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Speaker: Honourable Paul Lane, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Today I would like to welcome back to our public gallery Julie Humber, Brian Dunn and Wayne Peddle. They are members of the organizing committee for the Canadian Open 5 Pin Bowling Championships, which is the subject of a Member's statement today.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I would also like to welcome to our public gallery, a wonderful group of students and athletes that I had the pleasure of meeting earlier today from St. Joseph's Academy in Lamaline. They're packing more hardware than Kent Building Supplies –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: – with all of the awards they've won in so many sports.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Burgeo - La Poile, Burin - Grand Bank, Placentia West - Bellevue, St. George's - Humber and St. John's Centre.

The hon. the Member for Burgeo - La Poile.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. KING: Speaker, today I recognize graduating students across Burgeo - La Poile as they prepare to celebrate an important milestone in their lives.

Graduation season is a time of pride for families, teachers, students and communities. Years of hard work and dedication reach a time of recognition, celebration and reflection as these young people look toward the opportunities ahead.

In Port aux Basques, students at St. James Regional High are preparing for their next steps. In Burgeo, graduates of Burgeo Academy are getting ready to chart their own paths. In Burnt Islands, students at Grandy's River Collegiate, my alma mater, are reaching this milestone with the support of a strong and caring school community. In Ramea, St. Boniface All Grade is celebrating its lone graduate, Brooklyn Cutler. In small communities like Ramea, a single graduation becomes a shared moment for the entire town, with neighbours, families and volunteers coming together to show their pride.

Speaker, every student represents the future of our province. Their success is our success. Their potential is limitless.

I ask all Members of this House to join me in offering congratulations to every graduate in Burgeo - La Poile. We wish them every success in the years ahead.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: Today I rise to recognize an extraordinary group of student athletes from St. Joseph's Academy in Lamaline in the beautiful District of Burin - Grand Bank.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PIKE: St. Joseph's has a 1A designation due to its small population with just 17 students in Grade 10 through 12. Many

would never expect this level of success during the 2025-2026 school year.

Despite their size, these young men accomplished something remarkable. They have won four provincial championships: 2A Boys Soccer provincial championship, 3A Boys Indoor Soccer provincial championship, 2A Boys Basketball and 1A Boys Ball Hockey championships.

These victories were the result of years of dedication, sacrifice, teamwork and outstanding coaching. These athletes support each other on the field as teammates and as friends.

It has been a historic year for the school and their players have become role models for younger students who watch with pride and respect.

Here in the gallery today we have Chris King, Peter Stacey, Hunter Walsh, Patrick Sheppard, Jayden Slaney, Austin Harnett, Evan Stacey, Nate Sheppard, Oliver Pike, Luke Stacey and Coach Marc Pittman and Assistant Coach James Loder.

Congratulations to all who supported this small but mighty school.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: They're not even from Mount Pearl, but I have to tell you it's awesome, absolutely awesome.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I stand here today to recognize the 2026 Fire and Emergency Services Training School, taking place from May 23 to May 29, hosted by the Marystown

Volunteer Fire Department on the Burin Peninsula.

This year's training school has attracted more than 360 registrants across 23 specialized courses, reflecting the strong interests and commitment of firefighters, emergency personnel and volunteers from communities throughout our province.

This marks the first time since 2012 that the provincial Training School has been held on the Burin Peninsula, highlighting the region's strong commitment to emergency preparedness. Participants are benefitting from hands-on training and collaboration with fire and emergency personnel from across the province.

I was so pleased to be joined by my colleague, Minister Forsey, as we recognized the tremendous efforts of organizers, instructors, volunteers and first responders who continue to serve and protect communities every day.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing the success of the 2026 Fire and Emergency Services Training School, and in thanking the Marystown Volunteer Fire Department, the organizers, instructors, volunteers and all first responders whose dedication and commitment help keep our communities safe each day. Their services and sacrifice are deeply appreciated by this government and all communities that they serve across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for St. George's - Humber.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CORMIER: Speaker, I rise today to recognize the community building and hard

work of the Stephenville Crossing Recreation Committee.

Set up three years ago, this small but passionate group of seven volunteers have taken what was an idea and grew it into something vibrant and beautiful that, for 12 months of the year, they are providing value to all ages and that will be why, when kids grow up, they say they love their town so much.

These seven people organize and hold sports events for youth and adults, family days. They maintain the outdoor rink in the winter, enjoyed by the entire region. They host pop-up events at the rink. They hold multiple holiday events such as the past Easter egg hunt. As well, they hold tea parties for seniors.

Check out their Facebook and see jubilant children, athletic teens, active adults and happy seniors. Those photos and memories are the work of this committee.

Speaker, I ask all Members to recognize the excellent work of the Stephenville Crossing Recreation Committee and the work they've done in making Stephenville Crossing a close-knit community.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

In less than a month, 240 elite bowlers, the best of the best, from across the country will arrive in St. John's to compete in the Canadian Open 5 Pin Bowling Championships, along with 140 friends, family and fans.

Four days of jam-packed elite bowling competition will take place from June 3-5 at Plaza Bowl, with championship finals on

June 6. Opening ceremonies on June 2 will kick off the championship and close with ceremonies and a banquet at the Holiday Inn.

Interesting fact – five pin bowling was invented in Canada. Members of the organizing committee are passionate about this uniquely Canadian sport. For the past year and a half, Julie Humber, Brian Budden, Wayne Peddle, Art and Elaine Wells, Connor Belbin, Brian Dunn and Mike Howlett have been planning the tournament, arranging accommodations and activities.

Committee chair, Julie Humber, says it's all worthwhile, knowing players from other provinces will experience our local hospitality. She encourages the public to come watch the exceptional talent from across the country and exciting bowling competition.

I ask Members to join me in wishing the committee all the best for a successful national championship and encourage people to get out and see it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Next I have a request by the Member for the District of Harbour Main for a Member's statement outside the normal rotation, with leave.

Do we have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave has been granted.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you for the leave.

Speaker, today it is my great pleasure to recognize the extraordinary talent of two residents of the District of Harbour Main: Glen Doyle and Roselle Doyle.

Before his return to this hometown of Avondale, Glen was both a screenwriter for independent film and a martial arts champion. Since his return to Newfoundland and Labrador, Glen, under the pen name Thaine Chase, has published 11 fiction novels across many genres, with my personal favourite being *The Letters From Lincoln Bee*. Amazing.

Before she moved to Avondale with her husband Glen, Roselle lived in Montreal, the UK and Ontario. Throughout that time, she was a professional figure skater and choreographer, with experience choreographing figure skating routines at the Olympic level.

Since then, Roselle has become a successful self-taught artist. Her art depicts the unique nature, culture and landscapes of our beautiful province in an equally unique style consisting of brilliant colours and swirling patterns, calling back to her career in figure skating. Together, Glen and Roselle are an amazing example of the creative talent found throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating them on carrying on the artistic tradition of our beautiful province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I believe they are in the gallery. I neglected to welcome them. I didn't realize. But welcome to our gallery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: Speaker, throughout the summer, thousands of motorists will travel our roads and highways to experience all that Newfoundland and Labrador has to offer.

To support safer roads and communities as traffic increases, I encourage all drivers to make safety their top priority.

Most motor vehicle collisions and related injuries are preventable when we follow the rules of the road: never drive impaired or distracted, always wear your seat belt, obey posted speed limits, slow down in construction zones and adjust your driving to changing weather and road conditions.

Drivers should also maintain a safe stopping distance from the vehicle ahead, be alert for moose or other wildlife, especially at dawn and dusk, secure cargo properly and ensure vehicles are in good working order before heading out on the road.

For those using off-road vehicles, safety remains just as important over the summer. Never ride impaired, always wear safety gear, use proper riding techniques, avoid travelling alone, be sure to share your route of travel and ensure your vehicle is well maintained.

Let's all do our part to ensure a safe and enjoyable summer.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I join in encouraging all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to make safety a priority as we head into the beautiful summer season.

With more people travelling on our highways, visiting cabins and using off-road vehicles in exploring communities across the province, road safety awareness is especially important. Simple actions like slowing down, staying alert, avoiding impaired or distracted driving and wearing seat belts and helmets saves lives.

I would like to thank community advocates like MADD Canada, the STAND for Hannah Foundation, Gail Thorne and Sarah Pittman who continue to fight for tougher laws in Newfoundland and Labrador to curb dangerous and distracted driving.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I encourage residents to travel responsibly this summer and wish everyone a safe and enjoyable season ahead.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We, too, remind everyone across the province to remain vigilant this summer when on the roads.

So many workers in this province are employed on roads, especially in our summer months. Please slow down and follow all instructions in construction zones. Every worker deserves to come home safe and sound at the end of the day and this is where we can play a part in making sure they do.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Speaker, I rise to highlight an important milestone in advancing the Industrial Benefits Agreement between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador and Bombardier.

This agreement was established in 2009 through the acquisition of water bombers from Bombardier, and it saw the commitment of \$47 million in industrial benefits for our province. This agreement was enacted by the former Progressive Conservative government, and today's announcement builds on years of effort to maximize opportunities for Newfoundland and Labrador businesses.

Over the past few months, the Department of Jobs, Growth and Rural Development has worked with Bombardier to help connect local businesses with new opportunities.

As such, I want to recognize and congratulate St. John's-based CoLab AI, which secured a multi-year, multi-million-dollar agreement to support Bombardier's aircraft and manufacturing through CoLab's artificial intelligence solutions.

Speaker, this partnership showcases the strength of our growing technology sector, creates high-value jobs, attracts additional international investment and further positions Newfoundland and Labrador companies on the global stage.

In addition, there will be enhanced aerospace training support at College of the North Atlantic to help prepare the next generation of skilled aerospace workers.

Our government remains fully committed to working with Bombardier to ensure the full realization of this benefits agreement.

Let's soar high!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

I rise today to join in recognizing the success of CoLab AI. Located in Virginia Waters - Pleasantville District, I'm always excited to stand up and talk about them and the important partnership with Bombardier.

It is always encouraging to see Newfoundland and Labrador companies competing and succeeding at the international stage, particularly in growing sectors like technology, artificial intelligence and aerospace innovation. CoLab AI's success reflects the talent and expertise and entrepreneurial spirit that exists here in this province. Securing a multi-year agreement with a global company like Bombardier is a significant achievement and something that should make Newfoundlanders and Labradorians proud.

I also welcome the focus on aerospace training supports through the College of the North Atlantic, which will help create opportunities for young people looking to build careers in industry here at home.

On behalf of the Opposition, I congratulate CoLab AI, CEO Adam Keating and CTO Jeremy Andrews and the entire team for this milestone and wish them continued success

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SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. Member's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We're happy to see this government work collaboratively with a Quebec-based corporation for the benefit of our province. With that in mind, we ask this government to work collaboratively with their federal, provincial and territorial partners to set up strong guardrails around the use of AI to ensure that these technologies are a benefit for us, the people, first and foremost.

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.

Yesterday the Premier admitted in this House he does not know who the invisible and so-called experts are that the panelists relied on for his biased report. He actually said it would be inappropriate for him to know who is giving him advice on the biggest opportunity in our province's history.

Why is the Premier comfortable taking advice from unknown individuals?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, while the Leader of the Opposition wants to focus on process, let's actually focus on the MOU that they signed, that they were prepared to

make the final agreements on, that would have cost significant costs to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Let's talk about some facts.

The Liberals intervened in the MOU negotiations in a way that superseded Hydro's governance role. Against expert advice, the Liberals insisted on inserting a costly 2 per cent escalation clause which put our province at risk of a \$30-billion loss.

Again, I ask the Leader of the Opposition: Why did you include that 2 per cent escalation clause?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I understand why the Premier doesn't want to speak about process, because he knows it's a flawed process.

Today, VOXM reported: Despite numerous attempts, the Opposition Leader could not get answers from government about naming experts in the report. The answer we did get from the Premier is he doesn't feel like he needs to know who the experts were. That is even more troubling.

Why is the Premier putting blind faith in unknown experts?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to talk about flawed, let's talk about a flawed MOU, because that's exactly what's at the heart of this discussion. It's a MOU that they were prepared to sign up for.

We did an independent review which highlighted several challenges with that. Let me read another fact: The Liberals failed to produce a long-term economic plan or an energy plan to find out how much energy Newfoundland and Labrador would actually need over the 50 years.

Speaker, all they did was simply focus on how much money can we get in our coffers? How quick can we get it in there before the next election?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Well, I think Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are going to want to know why this Premier won't focus on the future and all he does is continue to focus on the Liberals. It's very strange.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: Yesterday, when I asked if the Premier knew the identities of the experts, his answer was: I'm not privy to that information. That Independent Review Committee is truly independent. I did not influence them in any way.

Speaker, how does knowing the names of these secret experts result in influencing a report that's already written?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me tell you what we are doing. We are absolutely focusing on the future, and that is why we would never agree to the existing MOU.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: That is why we asked for an independent review to be done, why we asked for it just right after the deal was signed.

So what we are doing now, we are focused on getting more power, more value and more transmission for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, during the good old days of openness and transparency, the four-day MOU debate by the Liberal government, they made available the experts to answer questions about anything that any MHA had. J.P. Morgan and Power Advisory were those experts.

Since the Premier astonishingly admitted yesterday that he doesn't even know the identity of the experts that he's relying on for the biggest deal in our province's history, does he at least know their qualifications?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to talk about the experts that they used, the experts that they had. Well, why did they not listen to those experts? Why did they go against their own negotiating team when they turned around and arbitrarily – this former premier and the former premier before him, a 2 per cent escalation clause was added to the MOU against the advice of their own financial advisors.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition: Can you please explain that to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, one of, if not, I would suggest, the most important part of any deal with Quebec is getting the right price. You need experts to give you that advice.

So I ask the Premier: Will he take the time to find out who is giving him this advice and tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who they are?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, the independent review has identified serious flaws and weaknesses with the MOU that the previous Liberal government were about to sign up the people of Newfoundland and Labrador for the next 50 years.

We have a new negotiating team in place. We will negotiate a new deal that brings more power, more transmission and more value for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Yesterday the Minister of Finance insisted we don't need to know who the experts are because the panelists were the experts.

So I ask the Premier: Which of his three hand-picked panelists is an expert on electricity, market, pricing analysis and price forecast?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The fact that this government failed to do an economic plan to understand how much electricity we already needed, the fact that they signed a 2 per cent escalation that

would cost taxpayers \$30 billion in completion of this, and the fact they overinflated the numbers and said \$225 billion to our coffers should tell the public everything – all false. Then on top of that, not one, but two premiers knew this and they voted for it and they signed it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Why does the Minister of Energy choose to use nominal values when he's talking about one side of the deal but NPVs with the other, because the public need to go know the difference. The Energy Minister can tell the public what the difference is and why he's trying to use one when he talks about their deal and another when he talks about ours.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: It's pretty interesting that the MHA for Windsor Lake would say that, after they did it during the whole four days of the debate, after they did it when they brought this to the public back in December. They utilized numbers that were 10 years old. They showed jobs that didn't exist. They overinflated everything and, now all of a sudden, it's a big issue.

Let's use the number they had. They said \$33 million. Now, if you're smart and you're in the public and you're taking a billion dollars a year and it's a 50-year contract, perhaps he should explain how \$33 million equals a billion dollars a year over 50 years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: We don't get an answer, but we continue to get questions because they're not acting like they're in government, still.

Speaker, yesterday the Premier, as I said, and today, acted like he was in Opposition and continues to ask me questions about what I knew and whether I knew about the 2 per cent escalation clause. I'll turn around and ask him.

Did he know about the 2 per cent escalator clause?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, I know exactly where we're to. We're sitting on this side of the House (inaudible) –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Why are we here? Because the people of Newfoundland and Labrador voted against a Liberal government that was going to turn around and put an MOU in place that would have turned around and had a 2 per cent escalation clause, that had no economic plan.

But do you know what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador did? They protected their children. They protected future generations of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians because the former Liberal government would have signed that MOU and we would be stuck with it for the next 50 years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: The Premier knows where he is, but I don't think he knows why he's there because he continues to act like he's in Opposition.

