



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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Volume L

FIRST SESSION

Number 14

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HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Thursday

June 10, 2021

The House met at 1:30 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

**Statements by Members**

**SPEAKER:** Today, we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Topsail - Paradise, Stephenville - Port au Port, Conception Bay East - Bell Island, Terra Nova and Placentia - St. Mary's.

The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

**P. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to extend my congratulations to 13-year-old Gavin Baggs of Paradise as being this year's Easter Seals Newfoundland and Labrador Ambassador.

Gavin was born with a rare birth defect. It was unknown if Gavin would walk; however, he has overcome all odds. At the age of five, Gavin started playing para ice hockey with Easter Seals and then wheelchair basketball and swimming two years later. There he quickly progressed and began playing with the Avalon Sled Dogs, the Wheelchair Sports Association and swimming with the Mount Pearl Marlins.

Gavin was fortunate to play with the Newfoundland and Labrador wheelchair basketball team that went to the Canada Games in 2019; the youngest player to ever play at the Canada Games wheelchair basketball and the youngest ever to score a basket in that tournament.

Gavin wanted to give back to Easter Seals and began to volunteer as a para ice hockey coach. He wants to let others know that you can achieve anything you put your mind to, regardless of having challenges or difficulties and encourages others to put their names forward to be next year's ambassador.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all to join me in congratulating Gavin.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Gold medallist, Katarina Roxon, is headed off, once again, to represent Canada at the Paralympic Games in Tokyo, Japan this August.

This will be Katarina's fourth time representing our country at these games. Katarina, born to immigrant parents, Leonard and Lisa Roxon of Kippens, became involved in the sport of swimming at five years old because her parents thought it was an essential skills she should have. Well, investing in those swimming lessons was the beginnings of a world-class, gold medallist.

Katarina is a three-time Paralympian having represented Canada in Beijing in 2008. At the age of 15, she was the youngest member of the team; London in 2012 and Rio in 2016. In Rio, she won a gold medal in the 100-metre breaststroke.

In recognition of her gold medal performance, the government renamed the Trans-Canada Highway Route 490 as Katarina Roxon Way.

Katarina's accomplishments extend far beyond the pool. In 2018, Katarina was appointed to the Order of Newfoundland and Labrador. She is the recipient of the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal and was included in the 2016 Most Influential Women List.

We are so proud of Katarina. I ask all Members to wish her much success at the Tokyo games.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today, I acknowledge a lifelong educator, volunteer and promoter of our province's heritage and history through her decades of work with the museum movement of Newfoundland and Labrador. I speak of my constituent Teresita McCarthy or Teddy as she is affectionately known.

For decades she has been a driving force in the province for the establishment and promotion of museums in all corners of our province.

Teddy was recently selected by the Canadian Museums Association as the 2021 recipient of the Distinguished Service Award which honours individuals in the museum industry for their significant contribution to the local, provincial, and national museum movement.

In the course of Teddy's 30 years of involvement, she served as president of the Museum Association of Newfoundland and Labrador and was a founding member of the Bell Island Heritage Society. She has been active at the national level serving on countless boards, committees and conferences that were instrumental in promoting this country's history.

I ask all Members to join me in thanking Teresita McCarthy for her dedication in preserving and promoting our culture and history.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

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

Mr. Speaker, during these unprecedented times, outdoor activities were highly recommended and in my District of Terra Nova there are many beautiful trails.

There is one such trail that is being built by a family, friends and a group of volunteers, and is being developed as a community memorial. This is to honour Donna Vardy. Donna's Way, the Long Pond Memorial Walking Trail and Picnic Area, affectionately known as Nanna's trail by her grandchildren.

For many years Donna talked about a trail or memorial for Random Island. Her husband Dave, upon Donna's passing, acted on her wish. With a few phone calls and no real plan in place, family and friends made this happen. This trail is 3.9 kilometres in Robinson's Bight on Random Island and is open year-round.

Donna was a member of the ground search and rescue for Clarenville chapter, the Random West Volunteer Fire Department, the Clarenville SPCA and a dedicated leader in the surrounding communities.

I would like us all to honour Donna as a volunteer that went over and above daily. A lady that lived life to the fullest and left memories for her family and community to enjoy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Society of United Fishermen was founded in 1862 by Reverend George Gardiner, a Church of England clergyman. On April 9, 1931, Goodwill Lodge number 84 in Dildo, Trinity Bay, was established.

The society was originally formed to help fishermen, their families and anyone in need. Originally, financial assistance would be provided by the society. The need for this type of assistance has largely been replaced by modern social benefits.

Now, the focus of the society has shifted to supporting registered charities. It is the only fraternal benefit society of its type that has its roots in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The lodge in Dildo is comprised of members from Blaketown to Heart's Delight.

The lodge has spearheaded many significant projects over the years. Most notably, a heated outdoor swimming pool and an interpretation centre. The SUF also originally initiated and planned the annual Dildo Days celebrations, which have grown over the years, attracting visitors by the hundreds.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity as the Member of the House of Assembly for the District of Placentia - St. Mary's, to congratulate the Dildo Society of United Fishermen on their 90th anniversary.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

**Statements by Ministers**

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

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

On behalf of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, I am very pleased to acknowledge the induction of Mr. Derek Hogan – no relation – as a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers.

Widely considered to be the premier professional organization for lawyers, the American College of Trial Lawyers is composed of the best trial lawyers in Canada and the United States. Fellowship in the college is extended by invitation only after extensive vetting to trial lawyers who have been marked by the highest of standards of ethical conduct, professionalism, civility and collegiality.

A 30-year veteran of the Legal Aid Commission, Mr. Hogan is one of the most respected lawyers in the province and has been instrumental in bringing about major changes to the justice system. In 1995, Hogan appeared before the Supreme Court of Canada arguing his client's Charter rights were breached by a weekend stay in custody. Days after his win, Provincial Court instituted weekend court.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating Mr. Hogan. He is a shining example of the great expertise within the Legal Aid Commission, our public service and the legal profession.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I would like to offer sincere congratulations to Mr. Derek Hogan on his induction as a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers, which is a prestigious, well-known organization for lawyers.

We have amazing, talented, diligent, hard-working legal professionals within our Legal Aid Commission. There is a misconception that Legal Aid lawyers may be less capable than their private sector counterparts. Well, Mr. Speaker, that's truly a misconception, Mr. Hogan is proof of this. He is evidence of the high-calibre legal professionals in the public system. He is an excellent legal professional with impressive credentials; he is also a role model to many new and young lawyers who enter the profession.

Mr. Speaker, of particular note is his dedication as a criminal lawyer for most of his career at Legal Aid. That is important because he has been committed and dedicated to ensuring that all individuals in our criminal justice system have the right to counsel; a right, which is so important, and a fundamental right guaranteed in our Charter.

Mr. Speaker, congratulations to Mr. Hogan. We, in the Official Opposition, wish to thank him for his over 30 years of dedication and service to Legal Aid and to the people of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. We also would like to congratulate Mr. Hogan on his induction as a fellow of the American College of Trial Lawyers. This award demonstrates the high calibre of people working as a part of our Legal Aid contingent. That is why we take this moment to acknowledge the tireless devotion of all of those at Legal Aid to their work.

It is a valuable public service they offer. Without it, justice would be out of reach for people lacking the means to defend themselves in court. That is why we ask the government to think long, hard and seriously before adopting the recommendation of the Greene report to reduce funding to Legal Aid by 2 per cent and consider the impact of this move on those for whom justice or access to justice would be further reduced.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Environment and Climate Change.

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

I take this opportunity today to announce the 2021 recipients of the Water Operator of the Year Awards, which recognize the outstanding dedication of community drinking water system operators.

This year's recipient of the Small System Operator of the Year Award is Henry Jacque with the Makkovik Inuit Community Government. Mr. Jacque is a 29-year employee and a Class II Water Distribution Certified Operator.

The Operator of the Year for 2021 is Wayne Bishop with the Town of Paradise. Mr. Bishop has been with the town for 11 years and is a Class II Water Distribution Operator and a Class III Waste Water Collection Certified Operator.

Both of these individuals were recognized in their nominations for their tireless dedication to their professions and communities.

Mr. Speaker, we are making significant progress in improving drinking water quality and have reached some significant milestones. For example, the number of long-term boil-water advisories that have been in place for more than five years has reached an all-time low. The number of communities with a certified operator, the number of certified operators and the number of certificates awarded to water-

system operators in any given year has reached an all-time high.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members of the House of Assembly to join me in extending our appreciation to Mr. Jacque and Mr. Bishop, and the many system operators who play a central role in the delivery of water services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you very much.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

I join the minister in recognizing the recipients of the Water Operator of the Year Awards. The small system operator of the year has been presented to someone I know well: Henry Jacque of my hometown in Makkovik. Henry is a seasoned professional in my community, and I'm delighted that all of his hard work and dedication to his community is recognized with this award.

I also wish to congratulate Wayne Bishop of the Town of Paradise for receiving the Operator of the Year Award. You provide a vital service and this award recognizes your tremendous dedication.

The hard work of our public servants is critical to ensuring our communities have safe and reliable drinking water. They deserve our praise and recognition, and I humbly thank them for their service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Our caucus would like to

congratulate Mr. Jacque and Mr. Bishop for receiving these awards. We also thank them, as well as their talented and dedicated colleagues, for their work to ensure that the people of this province have safe, reliable and secure access to one of the most basic and fundamental services a government can provide.

Ready access to water is a human right. That's why we are disturbed by the fact that 189 communities are currently on boil-water advisories. We call government to work harder and to reduce that number to zero.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

### Oral Questions

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today's news is disappointing to say the least. Government should be keeping oil production in the province and growing our industry, not watching it die.

Is the Premier willing to admit that today's news is his failure?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I will say is this: The province has been at the table with the Terra Nova partners to try to strike a deal. We have what is, I think in anyone's estimation, a good offer on the table.

I'm frankly not willing to roll the dice with a massive equity investment in oil firms that continue to make money. If the Member opposite doesn't realize the risk with equity investments, perhaps he should look to Alberta and his cousin in Alberta right now who's

suffering from the result of a failed gamble on an equity investment in a pipeline, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Where is the federal government in this process? Have you spoken with the prime minister this morning about the loss to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I spoke with Minister O'Regan this morning; I've been speaking with Minister LeBlanc to inform them of what's happened with respect to the Terra Nova project and our position. They are still supportive of oil and gas in Newfoundland and Labrador, as are we.

We recognize the value of this asset, the value of oil and gas in our province. The oil is not going anywhere. We need to just make sure that it's the right deal for the people of this province so that we can get the best return, and not necessarily the oil companies, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The minister said he can't go it at all costs. We know that government's offer was valued at over half a billion dollars.

I ask the Premier: What is the value of what the partners in this project need to ensure this goes ahead?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, the equity ask is just far too much for our province right now in this particular moment in time. We have \$500 million of value on the table for oil companies that still generate profits. We're in a terrible fiscal situation right here right now in our province. We don't have the capacity. I'm not prepared to roll the dice on the future of this province, Mr. Speaker. These are the hard decisions that sometimes we have to make, but it's not a gamble I'm prepared to take.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we need to see the analysis. We found in the past that this administration doesn't break down exactly the impact on people in Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly those workers and those companies who benefit from the oil industry.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** If the Terra Nova does not resume production, how much will the province lose in future revenues?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, I will point out to the Member that there has been no shortage of analysis been done on this project. I can guarantee you that we will share the province's position at the right time. But I would point that out that we are currently still under various NDAs as it relates to this. We're still hopeful that a deal can be achieved.

We have not said we are not supportive; we have just said here is a significant financial offer to put on the table for the remaining partners in this project, all multinational, billion-dollar companies. We're just not prepared to take a gamble. The risk versus reward was too high for us as it related to the equity investment.

Thank you.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister that the conversation we've had over the last number of weeks when we asked questions about what was happening in this deal was always about: it couldn't be done in the public. Well, it's now in the public. You've taken 1:15 in the afternoon before the House opens to actually kibosh this whole deal by preventing the companies from being confident that this can go forward, Mr. Speaker.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Premier: Can you tell this House what the full economic impact of this devastating blow to the offshore oil and gas sector is for our province?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll remind the Member opposite that oil is still there. It can still be developed. I don't think this government, at this particular moment in Newfoundland and Labrador's history, should be meddling in private business at this level, Mr. Speaker. This would be an incredible ask for a Treasury that's already strapped. We've seen the decisions that we're going to have to take moving into the future.

Right now, those oil companies continue to turn profits. Last quarter alone, one of those operators made \$361 million in Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore. I think we don't have the Treasury capacity to fulfil what they're requiring to move forward and I'm not willing to take a gamble.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

But I would hope the Premier would let the world know that Newfoundland and Labrador is

open for business; it's the only way we're going to get out of our economic challenges.

The Premier and the minister say that they did everything they could to keep the Terra Nova here, but given the jobs impact, transparency is important.

Will the Premier and minister immediately make public in this House all the records they have relating to these lobby efforts of all the project's partners, right now?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Just to point to the preamble of the Member opposite first. I would suggest that a \$500-million offer certainly signals that this province is open to oil and gas. I would remind the Member that it wasn't that long ago we were out on the platform of Hibernia looking at the ways that we could help them to continue to thrive in our offshore. The Member himself knows that.

To the question, what I would say, as I said earlier, we are still subject to non-disclosure agreements. I guarantee you everything will be put out there, but right now I am not going to risk a lawsuit just to satisfy the Member's needs.

What I will say is that when this is all said and done, all the information is here. In fact, I look forward to a debate on this issue in the very near future.

Thank you.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will remind the minister, too, that we do support the oil industry; we want to see the evidence. Talk means nothing if action is not taken. We see a lack of action in this situation right here.

You want to talk about a debate?

I ask the Premier: Will he agree to an emergency debate starting immediately in this House of Assembly?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we're all supportive of oil and gas in Newfoundland and Labrador, but it has to be done correctly. It has to be done prudently. It has to be done with the maximum returns for the people of this province.

