearing my colleague from Lab West talk about fishing gets me really excited and I think about how excited my son is as well for the coming fishing season.

One of the great privileges we enjoy here in Newfoundland and Labrador is our vast wilderness and the wildlife that inhabit it. As many people in this province, I've enjoyed hunting and fishing all my life and continue to do that. As they say now, as the kids say, you have core memories and many of my core memories comes from hunting and fishing, snaring rabbits with my parents and grandparents and now it's something that I get to share with my children.

A few years ago, I was able to take my kids snaring rabbits for the first time. Now, it sounds gruesome and maybe my colleague from Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune would disagree but snaring rabbits was a very traditional thing for my family and something that my grandfather did every fall. He would go and spend a lot of fall and winter up around Taylor's Brook and, in fact, he died at his cabin snaring rabbits. I think if you could ask him how he wanted to leave this world, that's how it would be.

So I got to do this experience with my children, take them out. They're all really interested in wildlife, in all kinds of forms of wildlife. Again, they are excited to learn about it, how to do it. It gets them outside and, of course, the one rule is they have to eat it. So you don't kill anything unless you're going to eat it.

That goes for my son who is an incessant trout fisherman. He does not stop during the summer, like I did, following the train track, following all the little spots along the way, the brooks. My daughter has a keen interest in bird watching. If you haven't, I'd encourage you to get out and learn a little bit about the amazing diversity of songbirds we have here. It's fascinating. She even says she's going to be an ornithologist when she grows up. This is a very important thing for my family to be connected to nature. It's something that we've lost a lot in our lives these days. We're disconnected from that Styrofoam plate we see in the grocery store and I think it's important that our children know where our food comes from and see that.

It's about a reverence for nature and respecting life. That's why, I think, we have to protect what we have and the management of our resources is of utmost importance. I fully support this bill – absolutely. Again, these small changes are important to keep continually fixing little problems and little gaps in our legislation.

We talked about moose hunting. Again, the minister mentioned the moose licence management system is up and going. I'm sure it's overheating the computers with all the applications. I got mine in. My wife, my mother, my father, they've all got their stuff in too – absolutely. I will be getting a licence in area 10, if all goes according to how it's supposed to go this year.

AN HON. MEMBER: Take the Member with you.

J. PARSONS: Oh, but he'll be asking me for moose meat.

Like the Member, I have a freezer full of moose. Talking about our cost of living, I actually had a conversation with one of our staff this morning about the high cost of meat and the importance of having things like wild game in your freezer. We're always lucky to have a lot of wild game. Soon, I'll

have to convert some of my steaks into sausage as I prepare for a harvest this fall. I got screwed up last year. Unfortunately, there was an election and it messed up my moose hunting.

One thing that I will mention is there is a reference to coyotes and the changes in this legislation, and them being considered fur-bearing animals. So we'll have some questions in Committee about that and how that will affect, again, the issues around waste and whether or not furs have to be kept and things like that. But coyotes, a few years ago, we were dealing with bounties and such to control that population, and that is still a serious issue.

The last thing I want to mention is engagement with young people. It's something that we're seeing fewer and fewer young people hunting and fishing than we did years ago. Now, we have fewer young people, of course, but it is something that I think is very rewarding and very important to connect us to nature. So protecting and managing our wildlife resource this way is very important, but we also have to think about how we can engage our youth in this and continue the traditions for generations to come.

So with that, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to say, again, thank you for this. It's an honour to speak to this issue and just express how important I feel protecting and managing this resource is.

Thank you, Minister.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: If the Minister of Forestry, Agriculture and Lands now speaks, he will close the debate.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I appreciate all the comments that were said by all the Members who spoke on this legislation today and I appreciate their values of knowing why this has to be done, because it is a very important piece of legislation. Again, the amendments to the *Wild Life Act* will modernize and update the penalties and improve the enforceability.

I think everybody was in favour of that, so it's great to hear that. But just to elaborate on some of the comments that were made – and I usually start with the first speaker, but I think I'm going to move from the first speaker and I'm going to go to the Member for Mount Pearl North. I did appreciate her personal story of what she's going through.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: She did talk about the moose management areas and the dangers on our highways and, yes, that is certainly a part of all discussions when it comes to moose management. This year, we did have an increase on the Avalon licences because of the moose management areas that were discussed. We increased the licences on the Avalon.

Also with that, she mentioned SOPAC. We know SOPAC has always been interested in the moose management areas. Of course, fencing is part of the transportation part. That continues to be looked at and worked at as we move along. We know how important the lives of people in car accidents are to the people on our highways and we said safety for all of us in our communities and that pertains to people on our highways. We'll do our moose management areas, control our moose management so that we can reduce this stuff as much as possible if we can.

But I do appreciate your story, the Member for Mount Pearl, and appreciate your comments. I really do.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: With that, I'll start with the first speaker and all I can say is I'm gobsmacked. I didn't think I would be, but he agreed with me. He agreed with me, I can't believe – I think everybody in this House heard it. I hope there was nobody outside or anything like that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: I appreciate it. Listen, I know that the Member got respect for this act and I know his knowledge of the act. He was the former minister of this department and he values the workers. He mentioned that he values the wildlife commitments and the workers, and I do appreciate those comments. I really do, and I'm sure they do, too.

He also mentioned the moose management areas and, in particular, he mentioned the Bay d'Espoir Highway which, I think, that separates probably both of our districts from Exploits down to Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune. That's where a lot of that was done, so moose management Area 21 and 25, by the way, the moose management areas there. I'll say that his area takes in more of the Route 360.

Anyway, I do appreciate those comments and the moose management areas, we know that both of those areas, Area 21 and Area 25 are a good population of moose, healthy population down that way. You're right; on a dark stormy, night driving down over that highway sometimes, it can be particularly dangerous at times, especially in the fall of the year when the salt gets on the roads and the moose are out chasing that kind of stuff.

Moose management is a big part of the department's work. We continue to do that sort of work and we put our moose licence applications and those to determine what's

issued because of the moose management areas.

I appreciate his comments and he values the protection for the future of the valued resource of our wildlife and management plans. I do thank you for your comments, especially the one that you agree with me.

The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi mentioned our conservation officers and appreciated the work they do and what we can do to protect them, whatever rules and regulations we can put in to protect our wildlife officers. That is certainly an appreciated comment because they do great work and keep our wildlife protected and have healthy species so that everybody can enjoy it in the future.

She also appreciated the values of out hiking and walking through the woods and that sort of stuff. How valued nature is, how it does pertain to our mental health and issues. I'm glad to hear those comments and tidying the legislation.

She did mention the coyotes being a problem in different areas and that sort of stuff, and we have rules and regulations in for the coyotes and regulations. Actually, the wildlife officers themselves, they get involved with the coyotes that are in the areas of those places. So they monitor that all the time with regard to the coyotes. They take a great part in those regulations for those, too, so that was part of it. She agreed, of course, with tidying up the legislation and introducing those fines and the other parts of the act. So it was good to see those comments.

The Member for Labrador West, apparently the big trout they get down there, they use ours for bait. But it's good to hear the Member for Labrador West speaking of the fishing and the hunting down that way, certainly how it's valued in that area that, say, we set out the regulations about how many fish to keep and the regulations around that, and why they have such a

bountiful harvest of trout and fish and pike, it almost makes me want to go today, actually.

Anyway, I appreciate that from the Member for Labrador West. He values the conservation efforts, the measures that we put in place to protect our wildlife, protect our species that we have with regard to deterring illegal activity in those areas and the hunting, and especially how it pertains to food necessity in Labrador as well, and how he appreciates that.

So those are the comments that I certainly appreciate from the Member for Labrador West, and I look forward to one day getting down to maybe (inaudible) and take some of my trout down so I can go fishing with his big trout down that way.

Then we had the Member for Torngat Mountains who, again, appreciates the value of this legislation with regard to protection and illegal activity and protecting our wildlife and the protection of measures and values of the cultures of the land. She told us some stories with regard to the cultures and the values of her land and our land and what we do, and how, by protecting our meat source, which is a great source of meat – she talked about the food supply down that way and how expensive it is to have it down there, and we know that. We've heard the stories.

She's advocated lots of times with regard to the stories of the food values down her way. She knows that the value of those food sources are a great source of meat, a great source of food for that area. But she also values the protection of our enforcement officers and values the protection of our wildlife and increasing the fines and the measures that need to be so that we can all have that sort of culture for years to come. Those stories are great to hear.

Then the Member for Corner Brook, another great comment. It really was, and it shows that everybody is in favour of the legislation

and the rules. So, again, I appreciate that. But he spoke of this family and how they enjoy the hunting and fishing and the great outdoors again, and he'd like to see it that his children and his family for years and years to come can go fishing. We know the Humber River is probably one of the best fishing spots around when it comes to that, besides the Exploits. I'll just throw that in.

It is a good river and people enjoy it and it's nice to see that your family enjoys it and a lot of people related to you enjoy that and they also enjoy the values to hunting. Another great area over that way for the moose in that area. So to be able to pass this down, to be able to protect our species, but we also need to be conscious that there are licences and that out there and we do need to protect our people as well, especially on the highways, and that's why those licences are put out so it puts a balance in the system.

But doing that as well, we need to protect it. Putting in those rules and legislation and the fines especially and helping our enforcement officers do the work that they do will help continue that your family, my family and for all of us concerned that our children and their children will enjoy the values that we've done and our fathers before us that value the wildlife on our territory.

With that, Speaker, I'll close and look forward to questions in Committee.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: All Members ready for the question?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act. (Bill 8)

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

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

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Wild Life Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 8)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy House Leader, that we do now recess.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that we do now recess.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

This House is now in recess until 2 p.m.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today I would like to welcome to the public gallery, Miss Newfoundland and Labrador,

Cassidy Barry, who is the subject of a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also in our public gallery today, we have members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Youth Parliament Board of Directors. They are vice-president – external – Leah Patterson of Labrador West; vice-president – internal – Avery Patey of St. Anthony; director of debate and delegates, Liam Rowe of Carbonear; and director of delegates, Declan Walsh of St. John's.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we have Member statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Humber - Bay of Islands, Labrador West, Lake Melville, Lewisporte - Twillingate and Mount Pearl North.

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, on February 10, Mark Sheppard's leg got caught in the track of his snowmobile.

Hearing Mark's cry for help, Glenn and Matt Jacobs rushed to the scene. Seeing the severity of the accident, they immediately hauled Mark out of the ditch with his leg hanging and bleeding profusely.

Glenn immediately used his belt as a tourniquet to stop the bleeding and kept Mark awake while him and Matt, with shivering hands and out of breath, pulled the belt as tight as possible to stop the bleeding for 15 minutes.

Glenn's wife, Sue, called the ambulance, and as Mark's father approached asking to hold Mark and help with the belt, Glenn refused, later saying I thought he was going to pass away and I didn't want him to pass away in your arms.

When the ambulance arrived, Glenn and Matt still played a crucial role to ensure Mark was safely in the ambulance.

Courage is what made Glenn and Matt heroes that day. Even though Mark lost a part of his leg, he told me, because of Sue, Glenn and Matt, I am here today with my family and friends.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking these heroes who saved a life in a potentially deadly situation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: Thank you, Speaker.

It is always a pleasure to rise in this House and talk about Labrador West where winter lasts long and snow blankets the land for months. The communities of Labrador West transform the cold season into a powerful celebration. From early to mid-March, the region hosts the Labrador West Winter Carnival.

For about a week, the towns of Labrador City and Wabush burst with energy, laughter and colour. Skating tracks shine under the bright lights. Families gather for pancake breakfast. Music fills halls and arenas. Children race down snowy hills. Neighbours cheer at outdoor competitions. Instead of hiding from winter, the carnival celebrates it. The carnival turns winter into a festival of joy and invites residents and visitors to celebrate the northern lifestyle together. This annual event has grown into

a tradition that reflects the spirit, strength and unity of Labrador West.

This year from March 6 to March 15, Labrador West celebrated their 65th Winter Carnival. This year we had tremendous support from our towns, sponsors, volunteers and organizers, who offer a jam-packed schedule.

I would like to congratulate the Winter Carnival Committee and send a heart-felt thank you to everyone who makes this carnival successful each year. This collective effort demonstrates the strong sense of unity within Labrador West.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the community of Sheshatshiu has been hit pretty hard of late. My last Member's statement was for a son and this one is for his mother.

It was just a couple of months ago we wished Sheshatshiu Elder Mary Adela Penashue – or Maniaten, as she was called – a happy 98th birthday.

It was a large Labrador day as the family celebrated her life and laid her to rest and it was an honour to share in the community's grief, this last Saturday morning, as we said good bye to one of the last nomadic Labrador Innu mothers of this great land.

Maniaten was born in Nutshimit, on the land, in 1928, during a time when the Innu way of life was lived fully and freely. As one of the last nomadic Elders, she witnessed much change and, as a young girl, made the journey from Natuashish to Sheshatshiu

with other Innu on foot, where she later met her husband, Louis, and had a very large family together.

Through all the changes she witnessed, from life in Nutshimit to the imposed settlement of the Innu, she remained grounded in the values of the Innu people, the Innu way of life, the respect for the land, the caring for each other and the passing on knowledge from one generation to the next.

Elders like Maniaten are the bridge between our past and our future and her life stands as a reminder of the resilience and the continuity of the Innu.

As we say goodbye, may she be reunited with her loved ones and once again walk the old trails in Nutshimit where the land remembers her footsteps. May she dance to the heartbeat of the drum and camp where the caribou are plenty.

I ask all in this hon. House to join me in recognizing the life of Mary Adela Penashue – Maniaten, Nika – who will be remembered for her kindness, her quiet strength and the way she carried Innu traditions forward simply by living them.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

M. BUTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to recognize the 40th annual Mussel Bed Soiree in Lewisporte – a milestone celebration for one of the community's most cherished traditions. For 40 years, the soiree has brought people together through music, food and friendship, reflecting a strong sense of community that defines Lewisporte.

This year's event is especially meaningful as it coincides with the town's 140th

anniversary of settlement, making it a fitting tribute to the resilience, spirit and a shared history of its people. The Mussel Bed Soiree continues to honour Lewisporte's cultural roots while uniting generations in celebrations of heritage, hospitality and community pride.

With activities for all ages, the soiree truly offers something for everyone, whether enjoying a favourite band with friends, watching fireworks over the waterfront or attending the ever-popular Family Fun Day, which creates lasting memories for residents and visitors alike.

As Lewisporte celebrates this milestone year, we look forward with excitement to the future of Mussel Bed Soiree. I ask Members of this House to recognize the tremendous support of volunteers, sponsors and participants whose dedication has made the past 39 years and this special year such a success.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. STOYLES: Speaker, I am honoured today to rise to introduce this year's Miss Newfoundland and Labrador, Ms. Cassidy Barry.

Originally from Placentia, Cassidy now resides in my District of Mount Pearl North with her fiancé. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Memorial University, with a major in English and a minor in psychology. Throughout her studies, she also worked as a self-employed nail technician, demonstrating her strong work ethic.

