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Speaker: Honourable Perry Trimper, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): Order please!

Admit strangers.

I would like to welcome to the people's House today several special guests. First of all in the Speaker's gallery, I would like to welcome Lester Green, Elaine Spurrell and Wanda Garrett from the Southwest Arm Historical Society who will be recognized in a Member's statement this afternoon for a very special award they have received. Joining them are also Helen Green and John Spurrell.

A great welcome to you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I must also say I enjoyed a great discussion this morning with the Deputy Mayor of the City of Mount Pearl, Mr. Jim Locke, who's here with his Mount Pearl Senior High School consumer studies class joining us in the public gallery.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: With that, I will recognize the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today on a point of personal privilege. Mr. Speaker, I know that from time to time in debate in the House, particularly the Opposition, there's information sometimes that's put forward that's totally incorrect, and many times we just sit back and take it.

I just want to take exception to the Member for Cape St. Francis yesterday who made a statement and he quoted as saying it's fact. The statement that he made was in reference to the number of businesses in Newfoundland and Labrador that have gone bankrupt and he made his statement as a fact that there are more bankruptcies in this province under our administration than ever before in the history of this province.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to table, if it's permissible, that in 2017 – I went back to 2000 – there were 23 businesses bankrupt in this province. In 2007, there were 52. Also, consumer bankruptcies 2017: 1,367; in 2009: 2,542. That is correct information. So I take exception to that and I would, if it's permissible, like to table this so that the hon. Members opposite can really take a look at the facts and not just make statements.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: I thank the hon. minister.

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Today we will hear Members' statements from the hon. Members for the Districts of Exploits, Torngat Mountains, Stephenville - Port au Port, Ferryland and Terra Nova.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Mr. Speaker, if I could.

(Inaudible) did he have a point of order or a point of privilege?

MR. SPEAKER: It was a point of privilege, a point of personal privilege, so it's just a clarification read into the record.

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

MR. DEAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today in this hon. House to congratulate the Jubilee Pentecostal Temple on their November 16 through to 18 celebration of 90 years of bringing the gospel to the people of Botwood and neighbouring communities.

I had the pleasure of joining with the congregation and area residents on the marking of this memorable milestone, and the privilege of bringing greetings at their celebration concert on November 16, while sharing in fellowship and worship.

The Jubilee Pentecostal Temple and their teachings has long been a pillar of community support throughout our province. They have been exemplary in providing earthly and spiritual comfort to the communities that they serve.

Mr. Speaker, on a personal note, Jubilee Pentecostal Temple has been host to the hearing by me of many memorable sermons, and is the church where Beverley and I were married.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join with me in wishing for Jubilee Pentecostal Temple congratulations on their 90th anniversary and Godspeed on your continued march to a centenarian celebration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. EDMUNDS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this House today to congratulate the girls' volleyball team from Natuashish. This past weekend, I had the pleasure of attending the regional volleyball tournament in the 1A and 2A divisions in Northwest River.

Mr. Speaker, the Northern Labrador sports meets started in 1978 and, this year, the girls from Natuashish made history as they captured the gold in the fall sports meet, and again this past weekend as they also captured the regional championship, defeating teams from Northwest River and Churchill Falls. With the wins, they earned the right to represent Labrador in the provincial 2A championships.

It didn't come easy, Mr. Speaker. One of our Natuashish Shaman players, a strong competitor, Hopie Piwas, suffered a serious ankle injury and had to leave the competition. Even with this disadvantage, the rest of the team dominated the tournament.

Mr. Speaker, the measure of a community is by the fire in their young athletes, and Natuashish, as well as the rest of the province, have every right to be proud of the team's accomplishments.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the team for its efforts, and making history in their community.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Stephenville - Port au Port.

MR. FINN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today to recognize an incredible group of businesswomen from the Port au Port Peninsula. In 2012, the Lourdes Co-op Society was at risk of being shut down after being in business for over 70 years. Six years later, the business has turned completely around, so much so that last month the business received the 2018 Long Range CBDC Business Award of Distinction.

The award was accepted by manager Sharleen Hinks and two members of the business's board of directors, Bertha Hynes and Eileen Gastia, at the awards gala last month.