I ask the Member opposite: Would he support such a massive equity stake in an oil —?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** What's that?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** We're prepared to debate it, Mr. Speaker. That is going to be advanced, as I understand, in the near future. We will have an open, honest discussion across the floor, because this is incredibly important with respect to the future of the province, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I do agree with one point that the Premier said: It's extremely important. That's why it's so important. We can't wait four or five days to have a debate of how we solve this issue, or how we ensure the oil industry flourishes in Newfoundland and Labrador and those individuals who rely on this for their income know that there's some light at the end of the tunnel, Mr. Speaker.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Is June 15 still the deadline for partners to find a solution?



**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Absolutely, I think June 15 is the deadline that's been put forward by the partners in this project, certainly not by the government. It's not a deadline we put forward. What I would also point out to the Member is that these dates have been very fluid in the past.

There are two things the Member has not addressed at all yet in his questions that I do think are pertinent to this. One: The deal is not dead. We have a huge offer there. That relates to the second part: Why have you not called on these multinational companies to come to the table for the benefit of us and our workers?

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Mr. Speaker, we were waiting, as the minister was always saying that he didn't want to negotiate in public and did not want to share information with us. Well, do you know what? We're asking now.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Will you table government's analysis on its offer for equity into the Terra Nova Project, and why was it considered to be too risky?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are multitudes of factors. Information, I would point out to the Member, will be forthcoming. There will be no shortage of information, contrary to some of the megaproject debates that I've been involved in in this House of Assembly, I can guarantee you that. They will guide us going forward, the lessons from the past.

What I would say is that equity stakes are different in every single project. In the past,

sometimes the equity stake has been right at the beginning as a partner coming in; whereas in this case, it's coming in later on, taking on full risk for a field where 85 per cent of the field has already been depleted.

Thank you.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I remind the minister it's probably a little too late to close the barn door.

Today's news is devastating to the offshore oil industry. Is the Premier worried about the domino effect in the offshore industry?

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

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Mr. Speaker, as the Member opposite knows, we're fully supportive of oil and gas in Newfoundland and Labrador.

That oil is still in the ground. It's incumbent upon us and incumbent upon them, frankly, to make sure that we get the best value for that oil and gas for the people of the province. We are still supportive of oil and gas and we'll continue to be supportive of oil and gas. It's incredibly important for the future of this province and we're operating to achieve those goals, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oil in the ground doesn't pay a thousand workers' mortgages in Newfoundland and Labrador and keep their families fed and safe.

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Why did government pre-empt the operators and make this announcement today without them?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's certainly not a case of pre-empting; it's a case of the offer as it stands has been put there and has been communicated on multiple occasions, and we feel that we are at an impasse as it relates to this aspect of the deal.

What I would point out – again, this obviously is not a great story to be talking about today, but I could talk about what's going on at Hibernia and I could be talking about what's going on at Bay du Nord. But there's one thing we won't do, we're not going to do as the Members opposite would do, which is a deal at all costs and any costs and that's not going to benefit this province in the long run.

Thank you.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Local media has reported that Suncor and Husky Energy were willing to increase their ownerships in the field. Given they also have stakes in the West White Rose Project, has the Premier asked if they are willing to transfer the money they had budgeted for Terra Nova to the West White Rose Project?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would point out that it is still too early for that, given the fact that we are hoping this deal will still happen. We are asking the partners, these seven oil companies, to come together to bridge the gap and use the funding that we have put there to make this possible.

What I will say is that we'll work on anything that we can, but I would point out something that's very important: Terra Nova and West Rose are two separate, independent business cases and they will be based on profitability. I would point out that when we started working on this, oil was at \$40 a barrel. Today, it is over \$72 a barrel, yet we still maintain the same support that we did back then.

Thank you.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

With the pre-empted announcement this afternoon, we're hearing already from the oil industry that they're not very hopeful there will be a deal here, unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, so plans have to be made. I'm already hearing from people that their families are distraught about today's news and what it means to them.

What is the Premier doing to ensure that they have a future in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we're incredibly empathetic to the workers impacted and their families by the delay in Terra Nova. As the minister suggested, this deal isn't dead. We're just not going to be involved in equity at this point as a government. There's still \$500 million on the table, of value, from the provincial government. I think that's a very healthy offer.

We are very hopeful that those partners can sort out their private interests and come to a conclusion that advances this Terra Nova Project. If that's not the case, we will be there for the hard-working women and men of the oil industry who are impacted directly by this Terra Nova Project, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**D. BRAZIL:** Well, on that note, Mr. Speaker, I ask the Premier – with today’s devastating news about the Terra Nova FPSO, many workers will be left wondering about their future.

I ask the Premier: Will he ensure that a proportion of the \$175 million set aside for the Terra Nova will now be used to support employment of those who counted on the Terra Nova for jobs?

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

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We want them to advance this project, Mr. Speaker. So this, again, is not the fact – the deal is not dead, it’s just that we are not involved in equity at this particular moment in time, nor should we be, Mr. Speaker.

If, again, the deal does not go ahead and Terra Nova does not advance to an asset life extension, we will be there for the women and men who have been displaced from that opportunity of work. We will use the proceeds available to us to ensure –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**PREMIER A. FUREY:** – that they have other opportunities and they’re protected here in the province, Mr. Speaker, whether it’s in the oil and gas industry or beyond.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

Minister of Education, I ask: Did the government approve the hiring of the president at MUN? Yes or no?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Board of Regents, Mr. Speaker, negotiated the contract and the terms of the contract with the president. The LGIC signs off on the individual, not the contract.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

**B. PETTEN:** I guess my question should be – if that’s the case, then maybe I’ll ask the minister: Why didn’t they ask for details?

If something comes to Cabinet, it shouldn’t be rubber-stamped; you should ask the questions. That’s what Cabinet is there for.

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

**B. PETTEN:** It’s meant to be rubber-stamped, it’s meant to ask the questions. We wouldn’t be out \$500,000 on what I consider to be very lavish spending.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, it’s no different than when Dr. Kachanoski was hired in 2010 or 2014. In fact, I requested copies, which are publicly available, of his contract. The conditions in his contract are almost identical to the conditions in the contract for the current president.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

Two wrongs don’t make a right.

On June 1, I asked the minister about details of the –

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

**B. PETTEN:** Two wrongs don’t make a right.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** I'll throw it back again. On June 1, I asked the minister about details of the president of MUN's contract and he said he would look into it. Then, yesterday, I asked the question again. The minister said he would look into it.

I ask the minister: Why didn't you look into this very important issue when I first raised it in the House?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, I guess two wrongs don't make a right. But I do remember when the Member said that he had information. I did ask him to send that information over. I'm still waiting.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2017, the former Finance minister said: "We can't simply just ask and hope" ABCs "deliver. We need to ensure we get our spending under control. This legislation will be brought in."

Unfortunately, Minister, it was not brought in. Today, or just recently in the Budget Speech, the current Minister of Finance alluded to a similar promise.

I ask the minister: Will she take action to get spending under control at ABCs, particularly, what we've just heard about from MUN.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

This is indeed an important topic for the finances of the province. I think the Member should be reassured that the Budget Speech does also talk about an accountability framework that will be brought in for not just core government, but all agencies, boards, commissions, Crown

corporations and anyone who receives money from the public purse.

I think the Member opposite should take comfort in the fact that we are now bringing more Crown corporations to within government so that we can have even advanced control. I think he should take comfort in the fact that we also talked about, in the Budget Speech, changes to the legislation for Memorial University and changing the financial arrangements with Memorial University.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Speaker, we'll take comfort when the actual legislation is before us in the House.

I would also like to ask: Has the minister considered the Public Accounts Committee as the agency to be used, instead of setting up another accounting agency for accountability?

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

**S. COADY:** Mr. Speaker, I'm sure the Member opposite is aware of the role and responsibilities of the Public Accounts Committee. They have a very fulsome and important role within the organization, within government and they can exercise their duties under that responsibility.

We are talking about day-to-day operational activities. That's why it would be in the Treasury Board Secretariat, so that we will have not only continuous improvement, not only program evaluation, but also that accountability framework.

I'm sure we will hear from the Public Accounts Committee as to their view on how we maintain the Public Accounts of this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to it.

Today, Western Health is opening a testing clinic in Piccadilly, days after the English School District said in a letter to the parents and guardians there's an expectation that all students will be in attendance, unless they have been asked by Public Health to stay home. It went on further to tell them that all individuals who had been diagnosed with COVID, and their contacts, have been notified.

Well, today, as I just said, there's a new testing clinic set up in Piccadilly. The province has spent millions for online learning, but the school board has done nothing to accommodate students in my district.

I ask the minister: Will he direct the school board to offer alternate education and learning opportunities for those students who are not able to attend school because their parents aren't comfortable or are nervous about it, or they simply can't go because they're in isolation?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**T. OSBORNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I know that schools in the area were closed for operational reasons, Mr. Speaker; in other words, because teachers were doing contact tracing for teachers and so on. I am not going to direct the chief medical officer of Health, or Public Health; I think they've guided us well.

This province has done exceptionally well, compared to other jurisdictions, based on the guidance of the chief medical officer of Health. If the chief medical officer of Health said that schools are safe to be open, then I have to trust that.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would simply ask that the school board is responsible for the operation of the education system. I have asked that you provide educational opportunities for the students; I didn't say anything about closing schools. We have online learning. Let's take advantage of it.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Education.

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, the NLESD does a good job with continuum of learning plans for any students who are not able to attend school. It's funny, because I've taken questions from the opposite side when we did the blended learning model that all children should be in school; we took questions saying that we should be going to online learning.

Mr. Speaker, no matter which process you take, there are people that will complain about that process. The best place for the children, when the chief medical officer of Health says it's safe to be in class, is in class for the learning there.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is a sad day, indeed, for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and, in particular, people in the District of Harbour Main, who are deeply impacted by the lack of transparency and the failure of this government.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, with regard to transparency, the Premier's Greene report said: One way to improve it is to refine the current lobbyist legislation, and that the current *Lobbyist Registration Act* should be reviewed.

I ask the Minister of Justice: Who will be conducting this review and when will it start?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker.

That will be reported in due time.

I do want to let all the Members of the House know, and members of the public, that there was a report issued yesterday – or it arrived on my desk the day before yesterday – from former chief justice of the Supreme Court of Newfoundland and Labrador Trial Division David Orsborn with regard to proposed recommendations and revisions to the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act in this province. This government will take all those recommendations in his almost-600-page report and review them diligently to make sure that access to government information is strengthened and streamlined as we move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Greene report also said that "People need to see which special interest groups are lobbying their politicians and what those groups are requesting."

Just after the election, the media uncovered that the other Liberal premier was lobbied by a former Liberal prime minister to store nuclear waste in Labrador.

I ask the minister: When will new lobbyist legislation be introduced in this House?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank you for the question.

The preamble to the question was a reference to what was in the Greene report. As has been said publicly and as has been said in the House, the Greene report is a list of recommendations to this government and not every one is going to be adopted wholesale. We're still continuing to

review the Greene report. Anything in there that we think will serve the people of this province, we will implement in due course.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, the Premier's Greene report had something very important to say about transparency, which hopefully the government will adopt. The Greene report also said that "Improving transparency will, at least, minimize questions of undue influence."

Now, that we know this government will be looking at selling assets, as Moya Greene recommended, I ask the minister: Will new lobbyist and ethics legislation be introduced in this House before this government plans on selling or privatizing any major assets or services, to ensure that there is no undue influence?

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member for the question.

Again, it's easy to answer a question twice in a row.

As I've said, the Greene report has recommendations provided to this government by a high-calibre team, under Moya Greene's leadership. We look forward to continue to review that report and anything in there that we feel is going to strengthen the accountability and transparency of this government the Department of Justice and Public Safety will certainly implement and bring in any necessary legislation to the floor to debate in this House so the public can see and everyone in the Opposition can have their say.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, you don't know. I'd like to say it's a sad day here –

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** – in the District of Ferryland, as well, for my residents and also for the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, recent media reports on a rogue investor advisor who defrauded six elderly clients out of third-quarters of a million dollars has sent shock waves through the industry. However, while the individual will face sanction by the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada, who oversees the profession, they have no power to enforce any penalties or sanctions. Newfoundland is the only province that has not given the regulator any power.

Mr. Speaker, why is the government not protecting individuals?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

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

That's a very important question and we do have a range of financial services legislation to protect residents of the province. I can't speak to a specific investigation, but anything that was prosecuted, for example, would have been as a result of the current legislation.

If you look at the Order Paper, we do have a *Securities Act* upcoming where we're going to deal with improving the responsibilities for IIROC and other financial services institutions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**L. O'DRISCOLL:** (Inaudible.)

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

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

I can't blame you.

Mr. Speaker, the Third Party recognizes the potential impacts that the announcement today regarding the Terra Nova FPSO has on workers across this province. The announcement could potentially, certainly, have an impact on every corner of our province. This causes tremendous concern for the workers who were told by successive governments that their futures were secured.

I ask the minister: What is government prepared to do to ensure that these hard-working people in our province are not the ones who suffer because of what is now an uncertain future?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm certainly happy to answer this question and talk about the workers who, I can guarantee you, have been top of mind during this entire process.

I would point out the irony of the NDP asking this question about them when they have never supported this industry at any point during the conversation ever. It's a fine time to show up now when you didn't do anything before.

Now, I will point out the main thing that the Members don't get.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. PARSONS:** There is \$500 million on the table. That is not a small amount.

Now, I know the Members opposite may give up on this but we're still hopeful that these multinational, billion-dollar companies will bridge the gap as it relates to equity, take the support that we've offered and come to a positive conclusion.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I certainly remind the minister that the NDP, the Third Party, has always been about workers; about making sure that with any industry that's facing turndown that they are protected and looked after – period.

Mr. Speaker, the Keystone pipeline project commissioned by Alberta's government that was all in on oil has been cancelled. The Terra Nova FPSO is one of three large oil projects that are facing an uncertain future. This is a harbinger of what is to come in this industry; we must accept this to a degree.