Cassidy completed her training as a cardiology technologist and now works full-time at the Health Sciences Centre in the cardiac diagnostic unit. Her dream is to

pursue medical school and ultimately become a heart specialist.

In addition to her professional and academic achievements, Cassidy volunteers with the education director at the Cardiology Technologists Association of Newfoundland and Labrador.

As Miss Newfoundland and Labrador, she will be travelling across the province, proudly representing our communities and attending festivals and events throughout the year.

Speaker, I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Cassidy and wishing her every success in her career and in her reign as Miss Newfoundland and Labrador. We know she will continue to make us proud.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, National Wildlife Week is a time to reflect on wildlife and its habitat.

Our staff at Salmonier Nature Park know all about that.

Whether they're guiding visitors on the trail or visiting classrooms, our educators are happy to talk about the wildlife species that share our home.

Speaker, Newfoundland and Labradorians are known for our love of the outdoors and our cherished traditions of hunting and trapping.

One person who lives those values is Chris Baldwin, who recently retired after a 32-year career with our department, including time as manager of the Salmonier Nature Park.

Chris is a champion for sustainable, accessible hunting and angling. He led the charge to modernize the *Wild Life Act* to lower the hunting age and to support hunters and anglers.

Chris was instrumental to our work, from flying surveys to delivering education programs, monitoring species at risk and much more.

He has been a mentor and friend to all of us, and his experience, kindness and passion for wildlife have made a difference. We all follow his example as we work to conserve and manage our wildlife resources. Thank you, Chris.

I encourage everyone to take time outdoors during National Wildlife Week from April 5 to 11 to appreciate this very special place we all call home.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, congratulations to Chris from this side.

I'm honoured to rise in this House today to recognize National Wildlife Week. Our naturally majestic Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has over 20,000 wild species that are protected under legislation and we discussed it this morning. It's not unusual to enjoy glorious views of our wildlife at any time, any place from incredible bald eagles to woodland caribou, from humpback whales and seals,

we are renowned for our incredible land and wildlife.

Wildlife protection works best when people are part of the solution. I ask the government to consider involving the public in a greater capacity by expanding citizen science programs, by supporting more community-lead conservation, especially in rural and indigenous areas, and by improving education and outreach about local species and ecosystems.

I encourage everyone to get outside every day and appreciate nature, especially the week of April 5 to 11, National Wildlife Week.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Our congratulations to Mr. Baldwin and we thank him for his dedicated service.

We also want to remind government that our wildlife is a significant draw for tourists. Roughly 20 per cent of our visitors come from ecotourism, and that's why we ask this government to rethink it's cancellation of the South Coast NMCA and expand the number of protected areas to meet our target, allow the feasibility process to continue and let the committee do its work.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today to highlight the critical role that safe drinking water plays in the health and prosperity of our people and communities.

Providing safe, potable water is essential to the well-being of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Speaker, this government and this Premier is committed to developing workable and appropriate solutions to drinking water challenges that match the needs of our communities here in our great province.

We are working with communities to protect drinking water sources, reduce boil-water advisories and provide training and certification to water system operators and funding to regional operators throughout the province as well.

Last week, the department's annual Water and Wastewater Workshop and Awards Presentation in Gander recognized and supported the important contributions of water and wastewater operators, including Derrick Seward as Small Systems Operator of the Year and PJ Genneau as Operator of the Year. Congratulations to you both.

I look forward to working with local leaders, regional service boards, municipalities, Local Service Districts and Inuit Community Governments to improve drinking water safety across this province.

Together, we will deliver safe drinking water in Newfoundland and Labrador, for all of us.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I acknowledge the minister's remarks and the recognition of our hard-working water system operators and I want to congratulate Derrick Seward and PJ Genneau on their well-deserved awards. Their commitment to safe drinking water is deeply appreciated across our province.

The reality for too many communities, especially rural ones, is that long-term, boil-water advisories remain a daily fact of life. The minister talks about reducing advisories and improving training and I urge the minister to make this a priority in his government to address this long-standing issue.

It was the previous government that expanded operator training supports to the operator education training and certification program as outlined in the 2017 drinking water safety report. The previous government also advanced regional service delivery models that many small communities still rely on today.

We will continue pushing for measurable outcomes, not just acknowledgements, so every community can count on safe, reliable drinking water.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We would also like to congratulate Derrick Seward and PJ Genneau for their work to secure one of our most basic needs, yet we have a long way to go to make access to safe drinking water universal. I remind the

House that last month there were 140 communities with boil-water advisories affecting nearly 9 per cent of the whole population. I, therefore, ask the government to double down on its efforts to close this unjust gap.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Gas prices continue to rise in our province daily, and it's now at least \$2 a litre in every part of our province. The last time this happened, the then Leader of the Opposition was enraged, and now he's Premier and he's patting himself on the back for not cutting taxes.

Can the Premier tell everybody what his plan is to provide relief to the people of this province at the pumps when it is clear this problem is not going away?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I have said before, it's a terrible situation that's happening right now in the world with this war in the Middle East and the impact that it is having on the people that live in that particular part of the world, but it's also having an economic impact, as the Leader of the Opposition refers to, not only in our Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but also in our entire country.

Gas prices are skyrocketing, but they would have gone up by another eight cents a litre if we had not stepped in and made sure that

that reduction was permanent, which we did. Because right now, as of today, if we did not do that, gas would be up an additional eight cents, and there was nothing in the Liberal forecast to make sure that that wasn't going to happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are not asking for taxes to stay the same. They're asking the gas tax to be lowered.

I'd like to remind the Premier of a comment he made when he was in Opposition in 2022: We all know this is an international issue. At the same time, the provincial government does have levers that it can pull to help the people of our province.

Premier, listen to yourself, pull the levers and lower the price of gas.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I say again, that's why we took the action we did to make sure that this decrease is permanent, because we will ensure that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador have the lowest gas tax of any province in the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, we are listening to the people in Newfoundland and Labrador. That's why we're bringing in measures, not just about gas tax, but affordability and other measures in the cost of living, which will see more money in people's pockets after our budget is announced.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, it's not just about the price of gas because high gas prices mean higher shipping costs, which businesses often have no choice but to pass onto the consumer. For those living on fixed incomes, especially our seniors, that means choosing between heat or food.

Speaker, that quote is from February of 2022, and it's from the now Premier. Again, why won't he listen to himself, take his own advice? I'll put it in words that I know he understands: Why won't he axe the tax?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

The Leader of the Opposition, now, has used "levers" a couple of times, citing the Premier in past statements in the House. Notice that levers is plural. He seems to focus on one lever, but he ought to know that there are many levers that can be used to put money back in people's pockets.

The Premier said, numerous times, that we're going to lower taxes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: We're going to improve affordability and all we would need for the Leader of the Opposition to do is sit and listen to the budget that will come up very shortly and look at those levers that we are using.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I'd like to know where the levers are because it's been six months and not one lever has been pulled – not one lever has been pulled. Newfoundlanders and Labradorians do not want to wait and should not have to wait. They are feeling the pain now.

So I say to the Finance Minister, if you know where the levers are and you know where they are and how you can pull them, why won't you pull them today?

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, we said that we were going to make sure that we were going to plan efficiently. We know where the levers are – we know where the levers are. They don't know where the levers are and in 10 years of government, I can tell from the budget and the deficit that they certainly didn't know where the levers were.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Now, all I would say is that the Leader of the Opposition would know that this budget is coming very soon.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: This budget is coming very soon. I would ask him just to be a little more patient and I would think that the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador are going to be pleased, as will the Leader of the Opposition.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: The Minister of Finance is missing the point. It's not about me. It's not an answer that I want for the sake of the House of Assembly. I'm asking on behalf of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are sick of being patient. They cannot afford to continue to pay for the high cost of gas and other issues in this province. Affordability is getting worse under this administration because they are not pulling the levers that only the Finance Minister seems to know where they are and he refuses to pull.

I ask the Finance Minister: How much extra revenue is in the coffers of the Newfoundland and Labrador government since oil skyrocketed by over \$50 since he took over?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, not nearly enough to cover the deficit that they left with us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, a very, very miniscule fraction of the debt that they left us – the only thing being is that the platform that this previous government – the Opposition has read numerous times – would know that we talked about affordability. We talked about lowering taxes and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: The Leader of the Opposition would know that I stand today knowing that I think and would hope that affordability issues will be addressed in the upcoming budget.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: That's fine; I mean, they can continue to say patience, but I can say that people are running out of patience. They've waited for their income tax cut; they didn't get it. They waited for a tax cut on the gas; they didn't get it. They waited for medical travel to be free that was promised; they didn't get it. They waited for free hospital parking; they didn't get it.

Minister, I'll ask you, when will you table the budget and deliver on what you promised for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, we'd be very pleased to announce in very due course and short course when the budget will be delivered, but you can rest assured that he will have a front-row seat to listen about all the affordability issues that we're going to pass on to Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Again, the Leader of the Opposition got focused on one cent extra for gas tax without looking at other levers that are going to put money into people's pocket. Any cent and any dollar that's put back into residents' pockets, it's a good measure. The only thing being, we wanted to make sure that we have targeted measures for those most vulnerable.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: The Minister of Finance should speak to the Government House Leader who's in charge of the Order Paper. The only reason I focused on that one lever, it's because it's the only relevant piece of legislation that's come to the House of Assembly to deal with affordability in the last six months.

So if you want us to continue to talk about other levers, I would suggest bringing forward the other promises you made. Where is the legislation on the income tax cut? Where are the other promises that you said you were going to deliver on because they haven't come to this House of Assembly? So we focused on what was brought, but unfortunately what was brought was not enough for 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: The Leader of the Opposition, he missed a question, but the only thing I would say is that in response to it, we looked at – he focused on one lever. We know the budget is coming. I'm not sure whether they had pre-budget announcements or not. The only thing is that we are going to deliver what was in our platform in very short course.

The only thing being is that what may be different from us and the previous government, which we will debate in the PMR this afternoon, is planning efficiently.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We have planned it out and we're not going to have knee-jerk reactions in order to send something out for the sake of sending something out – planning efficiently.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm certainly glad to hear that the Conservative government will be putting forward the Blue Book in the upcoming budget, which is what they promised Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

So if they won't assure the public, if they won't confirm the date for the budget, can they assure the public that the House will not close early this spring?

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, in the answer to that, I'm going to put out a prediction. A prediction will be that we will sit longer for every sitting than what the previous government has sat in the past six years. Will we sit for our full term this sitting?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: Absolutely.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Will we possibly need more time? Absolutely.

I know that –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you very much.

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, on Monday, the Leader of the Third Party rightfully pointed out the Minister of Health's about-face on medical transportation from when she was on this side of the House. She has gone from promising free medical transportation for everyone, everywhere, all the time to defending hefty bills incurred by patients.

So on behalf of the people I'm hearing from, why hasn't the minister done anything to improve medical travel in the past six months?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I want to point out, just because people on that side tries to mislead and take things out of context of what I've said and what I've done, Speaker, it doesn't make it true. The truth is we are working now for this budget to deliver on the medical transportation program, delivering it to 100 per cent, Speaker. We are working on that and we're going to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Ten years of Liberal government, Speaker, they didn't do that. In our first term of sitting, in actual fact, we're working on that and we're going to deliver. That's the difference between a Liberal government and a PC government; we take action.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, because the minister does get upset when she says we don't quote her properly, on December 15, 2020, she asked then Minister Haggie, will this government commit to changing the Medical Transportation Assistance Program to allow for 100 per cent reimbursement of travel costs for people who have to travel for medical reasons? Yet, now, patients are being forced to pay out of pocket.

Why does the minister say one thing on this side of the House and a different position on the other side of the House?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, the good thing about actually being in government is you have the opportunity and the privilege to take action to help people. We are going to deliver on our Blue Book promise about expanding MTAP coverage to 100 per cent, which is what the Liberal government, when they were in power, refused to do.

We are going to enact change and, in actual fact, we're going to look at affordable travel, not just for patients, but for every passenger that wants to travel in Labrador. That's something that is significantly different than what those Liberal MHAs who are in Opposition did when they had the chance. They failed to deliver. We are going to deliver.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, can the minister please tell residents why they haven't done

anything to deliver on their promises in six months? Still no free medical travel for everyone, everywhere, all the time; still no free hospital parking –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. DEMPSTER: – still no medical shuttle flights from Gander.

Why is the only thing this minister has done is cancel a hospital and let her boss pay for political advice out of the MCP fund?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, the MHA who asked that question, who was actually a Cabinet minister, either, when she was in government, didn't understand how government works, which will explain a lot of the failures, especially for Labradorians –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: – or, while they're in Opposition, they're trying to actually mislead.

We are going to deliver on our commitments. The thing about it is we have to work on MTAP. We have to make sure that the system is properly put in place. We are going to deliver with that. Ten years of Liberal government, they didn't.

We are into six months; we are actually taking action. The other thing is, we are going to actually take action and not just talk about it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: I say to the Member, I wonder where that freight boat is – is that being sailed yet?

Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Minister of TI said there were flawed tenders for roadwork that had to be cancelled, which is concerning.

Can the minister tell us what those flaws were?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Officials found there are flaws in their tender specs that come in. At first glance, they didn't think it was an issue. We were discussing whether you award these tenders. They came back and decided that this was flawed. There was no decision needed to be made. It was done at a different level. They were just cancelled and, I guess, there is a lot of it being re-tendered or whatever.

It's just an operational thing. It wasn't my decision, I say to the hon. Member.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: I'm not sure I got an answer from that. I'm just wondering, in terms of – because there are two sides. The tender is released. Contractors bid on it. So was it flaws on behalf of the contractors, or I'm not sure, I'd like for some clarity on that from the minister.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The flaws, I think, were on behalf of the contractor. They never met specifications so when it was reviewed, there was an oversight at first review and then when they looked at it further, it was deemed to be non-compliant. Basically, it was like any non-compliance. When it was discovered, they had to cancel the tender. So, again, it never made it to me.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Can the minister tell us how many contracts were cancelled because of those flaws?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: I'm not sure how many were cancelled because of flaws, but I will tell you there were some cancelled because of price. It's an issue that I've been very adamant about with the industry and the public, and I'm continuing on. The prices are out of control.

In your 10 years in government, your time as minister, I don't understand – I know where I'm looking to, I say the Leader of the Opposition. I don't understand how you could collectively sit there and –

SPEAKER: Address the Chair, Minister.

B. PETTEN: – let prices get out of control in this province like you did. Now we're left, again, with another mess to try to fix the prices to get roads paved in this province, and we will do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, I seek more clarity, but I don't know if I had the time for it, but I'll ask the minister, what was the cost associated with cancelling those contracts?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: I say to the Member opposite, it was a lot less than what we should have been paying. We saved a lot more than what we should have been paying. When anything is over budget, our responsibility is the public purse. As Members, as government, we have the responsibility to the public. It's not our money.