Did the Premier know about the escalator clause?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Once again, Speaker, the fact of the matter is the escalation clause was put in the MOU by the former Liberal government against their own financial advisors. He still hasn't explained why they did that. Simply answer that question, then we can talk about the rest of it.

What we know for sure is we know that we had a flawed MOU that we're now going to repair. We're not only going to repair it; we're going to fix it. We're going to get a better deal for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador – more power, more transmission and more value for all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I ask: Did the Minister of Jobs, Immigration and Growth know about the escalator clause?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Here's what we know, Speaker, we know a whole lot of facts. We know that the MOU left Labrador with a very small portion of power, not enough to suit the needs going forward. That's not hyperbole; that's a fact. We know that they were prepared to sign away the future of this province. Again, not hyperbole; it's a fact.

We know that they actually hid the details from the public and from us – absolute fact.

We know that when they met with Power Advisory and J.P. Morgan, their so-called advisors that were only allowed to advise on G and F, they ignored what they put forward and put in a 2 per cent escalation clause that would cost us billions. They voted for it, they supported it and they hid it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I'm not sure what the Minister of Energy said was hid. During the course of the debate, all MHAs should have been aware of the 2 per cent escalation clause. Because the now Minister of Immigration asked the experts, who were here and available, all about the 2 per cent clause.

The managing director of J.P. Morgan – a qualified, accountable expert, who we know their names and their qualifications – said to the minister, a 2 per cent escalator is appropriate in this House of Assembly. It was discussed and every MHA who was paying attention would have known.

So I ask: Did the Premier forget the debate he sat in on, or is the reason he didn't bother to vote because he wasn't paying attention?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: The bigger question is when Mr. Rawlings came in here and he specifically said he was only allowed –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – to comment on table G. When he came in here, he was only allowed

to comment on table G. That's his words, not ours. They purposefully had them mislead us. There is zero question about what happened here. At the end of the day –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: – the 2 per cent escalation clause hid the \$30 billion that it was going to cost the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. There was no debt, which is absolutely false. We're left with a \$30-billion debt, a 1969 deal and hidden agenda by this government.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Unbelievable that the Minister of Energy, a Cabinet Minister of this Crown, this government, has said that the former government advised experts to mislead the House of Assembly and not only that, that these experts that sat here and were qualified took that advice to mislead Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I ask the minister: Is that exactly what he is saying?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: What I will say is not only did they say they could only comment on what they were asked to advise on, which was table G and table F, but I can also say that the IRC has proven that when they offered advice, that government failed to listen. Two previous premiers, all the Cabinet ministers decided to hide that from the public. They did not listen. They voted for it. It leaves us with \$30 billion in debt.

The MOU was a bad deal. We will get a much better deal for the men and women of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the report has stated that the levelized cost in the MOU was 7.9 cents per kilowatt hour, yet Danny Williams and Bern Coffey said it was 2.7 cents.

Speaker, I ask the Premier: Who do you believe – Williams and Coffey, who you hired, or the panel, who you hired?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: What we will believe is the number that we bring back to the public, what we will believe is a number that will be far better than the number that was offered up in the MOU. We will deliver a better deal, one that brings more value, one that brings transmission, one that brings enough power for us to develop our own resources instead of watching Quebec exponentially grow their iron ore mining, 145 per cent versus 25 per cent for us.

It is clear that they did not know what they were doing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: I ask the Minister of Energy to give the dates and the calculations about how he comes to the 145 per cent for Quebec growing their mines.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Speaker, 145 per cent is easy data to get, you can go into any newspaper and google how much Quebec is growing their mining industry. It will show you pretty clear.

Listen, here's the deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: At the end of the day, we sit here and we are looking at a flawed process that we have tried to correct. We have the Opposition trying to get us to negotiate a deal, which we will negotiate for the best interest of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but we're not going to do it in public. He knows the difference. You don't negotiate in public, and certainly you don't negotiate with all of the flaws that were in this publicly because we wouldn't have anywhere to start from.

So we will go and deal with Quebec. We will deliver more value, more transmission and more power.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: It is not lost on me, it was a very simple question, and he said it was a very simple answer, but he wouldn't provide it. It's the same minister who sat here on this side of the House and said I'll answer any question, any time, and he hasn't answered one question since he's been named minister.

Speaker, I've asked about this deal and what will be in the Premier's MOU, and big surprise, the Premier hasn't made one commitment yet. So I'll try again and maybe the Minister of Energy will.

Will he confirm that any payments that this province receives from Gull Island will not go down over time?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: What I will guarantee is once we get through a negotiation process and we have a deal that offers Newfoundlanders and Labradorians the best future possible, then we will understand specifically and exactly where we stand with Gull Island, with CF1 expansion, CF2 expansion, where we stand with an economic value to our whole province where we can develop mines, hopefully get secondary processing, have an ability to develop a province that they were going to fail to do –

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave it to our people.

L. PARROTT: Leave it to our people, look after our children, our grandchildren and make sure that we have the most prosperous, beneficial deal that this province can receive.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, will the Premier confirm that there will be no minority shareholder rights for Hydro-Québec on his deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, what we have in front of us is a failed, flawed MOU and that's the first thing we've got to talk about. How do we make it better?

But just to give you a quick example. The amortization period for the loan on Gull

Island was 65 years. The actual contract agreement was for 50 years. So think about you're a taxi driver and you get a taxi licence for five years, but you take out your car payment over 10 years. After five years, you no longer have a taxi licence, but you have a car payment for another five years. The same thing with this agreement here.

Speaker, 50 years of a contract and 65 years we'd still be paying for it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, the Premier continues to talk about the new transmission he's going to get, so who will be paying for the new transmission in his new deal?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, we have a great negotiating team in place and we will deliver for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador just like we said we would.

We have stopped this MOU. The people of Newfoundland and Labrador actually stopped it when they voted us in power. We're going to make sure that we provide, as I have said continuously, more power, more transmission and more value.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, we heard that the panel would not meet with Hydro-Québec. Shouldn't the panel want to hear from the other side of this deal?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: I find it amusing that the Member for Windsor Lake wants to negotiate in public. The panel had to look at an MOU that they delivered. They had to look at how they could shape our future. They took the MOU. They got a firm understanding of what was contained inside the MOU. They found the flaws. They brought them back.

This government will now, in turn – not publicly, but we will – take those flaws, take the MOU and we will find a path forward that delivers more power, more transmission or more value. We are not going to give it away like they wanted to.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: The minister who said he'll answer any question any time, I think what he really meant was he won't answer any question no matter who asks it or when they ask it about any issue.

Speaker, the panellists heard from over 300 people but not one of the two major players. Make it make sense to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Hydro-Québec has important context to provide, from their perspective of course, but how do you assess a deal from only one side?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: The hon. the Minister of Energy and Mines.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: It's really quite interesting that the Member for Windsor Lake would bring that up because I can tell you, without a doubt, that's the same question I asked them about their negotiations from their

advisors at JPMorganChase and at Power Advisory.

I specifically asked if they got information from Québec-Hydro. I specifically asked if they used Quebec's numbers and if they had sat with Quebec in order to get those numbers. The answer was no and they expected us to believe that was okay.

When you want to talk about how we got to where we are, through that MOU, it was a flawed process. We will now take that MOU and we will fix what was wrong. We will deliver more power, more value and more transmission.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, at some point in time, this minister, this Premier and this government is going to have to tell the Newfoundlanders and Labradorians what they're doing. They continue to talk about what the Liberal MOU looked like. They're just scurrying away from the flawed process that they've created and this is the process that this province is in right now.

Will the Minister of Energy tell Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that he is okay with them not knowing who the experts are that advised on pricing; that he is okay with him not knowing about how they came to the conclusion on pricing; that he is okay with him not knowing about how they came to the determination of what the contract length is; that he's okay with telling them about how equity and debt should be allocated on all these projects, because this is what's happening. The individuals making the biggest decision in the history of Newfoundland and Labrador have no idea where they're getting their information from.

My question is: Why are they okay with it and why should Newfoundlanders and Labradorians be okay with it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Speaker, as I said earlier, the facts matter. The facts in this particular case –

J. HOGAN: You don't know the facts.

PREMIER WAKEHAM: Yeah, we certainly do know the facts.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

PREMIER WAKEHAM: We certainly know that there was no economic plan at all in the MOU. In other words, it was simply a case of – they didn't even recognize how much power ought we keep so we can build our own industries in Newfoundland and Labrador. We've heard significant increase in the mining sector on the Quebec side of the border and very little on the Newfoundland and Labrador side of the border, even though it's in the same trough. Why? Because Newfoundland and Labrador didn't have access to power but they didn't think about that.

I ask the Leader of the Opposition: Do you agree now that the 2 per cent escalation clause was wrong?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, no answer so we'll try this.

Doctors are criticizing the new health app MyChart. It is allowing patients to see devastating medical results before their doctor does. Patients are learning they have

cancer or miscarriages without proper support or information.

Will the Premier commit to updating the app to avoid these situations?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, we've become aware of some people actually looking at, I guess, very troubling reports without actually engaging with their family doctor. There is an option there where they have a chance to see that the reports are available before they look at them. Speaker, we're advising them to consult with their doctors if they need to have that level of assurance or actually to call family members before reviewing it.

Speaker, we are reviewing it with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, but MyChart is improving access to health care, it's also putting a lot of the knowledge and power back to the patient, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Trades NL is warning that the government's timeline for the Bull Arm floating dry dock is far too slow and could cost Newfoundlanders and Labradorians major defence contracts and jobs. Equinor and BP funding is stretched over five years, while workers and industry leaders are saying the opportunity is now.

Why is the government accepting delayed timelines instead of fast tracking the project to ensure Newfoundlanders and Labradorians don't miss out on the

economic opportunity and the associated jobs?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's great to see that the Member opposite thinks this is a great project. It's great to see that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PARROTT: Mr. Speaker, we talk to Trades NL on a regular basis, as we do Equinor and BP. They are all onside with moving this ahead. As we hit DG2, DG3, this process will go forward. The tender for the dry dock FEED process has gone out, so the process is moving faster than anyone would have thought it would. We will be ready to build a dry dock as soon as this project gets approved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

We heard in Estimates last week that the government did not send out any tickets for the first half of the school year for vehicles illegally passing school busses when the stop arm is extended.

Given the grave safety concerns with our most vulnerable, we do know there was a mail strike, but why did the minister not have contingency plans like sending tickets via courier for this very serious infraction?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Government Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

M. GOOSNEY: Thank you, Speaker.

When I came into this role, Speaker, I did multiple interviews with media outlets, and I also thanked the Members opposite and the former administration, Speaker, for taking care and looking out to public safety and traffic.

I already made it very clear that I'm not here for knee-jerk reactions. I'm not here to do things just off the cuff. I'm here for public safety. We're going to roll this program out and we're going to do it properly and efficiently for all of us.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Waterford Valley.

J. KORAB: Speaker, the RFP for the swing vessel, as we know, was not awarded yesterday. In a news release back in December, the government said, "This initiative fulfills a commitment made during the fall election campaign to produce four new vessels: three are to be built in the province to replace the aging ferries and one new spring vessel."

Will the minister now admit this is actually another broken election promise?

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

You know, it amazes me, the Opposition, they're more caught up in my failures. We're not about failures. We're about representing the people of the province. We committed to building new ferries in the province. We're committed to carrying on. We committed to doing the swing vessel. We're not giving up on that.

Our glass is half-full, Speaker, not half-empty like the other side. We will get the swing vessel, whether we build it or not or get it from a broker or get it from another supplier, we'll get there. We'll also develop an industry for ferries in this province like we promised to do. We'll continue on our commitments.

We're not in the negative world. They can stay negative. We want to stay positive. The people of Newfoundland deserve better.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, in response to my question of how government plans to address the staffing shortage at the Stavanger Drive urgent care clinic, the minister responded her department is trying to change the culture, where if there's a problem, we'll just take the easy way out.

So I ask the minister: What does she mean by the easy way out, and what exactly is the culture her department is trying to change?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, I'd like to thank the Member opposite for the question because it gives me a chance to clarify yesterday when I was talking about some of the responses we got back when we expressed concern about the Urgent Care Centre not staying open as long as it was scheduled.

I did talk about taking the easy way out and about the culture there where if there was a problem, one of the suggestions that came back to me as minister is – at the higher

management level – maybe we need to reduce the actual times.

In actual fact, Speaker, not only are we committed to keeping the Urgent Care Centre open at the hours but actually extending the hours. So what I'm pushing back is basically –

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The minister went on to say, if NLHS was having trouble staffing the Urgent Care Centre, they would close it earlier. She said, "Actually, I'm going to say honestly, it's ridiculous, but these are some of the options that were put back to me"

Now, the minister attended the safe staffing levels breakfast hosted by the Nurses' Union this morning. So I ask the minister: What should the clinic do if it does not have enough staff, should it keep operating and risk patient care and health?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, as minister, I'm committed to patient safety. I attended the breakfast this morning. In actual fact, we are struggling. I've inherited a system that I'm struggling with, Speaker. Basically, a lot of issues with recruitment, but retention is so vital for our nurses. It has to do with safety in the workplace, also work-life balance.

I hope the Member opposite was joking because I don't think any decent person or any person with any kind of mental capability would suggest us putting workers

and patients at risk. So I think he must have been joking, Speaker.

We are committed to actually addressing the shortages and the closures. We're going to work on keeping the centre open on the regular –

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: I'm not joking, I'm actually believing that the minister is blaming the people who work there for the problem.

I ask the minister: What plan does her department have to make sure that the urgent care clinic at Stavanger Drive is fully staffed? What are the plans to address that?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, that's very low. That's a low blow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

L. EVANS: That really is. I have to call the Member out for that.

In actual fact, Speaker, as Minister of Health, I basically take a lot of time to make sure that we acknowledge the work and the struggle for the last years, especially during COVID and post-COVID, what our front-line workers had to put up with. We appreciate them. We respect them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, there are a lot of problems in health care right now. I didn't create them, but I'm going to make sure that when we address them, we look after the front-line workers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. O'LEARY: Speaker, our nurses are under-resourced and burnt out and the solutions are clear, we need to increase the hiring of medical professionals. We can also set enforceable staffing standards and mandate public reporting to protect nurses from unsafe workloads.

Will this government pass safe staffing legislation?

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Speaker, we recognize that vacancies are creating a lot of problems, not only for patients, but for the health care professionals in the field that have to deal with the vacancies.

One of the things that we're addressing is we are investing in recruitment and retention. We are also making sure that we don't leave the vacancies out there. One of the things we're doing is we are working closely – working closely, a novel concept from the past government – with the Nurses' Union to have a traveling unionized nurse locum to go out and address vacancies when they exist, when they're happening, so we don't have chronic vacancies, we don't have nurses stressed by the vacancies.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Question Period has expired.

The hon. the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Speaker.

I stand up on a point of order, Section 49, Mr. Speaker.

The Minister of Mines and Energy said during Question Period that the expert panel that was here in the House of Assembly during the MOU debate in January 2025 – he said that the government of the day told the experts to, purposely, mislead the Members of the House of Assembly.

I'd just like you to look into that, Mr. Speaker. It's not true and I'd like you to look into that. It's unparliamentary language in this House to use that in that context.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader to the point of order.

L. PARROTT: Yes, withdrawn, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Okay.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

SPEAKER: In accordance with the *Auditor General Act, 2021*, I hereby table the performance audit on the *Transitional Supportive Living Initiative*.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House do not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 26, 2026.

SPEAKER: Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

The reason for this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS home care workers provide essential front-line support to seniors and persons with disabilities, enabling them to live safely and with dignity in their own homes; and

WHEREAS self-managed home care workers and agency-based home care workers perform the same duties, serve the same clients and are often required to hold the same training and qualifications; and

WHEREAS despite this equivalency in work and responsibility, self-managed home care workers are compensated at a lower hourly wage than their agency-based counterparts; and

WHEREAS the 2026 provincial budget includes a \$2 per hour wage increase for home care workers, bringing self-managed workers to \$19.05 per hour, while agency-based workers will earn approximately \$20.30 per hour; and

WHEREAS this continues to leave a wage disparity of \$1.25 per hour and agency-managed home care worker will increase to \$21.05 per hour in April 2027, widening the gap by \$2; and

WHEREAS there is currently no clear policy or commitment from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to eliminate this wage disparity between self-managed and agency-based home care workers; and

WHEREAS fair and equitable compensation is essential to workforce stability, recruitment, retention and the delivery of consistent, high-quality care to residents requiring additional support in the province.