I ask the Premier: What does he have to say to the electorate who are now realizing the reality of the oil industry they are now facing is tremendously uncertain in the future?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I appreciate the Premier letting me answer this.

The irony here is in the first question we're talking about workers. In the second question, they tell us not to invest in projects that support workers. I'm finding it extremely difficult to understand where the Member is going because you can't have one without the other.

Now, we have offered tremendous support to these operators to make this work. But we've also indicated that there's a responsibility that comes with us to make the best investment. That is why we are not willing to throw our future away when it comes to these deals. We've obviously shown that. But we're obviously willing to look at the analysis and take the proper precautions and put the proper risk versus reward here. We have done that. We're hopeful that these companies will come to a deal that helps this entire province and its workers.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I think the minister has a poor understanding of irony. I'm certainly willing to sit down and do some one-on-one tutoring with him.

It's not about investing. The question had nothing to do with investing, at all. Please don't put words –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Ask your question, please.

**J. DINN:** Yes, thank you.

I ask the minister not to put words in my mouth.

Mr. Speaker, for decades the Auditor General has been calling on government to divest from oil and gas. As a province, the government has continually ignored this recommendation.

I ask the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology: Are we now finally going to accept the global movement and invest more deeply in a green and sustainable economy?

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology.

**A. PARSONS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Certainly, I have no intentions to put words in the mouth of the Member opposite. That's clearly not what I want to do. What I remind him is that they have contrary positions.

Yesterday, they asked about Muskrat; the day before they said don't ask about Muskrat. Their first question, they say we should support the workers; the second question, they say no, we should not support these workers. I can't figure out where they're trying to go.

What I can say is that obviously there is a transition happening. There is no doubt, we've



embraced it. I will tell you that organizations like Noia and the operators themselves have embraced it. We see a bright future for things like wind, for things like hydrogen; for green energy. We will invest in that and we'll take advantage of the federal funds.

At the same time, we have a bright future for oil and gas in this province. We have huge reserves that are still there. We just need these companies to realize that we are not going to give it away.

Thank you.

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

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

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

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

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

Pursuant to the motion of referral of May 31, 2021, and in accordance with Standing Order 72, the Resource Committee met on five occasions: May 31, June 1, 3, 8 and 9 of 2021.

The Resource Committee have considered the matters to them referred, and pursuant to Standing Order 75(2), have directed me to report that they have passed, without amendment, the Estimates of the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture; the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills; the Department of Industry, Energy and Technology; the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation; and the Department of Environment and Climate Change, and recommend that the report be concurred in.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Further reports by Standing and Select Committees?

The hon. the Member for Burin - Grand Bank.

**P. PIKE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pursuant to the motion of referral of May 31, 2021, and in accordance with Standing Order 72, the Government Services Committee met on three occasions: June 4, 7 and 10, 2021.

The Government Services Committee have considered the matters to them referred, and pursuant to Standing Order 75(2), have directed me to report that they have passed, without amendment, the Estimates of Consolidated Fund Service; the Department of Digital Government and Service NL; the Department of Finance; the Public Procurement Agency; the Public Service Commission; and the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure, and recommend that the report be concurred in.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Any further presenting reports by Standing or Select Committees?

Tabling of Documents.

#### **Tabling of Documents**

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

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

In accordance with section 12 of the *Workplace Health, Safety and Compensation Act*, I hereby table the annual performance report for 2020 for WorkplaceNL.

**SPEAKER:** Any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

#### **Notices of Motion**

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice, and by leave, to move the following motion: Notwithstanding Standing Order 9 that this House meet for a debate

regarding the Terra Nova FPSO on Monday, June 14 at 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

**SPEAKER:** Is leave granted?

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

**B. PETTEN:** I would like to respond to that motion to move that this debate on the FPSO start immediately as opposed to Monday.

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

**SPEAKER:** I take it that leave is not granted. I ask is leave granted for –?

**B. PETTEN:** Is leave granted for mine?

**SPEAKER:** For Monday.

The motion was that he asked to debate on Monday and asked for leave.

**B. PETTEN:** (Inaudible.)

**SPEAKER:** We have to deal with this issue first.

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

**SPEAKER:** You can't amend it. You either agree with leave or not.

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

**SPEAKER:** So you agree to give leave?

Leave is granted.

**B. PETTEN:** (Inaudible.)

**SPEAKER:** You can do the motion after regular proceedings. Once we get into Orders of the Day, then you can your motion.

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

**SPEAKER:** We have to deal with the initial motion first.

**B. PETTEN:** (Inaudible.)

**SPEAKER:** Yes.

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you, that's (inaudible).

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

**B. PETTEN:** I move, notwithstanding Standing Order 9, that the House debate regarding the Terra Nova FPSO start today – start immediately. It cannot wait.

**SPEAKER:** This House do recess for a few minutes to review the request.

### Recess

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The notice of motion made by the Member for Conception Bay South is not in order. There is a process to dispense of the ordinary business of the House in circumstances such as these, which is outlined in Standing Order 36.

Leave was requested by the Government House Leader when he gave his notice of motion. Leave was granted; therefore, the motion before the House is the motion by the Government House Leader. I will now call for debate on that motion.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

We see the urgency of this matter and we want to make sure that everybody has an opportunity to have what briefings that can be availed of early next week or even into tomorrow. So, Mr. Speaker, that will be our motion, that this House do sit on Monday morning to debate this urgent matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

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

I do agree that this is very important. We, on this side of the House, know the importance of this and the effect it has had on the province, on every one of our districts and the people who

work in our districts. I have a lot in my own district that is affected by this.

I get the fact that Monday is coming and they're going to have a debate: I'm fine. But we really feel the importance of this is here and now. Where we're to right now, today. We did make a motion in order – or out of order; I guess that's the House rules. We feel strongly that something of this importance to be put off until Monday – there is no better time than the present. We strongly believe the government needs to reconsider and start the debate now, because the longer you wait, every day that goes by that's extra days of stress.

We had a private Member's resolution yesterday on the mental health that the pandemic has caused. Unfortunately, this may be another result of the pandemic and the world oil markets. It's a combination of things, but the pandemic plays into it. What those workers in this province feel today with that news conference – and at 1:15, I might add, which was 15 minutes before this House opened, that we became aware. It wasn't a long time for anyone to get their heads around it and to come into this House and to properly give – even Question Period. Now, I give credit to the leader for doing so.

We feel strongly that here and now is the time to do it for that reason. I mean, we can go into a number of reasons, but I won't waste any more time at it. I believe that right now the time should be spent debating this motion, here and now, today. The Terra Nova FPSO is too important to the province to be putting it off for days down the road while workers are home sitting down wondering what the future has. One minute too long is not good enough for these people, Mr. Speaker, or those communities.

I call upon the government to make the motion to sit today and to continue on tonight. We're here as long as you want to be here.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Just a couple of points on this Mr. Speaker. This is obviously disappointing news, to say the very least, and it is a huge issue for our province and it's a huge issue for the workers. I totally agree. On a personal level, I would have no issue – and I know that's not the motion; it's neither one of the motions, really. But if someone could provide me with some sort of a briefing and so on of whatever details could be available. If we suspended the House right now and we could have a briefing and come back to debate it tonight, personally, I'd be okay with that. But to simply have a debate right now, at this moment, with no information, I don't think we would be doing justice to the issue.

I'm not making a motion here of my own, because it won't be in order either. But, again, I really believe we need the briefing and the information and, as I said, on a personal level, if we did it right now, had a briefing and then we debated it tonight, I'd be fine with that. I'd be fine with debating it tomorrow morning, but I need the briefing first.

So I just wanted to make that point.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my understanding from the department that those briefings are being arranged as soon as possible. Obviously, the department is busy. There are still negotiations here. This is not something that is a dead deal. We still have a half a billion dollars on the table as an offer. These are important jobs and that's why we have a half a billion dollars on the table. If you think about it, that's a considerable offer to these companies from this province and there's work being done.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can assure the Member opposite, before our debate on Monday there will be an opportunity for a full briefing for Members opposite.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

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

I find it very hard to believe that these briefings aren't already done. There was a decision made, there was a press conference at 1:15 this afternoon, 15 minutes before we came into the House of Assembly. Was this decision, again, made with a lack of information? Is it another case of something that we didn't know? It's a fair question.

At the end of the day, there are thousands – it's not just the 900 men and women that work offshore directly, it's the people that work indirectly that are affected by this, and we want to put it off to the eve of a deadline instead of trying to find a solution three or four days prior to and trying to help find a solution. Something I'll add, and that this Premier has added time and time again, is that we need to collaborate and work together. Let's wait until the last minute so there's no time. We need to debate this motion today, Mr. Speaker, not Monday, and government should be prepared to give us a briefing right now.

**SPEAKER:** Are there any other speakers to the motion?

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course we have to respect the opinion of the Chair on the motions, which ones are in order and not in order. I understand the urgency across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador for all of the workers and I'm sure every Member in this House of Assembly right now is concerned about the workers and their families.

It is a situation, Mr. Speaker, where I feel that if we were going to debate it now, fine, but I've been through a lot of this and I go back to Voisey's Bay, I go back to Muskrat Falls and I go back to them all. Before I would get involved with the – seriously, we could stand here, I could stand here and talk about it politically, but to get involved with it, I feel that we do need a briefing. I feel that, the government, if they're offering a briefing that I would partake in that briefing, because it's so important to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. If we're going to debate this on Monday, I notice the motion says 9 o'clock, so we should have a briefing

either before 9 o'clock or delay it and open it at 10 o'clock and have a briefing at 9 o'clock for some way to have a briefing in this House.

Even with the briefing, I am confident, being involved in some negotiations before, that there's a certain amount of information that you can't divulge anyway. You can't divulge it, but divulge the best and the most that you can to help us with an informed decision.

If the government is willing to commit to a briefing on Monday, to give us the proper information so we can have a really informed debate and offer some great discussions, I'm fine with that. We can't rush the decision and we can't rush the information that we're going to get. If the information is available in a briefing sense, let's have it. As the minister said and the Government House Leader said, this is still going. I understand where the Opposition are speaking from also, that it's so important to all the people. I know a couple of them and their districts are very much impacted by all of this.

I just wanted to put it on the record that if we're going to have a debate, we should have a briefing and get all the information that we can to all the Members before this debate in the House of Assembly.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Any other speakers to the motion?

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

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

It's really not the best of a choice either way you look at it. If we debate it today, we're doing so probably without some information. If we do it on Monday, I think, as my colleague behind me said, it's going to be on the eve of the decision. I guess, if I'm looking at it, I still need to have the information in front of me to have that fulsome debate, even if that's tomorrow.

I'm just thinking if, indeed, this proceeds on Monday or we have a briefing on Monday, maybe – I don't know; it's probably out of our hands – the deadline could be pushed back. I don't know if it can or not. Otherwise, if the

debate on Monday is just a matter of formality or pro forma, it offers little.

Certainly, I do want to have a debate on this. I think it's important we have it, but I'm cognizant of what my colleagues have said here. There are people, yes, who are going to be going through a stressful time over this weekend. I think we need to have an informed debate here. If that means doing it earlier, I would certainly support that, but it has to be one that's done with the information in front of us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Any further speakers to the motion?

All those in favour of the motion, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

Any further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm, again, going to present a petition on behalf of the people of Humber - Bay of Islands and the Corner Brook area concerning the previous election in 2021.

Mr. Speaker, the petition calls upon the government to have an investigation into the last election.

I've noted before on the Committee – and I've asked people and I'm getting a lot of responses to it – that there's no one on this Committee from the West Coast – no one. From the west of the Baie Verte turnoff, there's no one on this

Committee to express their views and pass on the frustrations that were felt during the election. I said before, Mr. Speaker, if there was no one on that Committee from St. John's, what an uproar; if there was no one on that Committee from Labrador, what an uproar. But there's no one on it from the West Coast of the province.

I'm asking the people from the West Coast that if you have any concerns, which a lot have already expressed, during the election, after the election and since I started presenting the petitions, keep sending them to me. I will assure the people on the West Coast that they will be given to the Committee. I am more than confident, Mr. Speaker. I know the Opposition themselves will be on the Committee. I know that they received a lot of the same concerns that we had. They had a lot of concerns expressed. They felt the frustration and they felt, on many occasions, the act wasn't followed and a lot of people's right to vote was denied. I'm sure they're going to keep the government accountable for that in the Committee.

I'm still amazed – I said it before and I'll say it again – I'm still amazed why the Commissioner for Legislative Standards is not brought before this House to have a discussion and inform this House what happened during the previous election in 2021. I am just astonished that an Officer of the House of Assembly is not in front of us explaining his actions and why the Premier, at the time, said that the Commissioner for Legislative Standards could run an election during a pandemic. We've seen the outcome of that.

This is why sometimes I think the House of Assembly in itself is not doing their own duties and our responsibilities to the people of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador, but that's for another time.

I will keep presenting petitions. I made a commitment twice a week and I will follow up on that commitment to keep raising this issue, Mr. Speaker, so we can make improvements for the next election.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

I have a petition here and I'll just read it out first.

The reason for this petition, Mr. Speaker. The former mill property and Grand Falls House were appropriated by the government after the Abitibi mill closed in Grand Falls-Windsor.

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 turn over the former mill property and Grand Falls House to the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, where the people of the community feel it belongs.

Mr. Speaker, this has been going on for quite some time now through a couple of different ministers. I had a great chat with a few people about it again this morning, but it's not moving fast enough.

In a time of fiscal restraint, I understand that some decisions are going to be hard and can't be made; this doesn't cost the province a penny – not a penny – except the paperwork it's written on, to pass this back over to the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor, but the benefits that could come out of this for my district and, in that envelope, the province itself are phenomenal.

The plan that Grand Falls-Windsor have for the old mill property is a green scenic area with some parkways, just a beautiful space. Right now it's just a parking lot. It's just a crumbled parking lot that's cleared off. It's not right. We feel as though it should be passed back over to the people of Grand Falls-Windsor where it belongs. There is no purpose to hold on to it. We need to get it passed over, as well as Grand Falls House.