They thought it was their money in their 10 years. We know it's not our money. It's the public purse. We will do what we can to protect the public purse.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: I really don't care what the amount was. If it's over budget and I feel it's not properly priced, we will not commit to tendering any work. If it's overpriced, it needs to be re-tendered and get a better price because the public deserves better.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

J. PARSONS: Speaker, as a new MHA trying to deal with health care issues for my constituents, NLHS patient relations isn't being responsive and senior staff are telling me to contact the minister's office. After reaching out to the minister's office, we're being told to deal with NLHS.

What am I supposed to do? Whose in charge of making decisions related to

patients? Should I be calling Des Whalen instead?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, really, honestly, as Minister of Health, I just want to acknowledge that there are a lot of issues in patient relations and it wasn't addressed. But now, in government, we are actually taking action. We are actually working with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services. They've actually increased the staff at patient relations. That's just starting to take effect now, Speaker – something that was failed to be done by the Liberal government.

We deal with so many patient relations because there was a failure to address the need to actually have it properly staffed. We are taking action, and that action is going to benefit patients who are looking for answers for their complaints and their concerns and their appointments, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, residents in my district now routinely see heavily armed police responding to criminal activity. A recent CBC investigation shows that the number of guns being seized by police in this province is now at a record high. The RNC said – quote – sooner or later somebody is going to get hurt.

What is this minister's plan to get guns off our streets?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, I can say that our government is committed to ensuring that there's public safety in our towns and communities throughout the province.

We are looking at properly resourcing policing. We are investing in our police and law enforcement in the province. We will be tackling crime and reducing the amount of crime in our province. We will be looking at taking criminals off the street.

We will be hiring more police officers, more RNC officers, more RCMP officers. We're going to be looking at investing not only in policing, but in the courts and in the corrections, in the entire criminal justice system.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

K. WHITE: Speaker, the cost of living continues to climb and residents in my district are feeling the pinch. The Conservative platform claimed that there were over 300 unnecessary taxes and fees that would be eliminated. They've since adjusted the sugar tax from zero to zero and gas from 7.5 to 7.5.

Can the minister please tell this House what fees and taxes he's eliminated in the past six months?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Under the theme, Speaker, of planning efficiently, these were all the fees and fines that this government brought in in 2016 – 2016, 300 of them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, if there were 30 of them, we would have it done by now, but there were 300.

So I would say we –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the minister.

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

Listen, it takes time to go through all the fees and fines that they put out there, but I can tell you, we've started the review –

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

C. PARDY: – and it's an extensive review.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Minister, as the cost of living continues to rise, provinces like Alberta, New Brunswick and Quebec have indexed their income support.

Will this government include indexing of income support in the upcoming budget?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, we know what we've been left with as far as the deficit and the debt. We also realize about people need affordability issues and we need to put money into people's pockets and into their households.

We hope to achieve to the best of what we're able to do in this upcoming budget, to make sure that we put more financial resources – money – into people's pockets, including some of the most vulnerable that we have in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, no answer for income support, and I was here in December of 2015, and I do remember what we inherited at that point. So I'll ask this.

Minister, despite your commitment yesterday to fix housing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: – rent supplements have been unavailable for months.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: What is your plan to meet the demand you already know exists?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm so happy she asked that question because when I came into this office on October 29, I wasn't able to give out one Canada Housing Benefit because it was all gone from the previous administration – not one. I said yesterday –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. WALL: If they want to hear the answer, I expect them to listen. I listen and I show respect –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. WALL: – every time I stand in this House.

Thank you.

Speaker, we have a plan to address that as we go forward. As my colleague, the Minister of Finance said, we are looking at all options to avail of when we help out our most vulnerable population. As in words of the opposite, stay tuned.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, a litre of gasoline is above \$2 for the first time since 2022. The Opposition Leader is calling on the Premier to cut the gas tax, the Premier is asking the prime minister to help with gas prices and there are rumours from the Minister of Finance of a budget with affordability measures.

So I ask the minister to confirm the rumours and tell the people today when exactly he will deliver the provincial budget so they can see for themselves the promised affordability measures. Will it be this week?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, it will be forthcoming in short course, as to the date of when the budget will be delivered. I would

say to the hon. Member that we do have affordability issues that will be coming in the budget. You've really read our platform, and the platform is what we're going to deliver on.

We do feel that with the amendment, of which the Third Party and the Leader of the Opposition and his team had presented, was to reduce gas by one more so that the hon. Member for Ferryland, when he filled his gas tank, would save 50 cents, we think we need targeted approaches out there for the most needy in our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, on the topic of rental relief, the minister responded to my question on rent control saying he is passionate about people and that he will continue to meet with stakeholders, as he has been doing.

So I ask the minister: What stakeholders has he engaged since being elected directly related to rent control?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Speaker, a very important question.

As before, when I was a mayor, I used to consult with lots of other communities. I've done that since being in this role.

I've also met with – I'll answer the question straight up – tenants, landlords, Association for New Canadians, real estate brokers. I will be meeting with NLAR, which I was a part of and know them as professionals; SeniorsNL; counterparts across the country; and I spend evening and evening after

evening after evening looking for solutions to improve our legislation for all of us.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Leader of the Third Party – quick question.

J. DINN: Speaker, of course affordability could be significantly helped by the Guaranteed Basic Income.

So I ask the Premier: While we're waiting for the Minister of Finance to choose a date, will he commit to releasing the report of the All-Party Committee on Basic Income this week?

Now, I have a copy here. We can release it together following Question Period, if he likes.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I'd like to borrow a term from the Leader of the Official Opposition; we stand for collaboration over confrontation. Anything that we can stand with you to share, to make better and to improve, we will certainly stand with anyone.

The Guaranteed Basic Income, we can speak highly of putting money in people's pockets who need it most. It's great. The only thing being that we would look at, we would like to instill it and put it out there, guaranteed. We need the federal government's help. We need to make sure that we don't have a debt around \$20 billion. We need to make sure that we don't have \$1.1 billion in interest charges on the debt.

SPEAKER: The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the roads on Route 450 and 440 in the Bay of Islands are in need of repairs. These routes are heavily travelled by residents and tourists. The traffic, with heavy trucks due to the *Baltic III* shipwreck, has caused major damage to Route 450.

I ask the Minister of Transportation to have these routes reviewed and repaired, where necessary.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Member for the question.

I'll say what I say to a lot of Members in this House on all sides. When we get contracts and when we see where we are with prices – because I stated just now in Question Period, we have to get the prices under control. So I've made a commitment if we get prices that are in line and we can find savings, we can find extra monies, I'll definitely review his roads and I'll review other roads, not just on any side of the House that need repair.

Right now, I make no commitments until we get pricing back and we see where we are with our budgets.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, safety is a top priority for all residents and town councils in Humber - Bay of Islands. I will be travelling with the staff to prioritize safety concerns for

Route 450 and Route 440 to ensure the safety areas are prioritized.

I ask the minister to have these priorities reviewed to keep Route 450 and 440 safe for the residents and the tourists.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I have no issue with having any route reviewed. If the Member opposite wants to have those routes reviewed and he brings people out, like anywhere in the province – most of the roads in the province, actually there is a review; there is an idea of what kind of condition they're in. Staff do it on a regular basis and I have no problem with those roads as well.

We will make decisions at a later time, depending on the budgets of course and getting the work done, but we will definitely be able to look at that and other roads.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has now expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

J. DINN: With leave, Speaker, I would like to table the *Recommendations for a Basic Income in Newfoundland and Labrador: Report of the All-Party Committee on Basic Income* of September 9, with leave.

SPEAKER: Does the Member have leave to table the document?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave has been granted.

J. DINN: Thank you.

SPEAKER: Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, during Question Period yesterday, and probably the last couple of days, there have been questions come up in questioning my decision-making and my fairness in roadwork. So I think this fairness – I never really gave a clear answer yesterday. I went back and done a little bit of homework.

I want to advise the House that the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's in the last five years received \$41 million worth of roadwork in their district. The Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, who said she got a goose egg, got \$27-plus million. The Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, who's very critical of me, got \$34 million. The Member for Burin - Grand Bank got \$31 million.

So I tell you, Mr. Speaker – and there's more. I can answer questions at a later date, and there's more to come. But that's just an indication for the people of the

province to hear. When they're throwing criticisms our way, I think I'm backing up what I said with facts and figures. This district has done quite well and we have to try to spread this work out throughout the province to the other 40 districts to be fair for all of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I would defer to the Clerk, but I don't think there's any response. No, no response.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reasons for and the background of this petition:

WHEREAS students in schools in the Gander District, especially those with learning barriers, are being negatively impacted by a critical shortage of student support staff, and most students with approved supports are not receiving adequate time with student assistants, instructional resource teachers, speech language pathologists or teaching learning assistants; and

WHEREAS parents and educators who suspect that students who need these resources face an unacceptably long wait time for assessments that is impacting the learning, mental well-being and safety of all students in the classroom, and putting overwhelming pressure on teachers and existing support staff; and

WHEREAS every child has a right to an effective and safe learning environment, and every teacher and support worker deserves a safe, functional workspace where they can do their jobs effectively and

until the need for safety and resources are met, we cannot expect academic achievement to follow; and

WHEREAS this matter has already received attention and support from parents throughout the district online and through other petitions;

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to direct immediate action from NLSchools and the Department of Education to: one, review staffing levels for student assistants, teaching and learning assistants, instructional resource teachers and speech and language pathologists; two, release a public report detailing the number of students approved for support across Newfoundland and Labrador, the hours and staff currently allocated, wait times for assessments and service delivery; three, increase funding in the upcoming budget to meet current student needs; four, develop a clear recruitment and retention plan to ensure these critical positions are urgently filled and maintained; and lastly, commit to ongoing consultation with parents, educators and administrators to ensure that no student is left unsupported.

Speaker, I will be submitting this petition in addition to the other petition that has online signatures as well as in-person signatures, and I'll personally deliver those to the Minister of Education.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I've entered the content of this petition before, but the reason why I'm entering it today is because it arrived to me

in the mail from two of the Opposition Members' constituents, their district.

It says, the reason for this petition is as follows: While the minimum wage continues to rise, families across Newfoundland and Labrador who manage home care for their aging sons and daughters with disabilities are still being forced to subsidize wages. The hourly rate paid through NL Health Services is not competitive, leaving families to sometimes make up the difference out of pocket.

To add insult to injury, families who already manage the employment of home care workers must also compete with private agencies funded at a higher hourly rate through NL Health Services. When asked why family-hired employees are paid less, families are told that recruitment, scheduling, payroll oversight, all of those costs are additional for agencies.

Speaker, if every family in the province chose today to place their loved one into an agency-funded care, the cost to government would rise dramatically. Families are not asking for special treatment; they are asking for fairness. Their employees should be compensated at the same rate as agency employees, especially when many agency employees also provide home care for families.

Now, Speaker, today is April 1 and we know that the minimum wage has gone up by 35 cents to \$16.35. Self-managed employees are getting \$17.05 an hour, plus 4 per cent. Whereas today, agency employees are getting \$20.30 an hour, plus 4 per cent. There's a wage gap of \$3.25 and they're doing the exact same work. I know this because, as an employer, I have individuals hired who are employed in self-managed, leave my home and go work in an agency.

This particular petition arrived in the mail to me. It is from residents from the Minister of Finance, the MHA for Bonavista, his district, and there are also residents here from

Clareville. I got them here from Bloomfield, Jamestown, a lot from Clareville, Musgravetown, Lethbridge – let's see, it goes on. From Terra Nova, Clareville, a pile from Bunyan's Cove, Shoal Harbour, George's Brook, and it goes on and on. There's not one person on this from my district, Speaker. But they did send it to me in the mail and they did ask me to present it and I told them I would.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today on this petition, and this is a call for the implementation of GPS ankle bracelet monitoring systems for intimate partner violence offenders.

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

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

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

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

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

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the

Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to implement an active GPS ankle bracelet monitoring program as an option for courts to impose on accused dangerous or repeat intimate partner violence offenders.

Speaker, when I was minister of Women and Gender Equality, we actually struck a Cabinet Committee, a task force, if you will, on gender-based violence that included a number of departments, such as Education, such as Health, such as Housing and social services, of course, Justice and Public Safety. We often met with stakeholders and took presentations from stakeholders.

One of the most effective presentations that we did receive was from Violence Prevention Avalon East and how they came in and gave a presentation on the ankle monitoring and how it actually makes a difference where it could save lives, to defer repeat offenders.

So I know when the hon. Member, my colleague, was standing here, she was, at the time, the shadow minister for Justice and Public Safety as well as Women and Gender Equality, and she called for the urgency of this. Again, it was mentioned it was in the Conservative platform, that's something they would be bringing in, as well as a policing oversight. The urgency – and I quote – the Member said it's all about political will. It can be done now.

Unfortunately, six months in, we're not seeing action thus far. I know my hon. colleague as well from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi has also called for this and petitioned this and even questioned this here in this hon. House, and it is something that we are calling. We know it can be done at \$15 a day in other jurisdictions, as we do know.

So we are calling on the minister to do what she can to work with her colleagues, to work with the Premier to make this happen because it could indeed save lives for the people, in particular, women who are

victims of gender-based violence here in this province.

Thank you, Speaker.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

SPEAKER: This being Private Members' Day, I'm going to call upon the Member for Lake Melville to move the motion.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for St. George's - Humber, the following private Member's motion:

WHEREAS access to safe, affordable housing is essential for the well-being and economic stability of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador; and

WHEREAS recent public reporting, including findings by the Auditor General, identified serious concerns regarding the planning, management and delivery of housing initiatives under the previous government; and

WHEREAS delays, lack of oversight and missed opportunities to expand housing supply contributed to increased wait-lists, rising rents and growing pressure on vulnerable residents across the province; and

WHEREAS a new government now has the responsibility to restore public confidence and ensure housing programs are properly managed and deliver these real results for residents; and

WHEREAS the people of Newfoundland and Labrador expect accountability for past failures and a clear path forward to addressing the housing shortage;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House recognize that the housing challenges facing Newfoundland and Labrador were significantly worsened by the failures of the previous administration to properly plan, manage and deliver housing initiatives; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the efforts of the new government to implement stronger oversight, improve transparency and accelerate the construction and repair of housing units across the province; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this hon. House encourages and supports the development of a comprehensive housing action plan outlining timelines, targets for new housing units and measures to address wait-lists and affordability; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this hon. House encourages collaborative action of the government and board of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation on the development of housing policies that ensure accountability, efficiency and delivering homes for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

With that, Mr. Speaker, an honour and a privilege every single day that we get to get up in this House and address our districts and do our good work here and talk about the people that put us here.

Right now, this being Private Members' Day, we're talking about this resolution that's been put out here and let me begin by saying what should be obvious, is that we welcome the Auditor General's report. We welcome it with open arms on housing. We fully accept its findings and we are going to act on them. Of that, you can be sure.