Therefore we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to implement a clear policy and funding framework to eliminate the wage disparity between self-managed and agency-based home care workers, ensuring equal pay for equal work and to establish a timeline for achieving wage parity across the home care sector.

Speaker, I've been talking about this continuously for a couple of years now. I believe it was in 2019 we did have an increase for self-managed home care. I certainly urge the government to please continue to look into this. I have spoken to the Minister of Seniors about this issue. I just want to keep it on the radar and make sure they realize that we are looking for commitment to ensure that there is pay equity as we go forward.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise to table a petition to: Protect 34 Battery Road (Limeville) from Development.

These are the reasons for this petition:

Developers have proposed to build a subdivision on two parcels of land situated at 34 Battery Road and Cabot Avenue, formerly known as Limeville.

Thirty-four Battery Road is a Southcott-style, second empire historic property that has not been designated or registered as heritage, although it was built in 1870 and survived the Great Fire of 1892.

If built, this subdivision will fundamentally alter the character and irrevocably destroy the heritage landscape and greenspace of the Battery and Signal Hill neighbourhood.

Preserving built heritage and culturally significant natural landscapes is crucial to Newfoundland and Labrador's tourist economy.

Signal Hill National Park has 750,000 visitors each year, while 85,000 walk through The Battery and the North Head Trail.

Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to declare this property to be provincial historic site under the *Historic Resources Act*.

I will so table and just a few extra words, Speaker. I did table a letter to the minister on this particular property because we know that the minister fully intends on making this province the tourism capital of Canada. In order to do so, one of the biggest merits of our province is its historic properties, its heritage significance. This is exactly why in this particular situation, the *Historic Resources Act*, which needs a serious updating, as well it requires strength so that we can stop the ongoing demolition by neglect of many of these properties right across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I table this petition on behalf of the residents, the neighbors, and the people who work in the accommodations, the tourism industry who know that this will have a negative impact on their industry.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

P. PIKE: Thank you, Speaker.

I have a petition, road repairs for Frenchman's Cove.

These are the reasons and background for the petition:

WHEREAS the residents are concerned about their safety when travelling these roads; and

WHEREAS the Town of Frenchman's Cove is fully serviced by the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure and requires immediate paving and remediation; and

WHEREAS children from the community are bused to school; and

WHEREAS emergency vehicles travel these terrible roads; and

WHEREAS the residents of this community must travel for all services within the region; and

WHEREAS the Burin Peninsula's only golf course is located in this community; and

WHEREAS within the town boundaries, the community has a provincial park; and

WHEREAS tourism is being deeply affected

THEREFORE we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador

to implement changes to explicitly address the issues facing the people of Frenchman's Cove. They ask that the department complete an assessment of the area, provide a plan for repair and pavement in the area and meet with their community council to address their concerns.

Speaker, I've been standing in this House now on a number of occasions talking about the roads in the Burin - Grand Bank District. In doing so, I'm trying to bring to the attention of the minister and his officials that we'd really like to have the officials visit the district of Burin - Grand Bank, take a look at the roads out there and make some recommendations for remediation or paving.

So if the minister could find the time to send his officials out there, the people of the Burin Peninsula, not only Burin - Grand Bank, would certainly appreciate that given the conditions, like I say, of the roads.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm trying to hear.

P. PIKE: (Inaudible.)

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'm trying to hear.

I ask the Member for Burin - Grand Bank for your co-operation. I hope I don't have to speak to you again.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, when I got up earlier on Motions, it was supposed to come now, so Motion 7.

I move, pursuant to Standing Order 11(1), that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on today, Tuesday, May 26.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that the House do not adjourn today at 5:30 p.m.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's good we can laugh at ourselves.

SPEAKER: Yes.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 5, second reading of Bill 16.

SPEAKER: Order 5.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, today we are –

SPEAKER: You need to move and second the motion.

He can move and second the motion.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 16 now be read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000, be now read a second time.

Motion second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000." (Bill 16)

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

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm glad we're in order.

SPEAKER: Procedure is important.

C. PARDY: Procedure is very important.

Speaker, today we are introducing amendments to the *Income Tax Act, 2000* that will see the implementation of tax measures from *Budget 2026*. As part of our commitment to make life more affordable, *Budget 2026* focuses on responsible, smart spending for all of us.

Speaker, the number one concern for the people of our province is the cost-of-living pressures. Through these measures that will be introduced now, we are providing targeted relief for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The first one I want to address is the basic personal amount. This is one of the most important measures in this legislation. Effective July 1, 2026, the basic personal amount will increase to \$15,000 –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: – resulting in an average basic personal amount of \$13,094 for the 2026 tax year. Speaker, this measure will benefit approximately 285,000 taxpayers and save individuals hundreds of dollars annually.

The basic personal amount is a fundamental feature of our taxation system. It ensures that individuals earning below a certain threshold pay no provincial income tax while still providing relief to those earning above it. Bottom line, every taxpayer in Newfoundland and Labrador will not pay any tax up to \$15,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: For context, the basic personal amount was, in 2025, \$11,067, and would have been \$11,188 in 2026 with indexation alone.

Speaker, this measure represents a deliberate decision to further reduce the tax burden on individuals and families. As the Premier had mentioned, as was mentioned in our blue book and in our campaign promise, this was going to provide relief for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

We had mentioned in the House previously the amount of money put back into people's pockets through the basic reduction amount is \$91 million, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: A tax relief of \$91 million for the 285,000 taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The second implementation or the second tax measure is the volunteer firefighters' tax credit and search and rescue volunteer tax credit. This will put a further \$1.4 million into those people who provide safety and make our community safer in Newfoundland and Labrador, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: This volunteer firefighters' tax credit and the search and rescue volunteer tax credit, recognizes the extraordinary circumstances of volunteer firefighters and our search and rescue personnel. *Budget 2026*, as forecasted, doubles both tax credits, increasing them from \$3,000 to \$6,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: This means that the maximum tax saving increases goes from \$261, for our most cherished firefighters and search and rescue attendants, to \$522 annually, benefiting 6,000 volunteers.

Speaker, these heroic individuals respond to emergencies, trained extensively and serve their communities, often at great personal sacrifice. This is something that was certainly highlighted this past fire season. In order to qualify, volunteers must be residents of the province, provide at least 200 hours of eligible service and participate in emergency response training or organizational duties.

Speaker, let me be clear in saying, we value the service of these individuals. We recognize their commitment and we support them.

Note, this would be the highest tax credit of all provinces in Canada, but it mirrors and is equal to only the federal Government of Canada and we're pleased to be able to deliver it.

The third reduction, the third one of this bill, Speaker, is the small business corporate income tax rate reduction. These focus on supporting small businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador, which are certainly the backbone of our economy. *Budget 2026* introduces a phased reduction in the small business corporate income tax rate. It is 2 per cent effective this past January 2026.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: It drops to 1.5 per cent effective January 2027 and 1 per cent effective January 1, 2028.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: When fully implemented, the budgetary line for this tax credit will be \$14 million.

This measure supports over 6,000 small businesses across the province. Currently, small businesses benefit from a reduced rate compared to the general tax rate of 15 per cent, applied to the first \$500,000 of active business income. In order to qualify, businesses must be a Canadian-controlled private corporation, maintain a permanent establishment in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador and operate an active business here at home.

Speaker, this tax reduction will improve cash flow, encourage reinvestment and help businesses grow and create jobs. These amendments reflect a balanced and responsible approach to taxation. They provide meaningful relief to individuals, recognize and support our volunteers and strengthen our small business sector. Together, these three measures, as promised in our election platform, and as delivered by this government, will help build a stronger, more resilient province for all of us.

I encourage the Members of the House of Assembly, my colleagues, to support this legislation because it puts money into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm always excited to stand on my feet as the Member for the beautiful District of Virginia Waters - Pleasantville and the great people that live within it.

This is Bill 16, as the Finance Minister talked about. It's an important bill for the Income Tax Act. It's an important plank of what they ran on as a government.

I'm going to take a couple of minutes – I won't take all my time here. I think I'd be remiss in saying anything other than we are supportive of anything that is going to put money into the pockets of people, but I do have some things that I'd like to highlight as things that are important regarding this bill.

It's always great for us to provide opportunity to increase the threshold, which will in turn allow tax filers to pay less taxes on that initial amount of money. I think the Finance Minister said, currently, it's \$11,067 as the threshold. They're going to raise that to \$15,000 in an approach based on where we are in the fiscal year, which makes sense.

What I can say is that they said this is going to be a tax break for all of us. It's their tag line, slogan that they use but it's not for all of us, and I want to be clear on that. There is, I won't say significant, but a number of people across this province that make the threshold less than \$11,067 right now. This means no change for those individuals.

I know some of the most vulnerable people in our society – and I know the MHA for St. John's Centre will probably talk about this as well – there is no tax benefit or break for those individuals that would see no benefit from this change today.

So it's not for all of us. It's for some of us, which is a telltale sign that there are other levers that can be pulled and some of those things are what we were talking about during the election campaign. We campaigned on lowering electricity rates. I think the NDP campaigned on a similar

thing about removing the HST on electricity rates and lowering them and finding ways to do that. That would do more for people across the province, I think.

This equates to about \$28 a month – and, listen, I'm not going to stand here and say \$28 a month is not going to make a difference. It's going to help, there is no doubt about that, and I am appreciative of that. The fact that this is one aspect of the plank being fulfilled – one of their three pillars said to lower taxes and this does lower taxes for some people in our province, but there are other levers that can be done.

There are some really good things in this piece of legislation and bills that I know some of my colleagues are going to highlight. Clause 2 amends section 17.3 by increasing the volunteer firefighters' tax credit from \$3,000 to \$6,000. There's not one person in this House of Assembly that's not going to say don't do that. It's an amazing thing to do. We campaigned saying we were going to do a similar thing.

Outside that, it's the right thing to do. We don't have to remember very far back to realize how hard those individuals worked this past spring. In 2025, it was significant, very nerve-racking, and I've always said I can't move forward without saying thank you to some 6,000 volunteer firefighters and search and rescue people that did some fantastic work in many parts of our province.

I know some of my colleagues in this House of Assembly have seen significant damage to their region. What I think is problematic is the fact that we've got to do more for those individuals every time, and this is a great step in that direction. It's a very good one. It will lead the country, which is where we should be. We should be the highest in the country. They deserve that. As well, clause 3, section 17.4, increasing the search and rescue volunteer tax credit from \$3,000 to \$6,000 is a great move as well.

There is also, Mr. Speaker, a significant benefit to making some changes to the rate that businesses pay, a small business rate. One of those good things about the small business corporate income tax rate that we can do – I think the Finance Minister eloquently said what he was going to do, lower it by 0.5 per cent in 2026, 2027 and 2028. This is good news for small business, there's no doubt.

I think it equates to about \$500-ish, depending on the level of involvement that they have, but it's good news for them. They are the lifeblood of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. They are the economic driver that is this province. They provide significant employment, and this may allow them to expand their business. If everyone of the small businesses in our province just hired one, even part-time person, there would be a significant GDP growth in this province. We would have to find some employees, of course, but it would be significant growth in our province.

We know that we talked about levers over the last little bit, and the Finance Minister understands that there are many levers that can be pulled. We talked about ones that we could do to lower fuel tax by another percentage point. It would have saved people a similar amount to what they saved in the income tax reduction that we made today per month.

So we think there are multiple levers that can be mentioned. I did speak yesterday, I think, about the significant windfall that the Finance Minister is going to find within the Treasury if oil prices continue to reign supreme like they are right now. I think, in the province, it was \$2 a litre or something yesterday or into today. That's significant and every time the barrel of oil goes up by \$1, if that sustains for the full year, that's about \$21 million within the coffers of this province.

It's not the way we want to increase revenues in this province, because it hurts

people in the province, but that's why we have those levers that we talked about so many times. There is an opportunity and we're going to continue to push hard and hopefully – which is what I think is going to happen – they're going to do something in the fall. We're going to push them so hard; they're going to have to do something in the fall.

Individuals are going to need to see a change. I think the Finance Minister – if I misspeak on his words, he can clarify them because I'm not trying to – has said that we'll see how this transpires over time with the conflict in Middle East and what it's doing to oil prices. I think the Minister of Energy and Mines has said that in the past too, and that's true. I agree with both of them on that statement, that we will have to see over the balance of time how long oil will stay high, which will then in turn drive the provincial Treasury. But we do know that oil is staying high right now, and we do know that there's a certain amount of money that's come into the Treasury.

I'm not sure that the Finance Minister would know today – and maybe that's a question that I'll ask when we get into Committee – what are we seeing from the increase in revenue to the Treasury of this province based on where we're to from an oil production, an oil price and a Canadian dollar versus the US dollar exchange rate. Those are the three things that drive oil prices for this province with respect to the provincial Treasury.

I know that that's a moving target. He may not know that today, but I know his Finance officials would probably be able to come up with a fairly good estimate of where we're to. I would think it's in the tens of millions of dollars. It's probably not in the \$800 million like I've suggested it could be if it's sustained for the full fiscal year, but we've had several months now of it being sustained higher than the value at which the budget forecasted it to be for the year,

which are all opportunities that we see there.

I think it's excellent that they're doing their tax cut for some of the individuals in this province, raising the threshold. But one thing that's not lost on me is that we could have been brought back here in October, in which case we could have done it retroactive for 2025, instead of it being 2026, or a portion of it. At least we would have the full of 2026 in there.

So I think those are some things that I will probably ask in Committee, how that would work, and I'm sure he will have some answers for that and I'm sure there's a good reason why, from that standpoint.

I think some of the other things that are really interesting – and I'm not going to talk for too much longer. I think we're supportive of that and I do have a couple of my other colleagues that are interested in speaking to this. But it is an interesting opportunity for us to get up and talk about what we see as benefits and where we see some gaps.

I know the Finance Minister will tell me that there are a significant amount of things that we can pull with levers. I know we're not going to pull them all, but there is an opportunity for us to pull some more of those levers. We have pulled some.

I'm interested in the increase in the tax exemption, which is good for some individuals in this province. But I will caution that it is \$28 a month roughly, and it's not for everybody. Those that have paid the least and most vulnerable and would probably need the most money receive no benefit from that. There are other levers that they may be able to get benefit from and maybe the Finance Minister will highlight some of those in his talk throughout the day and into the next couple of days. But these are targeted programs that he mentioned. We just believe on this side that it has not gone far enough. It could have been done a little quicker.

On that note, Mr. Speaker, I am going to take my seat now and I will say that to the Finance Minister, thank you for listening. Thank you for writing down those notes and I, hopefully, think that he will make some friendly amendments over this piece of legislation, maybe even today, to just give them more. It would be excellent. It's not exactly what I think is going to happen but based on what we're asking for, I do know he writes down a lot of stuff and hopefully that's going to come, at some point, into a piece of legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the opportunity to continue chatting about the bills today that we're going to be chatting about and into the budget process.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm happy to speak today to the Income Tax Act, Bill 16, and we will be supporting this bill. This really is a cornerstone of the government's election platform.

If we look at the four things that are being accomplished here in this bill, it amends the *Income Tax Act, 2000* to increase the basic personal amount; increase the volunteer firefighters' tax credit; increase the search and rescue volunteer tax credit; and decrease the small business corporate income tax rate.

During the election, obviously, one of the government's key platforms was lower taxes – fair enough. My understanding is that this is their core vehicle for implementing that change. We would have loved to have come to the House in December of 2025 and passed these bills, which we would have supported. They are increasing the personal amount, as my colleague from Virginia Waters has mentioned, and that will result in \$28 a month savings for workers in Newfoundland and Labrador.

They're also decreasing the small business tax rate. I also think it's important to explain that a bit further for people. The small business tax rate is not a percentage based on revenues. It's based on profit up to a profit amount of \$500,000 for a small business.

So if we look at the range of how much a small business might save from that tax change – let's say a small business in Newfoundland and Labrador makes \$50,000 profit. So \$50,000 profit, based on reducing the small business tax rate by 0.5 per cent, that equals \$250 extra a year for that small business. It is certainly something that we support.