If you've ever been in there. It's absolutely beautiful. It can be used as a great tourist attraction.

Again, I call on the minister. I would love a response from the minister about where they are with negotiations when it comes to passing it over to the town. Hopefully, they're ongoing. Hopefully, it's resolved soon so we can move on

with this and the Town of Grand Falls-Windsor can get back what it rightfully owned in the first place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**C. PARDY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I presented this petition in the last sitting. It reads as follows: Several abandoned buildings in unincorporated areas or LSDs pose a significant health and safety hazard to local residents and tourists, including collapsed or collapsing dwellings. Others are dens for rodents. These abandoned buildings also undermine the tourism and development potential of many picturesque communities in the District of Bonavista, which is heavily reliant on this industry for economic growth.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to bring forward legislation that acts on the removal of these collapsed or dilapidated structures.

I present this petition, Mr. Speaker, and it's one that was presented before that we had discussed. The District of Bonavista is big on tourism, as you know, and I would think it's very significant for the economic coffers and revenues of our province.

We would like to build on the tourism. I'm sure with our state of financial affairs that our province has there are industries like tourism and the fishery that we ought to be focusing on in order to grow our revenues from these sources.

We have areas, like in Knights Cove, Trinity East, and Newmans Cove to name three of the 58 communities in the District of Bonavista, that have these dilapidated structures. We want to gather more and collect more from tourism. I think it would be in the province's interest to make sure that these collapsed and abandoned structures are removed so that they're no longer an unacceptable sight for the many tourists that travel in the District of Bonavista.

I read the Estimates in 2019, the, then, Minister Mitchelmore, talked about how tourism was enhanced in the District of Bonavista when they paved roads that went to tourist attractive sites. He complimented and said what a great investment it was.

I would say in the short time remaining, Mr. Speaker, that an investment into these dilapidated and rundown structures by the province will bode well and better present the District of Bonavista. I will certainly always help those that are in these communities as well.

I thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call Orders of the Day.

#### Orders of the Day

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call Motion 1.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's always a privilege to speak in this House of Assembly on behalf of the Exploits District.

Mr. Speaker, only last night I got a call from one of the oil workers myself who wanted to know what would be his future with regard to the oil industry, and today just to hear that news. I was looking forward to going home this weekend, but to go home to see that person to try to explain to him or put some hope in his mind that things will be okay. Hopefully, they will. Hopefully, we can get this straightened out and, hopefully, we can carry on.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, on a brighter note, it's still good to talk about the Exploits District. Right now, I'd like to acknowledge the volunteers of the district. We have a great volunteer core in the Exploits District. A lot of the clubs, especially during COVID, some people did come on hard times with regard to the amount of work they could find. They needed extra help with regard to food. They needed extra help with regard to clothing. Sometimes even some worse cases, I know there were a couple of fires that people had to reach out to with regrouping, clothing, bedding, household goods, that sort of stuff.

Hats off to the volunteers in our district, Mr. Speaker. The Lions Clubs, fire departments, the Knights of Columbus, Kinsmen Club, seniors organizations and church groups. They all band together it seems like in the past year and you could reach out to them. Even though those clubs fell on hard times themselves, it was still great to be able – because I did reach out to them a couple of times, different departments there, different clubs, to say I have a family down the road, I have a family in this community wondering if you can help them out. They won't reach out to you because they have that sense of pride that they don't want to reach out and feel intimidated that they have to ask. B'y, those clubs would jump on board and say, yeah, we'll help you, b'y. Let us know. They'd be down with hampers or, like I said, bedding. Anything at all to help out. Mr. Speaker, I'd certainly like to thank the volunteer groups in our district.

Speaking of the church groups, I'd just like to acknowledge right now that the Anglican parish of Bishop's Falls is celebrating its 100 anniversary this weekend. They're going to be having their opening ceremonies this weekend. I'm glad to be home to join them in that. It's a milestone, no doubt about it. I'd like to congratulate the clergy and parishioners of the St. Andrew's Anglican Church on such a milestone.

Mr. Speaker, also the Max Simms camp in Bishop's Falls. When you're talking about the volunteer groups, Lion Max Simms camp, the help that they provide without government assistance. It's at a cost of \$1 million a year, just to operate the Max Simms camp. It provides assistance to groups with disabilities, especially

the blind and autistic. I know this, Mr. Speaker, because I'm a member of the Bishop's Falls Lions Club. I'm very proud to be a Lion.

They do great work. The work that they do, Mr. Speaker, those people, I've seen the camp for the blind. You'd have to be there to really appreciate it. They keep their monies. They look forward to every year to going back to the camp just for that week or two weeks – whatever they can get. I hope COVID don't interfere with their plans; it really interfered last year. I know they're looking forward to getting back.

Mr. Speaker, the Max Simms camp is a great, great facility. If anybody would like to go out and visit that someday, I'd certainly be more than welcome to take you up there for a tour, just to get an acknowledgement of it.

Mr. Speaker, front-line workers, another group that certainly, in our district, excelled during COVID. They had their worries as well as anyone else. Your front-line workers: your store attendants, nurses, anyone on the front lines, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to acknowledge those people in our district, at this time, for the work that they did during COVID.

Boys and Girls Clubs: another great facility in the Exploits District. The Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, they have great programs. They do great work for youth. It's amazing. They are usually there from probably five years old, up to 22 years old. Especially this time now, Mr. Speaker, with COVID, I know we talked about mental health and I know the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans mentioned yesterday about youth, how he dealt with the youth in regard to mental health. Those Boys and Girls Clubs, the programs that they can provide to help with the youth in the area, it gives them a feeling of belonging. It gets them out into the communities.

There is one in Botwood and there's one in Norris Arm. The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, there is one in Buchans, actually. Those Boys and Girls Clubs, they're well underfunded, I'll tell you that, because the monies that they need to operate, the programs that they provide, the interaction with regard to schooling. They're not in school most of the times now; they're home. If they can interact

with people of their own age – in regard to Boys and Girls Clubs, too, when we're talking of mental health – they can share their views and they can relate to one another. Mr. Speaker, the Boys and Girls Clubs, I can't stress it enough, the work that they've been doing.

Actually, it was only, I think, what, a couple of weeks ago I did a Member statement on Shealah Hart of Northern Arm. She was recently chosen by BGC Canada as one of this year's Regional Youth of the Year. It is amazing work to see those young people doing that, Mr. Speaker.

Shealah, she's been with the BGC – they've changed the name from Boys and Girls Clubs. They went with BGC and it's hard to get used to. She's been a volunteer now, Mr. Speaker, for 13 years and she has served on numerous capacities at a local and national level with the BGC. That's a big accolade for a youth. It really is. I'm very proud to speak on youths. Even though she's enrolled in MUN, she will continue to work with the BGC on a local level and on a provincial level to foster and support other youths.

That will tell you the activities. Sometimes we look down on the youths. I'm sure we've all said it, like: Oh, look at that group coming down the road. What are they up to? If we supported programs like this in our communities, we would know that the youths in our communities are doing good things. I've seen them with cold plates. The Boys and Girls Club deliver cold plates to the seniors in the community, Mr. Speaker. That's great to see that happening and we need more of that to get our youths involved. Get involved in society. Get involved in themselves. Let them relate and let them be free in our communities. Not only do they excel from it; we excel from it, too, because to see them do those things, it's rejuvenating, Mr. Speaker.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I will touch on the health care in our district as well. I can't leave it alone, because health care has really taken a toll in our district. I'll start with the lab services of Grand Falls-Windsor. Our regional hospital at Grand Falls-Windsor, that's where our biggest hospital is.

Mr. Speaker, the lab testing hub for Gander, which was announced for Gander and moved to



Gander, has caused a lot of friction between the towns. For starters, the lab services in Grand Falls-Windsor, the lab itself, was big enough to be the testing hub. It was before. There was no reason to move it to Gander. The minister himself, he will come on and say: B'y, there's nothing happening to the lab services in Grand Falls-Windsor. There are no services being cut. Everything remains the same.

Yet during the election again, 2021, they made a lot of promises out our way. They really did. During the election of 2021, I can remember the candidates, even on the NTV news, saying we will review the decision. Mr. Speaker, if things are okay, if there are no changes, would somebody explain to me what are they reviewing? What would it be? It's beyond me; I don't know. But it seems to be that the testing hub is moving.

I don't know who endorsed those candidates to say those things. There was a big announcement from one of the candidates that the 24-hour emergency service in Botwood was going to be open. Then the other candidates announced that we're going to review the situations. I don't know who endorsed those announcements, Mr. Speaker. If it was the Liberal Party, the Liberal government, well, they should come clean on all that and let's get it done. Let's do the reviews on the lab services. Let's open the 24-hour emergency service in Botwood.

I can't see the candidates just coming out themselves and just saying it: B'y, maybe I'll get elected. I can't see the Liberals at the time doing this just to say: B'y, if we do this, we'll knock out the PC candidates and we'll get those seats.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Is that's what's on here? I'm amazed with it. I really, really am. I'm really amazed with it.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, in regard to the lab services, Grand Falls-Windsor hospital itself, right now, they're the hub for seven satellite hubs in Central Newfoundland. They range from Harbour Breton, Baie Verte, Springdale, up to Grand Falls-Windsor – Buchans and out as far as Lewisporte – Botwood, of course. That's seven satellite hubs all in Central West. That's

seven that have to go to Grand Falls-Windsor for testing.

They're going to bypass Grand Falls-Windsor hospital and go on to Gander, and then wait until those tests are done and then send them back again. Transportation alone just doesn't make sense when the Gander hospital only has two satellite hubs. The geography of it just doesn't make sense, and just for, basically, the minister to be able to service his own District of Gander.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, again I mention the 24-hour emergency service in Botwood, the stress it's creating on the emergency service in Grand Falls-Windsor because now they can't go to the emergency service in Botwood. They have to go to the emergency in Grand Falls-Windsor. It's creating more waiting times for the patients, doctors. More stress on the doctors. More stress on the nurses. The nurses right now, you'll hear them on the news. They're all stressed out. They're worked to death. You're going to have to try to span out the workloads and make it easier in one capacity or the other. Mr. Speaker, by opening the 24-hour emergency service, it would take the stress off Grand Falls-Windsor and have the people more content back in Botwood.

Also right now, Mr. Speaker, the CEO of Central Health is still in New Brunswick. She's been in New Brunswick ever since last June. She resigned last June. As far as I know, there's no recruitment to get the CEO back on site. We only just went through a COVID influx in Central Newfoundland, Mr. Speaker, and our CEO is up in New Brunswick.

Mr. Speaker, there is some great attention that needs to be done with regard to health care in the Central area, and doctors, again, are another thing that the residents in our area – we have a shortage of doctors, Mr. Speaker. I did touch on it here yesterday, but I'm getting lots of calls from people that can't find doctors; they have to make long travels.

I know that's not just in my area, Mr. Speaker, it's in every area in Newfoundland and Labrador. When you're taking about seniors to go see specialists, and most of the time it is in St. John's at the Health Sciences Centre, they have to come out here and they have to travel

long just to drive out, Mr. Speaker. Then they have to get rooms because they can't drive back. Seniors need more time – it seems like they take their time more – not like some young ones, they rush out and probably rush back again on the same day. Seniors need more time and they need to be rested so they come out, and it costs them more, Mr. Speaker, just to be able to see a doctor. We need to put more emphasis on the doctors.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker, there's also some other work that needs to be done in the Exploits District. I did touch on it the other day; the roads are another part of the Exploits District that needs attention, Mr. Speaker. I'm getting it all down around the areas. In the past two years, we haven't had any roadwork done in our district. The potholes, the pavement is gone in places, and it takes time for the maintenance –

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

**P. FORSEY:** Yeah, Mr. Speaker, the minister do remind me that he don't know where Exploits is, because he did tell me one day that the Sir Robert Bond Bridge ran across the Humber River. So that'll tell you where the Liberals think Exploits is: they don't even know.

Thank you for that reminder, Minister, I appreciate that.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Yes, probably you should come in. I'll show you around one of those days.

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

**P. FORSEY:** I wouldn't have reminded me of that.

Anyway, that's some issues in our district, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to have addressed. I'm sure we have them all over.

Again, the lab services, the 24-hour emergency service and the doctors, that is immediate, primary health care that we need in Central, in the Exploits District and a part of Grand Falls. Some of my district runs to Grand Falls-Windsor and probably overlaps with Grand Falls-Windsor into the Grand Falls-Windsor -

Buchans area, probably. Actually, the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor is my constituent.

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

**P. FORSEY:** See, when I tell you I get calls, I get calls. No doubt about it.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, it's always a pleasure whenever I get a chance here in this House to get up. I know everybody hears me say: B'y, I wish he'd shut up about the 24-hour emergency service; I wish he'd lay off about the lab services in Grand Falls-Windsor; I wish he'd lay off about something else. B'y, is there anything good out there? Yeah, there is. But I just can't help it, Mr. Speaker, because these are the issues that are brought to me and my obligation is to bring them back to the House of Assembly.

As long as those issues and concerns are being brought to my attention, Mr. Speaker, I'll certainly bring them to the House of Assembly and I'll be more than proud and pleased to do so. It's an honour to represent the people of the Exploits District.

With that, Mr. Speaker, thank you for your time and I'll get to speak another day.

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

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

**C. TIBBS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the time to speak today.

I don't know when the briefing is going to be for Terra Nova, but I personally don't need it. That's something that is very dear and close to my heart. I'm just going to speak for a moment, not from a political point of view, I'm not going to speak on behalf of the government and I'm not even going to speak on behalf of the Opposition, I'm going to speak on behalf of the workers that are facing a very hard day today, or possibly coming – hopefully not. Hopefully, something gets worked out. What those people and those families have to carry into the weekend now is unsurmountable. It's not going to be a good weekend for them and their families. So I'm going to take a moment and talk about that.