We're not running from this report. As bad as it is, we're not hiding from it. We're not dismissing it. We're not going to try and explain it away and make it all sound nice. What we're going to do and what the people

of this province expect a responsible government to do is that when an independent Officer of this hon. House identifies deep systemic failures, we are acknowledging them. We're going to look them right in the eye and we're going to confront them and we're preparing to fix them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: This report, Mr. Speaker, is really serious. It's not about one isolated error. It's not about one unfortunate system, not one breakdown. This is about long-standing breakdowns, planning, policy, forecasting, inventory management, governments and oversight in general. It points to outdated policies, poor data, weak controls, the inefficient use of existing assets and it warrants plainly that without significant work to strengthen governance, data quality, planning and demand forecasting, Newfoundland and Labrador will simply be unable to meet our housing needs. We can't allow this to continue. It's as simple as that.

That's the heart of the debate. It's not about the audit of the Housing Corporation. It's not about that at all. This is an indictment of a political approach and a Liberal mentality in methodology, I'll say that.

Now, I say that because systems like this don't just drift into disarray and disrepair like this. That just doesn't happen and it just doesn't happen over time with normal conditions and normal things happening in economics, and even environments when we talk about housing.

What you're going to see is that the former Liberal government, they just allowed housing – they had no plan. They let it fall into disorder – no oversight, no accountability whatsoever. This report is really what many people in the province already know it to be. This is a Liberal housing report card. It says that the government left the system in disorder, and

the evidence backs that up. All of that, Mr. Speaker.

What's so striking though, too, is that this all happened during a housing crisis. That's like, can you drop the ball twice at once? I guess they have. So at the very time when Newfoundlanders and Labradorians needed serious help, needed serious planning, serious management, we got drift, delay, spin, nothing. That's what we got.

Instead of getting what we should have got, they got a government that made inflated claims and couldn't manage what they had. They got a government that talked so big, promised so big and delivered so very, very, very little. This is the clearest example, I can say that.

We've all talked about that. They went out and got in a scrum, 750 houses – 750. What did they end up with? Eleven. I tell you what, Mr. Speaker, you couldn't walk into a store and look at that TV and say \$750; I'll give you \$11 for it? It isn't going to happen.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: The people expect 750. When you say 750, and you're the minister or the premier, deliver 750, I say.

That example almost likened to the *Titanic*. There are not enough lifeboats there for all of the people on it, and we have dropped the ball in that aspect. It's not a minor discrepancy. It's not a rounding order. It's not a small communications misunderstanding. This is the former government trying to paper over failure with a number that sounded good in the scrum that fell apart on contact with the facts. That's what happened there.

Now, while they're doing that, what happened in the real world? That housing list kept on growing, kept on growing, kept on growing, more people in need, more people in need. By 2024, it had risen to 3,000 families, up roughly 20 per cent from

the year before. The Auditor General's report notes that and by spring of 2023, it was about 2,500; 2024, it went to 2,807; and by September, around 3,000 families – 3,000.

While they're trying to see their fake story of progress, the lineup is just getting longer. That's real people we're talking about, as well. You're talking about families. You're talking about seniors. You're talking about single parents, people with disabilities, young people trying to get started. In this province, after this 10 years, not a chance. People looking for stability, all they got were delays, delays, delays, delays.

That's why this debate matters so much is because housing is not abstract. It's not a spreadsheet issue. It's not just about numbers. This is not a tidy political file. It's about how people can live with dignity and security, and it's our job to provide that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: People have waited too long. Units weren't used; policies were outdated; inspections weren't even done; vacancy gaps stretched beyond months; lease renewals were overdue in 37 per cent of the cases, Mr. Speaker. This is pure mismanagement. That's exactly what this is.

I need to be clear about this, too. The focus of this debate shouldn't be about attacking the staff of NL Housing; it should be attacking the track record of the former government across the way who put us in this situation, Mr. Speaker.

I can see I only have a couple of minutes left here in my preamble, but I tell you what, we need a whole lot more going forward. I want to tell you this, if I can just for a second; you look at my district, 10 years ago, we had a place where you never locked your door. Everybody knew everybody. Everybody helped everybody. What do we have now, Mr. Speaker? Here's

where the passion comes out. We have hundreds of kids shooting up. Shooting up with needles in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

We have babies being born with syphilis. We have dozens and dozens of groups of people living outdoors – nowhere to live. We have hard drugs and organized crime. We have murders happening. We have people walking the streets in Goose Bay and in Sheshatshiu with guns. You have trap houses on every street. You have criminals running free, brazen daylight robberies. You have people drinking in public unmasked, and nothing being done about that.

You have 50 people standing in a circle, next to where the kids are getting their lunch from the middle school – 50 people standing around having a big brawl in the middle of the day, Mr. Speaker. That's what we're left with.

You look at our housing. You look at hospitals. You walk through our hospital; our hospital is clogged. We have people in the hallways. We have the everywhere. They have to ship people out for long-term care. There's no room for anybody, Mr. Speaker. Our own town had to take our benches out and all of that stuff because we just had such – I have 15 seconds, Mr. Speaker.

These are just some of the reasons – and I'm going to finish off that later – what this debate is all about, why we're here to attack this track record and to do just that is to let people know who this did. That's why I moved this resolution and that's why I want everybody in this House to support it.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to speak to this private Member's motion on housing, an issue that is critically important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and one that deserves both seriousness and honesty in this House

As the past Member of Public Accounts Committee and the critic for Housing, let me begin by saying this, I thank the Auditor General for her work. That is exactly how our system is supposed to function. Independent audits are meant to identify gaps, highlight risks and provide recommendations so government can improve.

What I just heard in this House of Assembly is exactly what we should not do, Speaker, take that work and twist it into a simplified political narrative that ignores both context and progress. Housing challenges in this province did not begin with one administration, nor will they be solved by pointing fingers in this House of Assembly.

The motion before us suggests that the housing challenges facing Newfoundland and Labrador were significantly worsened by the previous administration. That is an oversimplification of a very complex issue. The reality is that housing pressures are being felt across this entire country. Rising construction costs, labour shortages and increased demand have created strain in every province of Canada, not just here in Newfoundland and Labrador. To suggest that this is solely the result of one government is not only inaccurate, but it distracts from the real work that needs to be done.

Speaker, we have seen significant changes in recent years: population growth, shifting demographics and rising demand for smaller and more accessible housing. At the same time, construction costs have increased dramatically. These are structural pressures and no single government can control them.

I want to address the Auditor General's report directly. The findings highlight serious concerns, particularly around oversight planning and inventory management within the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation. Those are important issues. They require attention and they must be addressed. The PC government likes to say that nothing was done, but pointing out gaps is not the same as doing nothing, and real action was taken to address housing needs.

The report points to systemic issues that have developed over time. For example, wait-lists increased significantly while supply remained flat. That tells us demand is outpacing supply – something that requires sustained, long-term action. During our time in government, we recognized that need and we did take concrete steps to address it.

Speaker, I was the minister responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation from December of 2015 to July of 2017, and I can assure you that there were very credible, dedicated staff working throughout that organization. That matters, because behind every unit and every repair are public servants working hard to meet the growing demand.

In 2019, our government implemented the Affordable Rental Housing Program. That was 2019, and it was an \$82-million initiative to increase supply through partnerships. Homes have been completed, hundreds more are under construction, as I stand here in this House, and projects are moving forward in communities across the province from St. John's to Corner Brook, from Placentia to Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

We also introduced a very comprehensive five-point plan to stimulate housing development. This included incentives for rental construction; a loan program for developers; unlocking surplus government land; support for first-time home buyers; and encouraging secondary and basement

suites. We made projects financially viable so developers would actually build.

Mr. Speaker, those measures were designed to expand supply and improve affordability. It's exactly what is being called on to do today. Importantly, they recognize that government cannot solve this alone. We do need partnerships with developers, with municipalities and with community organizations.

In *Budget 2025*, we made further commitments. There was a \$36-million plan to build new provincial housing. There was a \$26-million plan to repair and upgrade existing units, and \$23 million in rental assistance supporting 2,600 families. Some of these housing measures are already being realized. Construction is happening now as I stand here, but housing is not just about building; it is about maintaining what we already have.

When we talk about housing, we're talking about real people: seniors, families and individuals facing housing insecurity. Housing is a foundational, basic need.

Speaker, the motion also speaks to better oversight and transparency. Well, we agree with that – we agree with that. That is why the Auditor General actually exists and why we support stronger governance, better data and improved planning.

Speaker, might I add, while the Auditor General exists, we stand here today and the Public Accounts Committee has not even been established yet. But this is not about assigning blame; it's about improving outcomes. As a former minister, I can tell you, managing a housing complex is difficult. It involves aging infrastructure, limited resources and balancing urgent repairs with long-term development, as the now minister will learn quickly. Often, units require significant upgrades before they can even be occupied – something that takes a lot of time and planning.

What concerns me about this particular motion is not that it highlights problems. We all agree there are problems. We all see that every single day, all 40 of us. It is that it looks backward instead of forward, that the people of this province are not interested in political narratives. They want real results. They want to know things like, when will more homes be built? How will the wait-list be reduced? How will housing become more affordable?

They want accountability, but accountability that leads to action. That is where our focus should be. That is why we support expanding supply through partnerships, supporting community housing, investing in repairs and working with municipalities and developers. We also need to continue exploring solutions like modular housing, better use of public land and streamlining development. Solving this issue requires using every single tool available to us.

Housing affects health, employment, education and one's quality of life. And yes, there is more work to be done. Progress does not come from rewriting history or standing in this House pointing fingers. It comes from building on it. In QP today, the Minister of Social Supports and Well-Being said there were no rent supplements left in October. Well, doesn't that spell out the demand loud and clear?

While I appreciate the intent behind this motion, I cannot support a version that places disproportionate blame without acknowledging the broader context of the real progress that has been made here. Because, Speaker, this motion is not really about accountability. No, it's about political framing.

The people of Newfoundland and Labrador deserve more than that. They deserve a government that is focused on delivering homes, not deflecting responsibility. They deserve actions, not accusations and they deserve results.

Thank you, hon. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Minister of Housing.

J. WALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate that a full minute has gone. I will say to the hon. Member who just spoke – and I thank her for standing in this House today and speaking –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

We're going to try again and I'm going to start naming people.

The hon. the Minister of Housing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

This is not funny. I'm really starting to lose my patience here today with this, and every day. Now, let's have order.

The hon. the Minister of Housing.

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

Third time's a charm to stand. With a full minute gone, I will try my best. I'll start again.

Thank you to the Member opposite for standing and speaking. I will say what she just said that's coming, is action and responsibility and a targeted approach, no doubt, is going to come from this government dealing with the Auditor General's Report and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

I know I spoke a great deal about it yesterday and I just want to further describe what we saw in this report. I've learned a lot in the last number of months since coming into this portfolio. I gave my initial impressions to the media on the day it was released – that's almost two weeks ago now – but after that, I felt it was important for me to stop talking and start listening.

I listened to everyone else who came to me since the Auditor General's report came out because that is what responsible government does. There's a time to talk and a time to listen and my voice is far from the only one that matters, I can tell you that.

I heard those who worked with community partners responding to the report, highlighting the experiences of dealing with the Housing Corporation in those supporting and experiencing homelessness and struggling in securing housing either for themselves or for others. I've heard it, I've listened to it and I was educated.

I also heard from many who wanted to talk to me, personally, about this report, but I can say, and I can stand here and honestly say it, up until yesterday, the group I heard from least was His Majesty's Official Opposition.

We had opportunities in the House to ask questions. No one asked a question. No one reached out until yesterday. I'm glad we

had that opportunity yesterday to do that because –

L. DEMPSTER: (Inaudible.)

J. WALL: I say to the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, I will stick to my speaking notes. I will stick to the reason why I'm here. I will stand here and say that this will be done for the people of the province and I will take politics out of (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: Mr. Speaker, those who want respect, give respect and I do it each and every day and I respect it. I respect this House as well.

The Leader of the Official Opposition gave some remarks about when he knew that work needed to be done with the housing file. He said that to the media. He knew work needed to be done. I would certainly hope that he knew that it needed to be done; he was the premier of the province for a period of time. Yes, money was put into that, I'll say to the Member opposite.

But I was so interested to hear from yesterday – and I'm looking forward to what's going to be said here again today in this House. I truly am. Their perspective is important. Because if I'm missing something, I said there were four ministers sitting opposite that were in this time frame. We're looking at 2021 to 2025, the audited report time frame, and everyone in this province is interested in the perspective.

I say to this hon. House, one thing that is important for me to do – and I did it yesterday and I want to do it again is to defend the hard-working people of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I know it's been said many times by both sides of the House. But everyone who reads the AG's report, who read the news or watched the debate or saw it on social media, I want to make sure that they know that this mess doesn't fall to the staff.

I've seen commentary online. I've seen it. I've been part of commentary on social media with respect to different Facebook sites and my picture is there and I'm not doing anything with respect to housing in the short period of time I was Housing Minister. However, I'll take that, Speaker, but I can certainly say that the people at the Housing Corporation care, they're qualified and they just want to do their work plain and simple.

As I said, from my first day, I've been extremely impressed by the Corporation staff. Whenever we look at decisions being made, I won't be pointing fingers. I'm looking at the human element but I can tell you when the Leader of the Opposition says they put money in the budget, there might have been money in the budget but when you're looking at the proper planning, the proper decision-making, making announcements for the sake of announcements, that's not going to happen anymore I can certainly tell you that. We're going to have a plan. We're going to have a budget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I know and I respect every Member opposite when it comes to knowing how the budget process works. They all know that. We all know that. When this budget comes down, when the Minister of Finance does present the budget to the House of Assembly, to the people of the province, I am excited for the work that we're going to be able to do for the people of the province and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

I can certainly say that every project – and we have many, many projects, as I said, for

many districts of this hon. House that are coming down the pipe – I will work with the Housing Corporation, with the CEO and the staff to ensure that we fill the gaps, that we reduce the wait-list, that the work is done and that it's going to be done efficiently and, as my colleague said, spending smarter each and every time.

This is what we are looking at in this report from 2021 to 2025. As I said, I've met with many stakeholders who experience or are dealing with the issue of homelessness or housing and all the groups and I've lost – I think it might be 67 or 68. Can you imagine being one of those groups and for another minister to walk in – and I'm the seventh one in just over two years – how do those groups feel?

In all honesty, with the human touch, with the personal element, how do those groups feel who continue to work day in and day out for the people of the province to advocate for them and I'm number seven that they have got to start off with again? Speaker, I hope and pray to God that I'm in this position to get the work done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. WALL: I know I serve at the leisure of the Premier but I can say it won't be a three- or four-month turnover for me. I certainly hope and pray.

Speaker, at the same time, we're looking at the fourth CEO of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. Again, let me be very clear; this is not being political. This is not coming down on any CEO. It's not a criticism but I can tell you, we had one CEO, after he spent a distinguished career in the public service and, if I'm not mistaken, served as a stint as the Auditor General – so we had very qualified people there.