Let's say a small business in Newfoundland and Labrador makes \$500,000 profit – that is the threshold at which this bill applies. If they make up to \$500,000 profit as a small business, they keep an extra \$2,500 in their pocket, in the business. That is essentially what this change does.

I do want to note that is effective January 1. Now we're five months, so that will be retroactive to January 1, which I think is a positive thing for businesses obviously, because the business financial year, primarily, is January to December.

I do think it's interesting to note – and I didn't realize this, actually, until the technical briefing – the change for the basic personal amount doesn't take effect until July 1. Residents in Newfoundland and Labrador will not get a full year's worth of value from the personal amount change. That is effective July 1. So while we would have supported having it applied for the 2025 tax year, it's not even applying for the full 2026 tax year. That starts on July 1 and is a retroactive amount. The first year that that will apply fully is next year.

I think that's important for everyone to understand. You will not get the full amount of the basic personal amount this year. That

will apply next year. I think that's very important for people to understand.

Obviously, this does increase the volunteer firefighter tax credit and the search and rescue volunteer tax credit, which we support. Tax credits, I think, are interesting vehicles for savings and for monetary policy, Speaker. When we look at the amount that these tax credits are changing, I believe it's from \$3,000 to \$6,000, that doesn't mean that someone gets \$3,000 in their pocket.

When you do the math on how the tax incentive works, currently a volunteer firefighter would be pocketing \$261 a year, maxing out on their current firefighter tax credit, and the search and rescue tax credit equals \$261 a year currently. So, fair enough, they are doubling this tax credit. That will deliver savings from \$261 to \$522 a year; a volunteer firefighter, based on the volunteer firefighter tax credit, will save \$522 a year up from \$261 a year.

I think the \$3,000 and \$6,000, those numbers might leave someone to think that they are saving \$3,000 a year, and that's not the way the tax incentive works. I just wanted to make sure everyone is clear about that. So for both of those savings, they will go from \$261 a year to \$522 year, which is about \$21.75 a month.

I think that's important, and I do want to thank our volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers across Newfoundland and Labrador. They do incredible work. They fulfill, really, the emergency response system for Newfoundland and Labrador. The work that they do is invaluable, and the tax credit is not even near enough to thank them for the work that they do. It is a small way the government can give them some financial contribution.

We know they don't do it for the money, obviously. So I do want to thank the search and rescue individuals and the volunteer

firefighters and search and rescue volunteers across Newfoundland and Labrador. The service that they provide to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is priceless.

If we look at the government overall, this was part of their platform of lowering taxes. If we look across the different taxes that we have, I do want to remind everyone that the gas tax is not changing, it's staying the same. We had an amendment to lower it, that was not palatable to the House and they did invoke closure. The House invoked closure so that we could no longer even have a friendly amendment for the gas tax amendment that we put forward. So the gas tax is staying the same.

I do want to note that even though lowering taxes was a pillar of the government's agenda, there are other taxes that they have promised that they're not delivering. This bill does not contain a rotational worker tax credit and this bill does not contain expansion of the Physical Activity Tax Credit, which were other tax credits that were in their platform and are now in the government's mandate. So I think that's important for people to understand.

We will be supporting this bill. I do want to clarify and make sure everyone understands the basic personal amount. So workers will get an extra \$28 a month. The small business tax rate is going down to 0.5 per cent as of January 1, which is great, January 1 for the whole financial year, and a business getting \$50,000 profit will save. They'll have an extra \$250 for the business operations in their business. I think that's great. That goes up to a small business profit of \$500,000, they'll get another \$2,500, Speaker. I think that's great.

Then, obviously, the volunteer firefighter tax credit and the search and rescue volunteer tax credit, in terms of the money that those volunteers actually have in their pocket during the year, is changing from \$261 to

\$552 a year, so certainly that is good as well.

I do want to also note just before I conclude that I was very proud that we were going to take a percentage of the tax off power bills, the HST off power bills. That would have saved money for everyone in Newfoundland, Speaker, because everyone pays for their power bill, Speaker. Not everyone benefits from the basic personal amount and that \$28 a month, but every household has a Newfoundland Power bill or a Hydro bill.

I do think that was a different way of helping more people, but the government is using the basic personal amount. It is their prerogative to do so.

We will be supporting the bill. Thank you for the feedback on this today.

Thank you.

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

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

Always a pleasure to rise and stand to all legislation and today, of course, we're speaking to Bill 16 and for the people at home, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000. I want to begin by saying that, clearly, our caucus will be supporting this as my colleague had just outlined.

There are important measures in this bill that will provide relief to individuals, support small businesses and recognize contributions of volunteer emergency responders throughout the entire province. As critic for Fire and Emergency Services, my remarks today will focus primarily on the provisions related to the volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers.

While this legislation is on its surface a tax bill, for many communities across the

province this is also a public safety bill, especially for rural Newfoundland and Labrador. There are communities in the province where the fire hall, as we know, is not simply a building, oftentimes it's the heart of the community hosting many events for emergencies but also in celebration. It is certainly the backbone of the community safety and volunteer firefighters are often the first people on the scene, as we know in emergencies, no matter what that emergency is. So, again, a heartfelt thank you for everything that they do.

They respond to structural fires, motor vehicle accidents, as we know, medical emergencies, storm events, wildfire situations, hazardous conditions and increasingly they are responding to more complex emergencies with fewer resources and greater pressures.

The same can be said for our volunteer search and rescue personnel. These are individuals who leave the homes in the middle of the night, in difficult weather and in dangerous terrain, to search for missing persons and to assist people in crisis. They do not do this because they are required to, they do it because of their passion and their dedication. They care deeply about the communities and the people in those communities and throughout our neighbourhoods. I do believe it is appropriate that this House recognizes their contributions in a meaningful way.

That is why our election platform included a commitment to double both the volunteer firefighter tax credit and the search and rescue volunteer tax credit from \$3,000 to \$6,000. We're happy to see that the government has continued on with the work that we put forward. We're happy to see that the current government agrees with this and they're now moving to implement this commitment through Bill 16 and they will have the support of the House because I think it's important that we acknowledge that recognition matters. Speaker, it's always positive when we can all collaborate and

come in here and work toward the greater good for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Those volunteers give up their evenings, weekends, holidays, family time, as we all know, and often their own physical well-being in service of others. No tax credit, as my colleague has said, could fully compensate for that. That is why we had also included a commitment to introduce legislation to establish standardized reimbursements that compensate guidelines to ensure that volunteer firefighters, search and rescue members and service organizations involved in large-scale designated emergencies receive fair compensation for their equipment, time and efforts.

We certainly hope that's another recommendation that the current government agrees with and decides to introduce because recognition from government does matter, particularly, after the difficult year that we had with the wildfires here last summer. I don't need to remind people here in this House and certainly the people across the province, we've seen wildfires that were happening simultaneously across our province. We do know, as well, that they happened across the entire country, which puts an extra strain on resources and equipment and personnel.

It's also important to recognize that support for firefighters and emergency responders did not begin with this bill. There has been important work done over many years, including by our Liberal government, to strengthen protections and supports for firefighters throughout the province.

In 2016, our government introduced presumptive care coverage for firefighters. I know that the Member for Lab West spoke about this a few weeks ago and the positive impact that change did have. At this time, I do want to thank him and recognize him again for his career and for his dedication because it's not an easy job. You're willing

to die. When you leave and answer that call, you're willing to put your life on the line. Thank you, Sir, for your service.

In 2018, we also first introduced the search and rescue volunteer tax credit. We're happy to see that bill being expanded through this bill.

This is one tool but it cannot be the only tool. We also need continued investments in training, equipment, mental health supports, recruitment initiatives and ensuring departments have the operational support they need to safely serve their communities because we know demands on firefighters are changing.

We are seeing more severe weather events, longer wildfire seasons, more medical calls and that includes mental health medical calls and increasing pressure on rural emergency response systems overall. Volunteer departments are being asked to do more and more and more and more. Speaker, I am sure you can agree with that.

Many volunteers are balancing these responsibilities along with their full-time jobs and their family obligations. We know, for example, for the wildfires on the North Shore, in the region of Conception Bay North, many of those people gave up their own work and they took time from work, whether that cut into their annual leave or their holidays that they would normally spend with family. That dedication was there and they made that sacrifice.

Search and rescue volunteers are another group that often do extraordinary work with very little recognition. These teams respond in extremely difficult conditions in remote areas, on water, on trails and in winter. Oftentimes, you can see them out in the community.

I want to give a special shout-out to the Avalon North Wolverines Search and Rescue. They're located in Bay Roberts, but those volunteers are from across that

region. They come together, they're an amazing team and you can often see them throughout all seasons in the year, practising their drills on cold-water exercises. You can often see them. If you do, I'd like to encourage people to pay them a thank you; because, after all, they're doing it for the highest good, for everybody in our communities and it's often at the considerable personal risk.

As I said, once they answer that call, their life is on the line and they're willing. I had a fire chief say to me, Pam, when we answer that call, when I go on that truck with my colleagues, we're willing to die, if that's what's needed. Again, we can't say enough and support them enough. In many cases, they are responding during some of the worst moments in a family's life, and there's the whole trauma to consider about the family members and the loved ones for the particular victim who is impacted in the particular crisis, in the event.

So I think it is appropriate that government has chosen to increase both credits equally. That's something that we lobbied for. Even last year in the Cabinet Committee we had on wildfires, this is something that we did support, both firefighters and our search and rescue, because they're integral to the process that we saw. They all come together as a team.

I do believe that there are also important questions, however, that government should continue examining as these measures are implemented. For example, will this improve recruitment and retention? Will it meaningfully improve this? Will departments in rural and remote areas benefit proportionately? Are there barriers preventing some volunteers from accessing them now?

These are all important questions. Those are reasonable questions, of course, because I think all Members of the House of Assembly would agree that the ultimate goal is not simply to announce a larger tax credit.

The goal is stronger emergency services and sustainable volunteer capacity into the future. Again, it goes back to volunteers literally make the world go around. Without them, we would be much worse off than what we are.

Again, a heartfelt thank you to all volunteers and our first responders. I always say that they're the bravest men and women in the entire world because they answer the call. When the rest of us are taking safety and seeking shelter and looking for help, it's them who go out there and who deal with these extraordinary circumstances.

I also think it's important that we maintain perspective when discussing volunteer emergency responders. These individuals are not asking for praise every day. Most of them quietly serve their communities for years without expecting any recognition, but government does have a responsibility to show that their service is valued. Legislation like this sends an important signal, especially when we're all collaborating and working together. I've often said that these volunteers are not political. They're not looking at the politics of any given situation. They're ready to suit up and ready to go at the call.

Many Members of this House, on all sides, have volunteer firefighters and search and rescue volunteers in their districts. We know the sacrifices they make; we know the calls that they respond to and we know the critical role that they play in public safety throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

As Official Opposition, our role is to examine this legislation and I believe we can certainly support this bill, while also emphasizing that some of these supports do not go far enough and there is always room for improvement, I say.

The basic personal exemption charge, for example, certainly isn't a tax break for all of us. It actually omits the individuals in the province who are most in need. Even for

those of us who are included, the support only equates to about \$28 a month, as my colleague had mentioned and put on the record. Not a significant amount of relief for the majority of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

A true example of spending smarter would have been investing this money into an initiative that truly would have been for all of us. Some other Liberal platform promises, we'd be more than happy for them to borrow, would be an elimination of the provincial tax on electricity bills.

We can go on about that. We know how people are hurting. We heard the Consumer Advocate come out and make suggestions to Hydro on what they can do to help consumers in the way of smart meters, but we also could have opened the House of Assembly for the fall session in October to come in here and I think the whole House would have been supportive of removing the provincial sales tax on electricity bills.

After all, as we know, we still are currently relying heavily on rate mitigation from Ottawa. We receive a half billion dollars annually to offset the price of our Hydro bills and we know that that is in effect because of the debt that was assumed with the Muskrat Falls Project and the way it was managed and the framework of that project.

We are heavily reliant and, again, those power bills would have been doubled, as we know. Thankfully we do have the rate mitigation but as we do know it is due to expire, so there needs to be a plan in place to protect people. I think every MHA in here can attest to constituents who call up when some people who can't pay those bills. Sometimes they receive threats from the Hydro that their power is going to be cut and they come to MHAs as a last resort to help them, to put a payment plan in place. Oftentimes, we do have to intervene and support the residents as best we can.

So this certainly could have gone further. We would have loved to see that and I think it's not too late. If the government would like to take that back to the drawing board and to reconsider that, I think it's safe to say that everybody in here would certainly support that.

Another initiative that was already voted against, but would have provided relief to every Newfoundlander and Labradorian, was to support the reduction on the gas tax. Now, as we know, it was at the beginning of this term that we were in here and it was a very passionate debate. We brought that tax in back in 2022. It was a Liberal gas reduction tax but we do know, given the circumstances, that government can go further and they can actually introduce a further reduction and decrease in this tax to support people.

That always comes back to the conversation of what's happening in the Middle East. Again, our prayers and thoughts are with Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and Canadians who are living in the Middle East through what's happening. Their safety is, obviously, front of mind. But it could have gone further. Again, it's not too late to come back and introduce that tax. I think everybody certainly would be supportive of that.

During the debate, they indicated that would only benefit vehicle drivers in this province, but, Speaker, that's simply an oversimplification. The price of gas, as we know, it's up and it's down like a yo-yo every other day. I filled up three times last week, myself, and it's a different price.

I think many people are tuning in to the radio and to the news outlets every day to see if gas is up or down, and it really makes a difference. I've even heard people go as far as to say that they get as much as the can before they have to fill up, when they're holding off.

We also know that we could have done some supports – we do know that these cost-of-living measures, they also impact so many other goods and services throughout the province: the price of food, transportation costs, shipping costs, in addition to making travel and tourism more affordable for both residents and visitors. We know that we're finally getting into the summer season. It's not really feeling hot and summery out there or spring-like temperatures recently but when the sun is shining, it's a better day. We welcome that good weather, please God, and we'll get that.

So much to consider. We will be supporting the bill because we support lowering costs of living for residents of our province. This bill does do some important things right. It acknowledges the value of the volunteer firefighters, as I've mentioned, and search and rescue personnel who keep our communities safe. They are the backbone of the community.

We will be supporting the bill, but we could do more. I think it's safe to say that we would all be willing to come in, whether it's the gas tax – we're still running on the Liberal gas tax that was introduced in 2022; we could take that further. The feedback I get in my district, of course, people want to see measures. People are finding it hard. Power bills are huge. We do know we are receiving that rate mitigation annually, \$500 million. Without that, it's very scary to think about what people will be facing month to month.

Again, I will support the bill. It's great when we can all collaborate and work together here as a House of Assembly, but there's always room for improvement. That said, we will support it and I look forward to further debate.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for this opportunity.

As always, no matter what you're speaking on, it's always a pleasure to rise on behalf of the people of your district and mine being Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, a rural district, it's always a pleasure to contribute in any way that you can in terms of what's before us.

As many of our colleagues have said, we'll definitely be supporting this legislation because it is good things for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. We're always there to support anything that would improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

I think when the minister did rise, he said, I think \$91 million might have been the cost of this measure. We all know that there's not a lot that you need to do in terms of making a decision but it can cost a lot. I know it's been mentioned that \$28 a month is not a lot but it is something. It's a move in the right direction. Not everybody – I think my colleague for Mount Scio had said as well – is receiving this tax credit, but I guess any move that can help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, then it's a good thing. I believe this move puts us on par with PEI and Manitoba. I think Manitoba might be a little over \$15,000, if I'm correct, in some of the research that I did there.

It's also been mentioned, too, that this is a lever that the government decided to pull on and from an election promise, but there are other levers. That's other levers that constituents have certainly communicated to us that should be pulled.

The previous speaker spoke about Hydro light bills; we know they are high and they're enormous. Gas prices are enormous. All of that is a cost of living and affordability strain and stress that's on people right now. They're calling for more help. A barrel of oil, we know, is way up and it's bringing much-needed revenue to the province. So we'll

see where all that goes in terms of the fall update and where we are in terms of revenue that we receive and giving back to the people of the province.