What started out as a business suited to meet the needs of local fishermen has expanded to meet the needs of the entire community. The great success of the business can be attributed to the all-women team that currently operate the business. They've seen tremendous growth. Their hard work and dedication to the company has seen an average of 15 to 20 new members every month, with a rise in their membership from 464 in 2014 to 706 members, an increase of over 50 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating these women on their award and wish them all the best as they continue to grow the business in the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Ferryland.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize St. Kevin's High School graduating class of 2018.

On Wednesday, November 7, I was honoured to participate in the cap and gown and awards ceremony for 74 students at St. Kevin's.

St. Kevin's High School has always achieved at a high level in academics, athletics and the arts. This class of 2018 is certainly no different. The commitment from the school administration has ensured students are ready to take on any challenge as they move forward on a new path.

St. Kevin's valedictorian was Mr. Luke Porter who addressed the gathering and spoke of the impact St. Kevin's has had on class development and the memories and friendships that has been developed during their time in their school years. These relationships will serve them well in their future endeavours.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask all my colleagues of this House to join me in congratulating the graduating class of 2018 of St. Kevin's High School and wish them every success in their future endeavours.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for the District of Terra Nova.

MR. HOLLOWAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to celebrate the efforts of the Southwest Arm Historical Society. Established in 2013, the Historical Society has focused its work on researching, preserving and promoting the history of the 24 communities, both current and resettled, in the greater Southwest Arm area.

The society's website, launched in December 2014, has 1,425 pages with more than 5,000 images depicting the history of these communities and its people.

In 2016, *Where Once They Served* project honoured the 26 men who served in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment during World War I. In 2017, these commemorative banners were on exhibition at The Rooms.

Part two, *Where Once They Sailed*, was completed earlier this month with the Society honouring the 87 men who sailed in the Royal Naval Reserve; 12 made the supreme sacrifice.

In January, members of the Historical Society will be recognized in Ottawa during the Governor General's History Awards of Excellence in Community Programming ceremony.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in applauding the efforts of the Southwest Arm Historical Society. Thank you Lester Green, Elaine Spurrell and Wanda Garrett for your dedication to the families of the men who served king and country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Environment.

MR. LETTO: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to provide this hon. House with an update on the ongoing review of our province's municipal legislation.

I'm pleased to say that we have concluded the second phase of consultations to modernize the *Municipalities Act, 1999*, the *City of St. John's Act*, the *City of Mount Pearl Act* and the *City of Corner Brook Act*.

The feedback received during the extensive consultations process has been compiled and can be found online at EngageNL.ca. Through public engagement efforts, well over 2,000 suggestions for improvements have been captured.

At the Premier's Forum on Local Government in October, the Premier was joined by delegates representing municipalities across the province, as well as a number of Members from this hon. House to discuss municipal legislation and contribute to the review.

Mr. Speaker, to date we have heard requests for: code of conduct legislation for elected officials and staff; improved conflict of interest provisions; training for officials and administrators; as well as more clarity on the role of local governments.

The department is currently analyzing the feedback from the review and developing recommendations for modernization of the legislation.

I would like to thank every resident, municipal leader and administrator, stakeholder organization and community representative who took the time to participate in this important consultation process. In particular, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador and the Professional Municipal Administrators have put significant efforts into working with the department on the review.

Mr. Speaker, the review of municipal legislation will result in a stronger, more flexible legislative framework that will meet the needs of today's cities and local governments and positively impact the daily lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, municipal legislation review was announced some time ago, and I'm pleased to receive this update.

As a former mayor, I'm very familiar with issues concerning local governance and I certainly recognize the importance of this review. I look forward to seeing the recommendations put forward following the consultation process and I also look forward to debating them here in the House – the new legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take the opportunity to thank mayors, councillors and staff across this province. The work they do is very valuable and I know they're looking forward to this new, modernized legislation.

Thank you very much.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy. I'm glad to hear of the work being done to modernize the *Municipalities Act* and various cities acts, it's long overdue; also good to hear government is listening to all parties, especially the municipalities themselves, as they did when we were all in Gander with the municipalities.

The minister may be new to his portfolio but he is not new to municipal politics, and has been involved in municipal politics long enough to know none of the new changes will work unless municipalities are given the proper resources, financial and otherwise, to implement them. So I encourage the minister along that road.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I rise in this hon. House today to recognize National Housing Day. Across the country each year, November 22 is devoted to raising awareness about housing and homelessness and finding solutions to address Canada's housing needs.