However, when she retired and a new CEO was appointed by government, it was deputy minister of a sitting department, of a current department, and that's unfair to the

CEO at that time who also had the deputy minister's responsibility for the department. I know how hard my deputy minister works and every deputy minister in every department in government and that was unfair to put the Housing Corporation on the corner of a desk of a sitting deputy minister to deal with the issues of housing.

We just can't simply shuffle the duties. That's why I'm very happy we have a full-time CEO there now who's dedicated and committed to ensuring the work gets done for the people of the province. Speaker, I know that much work has to be done, and I have a minute and 30 seconds left and I could go for an hour.

I can say we're looking at what needs to be done in the province. We had builds announced with respect to the builds that been ongoing within Corner Brook, six builds and 20 – I announced one yesterday for Hoyles Avenue. There's another coming today or, if not, tomorrow, for Empire Avenue in the District of Mount Scio because we see the need and we know that the work has to be done. It's going to be done properly.

I'm not going to make a splash. I won't be making a splash with an announcement because when you make a splash, you have other people left treading water, and that's going to happen. When an announcement is going to be done, it's going to be done right with proper planning, proper procedure, proper funding, the work being done and looking at the data that we need to have and work with to serve the people of the province.

I can certainly tell you that this is more than action. There's a plan. It's actioned. It's going to be provided with sufficient budget that's going to get the work done. In order for the work to be done for the people of the province the board of directors at the Housing Corporation and the CEO will do their work, work with the important staff at housing to build the houses, repair the

houses and look at what needs to be done to get people back into safe, affordable housing.

That is the goal here, Speaker. I will do the work, this government will do the work, our Premier will do the work and I look forward to being supported by all Members of this House when it comes forward to this PMR today because it is important. We will make sure that the work is done and I thank you for your time (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister and I thank as well the private Member's motion that is here before us. Look, let's stick to the facts here and there are a number of different measures that deal with people's livelihoods and affordability and certainly the housing issue in general. I mean, this is a beautiful province with hard-working people and rich natural resources, yet the basic necessities are still unaffordable.

Housing is next to impossible to find and increasingly difficult to address in amongst all of the health care issues that we have. We know that people need housing they can afford. The AG report, which, of course, was a big wallop – that was the one, these are the facts, an independent report with conclusions that “the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation did not effectively manage the supply of social rental housing inventory to meet the needs of Newfoundland and Labrador during this audit period.

“Systemic weaknesses limited the Corporation's ability to align supply with need.” These are the facts. This is in the report and I certainly would encourage everybody to go and have a look at that Auditor General's report.

“Governance and oversight did not drive corrective action.” So that is key. We can have all of these lofty goals and plans and desires, all of the things that we talked about during one government or another, but it all comes down to action, and that’s the bottom line. We need to support people so that they can thrive and they can have a roof over their heads – an adequate roof over their heads.

It is very concerning, as the report discusses here, that many of the issues in this report were also found in the 2008 audit and had not been corrected. There’s a lot to address and lots to unpack here.

I’ll just refer to the private Member’s motion here. Here we’re talking about essential for the well-being and economic stability of the people of the province; the concerns regarding planning, management; and in the third WHEREAS, delays, lack of oversight and missed opportunities to expand housing supply contributed to increased wait-lists, rising rents and growing pressure on vulnerable residents across the province.

Well, in amongst that, obviously, we need to address the public housing issues that have been presented to us but also, in conjunction with that, there are many things that we can do –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask the Members if you are having conversations to take them outside. I’m trying to hear the Member.

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

S. O’LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

There are many pieces to the pie, as I’ve already mentioned to the Minister of Finance. We know that this is a challenge, balancing all of the needs of every single

individual in this province, but rent control is something that has been proven in other jurisdictions. It is something that truly can provide affordability for individuals who are getting priced out of the market.

When we see people, young couples, my children, their friends who, in my day and age, I was able to access a property, even though I was a working artist – another generation cannot do that. They cannot do it in the same way.

So there has to be measures of support for people to get up on their feet in the beginning, in their early years. Rent control, Guaranteed Basic Income, these are the measures, these are the things that can help people. Rent control is something that has been proven in many other jurisdictions.

Another thing, another piece of the pie that I would like to reference, as well, is support for co-operative housing. Some time ago in my tenure as a municipal leader, I had the great privilege of attending a co-operative housing forum that was hosted actually in the City of Mount Pearl. I have to say there have been some successful pilots and measures that have been done, especially in Mount Pearl, but certainly in the City of St. John’s. I’m not sure about other jurisdictions, but co-operative housing has proven to be something that’s sustainable throughout generations of keeping people in their homes, keeping it affordable.

I would certainly implore the government now that it is your turn to govern, now it is your turn to take the opportunities, all of the opportunities – obviously, the AG report is the one that we really want to go at and make sure that social housing is dealt with, but there are other measures.

I would encourage you, the minister, if he could reach out to the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of Co-operatives and the Housing Corporation to discuss some of the successes that they’ve had, because those models can work and they are

another piece of that pie that I've mentioned to the Minister of Finance.

Co-operative housing, rent control, Guaranteed Basic Income – of course, my colleague was just forced to kind of table it there. But look, yesterday I spoke to the 10 vulnerable adults, many seniors facing eviction from their house down in the downtown core. If there was rental control, that wouldn't be happening.

A constituent living in an apartment building, I referenced that as well. They basically called our office inconsolable, rent going up – a senior on a fixed income. A family with four children in a rat-infested house, afraid to complain because they know they'll get evicted.

Again, another constituent in fear of her landlord, unwanted sexual advances against her with nowhere else to go. I have to reiterate these stories. Today, I brought to the minister's attention of another individual who had been scrambling around our office while we're trying to have these discussions in the House of Assembly, of an individual who is going to be unhoused as well.

We can do better. We have to do better. We have to serve all of the people of our province and certainly the people of my district are coming to me, and I can guarantee you all the hon. Members here in this House are getting the same kind of questions asked of them.

We have incredible resources in this province. The facts are the management, we haven't been doing so great so far. Look at the debts that we've incurred. The reality is that with the resources that we have at our fingertips, we have to do better. That means everybody has to do better, not just the elite, not just the people at the top of the spectrum, the big moneymakers, it has to be everybody because that's how a society is supposed to function.

I look at models. There are things that can happen. We've had a very exciting opportunity as the NDP, the Third Party, small but mighty, but we've just elected a new federal leader, and we have a premier of the Province of Manitoba who has just taken off the PST off grocery items. He can do it. It is something that is possible and, again, the power is with government.

These are measures that can happen when we look at all the options. Of course, specific to housing, but all of these things are integrated when we talk about affordability. I know that is certainly something that the government is very concerned with. Obviously, the NDP, we've been standing on affordability for a very long time.

Housing is a human right. It is something that's an absolute, that everybody deserves to have a roof over their heads and that is the starting block of everything – all the social supports, everything else comes afterwards, the food, everything else; but if somebody does not have an adequate place to live, they cannot thrive.

Speaker, it is my honour and pleasure to speak on behalf of the people of the St. John's East - Quidi Vidi District but certainly the people of this province, because I know a lot of people are suffering and there are options. While this Auditor General report – honestly, it's a complete embarrassment that we have let this happen. That we, as a society, have let it happen, that earlier governments have brought us to this point, but we all have a role and all of these pieces of the pie can be a contributing factor in ensuring that housing happens for everybody.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

I hope my voice holds out so I can get through this. Thank God it's only 10 minutes.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to rise today. I really appreciate it. I'm rising on behalf of the great people in the Burin - Grand Bank District and also the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who are very interested in this issue.

I rise today to speak to the motion on housing, and I was wondering when I was standing up, what's the difference between yesterday's motion and today's resolution? One was, I guess, we all certainly appreciated what was put forward yesterday and we all agreed with it. We all stood and said we would agree with the motion but today, with the resolution, it was like the blame game starts and the mud throwing. I certainly am taken aback by that. I mean, if we want to work together, let's work together.

If you look at years 2003 to 2015, we had a Conservative government, four premiers, yet the report says here, that the same issues that were found in the 2008 audit had not been corrected. So everybody, let's look at what really –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. PIKE: Yes, it's right here in the conclusions.

So I think it's important that we look at everything and we all try to work together on this very, very important issue instead of slinging mud back and forth, because that's not what we're about. That's not what we're about over here.

I'd like to start as well by thanking the Auditor General for a great report. I thought it was well done and it addressed all the issues that I certainly wanted to see addressed. Reports like this are essential.

They shine a light on what systems are falling short and where improvements are needed, Speaker.

Let's be clear; there are real challenges in our housing system. Nobody is denying that. Nobody on this side and nobody on that side. The demand for housing has increased and it will continue to increase. Wait-lists are through the roof. Yes, there are some areas where oversight and processes must improve. But we're going to accept that, and we should accept that because ignoring it helps no one.

I was wondering why the Member for Lake Melville didn't talk about the number of housing units that were opened up in the last five years in his community. I wonder why – I don't know if it's even moving now, but the hub never got finished. Even when I was minister, we were met with opposition for the hub up there. That would have certainly helped the people up in Goose Bay. It would have helped the whole region. But anyway, like, we were all there.

AN HON. MEMBER: Thirty million.

P. PIKE: Thirty million dollars to be spent up there. So listen, hang on. Before you get up and start doing that, hang on.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

P. PIKE: You were probably part of it.

But we also need to ground this debate in reality, what we got here today. Let's keep it real. Housing pressures did not begin in Newfoundland and Labrador alone; housing pressures went right across this great nation. There were rapid population shifts, construction, capacity constraints, rise in material and labour costs and increased demand for affordable units.

I see that the –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

P. PIKE: Listen, I'm trying to speak. You're over there chirping. You're having a great laugh for yourself. This is not funny. I really pity you, I really do, because this is not funny. I really do. I do, because do you know something? This is important.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

P. PIKE: Yeah, it is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. PIKE: Speaker, it's not fair.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I would ask for order and I would ask you to address the Chair, please.

P. PIKE: Speaker, I will.

Speaker, a blame game is not that we're about here. We're not about a blame game here. This is the actual needs at this given point in time.

I think back to my days as minister and the Opposition were urging us to do something; all of a sudden housing became an issue. Then COVID came. Then we had tent cities. I remember being the minister when tent cities were the thing. Then there was the request from the parties to get transitional housing. We did that. We got people off the streets. We got people in tent cities – we increased the number of shelters. We increased the number of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

P. PIKE: Speaker, no need of the chirping over there. We gave these Members an opportunity to speak. What I'm saying here is from the heart. It's not from the party; it's from the heart.

But we did have people on the streets and we did advocate for these people. They were housed in tents. We were there. We were down there with them.

This government had to move quickly. These were unprecedented times. We had to move very quickly. This government's ability to pivot was absolutely wonderful, being able to pivot. We had discussions with groups, all throughout the province. Trying to keep up with housing demands was difficult.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I find myself, unfortunately, having to ask for order again. The Member has the floor. I ask for everyone to show some respect and let the Member have his say.

P. PIKE: Thank you for your protection, and I really need it.

Mr. Speaker, good leaders have vision and they make decisions based upon the rights of others, and that's what we did. We took concrete action when we had to. We put together an \$82-million Affordable Rental Housing Program. Now, someone said earlier that the minister said that there was no money left in the pot. Thank God, we used it – we used it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: What were we going to do, wait for you so you could do it? We had to do it. We weren't going to say no, b'y, we have to wait until after this or after that. No, we wanted to help people immediately. That's why there's no money in the pot.

So that's what we did. When the minister today talks about when he got there, there was no money available for affordable rental, yes, we had given it out. I'm glad we did and I felt a success and I felt proud of

this government for taking action and giving it out.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: We put together a comprehensive five-point plan to stimulate supply. We made investments in repairs. We went and we visited homes. I visited Crestview in Corner Brook. I visited a lot of the areas in the province. I looked at housing, the same as the present minister did. We all did as ministers of Housing.

We went around and we looked and we acted as best we could at the time with the funding that we had, and we did have a good plan. We did rely on the great staff of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. I hope that none of this is ever a reflection on them, because they are the best and I worked with them and I'd stand by them anytime.

We provided rental assistance to approximately 2,600 families. Hundreds of units were completed, under construction or approved.

Speaker, look at the number of seniors' housing that we put out there. Look at the numbers. How many are we going to have as we go ahead in the future? How many seniors' units are we going to be doing? We did hundreds of them – very successful.

I knocked on the door of every single unit in my district during the election and these were the happiest people that I met. They were happy with their lot in life. They were happy with where they were to. They were happy they didn't have to get out and shovel.

I'll end with this. This government inherited active programs, approved projects, funding commitments and a clear understanding of where the gaps were. The question today is whether or not the work has already begun. The question is whether this government

will continue it and deliver results, and I hope that's true.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to stand in this hon. House and represent the people of Placentia West - Bellevue that rely so much, really, on our Housing Department because of the way our economy has gone.

The way I would like to start my address is that I would like to acknowledge two people in particular with Housing, Joe Mercer and Wayne Follett.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: They're two absolute gems that have had their hands tied behind their back for quite some time. I think now that the shackles are coming off them, we're going to see some real work done in the department.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: I do find it a little disingenuous, as I'm going to start as well with, a little ironic, I guess, from the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, Speaker, and speaks about the support and everything for their new leader, Avi Lewis, who has condemned Bay du Nord and wants us to turn off the pipes to oil and gas, which that would affect every Newfoundlander and Labradorian and we won't get to the housing that you're asking to be paid for.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: So when you sit up and you call the former government a slum lord, that I can agree with, but, in the meantime, you can't have it both ways. You need to be able to pay for it. It doesn't pay for it with beach rocks and buttons.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Now, to get back to the architecture, the debacle.

The Auditor General's report gives us more than a diagnosis. For this government, it actually gives us direction. It is a clear call to pause, reflect and correct course, but also to act with urgency and purpose. It tells us not only that we must do better, but exactly where and how we must improve. It is the core. The report points to weak governance that has developed over time; the absence of a strong, long-term strategy to manage and grow housing supply; inadequate tracking of housing needs, outcomes and changing demographics; serious gaps and oversight including how units are allocated, maintained and brought back online; and perhaps most concerning is the disconnect between supply and access.

There are still far too many households waiting for safe, appropriate housing while units within this system sit vacant. That's not just inefficiency, it's a failure. It's a failure of coordination and accountability and it must be addressed. I know that this minister and this Premier are going to do just that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: So there's nowhere that these challenges are more visible than in a town in my district, Marystown, which is the hub of the Burin Peninsula. The numbers tell the story and they should concern all of us.

There are 278 units in Marystown with an average of 51 years per unit. That's how old the units are. It's been decades since new

units were constructed, but at the same time, at least 70 households are currently on the waiting list for housing. This is not simply about aging infrastructure; it's about a system that has not kept pace with the needs of the community or the region. Homes that were built for a different time are now expected to meet today's realities without the reinvestment or expansion required to make that possible.

In Marystown, as in many parts of our province, the result is mounting pressure, aging units that require significant maintenance, limited availability for new tenants and families left waiting far too long for stable housing. The situation in Marystown should serve as a clear example of what happens when long-term planning is absent.