I certainly know in terms of the Minister of Finance, when he was over here, heard him many times in terms of a budget response, that I can't support the budget because you didn't go far enough. Well, I guess I can use his own words now that he didn't go far enough or the government didn't go far enough. But, as we said, and he's saying it now, a government can only do so much. That is the reality of the fiscal finance that the province finds itself in. With just a little over 500,000 people, our revenue side can't be based on taxation, for sure.

Speaker, the second was to increase the volunteer firefighters tax credit. I don't think anyone is going to say anything other than positive. The glass is half full when it comes to that, for sure, but I think any government from this point on, whether it be Newfoundland and Labrador or any government in Canada, would be doing this. I think these are gravity decisions that have to be made because we see what's going on. We know the challenges.

Those that represent rural Newfoundland, we certainly know the challenges around fire departments and firefighters – volunteer firefighters. A tax credit to them is a move in the right direction that I believe any government will do. How far we go – we need to go further because I believe, Newfoundland and Labrador, we can lead. So let's lead in terms of recognizing and supporting our volunteer firefighters in their challenges.

We know the fire mitigation plans are rolling out. That's a good thing, but we know in terms of rural challenges too, in terms of what they need to do their volunteer jobs in the province in rural districts: their vehicles, their helmets, the breathing apparatuses and certainly other valuable gear they need to do their jobs.

Things that have happened over the years in terms of doing things for firefighters moving in the right direction – in 2016, our Liberal government introduced presumptive cancer coverage for firefighters. Initially, 11 types of cancer were included. This was expanded in 2022 to 19 types of cancer. That was a very important move.

The 2018 budget first introduced the search and rescue volunteer tax credit. In 2022, Newfoundland and Labrador amended the Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act to expand presumptive cancer and cardiac coverage for both career and volunteer firefighters. This legislation raised a number of presumptively covered cancers from 11 to 19 and added specific cardiac protections. That happened in the last 10 years under a previous government. Those were indeed good decisions, smart spending, absolutely, by the previous government in terms of investing in those fire departments and the firefighters that make them exist.

In terms of increasing the search and rescue volunteer tax credit – I guess along the same lines, Deputy Speaker, in terms of what I just said about volunteer firefighters, in terms of search and rescue, we know the challenges around what goes on in Newfoundland and Labrador from a search and rescue perspective, but any supports for them, too, is very important. Because what they do, I think, gives credit and value to what it is we're trying to help them with.

Search and rescue volunteers respond to missing persons, boating emergencies, wilderness rescues, snowmobile and ATV incidents and flood and storm events. So increasing the credit can certainly improve volunteer availability and readiness, leading to faster response times. Which, when your loved ones are in need, whether it's a missing person or a boating accident, a faster response time and more trained responders certainly would and will improve survival outcomes during emergencies.

I think the value, too, Deputy Speaker, in terms of what service they provide – and I know the minister said supporting them. Yes, for sure, it's all about supporting them and I don't think we can ever do enough to support them. Reliable rescue coverage is particularly important for regions dependent on hiking, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling and boating tourism. All of that is relative in Newfoundland and Labrador. The value of their service speaks volumes to what they do and why it's important that we're supporting any investment, tax credits for them, to allow them to provide the service but recognizing and thanking them for the service that they do provide. It's all very important.

To the other piece of decrease the small business corporate income tax – from a rural perspective, businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador face higher transportation costs, smaller local markets, higher energy and supply costs, and seasonal fluctuations. Well, a lower business tax can improve cashflows and certainly help business stay viable, especially in the rural parts of the province. It supports rural economic activity, which is important, because investment brings the revenue side up in the right direction.

Tax reductions may help maintain employment and economic activity in rural parts of the province, which is key. Again, I guess, it's the measure of it, how far do we go, because you have to take into consideration in terms of the concerns from small business because there would be less revenue, and even for the government.

It encourages entrepreneurship and local investment. That's important because we know, in rural parts of the province, we face population aging, youth outmigration and slower private sector growth in some regions. In my district, in terms of employment and growth and economic development, we have three fish plants that are continuously going. I've said it many of times, during COVID, the fish plant in

Hermitage-Sandyville didn't really miss a day and people kept working. When people work, they spend money, they pay their taxes and, therefore, a better way of life. They pay their taxes to government and that contributes to the overall investment in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

To sum it up, Deputy Speaker, there are four components here: increase the basic personal amount; increase the volunteer firefighters' tax credit; increase the search and rescue volunteer tax credit; and decrease the small business corporate income tax rate in stages. These are good moves and we welcome it. We look forward to what these investments will do for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Any time, as I said before, that we can do anything to help Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, I'd be happy to say that I do support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Dwyer): Before we go to the next speaker, I would like to acknowledge a Grade 10 class that just came in and is sitting with us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: We have 22 students, two teachers and, of course, the important one, the driver, Charlie Bursey. I'll give some advice to the kids: always be good to the driver. He's the one that controls everything. He knows where you get to stop for something to eat and all that stuff.

Let's welcome the Grade 10 class from Copper Ridge Academy in Baie Verte.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll probably end up saying some of the points I made before, but there are four items here. It's about affordability and it's an attempt to put money back in people's pockets. I know that when the Minister of Finance quotes the numbers, like \$91 million in relief, it's as a whole; it's money that's going back as a whole into the pockets. I would hope it's an indication of the cost to government, but it's also an indication, hopefully, that the money is going to come back into the economy in some way, shape or form.

However, it still amounts to a small amount for those who qualify for it, and we've made that point before. The increase in the volunteer firefighters' tax credit, again \$1.4 million that goes into the pockets of those who volunteer in our communities.

I know during the fire in Conception Bay North I had a chance to speak and meet with a number of the firefighters in that area. It's one thing as a professional firefighter, both put their lives at risk, but in many cases we found – I've been talking to the volunteer firefighters there who are at risk of whether they would have a job to go back to. They felt a duty to stay on and fight the fires. There's also the other illnesses that may come with being a firefighter, presumptive illnesses and so on and so forth.

I do believe at some point, when we're looking at making things better, maybe it's also worthwhile to start looking at professionalizing our firefighters in as many communities as we can, because it is a tremendous ask of people to take this on. So maybe that's another way over the long term, to professionalize, to increase affordability to make it a full-time job for people. Same thing for increasing search and rescue, again, a tax credit is helpful. It puts an extra \$261 into the pockets of people, and that's a tremendous responsibility to take on.

Decreasing the small business corporate income tax, I'll talk a little bit about that. Again, it's going to help with the small businesses and maybe I'll start with that one from our point of view, one of the issues in our platform. We not only talked about reducing the corporate income tax for small businesses but eliminating it entirely, phasing it out with the hopes, with the plan that this could be used to look at hiring on people at a livable minimum wage. So there's a give and a take. There's a benefit in terms of the people that are going to be working and putting more money into the economy as a result.

So a lot of our platform was about affordability. We wanted to cut the taxes, provincial HST, from all forms of home heating. Not just oil, not just electric, but any form of home heating. One thing in Newfoundland and Labrador, certainly in the winter, this past winter, I would say that many people had their budgets severely impacted by the cold days, the length of the winter. Even today, it's pretty chilly out there. So it's an opportunity in our climate to make sure that people can afford to heat their homes. That's a basic necessity from our point of view.

Now anyone who has gotten a central heat pump or anything along this line, you know, our summers are becoming such that it is becoming a little more challenging to keep homes cool in the summertime, especially when we know that in certain jurisdictions, the excessive heating provides a risk to those who are vulnerable, our seniors and so on and so forth.

We talked about raising the Seniors' Benefit by 25 per cent and indexing it to the cost of living. We advocated for signing on to pharmacare. Again, a major cost saving that could've been for people, especially who are dependent on diabetic medication.

We talked about increasing benefits for ECEs. With regard to today, Speaker, child care – I think one of the advocacy groups

talked about a full compensation package should be offered, not just deciding which one is next, but why not the whole thing when it comes to pay, pension, sick leave and a health care plan, finding a way to implement those all at once rather than having early childhood educators pick one. If you want to attract people, if you want to make life more affordable for ECEs, then this is one way to do it. I was talking to an early childhood educator during the election. She was in the process of selling her house. She could not afford to live in the house anymore.

We talked about also bringing protecting gig workers and contract workers with stronger labour laws. Certainly, as we see the rise of Uber, Skip the Dishes and so on and so forth, we find that a lot of people don't have the protection they thought they had. They're sort of like an independent contractor and they're not getting the protection. So we looked at labour laws that may need to be brought in to protect people in the gig economy.

We talk about removing the HST off all forms of children's essentials. One of the things that we did promote, and is still a hope of mine, is that we will, as a province, bring in some form of guaranteed basic income, whether it's a pilot or phase it in. But if we want to address affordability, Speaker, then we start looking at some real initiatives that will actually put money in people's pockets and raise up their standard of living.

I know that the Members who sat on this committee were supportive of it. I think in principle – and that's something that does give me hope but it's something where we need to go. I'm looking forward to hearing about the poverty reduction strategy, the plan, when it comes out, but I'm hoping that guaranteed basic income factors into it.

Housing, we very clearly focused on not-for-profit housing. Now, we know, one thing that's very clear that came out in the

transitional supportive living initiative, Horizons, it's costly. I looked at one figure there, Speaker, that the AG said that day: For the 34 transitions, it's approximately \$706,000 per person.

Now, I'm not saying it's too much to house the people, but I'm thinking what could we do with an action, a housing plan that prioritizes not-for-profit housing? What could we do with \$706,000? How many people could we house in a supportive living arrangement, similar to Indwell, similar to the Ches Penney Centre of Hope, to Stella's Circle. There are a number of organizations that do this.

But I have a feeling, Speaker, that if we had more not-for-profit housing, we wouldn't be needing the bigger emphasis on shelters and transition and so on and so forth. We would definitely make our communities safer, as a result, and we would improve health care. Every dollar that's spent on social spending actually decreases health care costs significantly.

We talk about raising the minimum wage to \$22 and tie it to inflation, eliminating the corporate income tax completely on small businesses, phase it out entirely, and look at some way as to how we could tie that to increasing the minimum wage and making sure that small businesses could afford it.

We've talked about the strengthening of the collective bargaining process through Card Check and anti-scab legislation so that people could be part of unions. We know that a unionized job is a higher paying job with better benefits and a better standard of living.

We talked about 10 paid sick days. We talked about raising workers' compensation income from 85 per cent to 90 per cent. All these are about putting money back into the pockets of people, in this case, but money back in the pockets of injured workers. Reversing the tuition hike, again, allows students to live, and to live while they're

studying here, to put food on the table so we don't need a food bank at the university.

Most importantly, we talked about paid work terms for nursing students, education students and social work students. If we want to get people to stay here, we want them to go to areas that are hard to fill. Well, this is one way of doing it for all students.

Speaker, the bill talks about, in this case, four measures to put money in the pockets to people to address affordability, increasing the basic personal amount, increasing the tax credit to volunteer firefighters and to volunteer search and rescue people, and to decrease the small business tax. But I think we've got room to be more ambitious over the next year because I do believe that if we want to improve, again if the government wishes to live up to its slogan, its campaign promise of better health care, lower taxes and safer communities, well the best way is to make sure that people around us are doing well.

As I've said before, I do well when the people around me are doing well. That's the best way to make better, safer and healthier communities.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to stand, have a few words and speak on Bill 16 with just a few comments that I'm going to make on the bill itself.

I will be supporting the bill, absolutely, no doubt.

I just seen the Auditor General's report on housing. I won't get into that right now, but

what bothers me most about the Auditor General's report on housing is that it took me over one year – one year – to convince the previous government that there was a unit out in Corner Brook that was dilapidated, that should've been torn down and houses built. It never existed until I got NTV to take a picture of it with me in front, and here we are with the airport 106, or whatever it's called, put up there when the cost is, some of them, up to \$700,000 per resident.

There's a place in Corner Brook that I've been trying for three years to get some services and some support for the people who need it, in the former hotel in Corner Brook, and you couldn't get no one to listen to you. They're almost treated like second-class citizens.

The former mayor of Corner Brook is well aware of what I'm talking about. It took me years to try to get some support for those same residents in the same situation as the airport 106. Are they second-class citizens? They need services. They need wraparound services.

Do you know what was done? Nothing. Absolutely nothing.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I'll remind the Member that we're looking at Bill 16 now. It's not a money bill so we'd have to stick to the legislation.

E. JOYCE: It's definitely not a money bill.

SPEAKER: We will be going into budget debate later where you'll be able to bring these concerns forward.

E. JOYCE: Well, part of it, Mr. Speaker, is to increase the basic income amount. A lot of those people might not even make up to that personal basic income because they're in supported housing. They have no income. They had no opportunity to get into

substantial housing because there was none done in Corner Brook at the time.

Mr. Speaker, when you got the basic income up to \$15,000, a lot of these residents couldn't even make that. I've been trying for years to get that done, and no way in the world, I couldn't get it done. I couldn't get it done. It was sad. I know a lot of those people. I know there are a lot of concerns, if you're talking to people in Corner Brook about it now.

I spoke to the current Minister of Housing and they're working on trying to get some supports for the people in that Corner Brook hotel. When I see this here and the cost and how it was done, it's pretty upsetting.

I stand here as a lowly independent, trying to fight for the common person who needs a bit of help and I was pushed to the side, the residents were pushed to the side, the people who need it were pushed to the side, and you read this here, it's pretty disheartening. It's pretty disheartening because, obviously, the previous government didn't think of people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, it was just certain people that they were concerned about. I, personally, raised it in this House on numerous occasions, through media and it fell on deaf ears.

I'll just get back to the other parts of the bill, the basic rate that you increased from \$3,000 to \$6,000 for the volunteer firefighters. I'd say 90 per cent of people here in their district have volunteer firefighters in their district. I'm pretty confident on that. The biggest part I find with the volunteer firefighters now, as to years ago when I first attended the Fireman's Ball, I'm going back to the '70s, then '80s and '90s.

Speaker, 1989 was the first time I spoke at a Fireman's Ball as a representative at the time, representing the Humber - Bay of Islands with Clyde Wells, as his executive assistant, to now, over 90 per cent of the

calls – and I speak on the Humber - Bay of Islands, but I'm assuming it's all over the province – 90 per cent of their calls they get now is for medical, it's medical work. So the amount of training they had to do, not for firefighting, but for medical services.

I see the Member for Labrador West, you were vice-president of the Newfoundland & Labrador Association of Fire Services, you know exactly what I'm talking about. The amount of volunteer work they put in just to get trained to do that medical. I'll give people a good example how this evolved – and I support the tax credit up to \$6,000, I say to the minister, 100 per cent – how this evolved, I will use Cox's Cove for the example.

For an ambulance to get from Corner Brook, if it's in Corner Brook or it maybe outside Corner Brook where it has to come from, to get to Cox's Cove, the minimum is 45 minutes. Someone with a heart attack ain't going to survive, so that evolved and then they became essential first responders, not firefighters anymore, first responders. They saved so many lives; the volunteer firefighters saved so many lives.

I know in the District of Humber - Bay of Islands, and I'm speaking on behalf of anybody who has volunteer firefighters in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, the tax credit will never be able to pay for the services that are giving to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, but it's a recognition to say thank you very much for what you do. Your work, your time, is invaluable. It's just invaluable.

Also, I look at the search and rescue, I know many cases, I know many of the people in the search and rescue that do so much work and training. It was just there in probably February or March, I was down to the marina in Curling when they were doing ice rescues, training for ice rescues, search and rescue, and the amount of time that they're sent out to do things throughout the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador,

not just here, not just in the Humber - Bay of Islands, but all the different search and rescue groups, again, increasing the limit from \$3,000 to \$6,000 is a little thank you.

We'll never be able to pay them for the amount of work that they do, the amount of training that they do, getting called out for three or four days at a time, but this is just a recognition for government to say we recognize what you do for us. I would say to the minister, again, this is something that they appreciate.

I know search and rescue, the many times they went out and they recovered bodies, they found people, I know personally. To all the volunteer firefighters across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the professional ones also, but the volunteer is one who does it for their community, thank you very much for your service. It's well-respected here in this House of Assembly by everybody and from all the people in Newfoundland and Labrador and the same with the search and rescue.