The National Housing Strategy, announced on this day, one year ago, in 2017, is a 10-year, \$40 billion plan that includes \$20.5 billion in federal funds to be allocated to provinces and territories to help reduce homelessness and to improve the availability and quality of housing for Canadians in need.

Mr. Speaker, in April 2018, Newfoundland and Labrador also endorsed a multi-lateral Housing Partnership Framework with the federal government. This partnership addresses the housing needs of Canadians, particularly those of vulnerable populations.

Through this federal, provincial, territorial partnership we can achieve better housing outcomes by sharing data and information that will make program development and delivery more effective. By collaborating with diverse stakeholders we can create effective housing solutions.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to achieving the best outcomes for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and in keeping with that commitment, we will continue working with the federal government to negotiate and finalize a bilateral agreement, which I am confident will represent an historic level of housing investment in our province.

Mr. Speaker, the details of this agreement are key to the development of the Provincial Housing and Homelessness Plan, which we will release in 2019.

Our focus is to reach an agreement with the federal government that addresses Newfoundland and Labrador's specific housing needs and defines how the National Housing Strategy and our Provincial Housing and Homelessness Plan support and align provincial priorities with shared national housing outcomes.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

MR. HUTCHINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement. We too want to recognize National Housing Day across the country and note the awareness that is required about housing and homelessness and finding solutions across Canada, as well as here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I applaud the National Housing Strategy that was initiated in 2017, a 10-year program to look at the improvement and the availability of quality housing for Canadians, and certainly Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. I look forward to hearing more details in regard to the bilateral agreement that the minister is working on with the federal government. As we know in Newfoundland and Labrador, there are many needs to be met.

I also know that we need to look broadly at the needs of those most vulnerable in regard to homelessness and the other services and programs that are available to them so we can work collectively to improve the lives of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I, too, thank the minister for the advance copy. It's good that NLHC has expanded its social mandate and is playing a key role in addressing homelessness. It's important that we all recognize that housing is an important social determinant of health. Our provincial housing action plan has been delayed for two years now and the bilateral housing agreement seems to be taking a long time to finalize with much of the federal money a long way into the future.

I say to the minister, people need better housing now and I hope that what comes forth from her in 2019 is a plan that has both action and money attached to it so housing can be dealt with.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, BeeHigh Vital Elements Inc. is the first and only Health Canada licenced producer of cannabis in the province. This company acquired their licence before Canopy Growth or Biome Grow.

So I ask the minister: Will BeeHigh Vital Elements also be receiving a multi-million dollar taxpayer subsidy?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're quite proud to see that BeeHigh Vital Elements has received a production licence from Health Canada, the first in the province, and they'll be operating out of Corner Brook. They will be a much smaller scale operation focused on craft in particular, but they also have to acquire a sales licence. Once they achieve a sales licence, then they will be able to do sales within the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. So they would have to have dialogue then with the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation.

We are certainly open for business. We are engaged, and we have been in discussion with BeeHigh Vital Elements as we welcome the same conversations with any other producer of cannabis in the country that has a licence.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, the minister routinely argues that government needed to give out multi-million dollar taxpayer subsidies in order to create a cannabis industry in this province; yet, BeeHigh received their Health Canada licence without any government handout.

So I ask the minister: Why have you chosen to shovel money into Canopy Growth and the secret shareholder company while BeeHigh can succeed on its own?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: So, Mr. Speaker, if we take the approach of the Leader of the Official Opposition, given the fact that cannabis became legal in October, if we had not entered into a supply agreement we would not have the 23 retailers that are selling, and have sold, millions of dollars of cannabis here in this province.

We have entered into an arrangement to secure supply. BeeHigh Vital Elements do not have a sales licence. They have a production licence right now but they do not have the ability to do sales. When it comes to Canopy or Biome, they both have production and sales licences that allow them to ship product and sell into our province so that we can grow an industry here, and that's exactly what we're doing, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: The minister said on Monday that he received a request from Canopy Growth in writing in May for the schedule to be adjusted.