A 31-year gap in new construction is not an oversight; it's a result of decisions and inaction that have compounded over time. This is exactly why we need to move forward differently. We need a modern, data-driven approach to housing that reflects real demand, ensuring existing units are fully utilized and commit to targeted investments in communities like Marystown where the need is clear and growing.

Our focus must be on rebuilding confidence in the system, making sure that every available unit is used, that aging stock is repaired or replaced and that new housing is developed where it is needed most; because, ultimately, behind every number in this report, including those in Marystown, are real people and families who are waiting. They deserve a system that works for them.

To see the checks and balances that are being offered up by the Auditor General, it's hard to believe that we never knew those checks and balances were possible before. I would say they were always there, we just turned a blind eye to them.

I worked with the Housing Corporation for the last seven years, because housing is a big deal in my district and there are a lot of people who rely on it based on the economy that we're currently in, but what happens in Marystown is very different. To address the problem of not having enough houses, what we did was, we took some of the assets and we sold them off to a private owner who was able to refurbish them and now he's making money off those units when we were told that they needed to be torn down.

I've also asked, over the last seven years, if we could get some more maintenance people because we are deficient on maintenance people. The maintenance people – I'll remind people of the province what the situation is. We have two maintenance people stationed in Marystown, and they cover from Terrenceville and English Harbour East-Grand le Pierre area right to Lawn, Lamaline, Lord's Cove. They own the whole Burin Peninsula from Terrenceville up. So if we look at hanging a door in Terrenceville in a morning, they're not getting to paint a wall or replace a window up in Lord's Cove later that day.

So a lot of it comes down to travelling and time that's not utilized properly, because if we had some more people – I even asked if we could get it contracted out if we weren't having the impetus to hire more staff. I mean working at one time for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing was a great job. That's where people wanted to work. They'd love to have job at it, but you can't mow a lawn in Marystown and one down in Parker's Cove the same day. You can't do one in St. Lawrence and one in Fortune the same day either, that's just not how it will work.

Like I said, the thing about it is that we do have good staff at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, and I'm not even touched on the homes that we're responsible for that, I must say, Newfoundland and Labrador Housing took a

lot of responsibility over the last year through my requests and my advocacy on behalf of the residents of the Golden Years Manor in Arnold's Cove. They're seeing a lot more and better way of living with a new automatic door, they got new flooring, they got lots of paint done, they got their apartments refurbished, but that was because I worked with Joe Mercer and Wayne Follett, and they understood the need. They knew that by doing this we were going to bring that house back into realization of being able to get new tenants, and there are new tenants that are coming. We have a couple more units to do and we should be there, and we'll get those filled as well.

To show the whole piece on what's happening in Marystown is very unfortunate, because, like I said, to have that many units outside the Northeast Avalon and to know that the assets – like, I had to call to get lawns mowed because they didn't even look like they were inhabitable. I had to get windows replaced and all these things with assets that were just dilapidated, that never got the maintenance that they deserved over time.

What I will say is that the people of the province who rely on this program and rely on Newfoundland and Labrador Housing deserve our utmost attention. This AG report is very eye-opening. I think that as the minister has stated before, he does have broad shoulders and he's able to carry the weight, but I think his compassion is really what's going to make a difference in making sure that our assets that we already have are refurbished, utilized to the maximum potential and made good.

I have one small story to say about where our deficiencies are. I had a lady and her child, they needed a two-bedroom apartment and all was available at the time in Marystown was a three-bedroom apartment. They were given instruction to have Newfoundland and Labrador Housing maintenance to go and put a piece of

plywood up over one of the doors, so it was a two-bedroom apartment.

When she asked me that – and I don't know if I'm going to get in trouble for this or not, but when she asked me about that, I said, by all means if you can take it down yourself, take it down. If you want me to come take it down, I'll take it down and if somebody comes here and inspects this house and asks who told you to do that, you can tell them it was me.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to speak in this House on this very important issue. Again, I thank the people from Humber- Bay of Islands because I told them any time I get an opportunity to speak on behalf and help them out, I will. I'll take every opportunity I can to raise important issues.

Also, as I mentioned yesterday, I want to thank the staff in Corner Brook. I also want to give honourable mention to my constituency assistant, Judy Bolt, who works tirelessly for the people out on the West Coast, Corner Brook Bay, Bay of Islands area with the housing issues. She's a diehard person who's really trying to help and has many dealings with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing in Corner Brook. I just want to recognize that I may be speaking here, but our constituency assistants do a lot of work dealing with issues like Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. I just want to recognize that, Mr. Speaker.

Here we are again today, we're talking about a very important issue, and I can see

the temperature has risen a bit here in this House. I have to say that dealing with the minister, I asked for a meeting and sure enough, came on in, had a meeting, went through the issues that we had out on the West Coast, in the Corner Brook area. Until – which I don't think is going to happen – I have to raise some major concerns, I will work with the minister privately. I'll work with him in his office. If he needs anything on the West Coast, he can count on me to help out in any way possible to solve this housing crisis.

I say, the heat has risen here in this House today, going back and forth, but the minister has clearly laid out a plan. He has clearly stated what his goals are. So it would be hypocritical on one day to say we all have to work together to, the next day, criticize the minister. Like, we have to work together. Until you've got to raise a concern in the House or do it in means, by way of news media, we should work together on it. This is just a prime example how it just changed in one day.

So I ask people to give the minister a chance. If the minister commits to it, I'm more than confident that he's going to commit to it. I'm more than confident that if he can't commit to it, he will come back to this House and say here's why, if there was something delayed. There's nothing wrong with being honest. There's absolutely nothing wrong with being honest with the people.

I'll say again to the minister that I will work 100 per cent, and I know Judy Bolt, in her office will work 100 per cent with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing to ensure that anything that can be done quickly, efficiently to put more units in place or help with the ones that need repairs, we're with you. We're just a phone call away. We're there.

I'm just going to go through the Auditor General's report and just raise a few concerns that I have here. This is the

Auditor General's report: "In the absence of an approved plan, the Corporation approached construction of new units on an ad hoc basis, depending on whether requested funds were approved.... The Corporation was approved for \$36 million in Budget 2024 which was intended to cover 104 new builds in areas of demand, \$11.7 million of which they received by June 30, 2025. By the end of the audit – almost 16 months after budget approval – only four of these new units were under construction."

I've seen many announcements for housing. I've seen it. I kept writing the ministers at the time: What is happening here? We're doing this, we're making an announcement, another announcement, but it never happened. Again, the reason I say that, the reason that I brought that part up is because many times people are asking us, are they getting any more units available? We're saying, well, government is building so many – I know so many were committed over on the West Coast back in 2004, but they weren't delivered.

So when we get the information – and this is, again, for this government also. If we're getting the information, we're passing it on to our constituents. When it falls through or it is not followed up then we've got to go back and tell our constituents, well, that wasn't true. People might say that you're playing politics, but it's better to be honest with the residents who need housing than making an announcement and not following up. This is a prime example. I've been saying that for years. I've been saying that.

The Auditor General is now out saying what I knew for years out in Corner Brook. I knew it. Every time you bring it up, you said, no, no, no, they're being done. They weren't being done. My advice to the minister is that if there is something that you commit to and something comes up, people understand. Because I've seen this too many times. I've seen it too many times, and what happens then? People get bogged down, thinking there are new units coming and there are

not. It's not fair to the people who actually need it.

Mr. Speaker, I brought it up yesterday. I'm going to be pretty good about it. I know in here at the Airport Hotel, there were a lot of services put in there. We'll get in later how that was done. I'll say to the minister, again, the units – and they're in old Corner Brook hotel – something needs to be done for the residents that are there, I can tell you.

It's a situation with no supports. It's a situation that they got to have security at the hotel itself. I know a lot of the people. I know a lot of them who are there. The church usually has a meal once a week – different churches. I've attended those meals and I know a lot of the people that are staying at that hotel. There are absolutely no services.

I think in the report here it said – no, it was a CBC article that I was looking at – how much they're paying per night for all of the rooms that were there. When you see the people that are there who are trying to get housing and can't, some do have issues. Some, it may be drugs, may be alcohol; some may be just down on their luck, but a lot of them don't want to be there. The vast majority, or everyone I spoke to, don't want to be there. They want to be proud. They want to be in their own home. They want to bring their family into their house. It can't be done.

So that's one I say to the minister and, just for the record, that's not even in my district. That's in Corner Brook District. I know the mayor is well aware of it also, but I know the people. I know the people that are there and I know a lot of them are struggling. They want housing on their own. They don't want to be there and have to lock the doors all the time. They just don't want it.

So I appeal to the minister: See what you can do to help out in that area. It's going to be a tough one, I know, because if you've got to go find 35 units, and that means someone else got to go down the list. I

understand that, but that's something that I ask that you have the staff to review to see what can be done.

The other one here, the corporation – this is the Auditor General's report – had insufficient one- and two-bedroom units for its needs. Again, when the housing, I know in Corner Brook, was built, a lot of large families, and over the years, you harp on it and you harp on it. The people who would want Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, usually one or two bedrooms is sufficient. You may need some with three and four, but the vast majority is one to two bedrooms. I know there's always the urge when you get a design to build bigger places and more bedrooms, but I know personally how many people are looking for one or two bedrooms. It's 90 per cent, I think, or higher.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to thank the Member for bringing this forward here today on a private Member's motion, because any time that we can highlight and speak about such an urgent need in Newfoundland and Labrador, I think we should take advantage of it. I know it's tough in your district also, but it's tough all across the province. Thank you for bringing it forward so we can all highlight the issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. BUTT: Thank you, Speaker.

As a new MHA, it took a couple of weeks for me to just observe and witness the proceedings of the House, which has been very informative, but what I saw earlier, after the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's got up and spoke, especially after the Auditor General's report giving the former

government the most failing grade that it can be given, and watch Members opposite stand up and give themselves an applause, how delusional can they get?

Speaker, the Auditor General's report delivers a clear and sobering message. This report provides independent, facts-based evaluation of these persistent challenges. We all had the opportunity to read the report; at least, I hope we did. If you didn't have it or didn't see it, I'd like to refer to the Leader of the Third Party's comments he made on the NTV news, they can review that.

Social housing demand is rapidly rising while supply, planning and oversight have fallen behind leaving vulnerable Newfoundlanders and Labradorians at risk. As mentioned in the Auditor General's report, the housing system in Newfoundland and Labrador was poorly governed. They have rooted in years of issues in planning, oversight and resourcing. The AG's findings and analysis say so in multiple ways: Policies were outdated, that's zero for one; forecasting was weak, zero for two; data quality was poor, zero for three; operational practices were inconsistent, once again, zero for four.

A governance failure always started from the top. It starts with the government that appoints, the government that supervises, the government that's supposed to demand standards and the government that's supposed to know whether the system is functioning. That government in question was the previous Liberal government. They were the ones that were supposed to ensure policies were being modernized, ensure existing assets were well-used and ensure the system could actually meet demands during a housing crisis. The bottom line, they did not, and the people of the province pay the price for their failure.

Speaker, the Opposition deserves to be held accountable for this because their

governance is not a side job; governance is a job.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. BUTT: Related to housing, simply put, they failed at the job. They failed to oversee. They failed to modernize. They failed to manage. They failed to plan and, because they failed, thousands of people were left waiting in a province already under severe housing and affordability strains.

How do we address this housing issue? We must recognize these problems exist, and that is the very first step towards meaningful change. We cannot improve what we do not acknowledge. Accountability goes beyond naming issues; it means understanding why they exist, learning from past mistakes and taking actions to fix them.

Our responsibility is now to ensure the corporation has leadership, resources and guidance to help people who need support. Addressing the conditions of exiting housing is only part of the solution. There must also be a focus on increasing supply. Many communities are struggling to keep up with demand, leaving residents with fewer options and fewer choices.

Speaker, in my district, there are 19 units available in Lewisporte and very few in other communities. This is not enough to support the vulnerable population in the district. This lack of social and affordable housing in my District of Lewisporte - Twillingate has a direct impact on the local economy. Low-income workers can't relocate to fill jobs and, in the same breath, employers struggle to recruit and retain staff. Seasonal and essential workers are priced or forced into unstable housing arrangements.

Seniors in my district are also affected. They often live in homes too big and costly to maintain, but they aren't able to downsize to an appropriate social housing. Delayed in hospital discharge due to lack of suitable

housing – some of these seniors, when they get discharged, they need special accommodations in their house and it's not provided. Because of that, increased reliance on home support and health care services. With this, this has now become than a housing issue. It's a health care capacity issue.

Increased risk of homelessness, this may not be visible to the public but it's there. People couch surfing or living temporarily with relatives or remaining in unsafe and unsuitable dwellings. The loss of public confidence in the system, wait-lists are unreliable, eligibility reviews were inconsistently enforced and oversight by the NL Housing board was ineffective. In my District of Lewisporte - Twillingate, the lack of social housing means seniors can't age safely in their communities, workers can't relocate to local services and families face displacement instead of stability.

The Auditor General has laid out the failures clearly. What rural Newfoundland and Labrador needs now is action that reflects regional realities, not a one-size-fits-all solution. Speaker, I have total faith in the Minister of Housing, that the appropriate action will take place to improve this housing crisis. This work is long term. You can't fix overnight what 10 years of neglect has created. Some solutions require sustained commitment, careful planning and continuous monitoring to ensure real progress is made and maintained.

At its heart, housing is about people. Secure housing supports health, education and social well-being. It is essential for a society where everyone can thrive. That's why I support this resolution.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Dwyer): The hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

E. JOYCE: On a point of order, just for a minute.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to recognize something that was said in the House. I asked the minister about programs for the Corner Brook hotel where people are at and that there are none. I've just been advised that there is a team from your department and from Newfoundland and Labrador Housing who are meeting right now as we speak to try to come up with some short-term solutions and a long-term plan.

I didn't know that that was going ahead. So I just want to let the minister know, thank you for that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

There have been a few comments that people deserve at homes, and we will firmly agree with that.

Now yesterday, the Leader of the Official Opposition in the media said that the NDP, if they want to talk about what was done in the past, well, that's a conversation we can have. The irony of it is that this is from a party that, over the last five or six years or so, I've had to listen to throw up Muskrat Falls every time – every time. Something that happened in the past.

But we also know – and why this report is so important, it's about it has effects now. It has implications now and implication as to where we're going. We know that the failure to address these issues, 2008, well fair enough. If we had problems with 2008, they should have been fixed, but they weren't –

compounded. The failures that were identified in this report have helped create the housing and homelessness crisis we now have.

The reality is – and I heard one Member talk about how we got people out of tents. No, you didn't get people out of tents. You got people moved to other places. They moved from Confederation Hill to the Grace General Hospital site. They moved up into the site of the Holy Cross School on Ricketts Road. They moved elsewhere.