Mr. Speaker, on February 15, 2019, I walked off an oil rig for the last time after 17 years of – enjoyed every single minute of it. I enjoyed the oil and gas. It has a future in our country, on our globe and especially in our province. When I walked off that rig on February 15, 2019, I walked off with the same pair of boots that I wore for a couple of years, throwing chain, throwing tongs, climbing the rig, drilling for oil 1,000 metres a day. I loved every minute of it. I miss the people I worked with and I miss the rig. Mr. Speaker, sometimes I still wear the boots; I have them on today just to remind myself.

Every now and again people don't notice but they're the most comfortable things I ever put on my feet. I carry them with me as I represent the blue-collar workers of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'll continue to represent the blue-collar workers of Newfoundland and Labrador. They're not forgotten about, but until you walk a mile in somebody's shoes –

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

**C. TIBBS:** – you don't really see what they're going through.

I'm going to speak for them for a little bit here now. Again, what they have to face now the weekend, and that's why we wanted to debate sooner than later. Again, just to give them some relief. Who knows? I've seen some squirrely things happen in oil and gas; some very squirrely things happen when it comes to deals in oil and gas.

When you catch the person's ear at a certain moment, that really counts, it can change their mind when it comes to deals. You wouldn't believe the humanity in some people. I just wonder for a second, if we had this debate today or this evening and something was brought up, brought forth – a piece of information that really touched somebody in a certain way on the higher end of things, we'll call it – maybe that could potentially impact the deal deadline coming Tuesday.

We're talking about Monday, that's four days away. That's lost time. That's lost time: 96 hours.

People are going to lose their jobs, potentially, and it's going to be very difficult. That's very concerning. But what concerns me just the same is the amount of people, possibly, that are going to have to put their boots on like I have now, get on a plane, take their family and move away. That's going to hurt our population growth.

I've always said it: Immigration is very important to Newfoundland and Labrador, but immigration is one thing. My God, if we can't even keep our own people here now, how much is that going to impact us moving forward? It's going to impact us huge.

The message that we have is: It's a dark day, it is; it is for the Terra Nova and the families that work on it.

I want to bring everybody's attention to something for a moment. I'm mind-boggled; I'm absolutely mind-boggled. Again, I don't run off facts and figures; I run off pure emotion. Those who know me, know that's exactly what I run off, and that's why I came home to do this job.

We have the federal Natural Resources minister from Newfoundland and Labrador. I remember when he was appointed that everybody was excited because we thought we were going to see some benefit from it. We are not seeing any benefit from it. We truly are not. I'm not here to play politics or throw anybody under a bus, but when we have the Natural Resources minister for Canada living in our backyard and we can't get anything from Ottawa – besides what we've gotten and it's greatly appreciated – to further this deal, that's very concerning to everybody in Newfoundland and Labrador.

For those people out there who say: You know what? It's COVID; it's the same everywhere else. No, it's not. If anybody wants me to table text messages from my phone, I'm more than happy to do it. I got a call last week to go back to work. Drilling is happening. People are drilling for oil. At \$72 a barrel, that's a sweet spot. It truly is. Ninety bucks a barrel, you know she's going to bust soon; \$40 or \$50 a barrel, not worth drilling; \$72 a barrel, bring it on. That's exactly what investors are looking for. So how we can't move this forward, it's very, very concerning.

I'm sure there's a lot of work going into it. There's not one person in here that wants to see that fail, but we need more information. We want to see exactly what's happening, we truly do, because there's a lot of stuff we don't know on this side and we would like to know because maybe we do have something to add. I worked in the industry and I've been in on some deals back out West. I've helped facilitate many, many things. I know this is on a much of a bigger scale.

It's crazy to think that Quebec is still getting \$13 billion a year in equalization. Yes, it's from two pots, but we are Newfoundland and Labrador with a population of, what, 525,000 people and more natural resources per person than I can ever imagine on the planet, and we aren't seeing the actual benefit that we should be seeing. That is very concerning to myself.

When we talk about a community benefits agreement. Everybody is going to say to me, and I've heard it lots of times: Well, you went out West to work. Of course I did. Well, what about their community benefits agreement? They've had them. They've had them for 20 years. I guarantee you, when oil bottomed out at \$40 a barrel, I was one of the first people to be sent home. I live with that and I totally accepted that. Of course I did. They want to keep their own people out there at the time working. Less LOAs and less money they have to put in to getting us out there again. I 100 per cent agreed with it. When I got sent home, as hard as it was on myself and my family, I agreed with it and I could see where they're coming from.

We need a community benefits agreement here in Newfoundland and Labrador. Over two years now I've been asking about it and over two years I've been told it's something that's in progress. Well, in progress doesn't do a whole lot for those people that are sat at home without jobs.

**S. COADY:** (Inaudible.)

**C. TIBBS:** Sorry?

**S. COADY:** We have benefits agreements for oil.

**C. TIBBS:** Yes, for oil and gas. But for other places in Newfoundland and Labrador.

For instance, the Grand Falls-Windsor long-term health care centre. Again, people from out of province coming in during a pandemic. We couldn't get people home, our own citizens, to go to a funeral and whatnot. I understand the safety of it and I don't disagree with the safety of it. But shouldn't that safety be implemented for everybody? There should not have been one worker come from out of this province into this province to do work. Especially during a pandemic. I'll stand out on that limb all day long and anybody can call me out on it all day long. I really don't care. But I'll always pick up for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

What we're going to see if this falls through, it's going to be some dark days for some families out there. I'll just give you some prime examples of what my family has gone through. Because 17 years, we all know oil and gas, it goes up and it goes down. I've been just about ready to drill a hole and they've told me: No, we're shutting down, that's it. It's been crazy. What you feel when you make plans with your family and whatnot. It certainly disrupts a lot of things.

What these families have to go through now when it comes to finances, for instance. The finances are going to be top of order: how they're going to pay their mortgage, their car payments, their fuel and groceries. Of course, groceries have gone up and fuel is skyrocketing right now. Again, people in this province are just surviving; we're not living. I'll say it, and I've said it before every time I've spoken these past two weeks, I'll never point a finger. I won't do it. I won't. Unless it's warranted. But what people have to go through in this province right now, it's absolutely fundamentally horrible, because they are truly surviving, a lot of people. It's not right that we work 40, 50 or 60 hours a week just to survive, just to hopefully walk out with a bag of groceries and feed your family at the end of the week. It's what people put up with. Now, these families, the uncertainty that they face is absolutely – it's horrendous.

I'll disclose something right here, right now. You can ask for the record if you want. My last year drilling I made \$176,000. Great money. It was fantastic money. I took a huge pay cut to

come down here and take this job on. I didn't take it on for the politics. Personally, I don't like the politics in politics. I really don't. What I do like is how all of us stand up for our constituents and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. It's not just my constituents. I'd stand up for the Minister of Finance's constituents tomorrow because they're fellow Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

What they have to go through now, the Members for Terra Nova and Harbour Main – lots of people within that area. My area isn't greatly affected, but it will be affected in the long run. What they have to face now – and they truly care – it's absolutely horrendous and I know what they have to face. They have to face families coming to them now asking: Well, what do I do about this? What do I do about that? These families, they're going to go through quite a bit. Again, I remember coming home on dark years, you know, 2010 hit us pretty hard, 2011 oil bottomed out around then and as well 2009. It was a horrible year. Coming home, I just talk about – you know what, I've got a very strong wife. Rotational workers they have very strong wives and husbands as they go away to work. I have a very, very strong wife. But it takes a toll on your marriage, it takes toll on your relationship with your kids and it takes a mental toll on everything.

Those men and women now what they have to go through. We just talked about our PMR yesterday. What they are about to go through, it's unspeakable. They have to look at their kids now and say they can't get into certain summer programs because now we have to struggle and financially watch what we're doing and just survive. They're in survival mode. They have to tell their kids they can't have anything. I remember coming home and having to say to my kids: Sorry, but we can't afford to do that right now. For a man or a woman, or a mom or a dad, that's a lot to take on. To go from one lifestyle where you're enjoying life and now off to this.

I just plead that we find a solution for these people so they don't go away, because it's easy to go away. Right now, Western Canada, she's starting to boom again. She is. Precision Drilling, 299, God bless all of the workers on that rig. I got a call to go back to it, like I said, last week. I miss it every single day. I miss

being covered in oil, dirt, sweat and everything else. By God, who knows, maybe one day I'll go back to it. Hopefully not. Hopefully I have a place here and I continue to stay here and stand for the blue-collar workers and the workers throughout my district because they need a voice for them. They do.

Sometimes we sit in here, we get caught up in the politics of it all and we get caught up with the high-level stuff. Sometimes we need Members like myself. I'm not out to do any great things; I probably never will. But what I will do is I'll speak on behalf of the people that I am very comfortable sitting in the trenches with. Those people that put on their workboots every single day and get out and give it their all, and send every cent back home to their family. When they see their family have sports, when they see their wife can go do something nice for herself or their husband can do something nice for himself, that's all they want. That's all that ever put a smile on my face. I'm the most non-materialistic person on the planet, I can guarantee you. I need very little. But when I see my community and my family doing well, that's all I ever needed.

But I know now the people, the families that are affected by the possible shutdown, close up of this today or Tuesday, they're going to feel exactly what I have felt in the past and I know it. I'm sure everybody in here has struggled at one time or another when they came up through, but for those blue-collar workers – and I don't know who's done it, who's not done it – I tell you they're some of the backbone of our province. What they do every single day with the safety concerns they have, the dangers that they face – I mean, I've watched some horrific accidents on oil rigs too. What they go through is a lot to take on, but to keep them working, to get them back to work, we need to do everything we possibly can. I know that I'll do everything I possibly can and hopefully there are other projects to happen.

Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore oil and gas – we could be a hub. We really could be a hub for this industry. I know Alberta, Saskatchewan, BC; they're a hub in Western Canada. We could be a hub in Eastern Canada. And to find out that, you know what, we have a possible billion barrels out in that basin right

now, it's fantastic to hear and hopefully to have access to it.

I heard the Premier say it's still in the ground; it's not going anywhere. I've heard that all throughout Western Canada over the past 17 years too. It hasn't gone anywhere for a million years, it's not going anywhere soon: it's not a good thing. It's not a good thing because the goal is – and we have to say it like it is – to transition to a greener economy. I am 100 per cent on board with that.

I have two small kids; hopefully they're going to have small kids growing up. When they grow up, I hope that climate change isn't even a word at that time because they don't have to worry about it. I hope it's not a big issue at all because I hope they don't have to worry about it. I hope that is the way the world is at that time, but that's then and this is now.

That oil that's in the ground, we need to utilize it now as best we can before it's redundant, before we don't need it anymore. I don't know how long it's going to be: 20 years possibly, maybe 100 years. Nobody really knows how long this is going to come on. All it's going to take is one invention or a thought or an idea to really put oil and gas and keep it in the ground forever and ever. It's coming and I welcome the day that it comes, but it's not today. So we need to ensure that the oil – it's in the ground, it's not going anywhere: again, it's not a good thing. We need to avail of that now, as soon as we can, get it streamlined, back on board. Hopefully something happens down the road, but right now that is of little comfort to the families that are affected.

I know everybody here feels it, but until you have the job instability or insecurity of not knowing what tomorrow is going to bring, like those families have now – and, again, I lived it for a long, long time, my family lived it and I know lots and lots of families that live it as well. The insecurity of that is – it is very disturbing to your family and it causes so many problems.

When it comes to mental health, that's one of the biggest things. Again, I'm just going to speak from experience. I was a driller on an oil rig. You're too tough to have bad days. Trust me, on these rigs it doesn't matter. There's no

calling in sick. There's no taking a mental health day, like there should be, but there's not. I guarantee you that. Do they try to follow their best practices? No.

When you were there for your 30 days – I spent up to 50 days straight on a rig; you were there for your 50 days and you had to suck it up and go with it. It's not the way the world should be, but it's the way that industry is. It's one of the toughest industries on the planet. I've drilled in minus 56 and I've drilled in plus 45, and I tell you what, it's one of the toughest jobs on the planet. My hat goes off to all of those who are in our oil and gas sector, including their families that put up with that lifestyle as well.

We talked about the community benefits agreement. When people say to me, you were out West for quite some time, I realize that, but I wasn't out there because they were welcoming us. Yes, they loved having us there because they knew we were the hardest working people in Canada. I wasn't there because they asked me to come out; I was there because there was a shortage of workers in Western Canada.

That's where people get it mixed up a little bit when they try to call me out and say you've gone out to Western Canada. Yes, I did and they were great people, but it was because they had a shortage of workers. I pray for the day that we have a shortage of workers here in Newfoundland and Labrador, too, and we have to fill those spots as well, but that's not today either.

We talk about the workers now that could possibly lose their jobs. The spinoffs that are in this province are unrenowned. That's going to be less cars bought, less houses bought, less groceries bought and that's going to trickle across the Island like you would not believe. If we lose one family – just one family – that's a loss to this province. We don't want to lose any families in this province. That can be a huge loss. When you extrapolate that, you destroy an industry.

Let me tell you something, the federal government, I'm not going to say they're out to destroy the industry because it's revenue. It would be pretty silly to say that they're out to destroy the industry, but they're not doing it any

favours, I can guarantee you that. I've seen it through Western Canada. They might put some money on the table, which is appreciated – for anybody to say it's not appreciated, you'd be wrong – but I don't see anybody bending over backwards for Newfoundland and Labrador from Ottawa. I haven't seen it for quite some time now. I've seen it for Quebec and I've seen it for other provinces. You go out to the West there and they're not very popular out there as well.

We have to try to find a happy medium to get everybody back to work, but at the same time keep the Newfoundland and Labrador coffers stable. I understand that and I understand there is a lot of pressure there, that we don't have a lot of money to be giving out. That's okay. I totally understand that. But where is Ottawa?