Can the minister please advise what specific changes have been made to the agreement?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I said in the House of Assembly, based on the delay in a start for cannabis happening in July – it was originally scheduled, it didn't happen until October – that created some delays. When Canopy was looking at this they were also looking at retrofitting buildings within the city. They decided on a new build as their option to be able to move forward based on the availability of properties.

With the City of St. John's, as well, they require permitting; things took a little longer. There was a fair bit of granite that was actually available for doing the landscaping and to be able to do the development. So we have an ability now where we've looked at the timelines and what has been requested, and Canopy will be in production by October of 2019.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, Schedule A of the agreement with Canopy says that the production facility will be 50 per cent completed by October 1 of this year.

Did they reach this milestone? And, if not, what is the percentage of completion?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're working very closely with Canopy Growth, as we are working with Biome and as we will work with any of the other cannabis production producers that we enter into an agreement with for supply and distribution that will also be doing production here that will be creating jobs in our economy and adding value. What we have the ability to do is that, one, we enter into a contract. If there are obstacles that have been faced, we have the ability to look at making an amendment to the contract as long as it is agreeable to the provincial government.

So based on what I outlined earlier in the conversation, we are in agreement that Canopy would have a production facility up and running by October of 2019.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, as often happens, I didn't hear an answer to the specific question of 50 per cent completion.

On the subject of amending the agreement: Was the original agreement amended, and will the minister table the amended agreement?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to our particular contract of supply, Canopy has agreed to supply us with 8,000 kilograms on an annual basis. In return, we've entered into a 20-year agreement with them so that they would build a production facility here creating 145 jobs and that it would all be on a performance-based measure so that they would take all the risk and put all the capital upfront in producing their facility.

In return, what would happen, in order for them to recoup some of their cost – not all of it, only eligible expenses – they would get reduced remittances. But for every dollar that will be provided to Canopy through their sales, the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation would get at least \$2, and most cases more. So this is a good deal for the people of this province, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. CROSBIE: They seem like complicated propositions, Mr. Speaker.

So, again, I'd ask the minister if he would table the amended agreement so we can have a look at it for ourselves.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We had a great opportunity, I did yesterday in debate as well, and so did my parliamentary secretary, to clear up the record, time and time again, that's been put forward by the Member of the Opposition and the Leader of the Third Party, because government is not putting any upfront money into this. There are no taxpayer dollars.

We hear them talk often about \$40 million or \$95 million. There is no budgetary line in any of our budgets that we're providing any type of grant; whereas it hasn't always been the case for some of the deals that have been done on the other side. There's been significant risk of taxpayer money put forward into making a deal.

What we've done is, when we enter into agreements, and we've done so in due diligence with our staff that are doing those, and anything that we can make available we have certainly done so.

We're not hiding anything, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, I'll take that as a no, he will not provide or table the amended agreement.

On Monday, the minister said we have an audit process put in place and we have adequate protections to ensure that all steps are being followed.

Who specifically will audit compliance with this agreement, Department of Finance or outside auditors?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have a clear process put in place for audits. Audits will be put forward on a monthly basis. They would be reconciled with the Newfoundland and Labrador Liquor Corporation and then they would be verified based on what is an eligible expense.

If there are more remittances that have been paid out or not remitted to the liquor corporation, given that there would be an overpayment, then we would be able to recoup that amount if there is not enough eligible expenses that would be coming forward on a month by month basis. So we do have that ability to reconcile.

And I did state, adequately, that we do have protections put in place. There are mechanisms in the contract from a remittance point of view, but also if there is non-compliance, we have the ability to pull retail licences and other mechanisms at our disposal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, all of that is impressive but I didn't hear an answer to the specific question of audit and whether it's being done in-house or by consultants.

Would the minister be able to answer that?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Newfoundland Liquor Corporation has been tasked with being the distributor for supply in Newfoundland and Labrador. They created Cannabis NL and they are the overseer as the regulator. What they are doing is they would be shipping out product – through that whole process, they would be doing the accounting process to determine how much cannabis sales is happening in our province, how much would be happening from online, how much would be happening from Canopy stores to the retail stores, and determining what is the reduced remittances. Then doing an audit based on eligible expenses that are coming forward, and

we'd be able to do that through the NLC and through the Department of TCII.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, have many questions. How will they ever know if the \$40 million in lost tax subsidies was the best deal for the province, especially when we don't know the identities of the owners of the companies that are benefiting from the subsidies?