I'll tell you where else they moved – and this is from yesterday, from a gentleman who does snow plowing at some of the big box stores, the big shopping malls. He said, every day, every night, there is five to six vehicles with people sleeping in them. That's cars, SUVs, vans, pick-ups, all sorts of vehicles, every day, every night. In their 40s, their 60s – there's a person there with their little dog, their poodle or their small animal. That's the reality this week. That is the reality.

In 2021, I remember the first signs of it for me. It was that we had a woman who was working in the health care system, sleeping in her car, under a bridge, because she figured that's where it was safe. That's what we're trying to – sleeping in her car. She was working.

I remember that time too, for the first time, I had a former student of mine and we were trying to find a place. He had a dog. He needed this dog. He couldn't find a place that would take him. We had to get money to arrange to put him in a tent in Pippy Park. Actually, there was a group, a charitable organization that helped him.

I remember last year, a gentleman walked up when I was leaving here, late in the evening, walking up with his dog. He had no place to go. He had a place to go. The dog couldn't. It was bitterly cold. I had promised at the time that we were going to be able to help. In the end where I put him – the only

place I could – I brought him down to Tim Horton's, down on Torbay Road and gave him the money he needed so that he could buy a coffee and donuts and so he could stay there with his dog that night until we tried to work out something.

For me, that's personal. It should not be. It should not be that you find yourself, this is what you can afford to live, in your car. It should not be. I'm sorry.

That's just a few. My colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi brought up others. I've got charts there from our own program that we keep track on to show the huge number of housing issues. Now mental health is becoming about equal and I would say they're tied.

I'm not going to touch much on the report. I said what I needed to say, but I will say this, Livingstone Street, to me, is emblematic of everything else that's in this report of what's wrong. I would say, allowing houses to fall into disrepair – drive along there and you'll see a beautiful community that has been allowed to fall into disrepair. It should not be. There are families there who want to make this their community.

A row of houses that burned down in 2025 – and I had written the minister at the time to find out what is going to be done with these. Are they going to sell them off like they've done with others? At the time the decision was, no, we're going to maintain sightlines. There is an ability here to actually improve the situation, to actually increase the housing we need. We know from the report that that was an area of high demand, yet we weren't building them. We should be.

So what are some solutions? Because I've heard also in here that there's no one-size-fits-all. We've brought up a number of things: rent and vacancy control to make sure people weren't forced into homelessness. As I was saying, these people sleeping in the cars, that's what's happening to them.

Non-market, community-based housing – which is really where the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, if it had been well funded and well supported, could have been.

We know from the Community Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador and the Annex Consulting, that was back in July 2025, that community housing stock is well below the national average. Now, they're statistics, but with those statistics come impacts on real people, the people who are sleeping in cars, the people who are still sleeping in tents.

We brought up land-lease communities, land trusts as a way that we can allow for not-for-profits to actually afford to build new housing developments; rent banks so that people who are transitioning between one job or another, or fall short on their rent, have an ability to not be put into arrears and forced into eviction.

These are not my ideas, Speaker. I want to make this clear. I look at the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness. These ideas come from across the country. They're around. They're long before I was.

Modular homes – and I want to spend the last few minutes talking about modular homes. I got the opportunity to visit BECC in Hamilton, Ontario, a year-round, huge – they're able to knock out 30 homes in a month. It's all indoors and the inspectors come in and, at the time, do the inspections, the wiring and then they ship them to the site, which by this time they're getting either a slab on grade or a basement or whatever else, and they put them up.

At the time, I was thinking of it – because I know the Member for Torngat Mountains, we talked an awful lot about the housing issues there. Maybe there's an opportunity here that they could ship them down and then ship them north – I don't know. There are solutions there that could be expanded on but think about it, the site work is done,

boom – and when you look at them, you would never know that they were modular homes, but we don't have to go that far.

Up on O'Leary Avenue, we have Homeworx, and they're doing the same thing, beautiful little homes that are affordable. Then I was thinking, you know, wouldn't it be great if they had an indoor place where they could do all this, and then I'm thinking of that 21,000 square metre production facility for cannabis, which I think is still not in use, that we have an opportunity here to do this.

So there are positive solutions here. Something that, I would assume, if Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation could have the ability to deal with, they could handle; which is why, in our platform, we talked about NL homes – setting up a housing-focused Crown corporation. The idea was let them raise the money to build the homes. It wouldn't necessarily be tied to government; they could go out and raise capital. They would get that money back on the rents that are paid to it, but that was part of the plan.

However, maybe that's something – and this is why I've had this conversation with the minister – that could be arranged with regard to Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, within the current structure, maybe, so that the debt isn't on the government books.

I'm not looking for picking around the edges; I think we need to get moving on this. Really, I think the fact that we've got people sleeping in cars – they probably work in some of the places, but they're sleeping there. They're not on income support or anything like that, they just cannot afford a place to live, and that should not be tolerated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to address a matter that affects some of the most vulnerable people in our province, low income and seniors that are looking for available housing. The reality is stark. Too many people who need housing are forced to wait, not only months, but years. Too many who already have homes are living in poor conditions because repairs and maintenance work is either taking too long or is not being done. This is not acceptable and it's not sustainable. Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation has been operating with limited resources for years, and the pressure on the system has only grown.

We do now have a government that is committed to working with everybody to improve this system. The reality is that it is under strain and has been for so long.

The recent report from the Office of the Auditor General highlights deficiencies, delays and gaps that must be addressed if we are to restore confidence and deliver the level of service that Newfoundlanders and Labradorians deserve. The policies are outdated and do not meet the needs of vulnerable populations. The housing crisis has only made this worse. Low-income families cannot find affordable renting spaces and seniors on fixed incomes are being priced out of communities they call home. Many individuals who rely on social housing simply have nowhere else to turn.

At the same time, while improving the condition of existing housing is critical, we must also recognize the urgent need to increase supply. Many communities across our province are struggling to meet demand and provide sufficient housing options. Without actions, these pressures will only continue to intensify.

Speaker, a lot of people think Labrador West is a rich community and everybody

worked for the mines, but everybody does not work for the mines in Lab West. We do have people that are receiving low income, we have a lot of seniors and, right now, Labrador West has probably one of the worst housing crisis in the whole province. They have nothing for nobody; zero rent availability. Contractors are buying houses, driving people out of the community. They have zero vacancies, sky-high rent and, like I said, people are being pushed away.

The economic boom in Labrador West has strained the social infrastructure, especially when it comes to the demand for housing. Past ministers have said that industry needs to pitch in and help out with the housing plans. I never hear anybody asking Kruger over in Corner Brook to help out with the housing. I never hear tell of anybody in St. John's asking the shipyard to help out with housing in St. John's. So why are they expecting the mines in Labrador West to do it? Government should have done it in the past.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: Government should have done it.

One of the past Members stated here yesterday – I don't like to bring it up, but I'm going to bring it up. He said he teed things up for us. You don't play much golf. You can't play much golf. If you teed all that up for us, how many clubs did you break off? That's sad. That's really sad.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. POWER: That's a lot of clubs broke off for them there somewhere, right?

Another former minister stated that new codes didn't allow for things to be fixed. I've worked with the National Building Code, I've worked with Fire and Life Safety codes and your new codes only happen when a building goes over 50 per cent renovations,

then it comes under new codes. That's the way the National Building Code works.

So maybe if you had to have fixed these houses for the last 10 years, they wouldn't be considered under the new codes – if the repairs and the work was done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. POWER: The cost of construction in Labrador is outrageous, everybody knows that. As government, we have to work with private developers and contractors to make sure we can get the proper housing in Labrador West.

There are local challenges – yes, everybody has them. Every community has them, but again, for years, this past government over here made the same announcement four times in Labrador West. They were putting up a 40-unit low-income apartment building; I still don't see it. I don't know if you put it in Churchill Falls, but it's not in Lab West. Something went wrong somewhere.

Again, all I can say is, you left all this for us. I'm the same as my comrade there, I'm new to this, but to sit down here the last three or four weeks and listen to the past government put all the mess they left on us, blame it on us, we're not the ones that wasted all the money. We're not the ones that didn't fix this and didn't fix that. We're here to change things and that's why the people put us in, to make life better for us all in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, I didn't know when I stood to speak to this PMR today that I was going to start by quoting a former Member – actually, a former premier, Tom Marshall, but I am going to start with something that Tom Marshall said to me when I was relatively new and dragging my

bags out – lots of late nights; I had lots to learn. One night – we had many chats, he was a very lovely man. My family had a special connection with Tom for some work he done during a tragic time in my family. We talked about that sometimes but, one night, when I was leaving and he was coming out with his bags from Finance, he said: What do you think of it all, in the House? What do you think of it? I said: I don't know what to think of it yet, Tom. I knew community advocacy. I knew nothing about this world 13 years ago. He said: Well, I'll tell you what I think. If we could run and get elected and there be no cameras and no social media, nothing for 3½ years, and then for six months, opened up, fill your boots, go campaign, you'd get an awful lot more work done.

Yesterday, we started with a resolution that came to the floor on housing. It seemed very genuine. The minister got up – and I tell the minister all the time I think he's a credible man – and talked about this is above politics. He said: I'm actually receiving emails; people are happy that we are working together. I did kind of question why do we have two days in a row, same content – and I did make that comment to the House Leader that I work with every day, and it is important that we work together to know what proceedings are on.

But, today, it's very evident. It's just completely about politicizing with a lot of really, really important information left out. I was not the minister of Housing during this particular window that's been here, but I'll tell you, I have a lot of learnings from my time – I believe I was in Housing in '17, '18 and well into '19, and I do know the tremendous need. The list was long. I do know the value of the programming that was there, in particular for rural parts like home modification for bathrooms for elderly, home repair, those are the things I would bring to the Cabinet table about we need to keep those programs.

I know that Housing in the largest landlord in Newfoundland and Labrador with almost 6,000 units. Many that are misfitted – many, many as was already talked about yesterday, really large homes. What do we do now? Do we sell those off? What's the most cost-effective way to move forward? Two people living in a home, they don't need a great big home – lots of challenges.

The social housing issues was predominantly in the larger city areas. Out in rural parts, it was a little bit different. It was a real challenge to find housing. I remember the first time I went out, I think it was \$16 million we had, I'm going to say, and it was maybe 2018, and some folks were saying only go non-profit, you'll get your best return. We don't want to do profit. I resisted that a little bit. I said: Let's open it up and see what we get.

So we went out with the \$16 million. We had \$42 million come in in applications, and in Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair we had no units. In the northern part of the district, Eagle River housing, who is doing an incredible job, and Newfoundland and Labrador Housing helps them with the ongoing maintenance and things like that, but they do an incredible job there. The rest of the district had nothing.

We spread all of the money, all around the province and we did put eight units into Forteau, strategically right next to the health centre – the only health centre that's in that entire district. Somebody referenced earlier today, the pride that you feel when you drive by. You don't do it for a pat on the back. You're not waiting for that from anyone, but I know myself – and I, too, knocked on doors in October. I don't think I missed a door and knocked on every door. When you go to those units and there are single parents living in there, it's very rewarding.

One of the things that's lost in this today, is all of the blame coming over as if everything was within our control. I take a little bit of exception. I have to mention the Member for

Lewisporte - Twillingate, when he got up, brand new in the House – brand new – so much to learn, to say the crowd over there is delusional, I have to tell you something – and it was another PC minister, Kevin O'Brien, we sat over there, when I was new and he was getting ready to leave. He served 12 years. We all got a long. For the most part, the majority on every team when we weren't doing our job, what we have to do, Opposition questioning government, we worked together pretty good – Clyde Jackman, Kevin O'Brien, I worked with these guys a lot. We built a new school in my hometown.

I said: Kevin, you were always fair. You were always decent. He said: When I walk out today, I'm going down the front steps. I said: Good for you. He said: I'm going to hold my head high with dignity.

So I want to say to the new people, behind me and over there, when we leave here, we're all here representing people, don't get to a certain level, so low that you can't talk to each other at the grocery store when you leave. I go back to COVID times. I was the minister for the Status of Women at that time and we were dealing a lot with domestic issues. During COVID, Speaker, talk about construction slowed. There were all kinds of issues with supply and demand that slowed the –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. DEMPSTER: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: We can't hear you.

L. DEMPSTER: I can't hear; it's all a big joke. The Member for Badger over there, Grand Falls, maybe he doesn't want to hear what I have to say.

Anyway, Speaker, in the middle of all that, we were also dealing with domestic violence at home, intimate partner violence. We actually brought in the texting. While we

were probably snowmobiling and Labrador closed down, it was –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'd ask Members to take your conversations outside.

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

L. DEMPSTER: So, Speaker, while we had space and small population, large land mass, there were people that were locked in with their abuser and we brought in the texting line. There was many, many things – I'm sharing that as an aside. Shelters – you can't hide under a rock and say we don't need shelters. There were many, many sad stories around shelters.

I say to the Member for Lake Melville, I can tell you my team, we put an inordinate amount of time into the issues that are in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. They're not easy to fix, and I wish you well with them, Sir. I wish you well with them.

But I can tell you that the premier actually set up a Cabinet Committee to try and deal with the issues there. There was somebody going into the shelter that lost their life. It wasn't anybody's fault. It was someone with addictions. The camera showed they were almost home, almost to the door. That same person, we had given a COVID vaccine to just before that. We had gone up, we had done a clinic in a box to help the people.

The issues are absolutely huge, Speaker. But to say we're delusional, we're going to fix everything and there are going to be no problems, I tell you, I'll wave a magic wand and I wish them very well with that and we will support all of that.

There was some confusion the other day when I called *Open Line* and said if it's good for the people I represent, I'll support it. I got

a call from Harbour Main actually was where my call came and they said we heard you're going with the PCs. I said: I haven't lost my mind altogether, I'll tell you that, I got to say. But the point is we have a job to do to ask the questions, but we won't criticize for the sake of criticizing.

Members talked a lot about vacancies here. I want to say it was very difficult to fill during my time – I'm only speaking of my time. It was almost impossible. The Member for CBS, he said we're going to do 24-hour snow clearing. Then he went out and said we put out ads and nobody applied.

AN HON. MEMBER: Relevance.

L. DEMPSTER: It's very relevant because we're talking about – I'm telling you now when this minister stands and says I'm putting my shoulder to the wheel, I'm doing a heavy lift, he's going to try his best. But I'm telling you there are things that's going to be out of your control, and I do wish you well.

Across every single sector, we have tremendous vacancy in every one of them departments. We're coming into Estimates now soon. After you bring in your budget, we'll be here going line by line with you across departments. It will be interesting to see what the vacancy level is in every department. Some will tell you, well, we won't fill that because then we can spend the money elsewhere, whatever you want to do with it. However, it's your decision as ministers and when there are vacancies, then there is something that's being missed somewhere.

Speaker, I made a few notes. You don't get time – 10 minutes is quick. During my time, I will say on behalf of the Liberal administration, we signed the largest housing agreement in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: It was a \$135.6 million – \$270 million cost-shared – nine years, three three-year action plans.

I want to give a shoutout to the team at Housing. They do incredible work that's very challenging.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CORMIER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a privilege today to rise and speak in this wonderful House, once again, on the resolution on housing.