We are the 10th province of Canada and we keep getting kicked around, kicked around and kicked around. I feel it every single time. I always feel it. I felt it out West, too. Unless you're Quebec or Ontario – especially Quebec, who's getting this \$13 billion a year. It still blows my mind. It's 2024, I know that it comes up again, but it's degrading. It truly is. I don't know what the number would be to put on the table to get this deal done, but I'm sure that Ottawa could find something to come down here, a Natural Resources minister to come down here and say what do we need to get this done, to keep Newfoundlanders and Labradorians working?

Industry is one thing, yes, and oil and gas is great, fantastic; it's something we have to hold on to. When you get down to the crux of it, Mr. Speaker, it's the people. It's the men and women that put on these workboots every single day to go out and do their job that they may not have come next week. You'll find these workboots at St. John's airport, Gander airport or out in Deer Lake and they'll be gone. Once that happens and we get a certain amount of people leave the province – not an influx, but an out-migration – I guarantee you, we are going to be in a lot of trouble and it's coming.

We need to pull together and have our debate. Hopefully somebody catches it; hopefully somebody makes a decision. I know that I'll always speak for the blue-collar workers and oil

and gas workers right here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

God bless you all.

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

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I move that we now adjourn debate on Motion 1.

**SPEAKER:** The motion is that we do adjourn debate.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole on Supply to consider the Estimates of the Legislature and the Executive Council.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to discuss the Estimates of the Legislature and the Executive Council.

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 (Warr):** Order, please!

The Estimates of the Legislature will be voted first. I'll ask the Clerk to call the subheads.

**CLERK (Barnes):** The Legislature, 1.1.01 through 7.1.01 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 1.1.01 to 7.1.01 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, subheads 1.1.01 through 7.1.01 carried.

**CLERK:** The total.

**CHAIR:** Shall the total carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Legislature, total heads, carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the Estimates of the Legislature carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, Estimates of the Legislature carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** We shall now consider the Estimates of the Executive Council. I understand that the House Leaders and a representative of the unaffiliated Members have met and agreed on an approach to considering the Estimates of the Executive Council.

Estimates will be considered by subheads and there are four in this order: 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 is Treasury Board Secretariat; 1.1.01 is Lieutenant-Governor's Establishment; 2.1.01 to 2.8.03 is the Office of the Executive Council; and 4.1.01 to 4.5.05 is the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

Just a little housekeeping, time will be allocated in 10-minute blocks. A Member can ask as many questions as they wish during their 10-minute allocation. The responsible minister will respond with this allocation, as is the practice in Standing Committee meetings. The style will be back and forth. Members may use multiple 10-minute blocks as long as there's an intervening speaker.

I will prioritize for recognition of the Official Opposition critics, followed by Third Party critics, followed by the unaffiliated Members. When there are no further questions for the subhead, the vote for that subhead will be called. When all subheads have been considered, the totals will be voted.

Seeing no objections, I will now ask the Clerk to call the first subhead.

**CLERK:** Treasury Board Secretariat, 3.1.01 through 3.1.06 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'll start off with some general questions.

The Budget Speech talks about the establishment of a House Committee, quote, "to review financial statements, budgets, and the annual reports of Crown corporations and organizations." Again, I think I asked this earlier today: Has there been any thought to



accomplishing this through the Public Accounts Committee?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Before we begin, may I just also say a couple of words on what Estimates we're looking at. This is the Office of the Executive Council. I want to thank them for their hard work and efforts. I don't want to take up too much of the Member opposite's time, but I did want to thank them for their efforts and for the work that they do on behalf of the province. They also manage relations with Ottawa, so it's a very important part of government. Perhaps, when I get into each section of it, I can say what they do.

Just on the point that the Member opposite is asking, the view here is we wanted to make sure that the Estimates – and I'll use that term – of all the important agencies, boards and commissions, the Crown corporations, are brought before the House of Assembly. This is a means and mechanism of doing this.

Yes, you could perhaps put it under the responsibilities of an existing Committee; we felt it best to have another Committee set up because, of course, the work that is done by the Public Accounts Committee is extensive. We wanted to have an opportunity to have another Standing Committee of this House of Assembly where more Members can be involved, different Members can be involved and you can bring in various entities to have them go through their Estimates.

We think it's very important, Mr. Chair, that we actually get to the granular level of everybody's expenditures, all those that take huge amounts of money from the public purse.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I totally agree with the concept, for sure, and I also echo the comments about the Executive Council and staff and the work they do.

The PERT report recommended major changes to government, but there is a no-layoff clause in the collective agreements. I was wondering: How do these two items work together or conflict with each other?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I think it's very important that we recognize that the PERT report – the Premier's Economic Recovery Team – did an extensive amount of work. I want to again thank the members of that team who volunteered their time.

I do want to say, Mr. Chair, that we are currently doing communications and consultations with the people of the province to determine which pieces of the report we want to implement and how we want to implement them.

Yes, we have a no-layoff clause in our current collective agreements. As I said to the Member opposite on multiple occasions, there are over 500 vacancies within government. We are looking for good people; we need good people. What we're considering is that people can be accommodated if they are moved around or they want to move around government.

I don't see there is a conflict at this point, first and foremost, because we are still consulting on the Greene report; second of all because we do need good people in the provincial government.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Mr. Chair, I am aware that discussions about the long-term work from home and the return to workplace are ongoing. Could you please provide some detail on that?

**CHAIR:** Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board.

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

This is very important, the work from home. There is a lot of work being done right now to try and accommodate people as we are moving through COVID, Mr. Chair. We are also

considering how do we ensure people who wish to continue to work from home are accommodated; what positions can be accommodated. We also want to speak with union leadership, the labour unions, to make sure we're considering all the various factions.

That work is ongoing, Mr. Chair, and we're expecting it to take a couple of more weeks, but we are looking at plans that allow those who wish to work from home and those that can be accommodated to work from home and any workplace policies that are required because of same, that we have a good solid policy. We will be speaking to labour leadership to make sure that we're considering everything as well.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What is the attrition plan which government is now following and is there a multi-year forecast by department which you can provide?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

Yes, there is an attrition plan within government, it is at 0.5 per cent. It has been there, again, same as last year. We do have a schedule, of course, for each department. Of course, that would have been reviewed during Estimates process, but if you want an accumulative list, I'm sure we could provide it.

We did increase the requirements of agencies, boards and commissions, so Crown corporations to 1 per cent. That is because we've seen there is a lot of potential within Crown corporations. So 1 per cent of those that retire will need to be acclimatized to a change in what they're doing.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Given the significant number of employees that have reached the age of retirement, is there any consideration being given to allowing employees

to retire early without having their pension penalized, which could help speed-up the attrition process?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I will say that we are expecting or the eligibility for retirement is about 24 per cent in the next five years. So it's a tremendous number of people within government. We understand the impact that could have on the operations of government.

There is at this point no consideration for an early retirement package. That's not to say that there wouldn't be one in the future. I'm just saying there is not one under consideration at this point in time. As I said, we have vacancies within government. We know that there will be more. There are more vacancies to come because of people retiring.

At this point in time, it's not under consideration. That's not to say it won't be in the future.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Under section 3.1.01, the Office of the President of Treasury Board, under Salaries, I note that the budget for salaries has increased from \$56,000 to \$186,400. I was looking for an explanation.

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

**S. COADY:** Yes, thank you, Mr. Chair.

I just want to make sure I'm getting it right.

Yes, that is because, of course, I'm now having the dual responsibility of the Minister of Finance as well as President of Treasury Board. That is now a dual responsibility. That is for two positions, one being what I'll call secretarial support or administrative support and the other being an executive support person to help manage the affairs of that office. It's up a little

bit, but still not significantly when you consider that that is now part of my mandate.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Under section 3.1.02, Executive Support, again in Salaries, despite a salary savings last year of \$102,200, the salary budget is being increased to \$1.9 million. Can you please explain why and probably give us an overview of the types of positions that are contained in that one?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

Yes, we were down last year by about \$100,000 because of vacancies. You'll see that throughout Estimates that sometimes there are delays in filling positions. It might be a specialist position or whatever. Sometime there's a little bit of a delay to fill them.

We are now back up to complement and we are actually adding another assistant deputy minister for program evaluation and accountability. You'll have seen that in the budget where we talked about how importance continuous improvement program evaluation and accountability frameworks are. We're adding an ADM responsible for that. That's why it's up slightly, to accommodate that position, plus the salary increases from this year.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Is it possible to get the overview of which positions are contained there or to be provided with a listing?

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

**S. COADY:** Certainly. That's the secretary to Treasury Board, four ADMs in Executive and about 20 positions overall. The \$1.9 million includes Treasury Board support staff and admin support as well.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Under the revenue section, there is a Revenue – Provincial. Can you please give an overview of where this revenue comes from and what accounts for the increase in revenue received last year?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That is pensioner mail cost recoveries. When mail is sent out to pensioners, the department is recouped for that. That's Provident10 pension payroll recoveries. When mail goes out, it is then recouped from Provident10 so that those mailing costs are recovered.

**CHAIR:** I remind the hon. Member that his speaking time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for St. John's Centre.

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker – or Mr. Chair.

**S. COADY:** I know. I get it wrong, too.

**J. DINN:** I had to look where the mace was.

I just want to pick up on a question that my colleague from Stephenville - Port au Port raised. It had to do with the attrition plan.

Minister, you referenced the fact that there's a 0.5 per cent determined and a 1 per cent for Crown corporations, if I heard you correctly. I'm just wondering how that number is arrived at. I'm looking at this in terms of the zero-based budgeting process that I was first introduced to, I guess, here when I was first elected. We have attrition. We also now have the possibility of looking at, according to the Budget Speech, balanced budget legislation.

I'm just wondering: In determining attrition rates, how is that 0.5 or that 1 per cent arrived at?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

0.5 per cent, so half a per cent, is a very low number when you consider that across government, in some departments, it doesn't even register; it's kind of absorbed in their salary envelopes. We look at the salary envelope and consider how much that would be. For example, if you have a salary envelope overall in your division or department – let's just say it's a million dollars – then 0.5 per cent of that is then taken because of attrition.

You might get those savings because of the way you were recruiting for positions or that you're changing some of the positions as you move forward with the way in which you're delivering services. It is to assist us with understanding that we need to pare back within government and how do we do that in a way that departments can manage their own affairs.

It's kind of looked at as being not too onerous for departments to make sure that they have the skills and the people they require, but they are still responsive and reflective of the need to cut back in certain areas. It's not overly onerous for departments to consider, but it is something that they need to keep in view during the year.

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

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

Here's where I'm going with this, too, because I noticed, looking in your office, that you have a secretary and then Executive Support. This is not be a criticism of employees for you, because I would look at to do the job there are people that are going to have to be hired; otherwise, services, in some way, shape or form, are going to be impacted.

I understand the salary envelope, and I think you used a term when you looked at – a phrase – that those who were left would have to be acclimatized to change in the way they're doing things. You've got that, but we also have zero-based budgeting, which, as I understood, it is building the budget from the ground up and

looking at exactly what you need. I would assume, in other words, that a department doing zero-based budgeting is keeping it to the bare bones: Here are the services we provide; here is what we're going to need to do it. Now we're layering on top the attrition piece, like we have to find attrition savings.

I'll give you this example I've used a few times at Holy Heart, where I taught. When I first went there, there were three secretaries. Two years later, there were two, not because there was a reduction in the population or anything like that, but we were down to two. What that did mean is that things that the secretaries had done, such as photocopying exams and getting them ready, now fell to the teachers and other people to do. In other words, that took away from other duties that we would be doing as teachers. It didn't suck up free time; it just meant we had less time to do elsewhere.

My concern is that if it's attrition about: Look, do we need the position anymore? If the service is no longer provided, do you need that person? That's fair enough. But if it's about, well, we're going to find that savings. That means the work has now been divvied up and there are extra demands on the employees left, and that has an impact, I think.

Now, at the department level, it may not be on the front-line services, but it's going to trickle down in some way, shape or form. That's my concern with this. This is what I've been struggling with throughout this process as to the combination. I'm wondering, in our rush to find the savings, if we're going to inadvertently do more damage than good.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I thank the Member for that discourse and for his thinking on this. I understand where he's coming from.

I think that's why giving departments maximum latitude – so not saying to a department where or how you have to make these savings, but giving them the latitude of saying you need to find within your salary envelope 0.5 in attrition, 0.5 of a per cent, so half a per cent – gives them the

maximum flexibility. You also have to recognize that if there are pressures within a department, sometimes a department will come to Treasury Board to ask for additional resources.

It is to allow maximum opportunity to manage the affairs of the department from the minister as well as the deputy minister, so giving them that flexibility, but also for understanding that if there is a certain program that needs additional supports, they do have that latitude to come through Treasury Board to have that discussion. Lots of times you have movement and rearrangement within the way you manage the affairs of a department because of differing pressures or differing ways in which you deliver service.

I would say we also have to recognize that there is more technology being used. There are changes to job functions and changes to the way you deliver services, and so you want to give that flexibility so they can make sure they're delivering the best services possible and giving them that flexibility.

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

I take the point. My issue with it at times, too, when we use the term we have to cut red tape and waste, well, red tape for one person is actually protections for another person. When people talk about the waste in government or we have too many public servants, then you need to show me why, because I might subscribe to that until I call up a service and I find I can't get through and then, all of a sudden, I'm going to be complaining about something else. I take your point: 0.5 is not much, but it's still putting in there the whole notion of attrition and I'm always curious as to how we decide that.

When I was with the NLTA, we had a print plant and now it's a huge digital photocopier. Obviously, the person we need, if we need anyone, won't be the person who deals with the press; we no longer needed it. There's no use hiring a person on with those skills. But if we're still doing copying and we're still sending out pamphlets, booklets and so on and so forth, we're still going to need someone there. There's

a difference. If we retired and we're going to farm out our printing then we don't need the person; that's where I'm going with that. It's not so much a specific question as a general observation.

With regard to 3.1.03, Secretariat Operations, there was a decrease in salaries last year. I'm assuming that had to do – it can't be with the 27th pay period or anything like that, would it?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

You're talking about – just so I'm clear – 3.1.03 and we went from \$17 million to \$15 million?