I ask the minister, or the Premier, whoever wishes to answer: Will he call in the Auditor General to investigate the Canopy Growth deal and give the taxpayers the answers they deserve?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Mr. Speaker, we have done a performance-based deal when it comes to attracting a cannabis producer here in this province. We've done it not only once, because they're only interested in the Canopy deal, but we've also done it with Biome. And we will look to do deals, performance-based deals with other cannabis producers because they are creating jobs and they are returning dollars to our Treasury.

The option that the Member opposite is talking about is importation and having jobs elsewhere. That is not what we want here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We are encouraging business investment and business attraction. That is what we are doing.

The legislation, when it comes to Canopy, that's who we have the contract with. They have shareholders, they are publicly traded. I don't know what the Member opposite continues to be talking about, a numbered company that has no relationship with government.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're hearing horror stories related to the pharmacy technician registration program.

Will the minister admit that the pharmacy technician registration process has become a mess for those who are trying to avail of it?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker.

Pharmacy is a regulated profession under the *Pharmacy Act*, and the authority for that rests with the pharmacy board. Seven or so years ago they changed the educational requirements for pharmacy techs. When that happened the Department of Health, under the previous administration and this one, worked very hard to support those individuals who wanted to, to maintain the qualifications and become eligible for registration.

We have continued that process, Mr. Speaker, and, as of this year, have provided an extra \$60,000 in grants or subsidies to individuals who wish to upgrade their qualifications.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

And that's not exactly our understanding.

Can the minister explain why currently employed pharmacy assistants who were promised full financial employment supports to complete a two-year online pharmacy technician support program have been abandoned?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I think some of the rather emotional terminology in there belies some of the facts. No one has been abandoned. There have been concerted efforts by the regional health authorities and the Department of Health to ensure that anybody who wished to upgrade their qualifications, that a pharmacy tech was able to do so.

There was a deadline and a bridging program. Of that, there were 33 individuals who were unsuccessful in bridging. Of those, 13 are being catered for in the province and 10 are being provided with money to enable them to take outside qualifications to enable them to bridge.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Why has the minister not discussed the ability to have both pharmacy assistants and pharmacy technicians work in the pharmacy field, as a number of other jurisdictions allow, so that no present employees are displaced or be forced to face financial or mental hardship?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

That's exactly what we are doing. Pharmacy assistants have lesser qualifications and requirements than pharmacy techs. There is room for both in the system currently. Anybody who was an assistant under the old scheme and wanted to upgrade was accommodated. We've spent significant time and effort, as did the previous government, to be fair in bridging them. And, as I say, lately \$60,000 has been provided to these individuals who wish to continue to upgrade.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We're hearing that a number of pharmacy technician applicants from Newfoundland and Labrador are having to travel to other provinces to do exams and register as pharmacy technicians in that province and then apply for certification in this province to practice.

Does the minister think this is the best way to support those who are committed to apply their skills within our province's health care system?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

As I said, this is an issue brought up by the pharmacy board itself. They are, under the *Pharmacy Act*, responsible for quality and qualifications of people in the profession of pharmacy whether they be assistants, techs or pharmacists themselves.

There are a group of people who were unsuccessful in bridging and they have chosen the option to go out of the province, and we are supporting them financially to do that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I need to clarify to the minister, there is no option. The only option is they must travel out of the province at their own expense.

The pharmacy board has denied requests for more than 60 per cent of the current pharmacy technician applicants who applied for an extension to get their certification due to health issues, family issues, work issues and other challenges.

Does the minister think this is an appropriate action when we are trying to recruit for this profession?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, again, I think it's a little unfortunate some of the language the Member opposite is using. No one has been abandoned. There has been some challenges with the pharmacy board. They are adamant about the standards they require for upgrading and they are well within their jurisdiction to do that.

It is not the role of government to regulate a self-regulating profession, unless what I'm hearing from the Member opposite is they feel that this government should take a direct hand in the licensing of self-regulating professions.

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

MR. BRAZIL: But it is the responsibility of government to ensure the best health care possible, and ensuring that we have the best trained people, who are Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, who have been trained here, get to stay here and provide that health care for the people of this province.