Search and rescue is another one that they spend so much time. It's unbelievable the amount of training that they do and then the times they get called out in different hours of the night and day and searching. I know recently, down in our district, they just found another person. I'm going back and month or month and a half ago. It wasn't the greatest situation that they found them in, but they found the comfort for the family. There was another out toward Cox's Cove, a comfort for the family. They're doing it as volunteers because they want to make a difference. You have to support them.

Mr. Speaker, there is some support there for small business also, which is, again, a good initiative by the government to help the small business because they are struggling, there's no doubt. They need a helping hand, so the reduction is beneficial to the small businesses also.

We look at other services, and I know the Leader of the Third Party brought it up about the other people we need to help. I'm just speaking on my behalf, there are two groups that really are reaching out, I spoke about it on many occasions. It's the senior who is living in their own home that's struggling. I'm just bringing this up because I know, for any government, there's only so much you can do.

What I found is that a husband and wife are living in their own home. They want to stay home, we all know, which is great. One of them passes away, then there's only one income with the same amount of bills for that house, to maintain it, to stay in your house. That senior wants to stay in their home but they just can't afford it. I know there was some financial help for them in the budget, but they are the people who built Newfoundland and Labrador and brought us to the standard we are today. They're the ones that always say, well, we just can't maintain our house. We can't pay the taxes. We can't pay the insurance. Snow clearing is tough, especially when it comes down to one.

That is something that I just want to bring to the minister's attention, which I'm sure he already understands and he knows. A lot of people, when they look at the senior who wants to stay home, I probably would do the same thing; I want to stay home. I want to stay in my house as long as I can. That's where your memories are. That's where your family grew up. That's all part of a senior who has special meaning to their home, but when you lose one income, it's hard. It's extremely hard.

So that's one, I'll say to the minister, if there's some way, again, that we can find some avenue or some levers, you always put it, that we can help out, it would be great. I know there is other work that we have done to help repair the houses and other things, which is a good initiative also. The other group in society is the low-middle class to the middle class that brings up it's

almost like they're struggling also, especially with this gas now.

I'll tell you another issue that's always being brought up, I get many calls, is the increase in electricity. No one can understand how it can go up one month and go up the next month an extra \$200, \$150, \$200. No one can understand it. You get them to call and try to get answers, but the frustration is when it just takes this big hike, some don't get the hike, some do. I can't explain it. So we pass them on.

You get a lot of concerns over that. If there's any way that we can make it even across the board or give the people advance notice of what's going to happen, or some way be able to explain the increases somehow because people just can't get the answers.

I'll say to the Minister of Finance, if there's any way you can find the answers why someone's light bill goes from \$200 to \$400 in the matter of a month – I can't find the answers. I've been trying. The calls that I have been getting, I cannot find out. What I do, I ask them to call and come down and check your meter to make sure the meter is working properly and things like that; 90 per cent will always come back and say, no, it's just gone up. For some reason, it's gone up.

So I'm going to sit down, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to say, again, that I'm going to be supporting this bill for the four reasons that are in there. There's always a way that if there's anything else that we can do to help out the people who are struggling, the seniors, the seniors that are mainly living in their own home and anybody else that we can help, within fiscal responsibility, of course, because if you give everything someone like myself asks, there would be nothing around because the ask is so big and you've got to do it in a responsible way.

But, again, I look forward to the Minister of Housing, who is helping with the Corner Brook hotel, to help those individuals, many I know who need the supports, who need

the wraparound services, some need counselling, some need other services, but a lot of them need housing – a lot of them need a house to go to. Once you get a house, then you can start your life and start the road on from your life.

I thank the minister for that and his support and him immediately getting on that as a supporter. If there's anything I can do, and I'm sure the Member for Corner Brook, I'm speaking for him, too, anything that he can do to help out that, we are there to help. This is not a Liberal, PC, NDP issue. This is a community issue. This is something that we all have to work together to try to solve. I look forward to working with the minister on that.

The city council is saying they soon may have an opportunity to build some new houses in Corner Brook, up to 300, once that water tower is built. I look forward to working with the city on that also because if the city prospers, all the residents within prosper also.

I see my time is short, I'll take my seat, Mr. Speaker. I will be supporting this bill.

Again, before I go, I'll thank all the volunteers, the fire departments and search and rescue and all the others who work in our communities to make it a safer, better place. Your work, sometimes you think it's not being noticed, but it is being noticed and it's being noticed by the government today by bringing this bill in here as part of it to help with the limit, going from \$3,000 to \$6,000 in taxes.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Lane): Seeing no further speakers, if the Minister of Finance speaks now, he will close the debate.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to acknowledge all the future Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are convocating starting today at our university.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I think there were approximately 250 this morning that I attended that were graduating. I hear from the officials, approximately 2,000 this week of our future graduates who are going to look and generate the economy and participate in our province. Hopefully, 100 per cent, all of them, will do so.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I have to mention, I had the pleasure, again, of meeting the Leader of the Opposition's mother, who was the past – am I correct to note she was the past Dean of Education? Yes. Anyway, one time before, I was at the Health Sciences complex and this remarkable lady swung by and we had a conversation at the Health Sciences complex, and while I did recall her today, she came up again and introduced herself.

I think she really espouses, I say to the hon. Member, Lasso when he talks about the collaborative, not judgmental, because she certainly came up and we had a great conversation. I mentioned to the hon. colleague, she was a very graceful, educated individual and I look forward to the next conversation with her.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I also stated that I was most impressed they gave an honorary Doctor of Laws today to Jean Claude Roy. He came from France. I think he settled in '71. He came to Newfoundland and Labrador, in the City of St. John's, and stayed. He's got a

home here, and wouldn't you know it, I mentioned to the hon. Member, I think his mother was there today because she's good friends with Jean Claude Roy and he has a spot on Hogan's Pond. Fantastic. I mean, that's really good.

A remarkable individual. He's an artist. He's painted the landscape of every community in Newfoundland and Labrador. Some people have his artwork. I think he's quite successful at the art, but a very graceful individual who truly loves Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I thank him. I know there are some other ones that are getting some honorary degrees coming up at the convocation, but it was very special this morning to attend. I look forward to doing it again on Friday because I wish to be there.

Any time you watch these young graduates that are graduating and walking across the stage, you can tell the energy that they have. They're ready to embrace the work life in Newfoundland and Labrador. It was a very special morning.

Before we go to Committee, Speaker, I just want to draw upon a couple of comments that were made here in the House.

The Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville stood up and said it's not for all of us. Well, it's for all the taxpayers in Newfoundland and Labrador – all the taxpayers. Those people who don't pay taxes, is it for them? No, it is not, but don't forget, there are other measures in the budget that fulfill that commitment, other measures in the budget that help a more targeted base.

Let me say to you, the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands talked about the seniors living at in their own home. We've looked at the Provincial Home Repair Program, we've doubled that; the Home Modification

Program, we've double that; we've dropped from seven years to five years that they can apply again; lifetime contribution we've doubled.

We've done those measures through the minister in that Department of SSWB. The Seniors' Benefit, we'll add \$331 to those 50,000. Maybe the senior that you were referring to will get a \$331 increase.

On the other hand, which is one that's not often talked about and one I think the Premier, myself, and many of us celebrate, is the child benefit, bringing 3,000 more children in. We had to raise the threshold, I say to the Burin - Grand Bank Member because he's had that discussion. I think anytime we move a threshold to serve more people, we're doing a good job with that.

An example would be if you had a family making \$30,000, they will now receive \$849 more a year, as they did not qualify before: \$28,000 come down, \$900 more, but they didn't qualify either. Those who qualify with the \$3,000 on the lower end will obviously get more because we've changed the formula to put more money out. So think of serving in those low-income homes, children, this is a significant part of the budget that brings us a whole lot of excitement – a whole lot of excitement.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: So when he mentions, the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville, well, this does not serve all of us. Keep in mind, we've made sure that we were comprehensive in the budget that we have other, what we called, levers that we would employ in this regard.

It's genuine. I find that every time the Opposition would stand up to speak about a monetary value for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, while they watch in the House, they will take the lowest refrain and number that they would have. For example, the Member for Virginia Waters -

Pleasantville stood up and said, well – he probably never used the qualifier “only” but I think he did; don’t quote me on that, but I think he did – only \$28 a month – only. You could use \$341 a year, which gives it a little more oomph. Either way, it’s the same amount.

He said we could have used a lever that we spent two days on: lower the gas tax by one more cent – lower the gas tax by one more cent. The Third Party, the Opposition, that’s what they were driving. Two days we debated in this House. Well, back at that debate time, if it’s correct that the average person spends or uses 1,460 litres of gas per year, that would mean, after two days of debate, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who drive vehicles would save \$14.60 more a year.

Now, if we were true, I’m using the year, but if you want to use the month, like you use, and break it down lower, well that would be \$1.22 a month. Two days debating on that bill, \$1.22. Could we have used that lever? We could have, but two days debating on that bill.

Now, break it down – this Member’s not dismissing this – any money added to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians is a positive. So we had stated here that we wanted to make targeted interventions going forward, targeted interventions for those that would be in need the most. I think that was the gist of what we were doing.

The Member for Mount Scio said it’s the cornerstone, about the gas reduction and these features here. Correct. It would be. Back to the provincial gas tax again, saying it’s not changing at all, even though we had it in our platform that the provincial gas tax is not going back up. We’re going to keep it where it is, the lowest in Canada.

I would state again, I’m not sure if it was the fifth time, for those viewers at home, it wasn’t budgeted in this year by the previous government for that to be actualized this

year. It wasn’t in the budget. It was not in the budget.

The Member for St. John’s East - Quidi Vidi would like the use of refrain because it wasn’t in the budget. Repeat it again. You can say now, well, we would have done it anyhow, but you weren’t forecasting to include that. So you can call it a Liberal initiative whatever you want, I’m just telling you, as the Minister of Finance, it wasn’t budgeted for ’26-’27 that it was going to be happening.

Anyway, my hon. colleague from Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, I think anything he had stated that any time that money goes out into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, it’s a good thing. I gave the amounts, even though it wasn’t in as far as any notes that I would have had, but of these tax measures, over \$106 million is going back to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians on these four tax initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your attention, and I look forward to Committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are Members ready for the question?

All those in favour, ‘aye.’

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, ‘nay.’

Carried.

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

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

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

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, “An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000,” read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House. (Bill 16)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 16.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 16.

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.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 16, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000.

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

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I just have a few questions. We are supporting this in Committee.

I do want to make a few comments in relation to the minister’s comments. The minister, I think, just said four or five times the gas tax change – I know we’re not talking about the gas tax, but as the minister just said, he repeated, fair enough it was not in the budget. Absolutely, it was not in the budget. The gas tax, keeping it the same, was not in the budget.

For anyone watching, the government’s budget is a yearly decision process that Cabinet makes. You all get together; you make all the announcements and decisions for that year’s budget and then you announce it on budget day. There’s a lot of rigour around that and, absolutely, we, our former government, did not dictate the budget that the Conservative government just passed. It was not in the budget. It was not our budget; it was the Conservative government’s budget, as is their prerogative to have. It is their budget; it was not our budget. It’s just silly to keep saying. I just reacted to what the minister said.

Also in terms of gas tax, yes, we put forward a one cent reduction. I’ll be honest, as the minister spoke to this, I will respond. We wanted a reduction that we knew the government could afford that was made up solely on the extra money they’ve made from the price of gas. We wanted to have a small, reasonable change the government could support, and we could have had a friendly amendment. Fine, if one cent wasn’t enough, we could have gone two. We would have loved to have another five cents.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

S. STOODLEY: Exactly, as one of my colleagues have just reminded me, that we

couldn't even do another friendly amendment. We would have been happy to have a higher amount, no problem, but the government invoked closure and we were not able to put forward the other amendment that we had, which we had spoken about. We were not able to put forward the other amendment we had because the government invoked closure to shut down debate on the gas tax.

While the government mocks the small change that we did put forward, we wanted to put forward something that the government had already made their money on and they could already pay for it based on the additional price of oil, so it would not have a financial budgetary impact on the government. But again, they invoked closure and voted against it. So that one cent off the price of gas is gone.

I could talk about gas prices all day, but that is not this bill. I have some questions for the minister. Minister, also in your statement, in your remarks just now, you talked about the Newfoundland Child Benefit. I don't believe that's in this bill. I am wondering if you could tell me how that's in this bill, please.

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

C. PARDY: Thank you, Chair.

I wanted to harken back to the budget comment that I had stated that it wasn't in the budget. The Member for Mount Scio was stating that it was our budget, not their budget, but I'd like to remind her and I know that, in Cabinet, she would have had the foresight to know that part of budget planning, fiscal planning, is in your out-years of three or four, where your expenditures are going to lie. Nobody – no government in Canada, unless you're going to tell me the past government was the exception, does fiscal forecasting as to what the expenditures are going to be in the out-years.

The only time you would have an element blank under a program or delivery, like continuing with the gas tax reduction, is if you didn't plan on doing it. In our budget, with the fiscal forecast, like every, I would assume, province in Canada, those programs that you're going to continue on through your fiscal forecast has those moneys allotted in future forecast.

I'm surprised that the previous minister may not have been aware that in the previous government that there is fiscal forecasting that you put in the amounts for the programs that you want in future years. That was the basis of what I'm saying. Yes, we inherited your budget from '25-'26 to make '26-'27 and in that forecast, there was no money for continuing the gas tax reduction. It was over – gone.

The one cent I had stated – and you can check *Hansard* – that if we were going to make any more measures – and I think the Third Party may agree – any further measures, we wanted to make sure we had them targeted for those who would need it most. I reference my colleague from Ferryland at that time. I said: Well, if he fills up his vehicle, he's going to get one cent. Now, already, he's got the cheapest gas tax provincial-wise in the country. You wanted to add one more cent on and we were saying that any more spent investments, we want it to be targeted for those who need it most. That was why we did not accept or were not in favour of the amendment.

I met with the bond-rating agency this morning – one of my meetings that we had – and not to disclose too much but they were concerned about the amount of debt that we had, like we all talk about in the House. The economy, we know it's looking very positive but, rest assured, we need to make sure that we spend smarter and plan efficiently with taxpayers' money. That is what we contended.

The Child Benefit, like the gas tax, is not part of the Income Tax Act. Those changes

will be made to the Child Benefit and they're not included in the Income Tax Act change here that we've got posed.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I believe this was mentioned, but I just want to make sure. I'm wondering if the minister can tell the House how much the changes in this bill are costing the government for this financial year.

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

C. PARDY: The total cost – I shouldn't say cost because I don't like the word "cost," but investment in Newfoundland and Labrador, putting money into the pockets of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, is \$104 million. I'm just doing the math in my head so if I'm off a little bit, I say to my hon. colleague –

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I would agree with the minister's categorization of this as an investment, absolutely. So I thank the minister for that information.

I was wondering why the personal exemption increase is starting July 1. Because taxpayers will not get that full value in this tax year; they will get a partial value. I notice that business tax change is effective January 1, which is good and it makes sense.

I was wondering if the minister can explain to anyone watching and for the record why

they chose to make the personal exemption effective July 1.

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

C. PARDY: The Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville was ready to sit in October. I remind him that we didn't get sworn in until October 29. I know there was a couple of days left in October that we probably could have opened the House, but we had some judicial recounts that were ongoing into November.

When we talk about planning efficiently, it does take time to understand what the fiscal position of the province was. Once we determined the fiscal position of the province, then we had to look at what we're going to roll out in our first budget, knowing it wasn't too far off.

While we wish we could have went back and started it in January, it does take a little bit of time to get the government up and running, what we had. I know me, in particular, to get familiar with the department and the officials, it does take a little time.

Anyway, it's launched and it's happening.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 5 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 5 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 5 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 Income Tax Act, 2000. (Bill 16)

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 acknowledges the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 16 without an amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 16 without amendment.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue and Deputy Speaker.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has considered matters to them referred and have directed me to report that the Committee recommends Bill 16 without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends Bill 16 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

Order 6, Bill 17.