**J. DINN:** Yes.

**S. COADY:** That is really due to vacancies and challenges in filling positions. There's a lot of movement in this area due to that these are entry-level positions. There's a lot of movement of people, you know, they come in to government in these positions and then move on throughout their career. So there's a lot of movement.

It is undergoing some reorganization. We anticipate to fill the positions and that's why it's back up to \$17 million. It is because, by its very nature, a lot of people enter in government and then they find other positions they like within government.

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

With regard to Professional Services and Purchased Services, what would these lines be used for and the decrease last year in the actuals?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Finance.

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

This is an interesting one: actuarial and consulting services for arbitrations and pension administration maintenance. The savings are due to reduced requirements in this particular area

because of the timing and scheduling of arbitrations is fluid. We do have a couple of arbitrations from the previous year that was paid for in '21-'22, but it is that ebb and flow of arbitrations.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I remind the hon. Member his speaking time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I have a number of, I guess, general questions, comments and so on.

On the attrition plan, I just want to sort of pick up where my colleague from St. John's Centre was talking about this. I get the point he's making, I do. I think maybe we see the world a little differently in that regard, or perhaps not. I don't know. But the reality of it is we've been having year-over-year deficits and we have a huge debt that we have to tackle. We have to decrease the expense side of the balance sheet. There's no doubt about it. The reality of it is, like it or not, whether we want to say it out loud or not, much of that is associated to salaries and benefits. That's the reality, it just is.

I'm certainly not advocating for laying people off – absolutely not. Hauling the rug out from underneath people's feet and families – definitely not. I would never support that, and I say that upfront. But by the same token, we need to look at where we can find efficiencies throughout the system and it's going to mean not a loss in jobs, but a loss in positions. There's a difference, because I've heard some questions about: Oh, there's nobody losing their job. Which is good to hear, but the reality of it is that there will be positions lost. It's inevitable. If you're going to combine the back office functions of the four health authorities into one, there are going to be positions lost. If it's not going to save us any money then what's the point of doing it to begin with? So I think it's important to put that out there.

Everybody can't work for the government. Government's role – as I see it at least – is to

provide services to the people. That's what government is there for. Sort of the by-product of making that happen is jobs, because in order to provide services someone has to provide them. It's kind of the by-product of it and it's obviously a positive thing for a lot of people, communities and so on. But, at the end of the day, the government's role is not to directly employ everybody that needs a job. That's the reality.

As long as we're going to do it, Minister, through attrition and so on and do it properly, and we're going to bear in mind – as my colleague from St. John's Centre has said – what the impacts are going to be throughout the system, so if it's done properly, done methodically then I think it needs to be done, and I would certainly support it.

When we're talking attrition – here's the other point, though. Whether it be attrition or whatever you want to call it, reduction of positions, one thing I don't agree with and I've never agreed with – and governments have done it in the past and so on. I don't like this idea of saying to every department, every division: You have to save X per cent. You need to cut your budget by 5, 10 or 15 per cent, whatever it is. Nor do I necessarily agree with everybody needs to reduce the number of positions by a certain percentage.

There may be certain divisions where we can't reduce it at all; we're at the bare bones. Maybe in division A, we don't reduce it all, but in B, we're going to reduce it twice as much as the target so that it all balances out, because in division B there's lots of room to do it in other ways and more efficiently and so on. This whole idea of a set number for everybody, I think that has to be flexible, looking at the bigger picture that there are going to be some areas where you can make changes and some areas where you simply can't in order to provide essential services. I just wanted to make that point.

The other thing, which I found, I'm going to say, offensive – I'm sure a lot of public employees did – in the PERT report was this whole notion about deal with the unions, and if you can't get an agreement, just legislate it anyway. It was like waving a red flag in front of a bull. I don't know why she put that in the report in that way.

I just want to ask the minister, does this government have any intention – I'm not bargaining here, negotiating before negotiations start. Can employees at least have some comfort in knowing that we're going to follow the collective agreement process and that there's no intention here on rolling back people's salaries and so on, because that was kind of the impression that was given. Can the minister give some assurances in that regard that that's not the plan?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much for the question.

Regarding the Premier's Economic Recovery Team, that is out for consultation and there is a process for consultation. We're listening to what the public has to say. I will say to the Member opposite: You can rest assured that we'll be following the – my apologies, my brain just went. We will be following the collective agreement process and we have not had any discussions at this point.

Next year is when the agreements are completed – I think in March of '22 – and we will be following a collective agreement process as time gets closer to that.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Minister, again, without negotiating in advance and so on, can people be given at least some comfort in knowing that government is not going to be going to the table looking to go rolling back people's salaries? Because I've heard from a number of public servants who are afraid of that.

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

**S. COADY:** The collective bargaining direction at this point has not been set. Again, respectfully, I would not comment on anything at this point.

That's not to say there would or would not be. All I'm saying to you at this point in time is: (1)

we're going to listen to what the public has to say on the Premier's Economic Recovery Team report; (2) we're going to follow a collective bargaining process and we have a great deal of respect for that process; and (3) there has been no discussion at this point as to how we're going to move forward, so I can't offer any comment at this point.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The balanced budget legislation recommendation, which I think I heard government say – I think it was in the budget that you said you were going to bring it in. I'm assuming, obviously, you can't bring it in next year and say we're going to have a balanced budget because we're even predicting that we're not. So I'm assuming that when you meet your target and we finally have a balanced budget, whether it be in two, three or four years' time, whatever the projection is, at that point in time that's when the balanced budget legislation would kick in. Is that correct?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

What the government has done is signalled the intent towards balanced budgets. We think it's very important for Newfoundland and Labrador actually to show the intent that we are moving towards balanced budgets. Notwithstanding, of course, that there are going to be things impacting that along the way: What happens if we have another COVID? What happens if there's a significant impact to the coffers of the government? When we bring in that legislation I'm sure we'll be debating it fully and refining it.

Mr. Chair, what we have pointed out in this budget is given the forecast over the next five years, where we see things going in the next five years. As you can see, we will not get to balanced budgets until, really, the fifth year and thereafter. So, of course, anything that we do in the meantime will be in that vein of understanding that we in that process.

I will say as well, Mr. Chair, we did place in the budget commentary – this was in the Budget Speech – around a future fund. Let's say, for example, after analysis, review, discussion and consultation through the PERT report process we decide that we want to sell a particular asset or we want to sell a piece of a particular asset. We would take that money and put it toward the future fund that could go to pay down debt or help us improving our economy.

We have signalled a couple of things there. How important it is to take some of the monies that we get within government to make sure that we pay down our debt. I think it's a direction that this government has set. We are going to really focus on balanced budgets; we're going to focus on paying down our debt. That will give some flexibility to the people of the province as we move forward.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you for that, Minister.

My next question is around the ABCs and dealing with the ABCs. Obviously, I'm 1,000 per cent in support of that, given the fact that it's something I've been raising in this House of Assembly for quite some time. I thank government for listening on that.

I know my colleague from Stephenville there was talking about bringing it to Public Accounts. I'm glad it's going to be a separate process. Certainly, what I had envisioned would be similar to what we see in Estimates. I'm hoping that's kind of how it would go.

The question to this, Minister, is: Where it's going to be a new Committee – it's not going to be our standard House Committee – can you give some assurances in developing this process like we're doing here today, independent Members will have a part in it, unlike what we see in the Management Commission and in the one I just referenced?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

I will give kudos to the Member opposite. I think that you've made a very compelling case to put this Committee forward and that's exactly what we've done. I thank him for his process over the last number of years. We've listened intently. We will be bringing forward a Committee that will be seized with looking at – I would like to have the Committee really delve into all the Crown corporations or as many Crown corporations as it appropriate. To delve into their spending patterns, their budgets and their plans overall.

I would think that we would welcome the House of Assembly review and support. We'll certainly take that into consideration when we're developing the Committee and bringing it forward to this House.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

I remind the hon. Member his speaking time has expired.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There's been talk in a lot of Estimates about vacant positions throughout government. I'm wondering: Is there a listing of vacant positions that we can get as of a particular time? I know it changes, but even if we had it as of today or yesterday or whenever. Is there a complete list that we can get?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

I believe when we had the Public Service Commission before the Estimates Committee – and for the people that are tuning in, I am responsible for the Public Service Commission. When we were here, we had the commissioners here and I believe the commissioner undertook that to bring that forward as well.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.



To follow up on that, is there also a list we could get of new positions that are being added to the government departments this year. I heard you speak about a couple of new positions being added here, a new ADM and some additional supports. Can we get a total of all of the new positions that are being added to government departments in this fiscal year?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

I don't know if they are classified differently, so allow me to go back to the Public Service Commission to determine if they have that readily available as to whether they're existing positions or new positions.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I noticed under section 3.1.03, under Property, Furnishings and Equipment, there was an expenditure of \$148,700. I'm just wondering what that was.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

That was for laptops, to ensure that our members of the department could work from home effectively and efficiently. That was where that purchase came from.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Again, under the same section, 3.1.03, under 02, Revenue – Provincial, can you please explain how this revenue is generated and what explains the variance in what was received last year versus anticipated?

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

**S. COADY:** Yes, thank you very much.

Again, that goes to pension costs so the lower amount was because it reflects a decrease in revenue due to a lower pension cost resulting in lower recoveries. The revenue side of things is payment services provided to pensioner payroll and teachers' payroll – so again that reimbursement of costs – salary and operating recovery from the pooled pension funds and group insurance plan recoveries from the group insurance plan fund.

So we basically outlay because of mailing or because of human resources, salaries, operating and then we are reimbursed in the department.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Under 3.1.04, Government Personnel Costs, under Salaries, last year \$56 million was budgeted. Can you provide some information about how much was transferred out and spent in other departments?

This year \$41 million is budgeted, so, again, I'm wondering how the number was calculated.

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

**S. COADY:** Certainly.

I'm going to refer to, if I may, the Member opposite, because he has had this question and this is around Appendix II. I will talk a little bit about Appendix II, because that's where this is showing up under Executive Support. In Appendix II under Executive Support, you'll see that figure that you had asked for previously.

Let me get that figure for you, Mr. Chair. It's now \$96 million. Last year I think it was \$111,233,000.

What that's comprised of is two things. It's comprised of the salaries of the Executive Council, but it also has what I'm going to call, for lack of a better word, a contingency effect. That's where we place a pool of money that we can have in case of contractual or what I'm going to call any kind of collective bargaining changes. It will be disbursed then to departments. You would see them in department salaries.

Last year, if you want to take a look, it was \$111,233,000 in total. \$56,997,000, if you're still following me on the salary line, was actually restated in the original budget. You'll see that it was revised to zero. It was a drop balance of \$40 million. The difference in that was \$16.7 million. There was a portion of that, \$13.2 million, went to Justice and Public Safety, and that was for some negotiations that went on there. Health and Community Services was again for another stipend that they required for collective bargaining contractual changes.

In this particular budget, we're allocating \$41,257,000 for that particular type of contingency.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Okay.

Under the Revenue – Provincial, again there was a significant drop in the revenue that was anticipated from \$325,000 down to \$93,000. Just wondering what that one is.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

That's government personnel costs from the pool pension fund, NLMF and the sinking funds. It also includes miscellaneous prior year recoveries from other departments.

**CHAIR:** The Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Under section 3.1.05, Financial Assistance, Current, Grants and Subsidies, could you please provide a breakdown of any money which was spent, including any which was transferred out to other departments or agencies, boards or commissions?

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

**S. COADY:** Okay.

Grants and Subsidies transfers: This funding is a pool of funds for business opportunities, financial support and required initiatives to meet objectives. Funding is held centrally and transferred to applicable departments, as you've indicated. Transfers of \$8.17 million occurred. The Legislature, for the general election, received \$5.58 million; Executive Council received monies there. I think it was some monies for advisory services around Muskrat Falls's issues. A small stipend for the Premier's Economic Recovery Team of \$35,000 and \$18,452 was dropped.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**T. WAKEHAM:** How much did you say was for the Executive advisory services?

**S. COADY:** \$2.5 million.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Okay, \$2.5 million.

**S. COADY:** That's for the financial and legal and that type of thing.

**T. WAKEHAM:** The rest of it was dropped?

**S. COADY:** Yes.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Okay.

Under 3.1.06, Revenue – Provincial: Can you please outline the revenue lines there? Where is the revenue expected to come from and why wasn't there anything collected last year?

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

**S. COADY:** Certainly.

This is around the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper. As you know, Corner Brook Pulp and Paper has a \$110-million loan disbursed. Due to COVID, there was no repayment on that, but that was due to COVID. That's what it is for. That's where the Corner Brook Pulp and Paper loan sits.

**T. WAKEHAM:** So there was no payment on the loan last year?

**S. COADY:** Correct.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Was that something you guys had agreed to with –?

**S. COADY:** COVID-related.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Okay.

When you talked about the JPS and the Health money from personnel costs, what exactly was that used for?

**S. COADY:** I'm sorry, can you – oh, okay. Sorry, you're going back to the other –

**T. WAKEHAM:** Yes, just backwards for a second.

**S. COADY:** Let me just turn the page and go back.

It was for payments for the RNC, I think I said. Yes, remember there was a settlement done for the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. That's reflective of collective bargaining and the contractual services. Then under Health and Community Services, it was a salary increase for ambulance operators.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Okay, great.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port.

**S. COADY:** I will provide you a copy of my book at the end of this. I know you're going to ask me.

**T. WAKEHAM:** Yeah, I was going to ask you; now I don't have to.

**S. COADY:** Now you don't have to.

**T. WAKEHAM:** I'm pretty well running out of time, but the one thing I would add about the whole attrition plan: As I said, the current age to retire right now is 58 and there are a significant number of employees in ABCs and government who have the years of service, but do not have the chronological age. So the idea of opening up a period of window for allowing people to leave the public service with their pensions would certainly help speed-up some of the attrition. And, potentially, if you want to make it expanded, you could actually even open it up

even more so that at the end of the day you actually have jobs being created as well by people applying. It doesn't always have to be about simply eliminating jobs.