These technicians were led to believe that once they completed an additional two years of education, along with the previous pharmacy technician course that had been completed, while spending their own money and using their leave time, that they would be compensated financially through reclassification.

What we have learned is they will receive just over a dollar an hour increase, while now having to pay the pharmacy board nearly \$800 a year in licensing fee. This nets a loss for most in the program.

Does the minister see this as fair?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

I can't comment on collective bargaining issues around negotiations for pay scales. I am aware that the pharmacy board have changed, or proposing to change, their registration fees for this coming year. We have met with the Pharmacy Association of Newfoundland and

Labrador on this subject, and, indeed, my officials are engaging with the registrar currently.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: That's good, because it leads right into my next question.

Will the minister commit to conveying a meeting with the health authorities, unions and stakeholders to ensure that the right thing is done to support these health care professionals and prove health care delivery?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker.

The department has met regularly with the health authorities on this issue as it is of concern to them. The maintenance of hospital pharmaceutical service is paramount. We have also met with PANL to discuss this issue. And, as I say, we are currently engaged with the pharmacy board.

Once again, Mr. Speaker, under the *Pharmacy Act* that was last revised by the Members opposite when they were in office, they are a self-regulating profession. They are responsible to their own counsel and their own board. Government has never interfered in the regulation of self-regulating professions; that is their responsibility to manage. We are engaged with them, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want the minister to acknowledge the fact that we're at a point now where this may become a crisis, and that's why the government are offering \$10,000 bursaries to attract people

into the field. So we need to address this immediately.

Can the minister provide the number of individuals that are currently waiting for a long-term care bed in the St. John's area?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to just comment that the fact that the Member alluded to bursaries in his previous preamble confirms what I have been saying since this series of questions started, which is government is committed to support these individuals in their educational endeavours. It is a challenge exam.

Those people who want and feel the need to have further education can access funds to do so and we will continue to support them in their endeavours, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I go to my next question, I need to clarify again for the minister. He's actually supporting what I've said here in the sense that the acknowledgement that there is a crisis in this particular field. The extra \$10,000 is to compensate for those that they're forcing out of the field who, in some cases, for decades have been providing that service within our pharmacies and within our health care regions, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't compensate for the fact that people are being displaced who have a skill set here, and very little support is being done for those who wanted to move to the next level and get their certification.

I recall there were 28 new beds opened recently in Carbonear.

Minister, is there a wait-list for long-term beds in Carbonear? If so, how many individuals are on that list?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Those are very operational details. I don't have access to those figures at my fingertips. I will undertake to provide them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: We're getting a number of calls from concerned families about loved ones waiting for long-term beds in St. John's.

How long will these families have to wait for appropriate beds?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Once again, Mr. Speaker, I don't have wait-list data at my fingertips. I can provide that. The last time I looked, which was earlier this spring, the wait-list for long-term care beds averaged between two and three months.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: That's, again, not what we're hearing from families and we know that from health professionals who are telling us the same thing.

When your government was elected in 2015, you cancelled an RFP for 360 long-term care beds which included 120 for each location: St. John's, Corner Brook and the Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor area.

We know the work is progressing for the new beds in Corner Brook and Gander, Grand Falls-Windsor, but does the minister have a plan to address the shortage of long-term care beds in St. John's?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy today to speak about the 2015 commitment that we had made to long-term care in our province.

I will say that Members opposite weren't too concerned because they spent over 10 years in this very Chamber here ignoring the long-term care situation in our province. They did a great job on the facility in St. John's, and we recognize that, but what they didn't do was do a good job anywhere else in this province, Mr. Speaker. That is why this government stepped up and put in place a new procurement model that they ignored. We were doing it using public sector workers which they completely ignored and did not want to be providing those services in those facilities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I need to refresh the mind of the Premier that we invested – the previous administration – in long-term care beds all through the province, and including Labrador also, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BRAZIL: Are there any plans for beds to accommodate individuals with mild or moderate dementia in the Northeast Avalon? We are also hearing this is an unaddressed need.