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

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

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2." (Bill 17)

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

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's a pleasure to stand on my feet again with some needed changes. In addition to what was previous, today we're making further amendments to the Income Tax Act, 2000. The Department of Finance is responsible for oversight of the Canada Revenue Agency's administration of both personal and corporate income tax on behalf of the province. Really, we have a lot of synergy with the CRA working for any kind of taxation on personal and corporate.

From time to time, technical and policy related amendments are required to ensure the act continues to function as intended. The amendments before the House today,

Speaker, arise from a combination of routine administration, evolving policy considerations and requests from the Canada Revenue Agency.

Newfoundland and Labrador has a tax collection agreement with the federal government under which the Canada Revenue Agency administers our provincial income taxes. I say to the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, I know in the past I had mentioned Manitoba, Manitoba administers their provincial taxation within their province. Most other provinces work with CRA, we're one of those. Making changes in the provincial taxation system, it can get a little tangly and it's not often as time efficient as we would like.

This agreement requires the province to ensure, where appropriate, provisions of the provincial act related to administration, enforcement and collection are consistent with the federal *Income Tax Act* and its regulations.

Speaker, the proposed amendments include extending the eligibility for the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit for six months following the death of a child; prorating the Green Technology Tax Credit when a corporation has a short taxation year. These are the ones that are recommended by the CRA. Other technical amendments include allowing the Manufacturing and Processing Investment Tax Credit and the Green Technology Tax Credit to be transferred to successor corporations following an amalgamation or a windup. Another is amending the refund limitation period for the Film and Video Industry Tax Credit to three years consistent with federal practice.

If these amendments are not adopted, inconsistencies will remain between federal and provincial legislation. This could place the province out of compliance with the tax collection agreement and may allow certain taxpayers to exploit unintended loopholes.

Speaker, with your permission, I'd now like to provide a few more details on each of those for clarity of the Members in the House and for those who are watching at home.

The first one brings me a degree of sadness even to talk about it but it's necessary. One, the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit is a tax-free monthly benefit provided to low-income families with children under 18. Currently, eligibility ends in the month following a child's death, consistent with the former federal rules. Delays in reporting the death can result in benefit overpayments and subsequent claw backs adding stress to the families during an already difficult time.

In the 2024 federal budget, the Government of Canada amended the federal *Income Tax Act* to extend eligibility for the Canada child benefit for six months, not one, following the unfortunate death of a child. To ensure consistent treatment between federal and provincial child benefits, it is proposed that the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit be similarly extended. This change would be effective July 1, 2026.

Just to restate, in the brutal and unfortunate situation that a child passes away at the end of January, under the old act, any money received after February, the family had to pay it back. Any family that loses a child, high on their list is not going to be contacting CRA to stop payments of the Child Benefit; that will be the least of their concern. It may not even be after six months, but certainly not that one month after. This gives them six months, the family, that they haven't got to be concerned with that, and they need to notify the CRA at the end of six months.

The second, the Green Technology Tax Credit, currently has an annual tax credit of up to \$1 million in a taxation year; however, there is no provision in the act requiring this limit to be prorated when a corporation has a short tax year. This could allow a

corporation access to more than one full tax credit limit in a single calendar year, if there are multiple short taxation years, which was not the original policy intent. The proposed amendment would prorate the tax credit limit for short taxation years, closing this loophole and ensuring fairness and consistency in the application of the credit.

Has there been anybody avail of more than \$1 million on a short taxation season in Newfoundland and Labrador? No, but it's something that the federal government wishes to close up the loophole.

Number three: the manufacturing and processing investment tax credit and the Green Technology Tax Credit. Other provincial and federal tax credits, Speaker, such as the Scientific Research and Experimental Development tax credit, allow unused credits to be transferred to a successor corporation following an amalgamation or a wind up of a company. Currently, similar provisions do not exist for the manufacturing and processing investment tax credit nor the Green Technology Tax Credit.

The amendments we are proposing today would allow unused credits to be transferred to a successor corporation, ensuring consistent treatment across tax credits and preventing the unintended loss of legitimate tax support following corporate restructuring.

K. RUSSELL: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: The Member for Lake Melville likes it. He likes what he hears here.

K. RUSSELL: Yes, Sir.

C. PARDY: The fourth and one, the film and video industry tax credit, is a refundable credit equal to 40 per cent of the eligible local labour costs with a per project cap of \$5 million. Unlike other refunds under the act, there are currently no time limits for requesting payment when this credit

exceeds the tax payable. This differs from the federal administration and from other refunds on the provincial act, which are subject to a three-year limitation. We're just putting a limitation on this one as opposed to having it open in perpetuity.

The proposed amendment would require the amount to be refunded to the corporation, thereby subjecting it to the same three-year refund limitation and aligning it with the federal practice. This change would only apply to productions that receive Part I approval after the effective date of this amendment.

Speaker, these amendments are largely technical in nature, but one could say important in practice. They improve fairness, close unintended loopholes, support families and ensure harmonization with federal legislation. Most importantly, they ensure that Newfoundland and Labrador remains compliant with its obligations under the tax collection agreement.

Speaker, it is for these reasons and these, and these aforementioned reasons just disclosed, that I put these amendments forward and look forward to this bill, too, proceeding through the House of Assembly.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Mount Scio.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the minister for the very thorough overview of the changes that this bill makes. We don't have a lot of things to add to that. This is an administrative technical bill. It doesn't include any policy amendments or changes that the government is hoping to make.

From a policy perspective, this isn't a big signature bill from the budget. We will be supporting it. It includes items that CRA has asked for and technical amendments that the department has recommended.

So thank you very much. I don't have anything further to add.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you, as well, to the minister for tabling this.

We understand certainly that this is a lot of housecleaning that's happening, but very positive news in it. We're very happy to see, of course, as was discussed, the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit, the manufacturing and processing investment tax credit, the Green Technology Tax Credit and the film and video industry tax credit.

Obviously, the minister has spoken to the details of the bill and the amendments. I just wanted to talk a little bit about two areas, in particular for me, green technology and film and video industry, but I will talk about the NDP platform being a platform that really is trying to encourage affordability. Some of these taxations in our fully costed platform were to promise the elimination of taxes including corporate income tax for small businesses, et cetera. That certainly helps small business, giving them a break to stay open, hire more staff and to grow.

It certainly aligns with the kind of things that we have been promising in our campaign promises, but some of the considerations that I just want to reference here are two in particular, an investment in two key areas. One is the diversification of industry and expanding the green economy.

Of course, it is probably no surprise to anybody in this House of Assembly that the green economy is something that I'm very, very supportive of and the NDP are very, very supportive of. These credits are designed to encourage companies to invest in this province, especially in equipment and processes that create more jobs and value right here.

We should be doing everything we possibly can to diversify the economy. We've had many of these discussions before, my colleagues and I. The swings and demands in global prices for commodities, they can wreak havoc on the provincial economy and government's ability to pay for the services that we all rely on. Of course, this is true as we start to shift away from fossil fuels. We also need to be doing our part at home to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and programs like this that help companies make the switch.

If we want to help incentivize the companies to invest more in the people of this province and a greener future – we certainly do – the government should be making sure that we can take advantage of the tax credits like these. It is a step in the right direction, so I'm very pleased about that.

The second thing I want to reference – and, again, no surprise to anybody in this House – would be the investment in the arts. By making the film and video industry tax credit fully refundable, companies producing film and television series in the province will be able to receive a refund from the government for eligible expenses rather than showing to hold some of it for the following year, if it turns out that they owe zero dollars in tax in year one. Whatever we can do to help foster that business, that industry, which is in a creative economy, as I talk about regularly.

This is a good initiative that helps new companies and television series with their financing upfront. The NDP supports all measures that invest in the arts and the

cultural sector, so we're happy to throw our support behind that. However, we do need to mention, of course, that the industry needs more support, particularly those that put money back in the hands of the creators, of the workers who make the works of art that we all enjoy.

The NDP would like grant funding at ArtsNL to be increased so that more creators can spend more of their time on the creative aspect of their art. Of course, the NDP would also like to see the government recognize the arts and culture sector for the economic powerhouse that it is, that it truly is, within the film, television, literature, music, performance and others, by creating a comprehensive export strategy that will grow demand for output and grow the local economy.

So having said that, these are the two main points that I really wanted to address. The minister certainly went through it in great detail, you know, the housecleaning of this particular amendment to the Income Tax Act, Bill 17, and the Newfoundland and Labrador NDP caucus are happy to support that.

Thank you so much, Speaker.

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

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2. While this legislation is largely technical in nature, the changes contained within it still have very practical impacts for families, businesses and several important sectors of our economy.

Speaker, even when the legislation is considered housekeeping, it is important that we take the time to examine how these changes will operate in practice, who they will benefit and whether they reflect the

broader priorities around fairness, accountability and economic development.

This bill addresses three primary areas: support for families through the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit, continuity rules for manufacturing and green technology investment credits, and refundability for the film and video industry tax credit. Overall, these amendments our caucus can support, while also asking important questions about the implementation, the long-term impacts and the broader commitments government has made in these areas.

I want to begin with the changes relating to the Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit. The legislation extends eligibility for the Child Benefit for six months following the death of a child. Families who experience the loss of a child are dealing with grief that most of us cannot begin to imagine. During that period, they should not be dealing with a sudden loss of financial support. This amendment recognizes that reality.

This amendment also brings the provincial Child Benefit in line with changes already adopted at the federal level in recent years. So alignment with federal programs, where appropriate, often make sense because it creates consistency, it reduces confusion and it helps ensure families are treated fairly across programs. So we support this change because families dealing with grief should not be burdened with the sudden financial disruption.

While we support the amendment, we also need to look at the broader context. The Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit became a significantly more meaningful support because of reforms introduced by the previous Liberal government. In 2023, the Liberal government announced a 300 per cent increase to the benefit, which came into effect in 2024. Support programs for low-income families were expanded and the age eligibility for the nutrition support was

increased. We worked with the federal government on an affordable child care initiative that helped families throughout the province.

While this amendment is positive and very compassionate, it is also building upon supports that were already strengthened substantially in recent years. At the same time, Speaker, we do believe there are broader conversations to be had around child poverty reduction and family supports. We will continue to encourage government to build on that work.

Government has spoken publicly about expanding eligibility and increasing the amounts associated with Newfoundland and Labrador Child Benefit but those details are not contained within this legislation. I think families deserve to know who will qualify, what changes are being contemplated, how much additional support will the people actually receive and when those changes will take effect. Those are reasonable questions because, while announcements are important, people ultimately judge programs based on what they actually experience in their day-to-day lives.

The next major section of the bill deals with the Manufacturing and Processing Investment Tax Credit, as well as the Green Technology Tax Credit. These amendments are largely technical but they are still significant for industry and investment planning. Essentially, the bill ensures that unused tax credits are not lost during things like corporate reorganization. In simple terms, if companies restructure or merge, these credits can continue to be utilized under certain conditions rather than disappearing entirely. These are practical measures that create continuity and predictability for businesses that are investing in our economy.

Predictability matters when it comes to investment. Businesses make long-term decisions, need stable rules, confidence in

the tax framework and certainty that programs will operate consistently.

Speaker, if we want companies to invest in manufacturing clean energy innovation and value-added industries in this province, we need tax rules that are clear, fair and aligned with federal practices. These amendments help accomplish that.

This bill also introduces provisions related to associated corporations and short taxation years. These changes are intended to strengthen safeguards within the tax credit system and ensure the rules are applied fairly and consistently across different corporate structures. That's a very sensible approach that we support.

Good governance is not only about reacting to problems after they happen but also identifying the weaknesses in legislations and strengthening safeguards proactively. The changes involving the Green Technology Tax Credit are also very important. They close loopholes related to short taxation years and associated corporations, while also ensuring legitimate projects are treated fairly during reorganizations. These are very sensible housekeeping measures that strengthen accountability and improve confidence in the system.

Speaker, we know that Newfoundland and Labrador has enormous potential in clean-growth industries including renewable energy, electrification and critical minerals. Stable and predictable policies matter when companies are making long-term investment decisions.

We also have to acknowledge that tax credits alone are not enough. Businesses and investors are also looking at energy availability, regulatory efficiency, infrastructure, labour force capacity, housing availability and timelines for approvals. Those factors matter just as much when companies are deciding where to invest.

So while this bill makes sensible, technical improvements, the government must continue addressing the broader conditions that influence economic development and investment confidence in this province.

Another component of the bill deals with the film and video industry tax credit. This amendment ensures the film and video tax credit is fully refundable when the value of the credit exceeds the taxes otherwise payable. The change provides greater clarity within the legislation and ensures corporations claiming the credit can properly receive the full value they are entitled to. This amendment, essentially, strengthens and clarifies how the existing credit operates in practice.

Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador's film and television industry has become an increasingly important part of our economy and cultural identity. It creates employment, supports local artists, technicians and businesses. It brings economic activity to communities and it helps showcase Newfoundland and Labrador internationally.

We have seen productions film throughout the province that not only generate direct spending, but they also increase tourism interest and international visibility. This is extremely important because our creative industries contribute significantly to our economy, our tourism sector and our cultural identity. Newfoundland and Labrador continues to attract film and television productions because of our talented workforce, unique landscape and growing industry expertise.

So ensuring our tax framework remains competitive and functional is very important. At the same time, government should still provide transparency around the projected fiscal impacts of these changes. What will the annual costs be? How many corporations are expected to benefit? How does government plan to measure the effectiveness of these incentives over time?

They're fair questions because public accountability matters.

Speaker, while this legislation is largely technical in nature, it reflects areas that matter deeply to the people of this province, supporting families, encouraging investment, strengthening clean growth opportunities and supporting our creative economy.

As this bill proceeds through the legislative process, I do hope that government provides additional detail regarding implementation and long-term planning. Because people want to know how will these measures support families; how will they strengthen investment; how will they contribute to economic growth; and how will government ensure fairness, accountability and transparency moving forward? Those are questions that matter to the people we represent.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 17.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Seeing no further speakers, if the Minister of Finance speaks now, he will close the debate.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I sincerely thank all speakers who weighed in on this amendment to the Income Tax Act. Just to focus a little bit on the green technology – and I know that the hon. Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi mentioned in Estimates as well about diversification, making sure that we develop responsibly, but make sure that we grow green technology that we mentioned. I know the Member had spoken about solar. I know that we don't have a high amount of

sunlight. We have wind in Newfoundland and Labrador but solar will work anywhere, and I acknowledge her pursuit of that.

One of the interesting statistics I came across was 19 per cent of our provincial revenue in this budget comes from oil and gas. That's a significant amount. In 2011-12, 32 per cent of the revenue of the province then came from oil and gas. I know that doesn't mean that we're becoming more diversified simply by looking at those figures, but it does account for some measure of diversity in our economy.

I look at the announcement now with the environmental assessment being cleared by North Atlantic. The Minister of Energy and Mines has talked about it in the past as far as wind and hydrogen. Their goal is to produce 30,000 tons per year here in Newfoundland and Labrador being transmitted over to Europe. With the agreements they got signed, if they come to fruition, which they fully expect they will, they will be manufacturing 60,000 tons of hydrogen per year. That's significant that we've got.

We all know about the Upper Churchill because we're all on that. It will be developed and we do look forward to that day where we can announce that we've got that better deal and we present to the House and –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: Everyone will be happy.

My hon. colleague across from me had mentioned about the Child Benefit and I know this one here is only in the context of the unfortunate passing of a child, as terrible as it is, but by going from one month to six months, I think everyone agrees. I do want to mention about the Child Benefit because she said the previous government increased it by 300 per cent. That's good.

I know the Member for Burin - Grand Bank said one of the biggest things we have is we have to look at thresholds, eligibility. We doubled the number of children that would avail of that benefit. We raised the thresholds that we can bring in 3,000 more children. That is the difference. Allowing more to avail – not less, but allowing more to avail of the money.

With that, Speaker, I look forward to Committee.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are the House Leaders ready for the question?

All those in favour of the motion?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

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

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

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

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Board, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 17.

SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair and that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 17.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The motion is carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Dwyer): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 17, An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2.

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

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Virginia Waters - Pleasantville.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Chair.

I've only got a couple of questions, and they're going to deal with the Green Technology Tax Credit a little bit, just to give you a little heads up. So there will probably be two or three of those.