I'll be speaking today about my own district, St. George's - Humber. The lack of affordable housing in St. George's - Humber is increasing year after year. I understand that the district is mainly rural and there are challenges involved, but challenges are opportunities to make a difference, and I'm so fortunate that this Premier put that minister in place to handle this file.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CORMIER: He's going to make a difference.

Our office has assisted with calls from individuals with many challenges that can be attributed to the lack of affordable housing, from domestic violence and addictions to incarcerations.

Sir, last week, alone, we have dealt with cases where we have a single father and son having to resort to staying with friends and family as there are no affordable rentals available and Newfoundland Housing offering is a wait-list. That's a policy issue for that gentleman. That's a policy issue, and I know we're going to be working on the

policy with Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

In my hometown of Pasadena, we had 60 apartment units built in the last couple of years by private contractors, and all are full and there's a wait-list. These contractors were able to build because the council, that I was part of for eight years, changed zoning so they could build these units, 55-plus living, for our seniors in our community – very fortunate.

The average market rent in our district ranges from \$1,000 to \$2,000 per month leaving many of the residents left choosing between housing and eating, having the children in dance or darkness, choosing a roof over their heads or relying on families to help fill the void. That's hard. Contractors in one town in my district stated they could build 100 units – 100 units this year – and still have a demand for more.

We have a major issue in this province, and I'm so happy for the Member for Cape St. Francis is going to take care of this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CORMIER: Subsidized housing is in greater demand than ever, and it has only grown over the last 10 years. Lack of planning and lack of policy resulted in some of these issues. The issues touch every part of my district from Codroy Valley to Pynn's Brook and everywhere in between.

We have residents with social and emotional needs forced to couch surf because there are no affordable places to go, often leading them into distressing situations and finding themselves with nowhere to go. In 2023, the minister at the time, repeatedly said there were 750 new public housing units being built, and the true answer – the true answer, Speaker – was 11.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

H. CORMIER: I can tell you what, those 750 units would go a long way today. Instead we have 11. We need those 739 units built, and probably another 750 to go with it. According to the AG's report, the wait-list grew 71 per cent in the last five years – a 71 per cent increase in the last five years. Inventory has decreased by 57 units.

While the former government were focused on sexy announcements, the people in my district were struggling. While one government focused on flashy, this new government, that I'm so proud to be part of, focused on solutions.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CORMIER: As of June 30, 2025, our wait-list has increased to over 2,600 families. I'd say that number has grown even higher by now. While the last government focused on the Avalon, we're committed to focusing on all of us.

In my district the average age of public housing units is between 42 and 44 years old. The wait-list in my district is somewhere between 160 to 300 families. This doesn't include the ones that have fallen through the cracks or have completely given up altogether. The people of my district have suffered long enough, and we have a government focused on all of us.

Housing, Speaker, isn't a privilege; it is the foundation of our social and emotional health, where memories are made, where we laugh, where we cry and where we go to at the end of long day just to relax. The people of my district and the province now – now – have a government focused on making that a reality for all of us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CORMIER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: You only have two minutes.

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I talked about housing yesterday, and I will go as quickly as I can.

One of the things I was very disappointed in, today, is we are not above politics here, as the minister pointed out we would be yesterday. What I will take my time to say today is that I will make no apologies for the questions we will ask as an Opposition.

I notice that, in this House of Assembly today, we're all wearing these daffodils, and when I put mine on today, I thought of the people in my family and friends who have been lost due to cancer, and I thought of a friend of mine who died just before Christmas, a very close friend, and he told me to keep fighting.

I will continue to do what I did when I was in as minister of Housing –

L. PARROTT: Point of order, Speaker.

Speaker, 50-50 Wednesday PMR.

SPEAKER: Yes, that's true.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

AN HON. MEMBER: No leave.

SPEAKER: Do we have leave – no leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: No.

SPEAKER: Unfortunately, the time has expired. You don't have leave.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

K. RUSSELL: I'll try and hurry as we close debate on this motion here, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's important to pull the discussion back to the first principles of what we're talking about here today.

What are we debating; we're debating the findings of an independent officer of this hon. House. We're debating on the condition – the horrible condition – of the public housing system that too many people depend on and we're debating the record of the former Liberal government here and how they, well, failed on everything they attempted to do within this file.

Mr. Speaker, we're debating an AG report that represents a 10-year Liberal report card. That's the truth at the centre of today's debate, I tell everybody out in TV land. This is not a partisan document. It's not a press release from government. It's not a political talking point drafted for our convenience. It's an independent examination that points to systemic issues in governance, policy asset management, data forecasting operations and oversight. It warns, without major work, NL Housing will remain unable to meet the demand.

So we've got to nip this in the bud. This is not our words; this is the Auditor General's words. Those facts tell a very clear story, that they did not manage this file. They neglected it. They let it drift. They allowed a housing crisis to worsen under their watch. They made inflated claims, as we've heard from across the House here today, but they did not build a functioning system. They talked about progress, all the while the wait-list grew. They sold a story of delivery while governance fell apart at its very core. They tried to count their way out of failure and the facts would not let them.

Well, the clearest example, the Member for St. George's - Humber said exactly that: 750 to 11. You don't need to say it anymore, Mr. Speaker. That's what it is. Why are we saying that again and again? Why is that important to the people of the province? Because the difference between 750 and 11 – one more than 10 – is huge. We have to

bring that up. To say that's what you've done and to do that, I'd say is immoral; it's political. It's a difference, Mr. Speaker, about governing and pretending to govern.

While they're pretending, all the people were suffering, simple as that. The wait-list climbed, what, to roughly 3,000 in 2024. Thousands of families were standing in line while they let the crisis just worsen and they were at the microphones telling everybody we're moving in the right direction. I mean, is that nuts or what?

Mr. Speaker, the Opposition complains that this debate is too hard on them. Oh, that they should remember one thing; nobody forced you guys to mismanage this file. Nobody forced you to tolerate weak oversight. Nobody forced you to leave inspections undone; to let vacancy gaps stretch on; to keep outdated policies in place. Nobody forced you to inflate your own record and misrepresent that to the people.

The Opposition might not like it, but the hon. House is under no obligation to shelter them from the consequences of your own record, simple as that.

Also I wanted to stress that, again, what this debate is not about. It's not about the staff of NL Housing. It's not about the board of directors. It's not about attacking public servants, which they love to do. It's not about pretending that the current government can reverse years and years of neglect overnight.

Now, in saying that, it's not about scoring points just for the sake of it. It's just not about that, Mr. Speaker. We're not about that. The truth is that the previous Liberal government broke this file. They broke this file and the AG has documented that breakdown perfectly.

If I might, I just want to say that you can try and act wounded by the criticism. You can do that all you want, Mr. Speaker, but this is

about recognizing how these issues developed. It's not politicizing it. It's telling it the way it was. It's about being honest about what needs to be fixed. If the Liberals do not like the history being discussed, well, you should have governed differently now in the House, shouldn't you?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: Simple as that, when you had the chance.

What this House needs is very, very simple. We need to acknowledge the report. We need to acknowledge the failures of the past government. We need to reject their excuses of pointing it back on us and the spin and the twist. We need to support the work of reform, Mr. Speaker, which is let's bring it to the ground – no pun intended, but bring it back up, bring it to life.

We need to make clear to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that this government will not defend a broken system just because you guys across the way are embarrassed by the truth. We're not going to defend that. We'll make it right. We believe in this minister; everybody says that. We're going to do that, Mr. Speaker.

So in terms of that I just want to say a little bit about the speakers. I'd like to thank everybody who got up who go up and talked about this tonight. I think we had 10 or 11 speakers. I'd just like to say, it's great, I say to the Member from Placentia - St. Mary's, to talk about spin and political twists and all of that. They spend their whole time talking, still trying to justify what they did and then talk about us spinning it. Okay, that's fine.

I'll move on to the Minister of Housing himself, he got up. He talked about how we're going to deliver, and I will tell you what we did. We met with our councils, and I said all that, and we're going to get out there and we're going to work with each district; we're going to do what needs to be done in order to right this ship, Mr. Speaker,

I will tell you that. I would like to thank him for his commentary.

He talked about crazy shuffling with the seven ministers and the different CEOs and all that. Of course, that had to have an effect on the performance of the staff. It had to; there is no way around it.

I'd like to thank the Member for St. John's East for her comments. She talked about the beauty of our place and the real need for housing, and these are the facts. This is factual. Deflect all you want, these are the facts. This is where we are.

I'll move on to the Member for Burin - Grand Bank, Mr. Speaker. He's playing the blame game and all this. He's saying we should work together. Well, the fact is, you never worked with anybody, not a soul, because the CEO was doing whatever the heck they wanted. He was doing whatever he wanted. So I will tell you what, he's saying he wouldn't work with anybody.

I tell the Member for Lab West, the comment he was talking about, the Member across the way said we left very little for you to do – that was his words. Tell that to the 2,500 people now still in the queue looking for a home, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. RUSSELL: That's what he said.

I'd also like to say completely and utterly, and if I may, I hope this is not unparliamentary, but you under your watch and with your colleagues there, you guys have completely pooped the bed. So the polite thing to do would be now to get out of it and move aside and let us clean up the mess, if you don't mind. All right, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the next speaker we had up, we had Placentia - St. Mary's. She talked about how disingenuous this whole thing has been, the need for urgency, how the ball has been

dropped over and over and over and over. Do you know what? I have three minutes left, I can say the ball was dropped over and over and over and over for three more minutes if I wanted to, but I'm going to do it, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands for his commentary, too. Again, he stressed in the perfect tone, the real need to work together, to actually go into districts for these MHAs from all districts to work with our minister, to work with our government. That's what got to happen. You just can't come in and impose your will on a district as the minister and say here it is, choke on it. That's not how it works.

Again, I'm running out of time, but I would just like to say this. The Member for Lewisporte - Twillingate got up, he just talked about – this stuck me here: Why are we doing this? We have to acknowledge this. You have to acknowledge this. You guys have to own this and then we have to be able to fix that and the only way you can do that is by the acknowledgement, by bringing the issues to the light, bringing the AG's report up for everybody to see. Simple as that.

I'd like to thank the Member for St. John's Centre for his commentary. As well, the Member for Lab West, again, always good commentary there about government's complete failure. He talked about, what, four announcements of the same building, a 40-unit thing, and where is it? Out there in the ether because they couldn't deliver on that.

We ended with Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair talking about us being genuine. Really? Politicizing this – really? I mean, I'm glad you got up anyway, acknowledging your time in that portfolio and acknowledging your failures while you were there So, thank you for that.

We closed up on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, with the Member for St. George's -

Humber, my colleague, who seconded this. I'd like to thank him for his commentary. I know he got cut a little short but in saying that he always gets up and speaks from the heart and talks about his district, as well, and says exactly what we're all saying here, is that we got the minister to do the job. He's going to come to your district. He's going to sit with the people and he's going to do what needs to be done.

Just before I wrap this up, and we can all see what we think of this, I just want to talk a little bit about the former government and how they engaged – I just want to make a point of it – our town council. I'll tell you this much. This is how this happened. They came to engage our town council. They said: Here's your mega-shelter because of your housing issues and all that. They tried to ram it down Lake Melville's mouth. They tried to ram it down and they said, no. They said: We need detox, treatments, sober-living options. That's what we need from our government.

Do you know what happened then? They said: Okay, we'll go back. They came back. They said: Here's your mega-shelter, choke on it. The people said: No, no, no, we're not doing that again. They said: We need that. Time and time and time again this happened. Why? Because the former minister of Health, his only commentary to the town council was, the Gathering Place model is all we know. That's all we know how to do.

SPEAKER: Given the time is 5 o'clock –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

L. DEMPSTER: Speaker, under Standing Order 49, I would certainly ask you to review some of the stuff, I'm not even going to repeat, because it's beneath me. To say

we went down and shoved that to people of Central Labrador, this is what you're getting, choke on it – I'm not going to repeat the rest because it's got to be below parliamentary.

It's not the first time that Member has stood in this House, the Member for Lake Melville, and no level too low. Where has he been for the last decade? Now he's here today and he knows everything.

I can tell you, the eight years I was a minister, everybody over there that came to me and wanted a meeting, I worked with them, I met with them and my colleagues done the same. Now he shows up –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

L. DEMPSTER: It's ridiculous the language that was used –

L. PARROTT: Speaker, point of order.

L. DEMPSTER: Excuse me, Government House Leader, I have the floor.

L. PARROTT: (Inaudible.)

L. DEMPSTER: No, I don't think there is an allotted time. I think the Speaker decides.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: The Speaker is recognizing the Member on her point of order.

L. DEMPSTER: It is also very disappointing, Speaker, when the Government House Leader is trying to say that there is a limited time and tell you how to do your job, but I would ask you to review the tapes for the Member for Lake Melville because that's absolutely disgusting, despicable. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador expect us to do better, to be better, to show a bit more professionalism and decorum in this House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, to the point of order.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

A point of order clearly has to indicate what the point of order is; it's not time to stand up and lecture. If you can't specify what offended you or what portion of a speech –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: She did.

L. PARROTT: No, she said: I would encourage the Speaker to go back and review his entire 10 minutes because there are things –

L. DEMPSTER: (Inaudible.)

L. PARROTT: So it wasn't highlighted what was said. It's like me standing and saying, Speaker, I would like you to stand and look at the last –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – five hours of –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Let the Member respond.

L. PARROTT: I'd like for you to stand and look at the last five hours of *Hansard* in the House because I believe Members over there said something that was offensive to me. There was no point of order made.

SPEAKER: The Speaker is aware of the points that were made, and the Speaker will take the matter under advisement, review the tapes and report back to this House at a later time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: We are now going to call the question.

All those in favour of –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

All those in favour of the motion, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

SPEAKER: The motion has been carried.

AN HON. MEMBER: Division.

SPEAKER: Division has been called.

Call in the Members.

Division

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready for the vote?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

SPEAKER: All those in favour, please stand.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

TABLE OFFICER (Gushue): Tony Wakeham, Lloyd Parrott, Joedy Wall, Lela Evans, Helen Conway Ottenheimer, Paul Dinn, Craig Parry, Barry Petten, Jeff Dwyer, Loyola O'Driscoll, Andrea Barbour, Chris Tibbs, Lin Paddock, Pleaman Forsey, Mike Goosney, Keith Russell, Riley Balsom, Hal Cormier, Mark Butt, Jim McKenna, Joseph Power, James Dinn, Sheilagh O'Leary, Eddie Joyce.

SPEAKER: All those against the motion, please rise.

TABLE OFFICER: Lisa Dempster, Bernard Davis, Sherry Gambin-Walsh, Pam Parsons, Keith White, Paul Pike, Elvis Loveless, Jamie Korab, Lucy Stoyles, Jim Parsons, Bettina Ford, Michael King.

CLERK: Speaker, the ayes: 24; the nays: 12.

SPEAKER: The motion has been carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Given the hour of the day, this House do now adjourn until tomorrow, April 2, at 1:30 p.m.