**S. COADY:** I think the only thing that I would say to the Member opposite is we also have to be cognizant of not losing too much corporate knowledge as well. So we want to make sure we do this in an effective way.

**T. WAKEHAM:** I understand.

That's all the questions I have.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Just a quick question with regard to the vacancies, I've noticed that in a number of departments, and there seems to be quite a few across when – I don't have a number at hand right now, but in the Estimates there seems to be quite a few.

Is this a long-term problem, COVID-related, or is it also possibly related to the fact that if indeed we are looking at attrition or we're increasing the workload, that it could also make it more difficult for the departments to get their work done in hiring? I understand there might also be collective agreement issues and so on and so forth. But I'm just curious, to pick up on what I was saying the last time.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

There is no slowdown in trying to attract people into the civil service. There is quite a lot of movement within the civil service. You've heard the number of people that are retiring. It's just, I think, we're seeing the baby-boomer generation move through. The last I looked it was over 500 vacancies. It's more to do with positions moving around. People who come in, they come in entry level and then they decide that they want to follow a different career projection or there are

other opportunities within government. That causes a knock-on effect.

So you see this tremendous movement within government of people coming in – and this is good for them – they move in their careers, they advance in their careers, then we're out recruiting at the same time.

It is one thing that I think we're all seeing across the economy, though, there are lots of jobs without people and there are a lot of people without jobs. So we're got to understand in the mix that we're continuously recruiting within government because people move. People move from the public service to the private sector and back and forth. We're going to look at how we can better enhance our recruitment to make sure we're getting great people into government.

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

**J. DINN:** With regard to laptops, I'm just wondering: When did people start working from home? When did that begin? I'm looking at when laptops were then ordered, and how many? I don't know if you have the total number for the whole government, all departments, or just yours.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

It was really around COVID time last year when people had to stay at home and they were starting to work from home; when more and more people were working from home that the purchases of more laptops, improved laptops began. So March of 2020 is when we first started to have the impact.

But we were upgrading laptops as well to ensure maximum functioning and maximum flexibility of that. So you've seen that right across government. We're continuing to upgrade, and you've seen some purchases coming through because, of course, you're seeing the projected revised budget from 2020-2021.

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

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

I guess, obviously, there was a certain time crunch. When were people outfitted with laptops to do that work? I realize that some were upgraded and some were probably new.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There are lots of laptops within government, but when you had your entire civil service working from home, obviously, we had to buy additional laptops to make sure that they were functioning and there was greater efficiency for people who could work from home. We wanted to make sure of that.

Really starting in March of 2020, there was a real push to increase the number of laptops, to improve the laptop capability. So I would say within the last year there have been a tremendous number of laptops either purchased or redeployed within government.

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

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

I have no issue with the purchase of laptops; totally behind it to get the job done. I'm just wondering, if they started in March 2020, were people fully outfitted with them – those who needed them – by let's say, two months, three months or a year later down the road, or no way of knowing that?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

There's no way for me to know. That would be a departmental concern. But I can tell you from the Department of Finance, department of Treasury Board as was required, they received their laptops or received their upgrades. If that was required, they got them as quickly as we possibly could get them to them.

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

**P. DINN:** 3.1.04, is it possible to have a breakdown for the Employee Benefits figures to see what percentage of money is currently spent on which type of benefits? Whether you do that now or later, it's no problem.

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

**S. COADY:** Under Employee Benefits, that is block funding for estimated employer costs for Employment Insurance, \$9.2 million; Canada Pension Plan – do you want the numbers or what they are for?

**J. DINN:** If you have the numbers that would be fine.

**S. COADY:** Yeah, I do.

Canada Pension Plan, \$25.4 million; Group Medical Life, \$2 million – I'm going to give you a copy of my notes afterwards.

**J. DINN:** Good.

**S. COADY:** Group Medical Health, \$28.8 million; and the Post-Secondary Education Tax of \$11.8 million. Employment Insurance, Canada Pension Plan, Group Medical Life, Group Medical Health and Post-Secondary Education Tax, it gives you the numbers in the binder when you receive it.

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

**J. DINN:** Thank you.

I'll leave with this last question then: With regard to the Uniformed Services Pension Plan, the MHA pension plan and the Provincial Court Judges' Pension Plan, how well are these pensions currently funded?

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

**S. COADY:** There's an unfunded liability, I just don't have it off the top of my head. I can get it for you. I just don't have it here with me.

All pension plans, not just some of them, but all pension plans have been doing relatively well in these years because of the returns in the marketplace right now. But there is still an unfunded liability for those, as there are for the other Provident10, as well as teachers.

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

**J. DINN:** I'm not jumping ahead of you, Chair, my apologies.

Are these plans – they're owned by the provincial government I take it?

**S. COADY:** I'm sorry, I can't hear you. I'll put my earpiece in – a lot of noise.

**J. DINN:** Are these plans then owned by and managed by the provincial government?

**S. COADY:** The Uniformed Services Pension Plan?

**J. DINN:** And the MHA and the Provincial Court.

**S. COADY:** Yeah, that's all part of that same plan. Yes, it is.

**J. DINN:** Okay.

With that, Chair, thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

**P. TRIMPER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I'm not sure I have questions. I've raised several of these points during various Estimates – suggestions to departments about revenue generating. I'm not sure if it's appropriate right now. I look to the minister.

**S. COADY:** I certainly welcome any questions or opportunities you have.

**P. TRIMPER:** Okay, just to enter in for the record, it's one that you and I actually spoke

about a few weeks ago during a Zoom conference. I'm back to it and I've been talking a little bit to my colleague from Bonavista about the aspect of Crown lands, escalating lumber prices and an opportunity that we could potentially pursue as a government in terms of increasing our stumpage royalty rates on trees that we are allowing to be cut.

We have them set right now at a relatively low rate, compared with what's going on in the market. If you look to Alberta in particular as a jurisdiction, they've just increased their stumpage royalty rates. No effect on the end customer because really what's happening, it's the middleman – middle woman, middle person – the processor that's actually seeing this opportunity to make phenomenal profits.

I've started to do a bit of a jurisdictional scan myself. I don't have the resources to look at each jurisdiction, but I can tell you Alberta has done this successfully. It's a lost opportunity right now. There's a lot of demand for building supplies. A lot of the questions I'm seeing during Oral Questions are relating to what could we do to reduce the cost. Frankly, there's not much, but we could take advantage without hurting the consumer.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much.

I'll certainly take that back. I know officials are listening to this afternoon, and I'm sure that they have written that down to do a jurisdictional scan to see what more revenues we could take in.

**P. TRIMPER:** Thank you.

With that, Mr. Chair, that's it for this section. I look forward to other opportunities.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** Thank you.

Is the House ready for the question?

**P. LANE:** Mr. Chair –

**CHAIR:** I'm sorry.

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Mr. Chair, I thought we were just going in order. Am I to assume that my colleague from Stephenville doesn't have any questions? If he does, it would be his turn. If he's not, then I –

**CHAIR:** Do you have further questions?

**P. LANE:** I have further questions.

**CHAIR:** Okay.

The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I apologize for the delay but I thought it was going to the Member for Stephenville - Port au Port; I didn't realize he was done. I just have a couple of questions I wanted to ask.

Minister, we know in the budget – well, in the PERT report originally, and then a lot of it transferred to the Budget Speech at least – you've talked about, for example, doing a review of Newfoundland Liquor Corporation, Nalcor, the back-office functions of the hospital boards, the school board and Marble Mountain. There is a whole bunch of things here that's in the Budget Speech, if you will, and when we vote on the budget – of course, really from my perspective, we are voting on the numbers that are in this book, not about future plans, per se. I think we need to deal with those on an individual basis when they come.

I'm just wondering when it comes to those particular issues, obviously, there may be some – like with Nalcor, as an example. Whatever the decision is on Nalcor and whether that be combined with OilCo and Newfoundland Hydro, and whether some of it go into the department, whatever it's going to be, whatever it is going to be called and so on – I don't think it should be called Nalcor anymore, I will say that, because of the stigma associated to it.

Whatever you call it and whatever it looks like, that would probably require some legislative change, I would think, which means it would come before this House of Assembly to debate. If we're looking at things – again, the combining of the health care authorities back offices or the school board and stuff. My point and my question is some of this may or may not require coming before this House to debate because there may or may not be legislative implications.

The assurance I'm looking for, if you can give one, given the enormity of these decisions – these are significant changes, I'll call it that. Even if it doesn't require a legislative change, per se, that would absolutely require it coming before this House of Assembly, could we as Members on the Opposition have some assurances that before the minister or the Cabinet, whatever, just goes ahead behind the scenes and says: Oh we can do all this through regulation, policy, and make huge changes to things, can there be, if not in this House of Assembly, some sort of a process set up where we're going to have that debate, that discussion, that heads-up before you just go ahead and start making wholesale changes to the way government agencies, commissions and core government looks. I know that's a mouthful but –

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you very much and thank you for the comments.

I will say that you're absolutely right; in some instances, it would come before in legislation. Some are just the organization of departments or government, just the organization of the way services are delivered.

We're held to account every day here in the House in Question Period. We're held to account by the Opposition on a regular basis, so I think that regular process would still apply. I'm not sure what further process – you have availability of information and availability of ministers on an ongoing basis.

We can have a discussion afterwards of what further things you may wish to have, but the organization of the way government delivers a

service is just that. I'm not quite sure what you would need further, but I'm certainly always open to your consideration and thought process for sure.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** I think the point I'm trying to make – and I'm trying to put it into words here but I'm hoping you're getting the drift. The point I'm making –

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Stuck for words (Inaudible.)

**P. LANE:** No, I'm never stuck for words. Trying to find the right one sometimes is a challenge, though.

If you were going to reorganize the health care authorities or a significant piece on that, that would be a significant undertaking. That probably wouldn't require coming to the House and bringing in a piece of legislation. Maybe it would but I'm just saying maybe it would not.

I'm not talking about now you're going to go to an office and say we're going to – government, all the time, when they come in they change names of departments and they move a few people around here and there. I'm not talking about that. But if we're going to be making significant changes to things, significant decisions on things, then whether they require going to the House because of legislation or not, I just feel, in the spirit of us working together, we should all have – whether it be a Committee or whatever – an opportunity to have input to say here's what we're looking at doing; here are the implications; here's what it's going to look like; any thoughts on it, any suggestions and so on.

I'm just speaking for myself; I really am committed to getting behind a lot of these things that I really think need to be done. I truly am. I'm prepared to take a few political knocks, if necessary, to do it and to do it right. If there are major changes made in government – and, again, I'm saying significant issues – I, for one, am not prepared to simply rubber-stamp it and say, oh, yes, I agree with all that, if there was no opportunity for input and understanding of

exactly what was done, why it was done and the implications behind it.

I know we have Question Period, but there's a reason why it's called Question Period, and not answer period, as we all know as well.

That meaningful input would be important to me as one Member in this House.

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

I think we could have further conversations of what further you may need.

I will say this: What we've signalled and what we've said we're going to do is take back-office functions, so instead of there being four payroll divisions, there would be one payroll divisions; instead of being four Finance departments, there would be one Finance department.

I think what the Member opposite is really referring to is how we deliver health care in the province, which is a little different than what we're talking about. How we deliver health care is under review from the Health Accord. Sister Elizabeth Davis and Dr. Pat Parfrey are undertaking what I think is a very good, solid process. I'm sure the Member opposite has had conversations with them, so you have that ability to have that influence in the early stages of that.

Whether we have four payroll departments, I don't think that would be a major decision, but I'm certainly open to speaking to the Member further to find ways and means of satisfying what he's referring to.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

**P. LANE:** Thank you, Minister, and we will have the conversation sidebar at another time.

I guess there would be implications even in that example that you gave with combining those four years. It would be like, okay, well, what is it going to mean in terms of positions lost? Where will they be? For example, if there's somebody who's in Western Health – I'll just

say for argument sake – performing a function, are we going to say everything is moving to St. John's; we're shutting the rest down? Or are we going to say it's all going to be in Western, all going to be in Central or people are going to be able to work wherever they're to?

My point is, Minister, there are going to be implications when you make significant changes like that and all I'm saying is having an opportunity to consult with Members on this side of the House as well so we understand what the implications maybe and an opportunity for some feedback and input. That's all I'm asking for, I don't think it's an unreasonable request.

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

**S. COADY:** Certainly, I know all Members are listening intently today and all ministers in particular who may have an impact in this area are certainly listening today for consultation and for discussion as we move forward.

**P. LANE:** Thank you, I appreciate it. That's all I ask. It was a roundabout way of asking, I guess.

My final question and I'm done: Because, really, it's the Cabinet who sets the Committees and so on – the government does – there was one Committee that we had in place in the last Legislature, which was the Democratic Reform Committee. That was in place, everybody here – most people who were here anyway would know, there was equal representation from all the parties and there was an independent Member. We met on a number of occasions and we had sort of taken the bigger issue of democratic reform but we had decided upon one step at a time. We were about to move forward with engageNL; engageNL has a presentation and everything all ready to go, as far as I know, on looking at campaign financing, as an example, and to engage in a public process. That was about to happen until the election got called.

Now, I know you have a Committee looking at the election itself or election legislation but that's a separate thing altogether. I'm asking: Does the government intend on reinstating the Democratic Reform Committee, given the fact that there's already been work done, everyone,



pretty much, that was on the Committee are still here now; we could move forward next week and carry on as we were?

**CHAIR:** I remind the hon. Member his speaking time has expired.

**P. LANE:** Do I get an answer?

**CHAIR:** Is the House ready for the question?

Shall 3.1.01 to 3.1.06 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

**CHAIR:** All those against?

Carried.

On motion, subheads 3.1.01 through 3.1.06 carried.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

I move that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

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 (Bennett):** The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**B. WARR:** Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

**S. CROCKER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the Committee have leave to sit again?

**S. CROCKER:** Presently.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again, presently, by leave.

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

**S. CROCKER:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now recess until 6 p.m.

**SPEAKER:** This House do now recess until 6 p.m.