Minister, how many of the corporations have claimed the green tax credit to date and

what is the total value of those tax credits issued or unissued?

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

C. PARDY: It would be my delight to get that information for you. I don't have it on hand.

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

B. DAVIS: I'm glad it's going to be his delight to get that information for me. It's my delight to receive it. So maybe in the conversation that we have, I'll ask the questions and see if they come in over that time frame.

How will the new rules for associated corporations and short taxation year affect planning for the green technology projects? I know that my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi talked about the benefits of diversification and particularly in mining and energy sectors highlighted in your platform. Will this affect that in any way, or do we think that will spur a little bit more of that economic development on that side?

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

C. PARDY: These initiatives we alluded to will not certainly be short taxation years. So no effect.

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

B. DAVIS: The film and video industry tax credit, Minister, what is the current annual cost to that? I know it's an investment in that and we've seen significant growth in film and television in the province. I mean most successful things we've seen are the last couple of years in that area. They're all awesome to watch and they're making

money, which is a good thing. I think if you can just give me an update on that, that would be great.

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

C. PARDY: If my memory were better, at a Committee that we had I remember I gave that figure out that we discussed and read out some publications. I will get that figure for you. I'm really close and tempted to give you a number that I think to be correct, but I probably should check to make sure.

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

B. DAVIS: Maybe you can add this other one to the list – and we're sitting tonight, I think, so it would be great if I had it. That's not going to hold up the vote on this, I don't think; it's just information to know.

What is the projected cost once this becomes refundable again? So if you can add that into it, it would be great as well. We can chat –

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

C. PARDY: There are no additional costs here – no additional costs. The only thing is anything in taxation needs to have a statute of limitations. Usually, I think they have a period of time that would be in and that would have harmony with the federal program.

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

B. DAVIS: Do we anticipate or expect changes to increase the uptake in the Green Technology Tax Credit? It's just a throw-in that I wanted to add. If you have that information, great; if you don't have it at your fingertips, I'll wait with bated breath for

the other information. You can throw it in with that.

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

C. PARDY: There are no immediate changes to the Green Technology Tax Credit and we haven't had any discussions towards any futuristic ones. Surely, there may be something that would be further enhancements. That could be considered.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Just a couple of quick questions. What consultations did the department engage in when considering the changes to this act?

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

C. PARDY: We would expect that every one of those – and I can't speak to what the consultations were. I just know that the federal government requested two of them; the others were the ones we are basically making adjustments, amendments that will be favourable to the recipients regardless.

If you had a company and all of sudden your company went defunct, then you are still eligible for that tax credit. That will still come because it was earned at the time; it's still yours. If you were taken over by another company, then we've got a transferability. There's nothing I don't think to hinder or impede anybody operating on either one of these initiatives.

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

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

Have any corporations come to the department to complain about this issue, not being eligible for credits due to the amalgamation in that regard? So I was just wondering if you had any contact in that regard.

Thank you.

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

C. PARDY: No, we have not.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

You haven't, but is there any estimate on how much money might have been left on the table as a result of the loophole?

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

C. PARDY: The loophole, it wasn't a matter of money left on the table. It is that they were entitled to \$1 million – \$1 million was the cap of what the entitlement was but if they had a short taxation year and they rolled over in another effort, that same company, there could be a possibility that they could be claiming in addition to the \$1 million, which was a cap that we've had.

So that was the loophole, but nobody ever availed of that. There's no money left on the table. Everyone got what they were deserving of. It's just the fact that, I guess, some may use it as a double-dip and the loophole prevented anybody from double-dipping to get in excess of what the \$1-million cap was.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair.

Does the department have any projections on whether this will mean more money for film and television projects, or does it just mean it's access?

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

C. PARDY: It's access, no different than what they originally get.

Maybe I can just add a couple of questions that my hon. colleague had asked. He had mentioned the take-up of the Green Technology Tax Credit. To date, we've had none. The film credits, estimated to be in '26-'27, \$11 million in tax credits. I referenced earlier, when I addressed your earlier comment on the Manitoba situation, I just want to make sure that I add correctly that Quebec, as well, monitor their own provincial taxation. Every other province in Canada is jointly with the CRA and the federal government.

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

S. O'LEARY: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Minister, for your comments there.

My only comparison would truly be to Nova Scotia when we're talking about film and television and the tax credits, because the Nova Scotia film industry certainly has been the one that has been very, very progressive in its history.

That would be my only true comparison in that industry right now because of its proximity. I thank you for your comments, and that's it for me.

Thank you, Chair.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 to 5 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 5 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 5 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 Income Tax Act, 2000 No. 2. (Bill 17)

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 Bill 17 without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 17 without amendment.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Lane): Order, please!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report that the

Committee recommends Bill 17 without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and recommends Bill 17 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. PARROTT: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

L. PARROTT: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: Motion 1, the budget – we're on the subamendment,

I'm just waiting for an updated list but I see the Member for Gander is anxiously on her feet and can't wait to provide us with her commentary.

The hon. the Member for Gander.

B. FORD: Thank you, Speaker.

Yes, I am anxious to share some commentary. I do welcome this second opportunity to speak to the budget as the representative for the District of Gander which encompasses Appleton, Benton, Gambo, Gander and Glenwood.

AN HON. MEMBER: What a district.

B. FORD: What a district – beautiful district.

I also thought carefully about how I wanted to use my time in the House of Assembly and what messages do I want to share with government opposite, people who tune in to the House of Assembly channels, what from this I'll take and share on social media and what else will be placed into the records for historical records with answers for *Hansard*.

It is a privilege to be in this position and my greatest hope and priority is that I can share some information that resonates with the government and somehow these views from a Liberal Member may get either into your frame of thinking or subconscious to contribute to your decision-making.

Growing up in Gander, I remember so clearly having access to our political representatives. As a teenager, I remember approaching then MHA Winston Baker about summer job grants. It was for the Community Crime Prevention Committee, on which I sat as a youth representative. At that time, moms and dads weren't out seeking the jobs for their children. Their children had to go off and find these jobs on their own and it was write to the MHA Winston Baker's office.

While he served as MHA, his brother, George Baker, was our Member of Parliament. I remember approaching George asking for assistance with identifying student aid and scholarships for post-secondary education and financial supports for young people attending national and international conferences as youth representatives from Newfoundland and Labrador.

Those were our Members of the House of Assembly and our Members of Parliament. Even at the local level, our mayor at the time, Sandra Kelly – who later became an MHA herself, as well as Minister of the Crown – she would make herself available for a meeting when, in Grade 9, my friend Corey Hobbs and I proposed that Gander

Town Council consider ways to incorporate a youth representative or perspective into municipal decision planning.

I also think about Doug Sheppard – again, a former mayor of Gander – who, before Sandra, would attend so many school events and would speak with us as children or encourage us in the community. That could be, for example, when we do readings at St. Martin's Anglican church where he, too, went.

My mother and father would also tell us these stories. Mom and Dad, Arthur and Betty Ford, would tell my brother Tom and I when we became old enough to purchase our first home about when they purchased their first house on Fraser Road in Gander. Now, they were young and they had moved to Gander from Bonavista and from the Town of Amherst Cove. Speaker, I think that's why I take a liking to our Minister of Finance because of that connection we have to that area of the province, you see, and we've bonded over that.

I remember Mom and Dad moving from Bonavista and Amherst Cove and into Gander, working with Jim Penney Limited and Eastern Provincial Airways and going to buy their first home. They were having issues with something procedural. There was some form and it was in the late '60s and '70s. They went to their Member of Parliament because my mom's father who was a harbourmaster in Bonavista said, like everyone says even now, in rural Newfoundland, if you have a problem, you got to go see your Member.

Mom and Dad found out that their Member of Parliament was John Lundrigan. So John Lundrigan met and helped them. Mom would tell this story about going to meet in his suite at the Albatross. There was a table and that's where they sat down to help fill out the papers. Brian Peckford was there at the same time in the suite. Brian Peckford was in the bathroom shaving his face with the door open. This is a story that my

mother remembers about how her Member helped her –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

B. FORD: Yes.

About how her Member helped them as a young family starting out buying a house, that she got to meet two of these politicians. They were so friendly and at ease, and one is shaving his face and the other is sitting at the table filling out this form.

Speaker, I share these stories because, in each, it was an elected official giving their time. It was giving their time, their expertise. It was meeting their constituents one-on-one, doing the work, hands-on work with the people who they represented. Getting to know what I needed as a young person in Gander from my Member, learning what my mom and dad moving into Gander needed from their Members, and really getting to know what people needed from government. I do believe that those are the experiences that really did shape my deep respect for elected officials.

As a town councillor in my 20s – I was there for eight years – deputy mayor in my 40s and now here in my 50s as an MHA, that's really the example that's been set for me and it's the kind of MHA that I strive to be. To be present in the district; inviting opportunities to meet more of the people I represent; accepting invitations and opportunities to celebrate with people and connect with residents; being available to meet, to listen, willing to do the research, willing to do the investigation myself; the calling, the connecting to resources and not always relying on having staff who will take on those issues and responsibilities for me.

Now, granted, I would not be able to function without my CA, Deborah. We receive an average of about 15 calls a week in the constituency office. Most all of those calls are complicated, nuanced, involve multiple departments of government and a

lot of history with each of those. So we make it work. We connect every day when I'm here in the city. Deborah works really hard on my behalf and on behalf of the people in the district.

These conversations that we're having – all of us, I'm sure – with our constituents, I think the level of work might vary district to district. I hear that constituents on the Avalon aren't quite as quick to say call your Member, when you lose your Air Miles, for example. You might not get the same, but we get the calls for so many different things.

The conversations, all of them, they're the reason why we're here. Those conversations, that's why we're here. Every drive back to the city, that's what I reflect on, what happens in the district and the people. Then I arrive here and no matter what goes on in the House, on VOXM, CBC, NL Proud, any of it, they are the reasons, and those conversations, as to why we're here.

In putting together this second set of remarks around the budget, I thought I'd frame them up by sharing some of the work that happens in the District of Gander; share some stories and situations that the people of my district have come to me about. They're seeking help. They're seeking guidance. They might be seeking a connection. Maybe it's advocacy. Maybe it's support. Maybe they're asking me that when you're in the House of Assembly next, will you please cross over and have a conversation with the Minister of Housing, for example.

So those kind of asks come in. I feel some of the stories that I may have are some of the very stories that all MHAs on this side, on the opposite side, would have about needs of their constituents.

Speaker, I do hear regularly from seniors in Gander, and Gander has attracted many seniors to relocate due to the proximity to health care, the emergency room, as well as

amenities. We also have seniors who are moving or choosing to stay in Gambo, in Benton, Appleton and Glenwood for the beautiful quality of life; but then they, too, have that closer proximity to the services that they need.

One of the seniors who came to our office – and this one really touched me and angered me and broke my heart all at the same time – she’s a very clever woman who had retired, but she was looking to increase their disposable income. Someone presented her with an opportunity and she got involved with it. She had to invest money into this opportunity and it didn’t seem too suspicious to her because she was thinking about programs in the past like Avon, where you put up the upfront money and you buy your kit; or Tupperware, you put up so much money to invest in a small business.

What was happening is she was taking their registered plan, taking money from that in order to fund this. As it happened, Speaker, that senior ended up being scammed terribly. I think it was to the value of about \$50,000.

The maddening part of it all is that because it was taken out of registered plans, that’s now being considered income. So she has to report that as income, has to pay the taxes on it and now it’s put them in a higher income tax bracket so the benefits that they would have secured, that they would have been able to use to be a part of, because of their original income they no longer meet that threshold because now their income is being reported as \$50,000 higher than what it is.

She’s had to go through a pretty big process with the RCMP, with documentation. We’ve been trying to help her navigate that process to get her back to the point where she can have her accurate income determine what provincial and federal benefits she’s going to be able to avail of.

That was just one example I wanted to share. I’ll share another example. There was a senior who had reached out; she had lost her husband. Having lost her husband, she still does want to age well at home. That’s her objective: to remain in her home. She owns her own home but since her husband passed away, she has lost some income because of the portion of his pension that she no longer receives.

She’s lost more than that. There was support that the husband provided. For example, he was the one who stacked the wood, chopped the wood, split the wood and put all the wood in the garage and filled up the wood box next to the woodstove and kept the woodstove going so they didn’t have the cost of electric heat. Now, with him having passed, that’s no more. So now electric heat is the option for her and that’s an additional cost.

She lost the labour he provided doing lawn care and doing snow clearing. Even with the \$400, or the \$800 that our party had committed to giving for the stay at home, that \$400 or \$800 would have really helped that woman with snow clearing, for example, or with the lawn care to literally help that woman age well at home.

Those are some of the examples that we’re hearing from. We have another senior who’s at home with his wife. They own their own home. She requires support. She needs physical help because of her health care, with like getting moved into beds, with being able to wash herself. They really need assistance but they make just over the limit to not qualify for the home care. So for them to get one hour of home care a day – just one hour of home care a day – it’s \$600 a month and that family cannot afford – on paper it says they can afford it, but they cannot afford the \$600 a month.

In order for them to be able to stay at home, they’re choosing right now between food security, electricity and the cost of the home care. This is as the husband in his 80s is

aging and she's aging. So it seems to be a care facility is where they're going to end up, knowing that's going to cost the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador significantly much more money.

Speaker, in addition to hearing from seniors, we hear quite a bit from young families as well. I believe the population count – and this was a statistic I used to reference around a year ago – that the community of Gander – I'm 99 per cent sure – it's the only community outside the Avalon that's growing in population.

The community of Gander is growing and it's young families and young professionals; they're having children. Every day, I meet a family that has four children and someone talking about having five children. It's in the water, I guess, from beautiful Gander Lake; something is going on.

All of that to say we're really pleased with our growing community, I mean that's wonderful, but we are hearing young families. I think what they had hoped to see in the budget truly was more tax relief. So the breakdown of the \$28, they don't see that as substantial relief when they look at the cost of things that they have to pay for.

I hear about daycare as well, the availability of daycare and the \$10-a-day daycare and finding ways to expand on that, to increase that. My husband worked, I worked and we paid out \$1,400 a month for five years for daycare for two children. We could have bought a house. We were in a position where we could choose to do that but, for many families, it really means the difference of one person choosing not to work because the financial incentive to work is not there if you have to pay out those daycare costs. We hear from young families about that.

This is a budgetary issue. Some time ago, I presented a petition in this hon. House about students facing learning barriers due to a critical shortage of student support staff. Even just today, since we've been

here discussing this, I received emails from a couple of families concerned about the size of the Grade 4 classes at Gander Elementary this year and writing the principal of the school and the administration to clarify rumours, at this point, of what they're hearing about the size of the classes. With larger class sizes and fewer student supports inside those classrooms, that's really worrying, particularly, for young families.

I also hear from young families – and I want to share this because I know that we celebrate sport and we celebrate recreation but there is a cost associated with sport and recreation. Ask any parent who has had their child in hockey or figure skating or summer soccer or a swim team; the same could be said for music programs, drama, art if they're in classes, any type of enriching activity. Often, we find, outside of the Avalon, families have to bring their children to the capital city to benefit from some of these high-performance training camps or very specialized, like French programming camps. When we think about the higher cost of living, not all families can afford to get themselves on the highway, 400, 500, 600, 700, 800 kilometres away from the capital and get their family in here five and six times throughout the summer.

I'm receiving calls that I know the previous MHA had told me he hadn't received a lot of calls about: Where is the subsidy? Is there any subsidy for this? Is there a tax credit, an increased tax credit that can account for the travel and the mobility required for young families, who, again, seem to be having more children – two and three and four – to have them in activities like that?

Speaker, those are the points I really wanted to focus on just to give government a flavour of the type of financial impacts that their budget will have on people throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. As a municipal leader, I was always really cognizant that the decisions we made were going to impact the people of our

community. When I think about the budget for our entire province and how many different ways and points throughout people's day, the decisions you make will impact them.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis, that we do now adjourn the debate.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that we now adjourn debate.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for the beautiful District of Cape St. Francis, that this House do now recess until 6:30.

SPEAKER: It's been moved and seconded that this House do now recess.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

This House is now recessed until 6:30 p.m.