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

One of our undertakings in my mandate letter was to bring forth a plan for dementia care. That is ongoing. It is part of our home support and personal care home review. Dementia care, as a specific area, has been identified. We are currently in discussions with both home support agencies and personal care homes as part of our

review to ensure people with mild to moderate dementia are adequately cared for, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Nearly a month ago, the minister stated that nothing had changed in how government support seniors and their families in accessing personal care homes or remaining in their homes. We are being told something totally different.

Does the minister still stand by that statement?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to stand to clear up some confusion here.

The Member opposite is not speaking to the bulk of personal care home operators. The bulk of them, all but five essentially, all but five, are quite comfortable with the process we have. They're engaged in the process and they accept that we've sent out a discussion document. Five of them, including a former Minister of Health from that side of the House, have subverted the process for their own ends.

The gentleman opposite is not listening to the bulk of people. The last time they tinkered with personal care home allowances, 15 per cent of small homes in this province closed as a direct result of it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Will the minister table the wait-list for long-term care beds for all regions across the province on a facility basis, including a breakdown of a number of waiting in acute beds and those that are waiting in the community?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Mr. Speaker, some day in the very near future that data will be accessible through the public websites of the regional health authorities. We have nothing to hide with this. We're actually working and meeting tonight with Canada Health Infoway to set up that kind of portal for this province, Mr. Speaker.

There is nothing to hide with this data. The data is available. If the Member wants it, I'd be happy to provide it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island for a quick question, please.

MR. BRAZIL: It's been a year since the West Coast MHAs lobbied to have Dr. Justin French address unacceptable wait times for cataract surgery.

Can the minister update us on whether any progress is made in addressing this very important issue?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier for a quick response.

PREMIER BALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Yes, indeed, I'd be pleased to say that I met with Dr. Justin French this week and I provided an update to the Minister of Health and Community Services, Mr. Speaker.

Our big focus, Mr. Speaker, and listening to the Member opposite talk about long-term care, he talks about wait-lists in long-term care. If they had done such a good job, as he suggests there is, why weren't those long-term wait-lists being taken care of?

Mr. Speaker, we have made significant investments. One of the proudest achievements of this government is finally moving to a replacement of the Waterford Hospital; something when this province had more money than it ever did in its history, you completely ignored.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the Premier: Before Husky Energy attempted to resume operations after the forced shutdown last week, did they conduct a thorough equipment or systems check to ensure that no components were damaged by the storm? And, if so, is he satisfied with the scale and scope of the check?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite is fully aware, they do have a safety and environmental protection plan that they must enact and they must follow.

There is an investigation underway to determine if they did follow all the protocols required; and, further, Mr. Speaker, to assess whether or not more protocols are required. The chief safety officer and the chief conservation officer have been in daily contact with all operators in our offshore.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I say to the minister, that a picture recently released by Husky Energy clearly shows a chain lying across the broken flow line and connector

that Husky has identified as the source of the oil spill – and I don't mean a necklace, Mr. Speaker.

I ask the minister: If she has had conversations with the C-NLOPB or Husky Energy about this chain, where it came from and its role in Friday's spill?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As was indicated over the last couple of days, the remote-operated vehicle did analyze the flow line and it did see that one of the – what's called a weak link, Mr. Speaker, actually was damaged. We don't know the source of that damage. C-NLOPB is investigating, and we'll understand more as time progresses as to what occurred to have that damage occur or why that weak link separated.

So, Mr. Speaker, as time progresses we will understand through the investigation and whatever is required to be done to ensure safety and environmental protection in this province will be done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, we learn daily of more storm-related incidents offshore; damage to lifeboats on Hibernia; a fire caused by over-stress of thrusters on the Henry Goodrich drilling rig; and now questions about this chain across the SeaRose flow line.

I ask the Premier: Is he confident the C-NLOPB has the resources needed to conduct multiple safety investigations on a timely basis when these incidents occur?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Natural Resources.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To answer directly the question, whatever resources the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board require, they will certainly have.

This is a very important issue, obviously, for all of us in this province. We have a chief safety officer and a chief conservation officer who are reviewing all of the occurrences of the last week. I can say that C-NLOPB has put a notice on their website as to what damage they are aware of, and they are considering all of the things that did occur in the last week.

I can also say, though, that the installations are designed for a harsh environment, and whatever we need to do to ensure safety and environmental protection will be done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Norway's independent safety authority says a strong supervisory authority is a cornerstone of the Norwegian model. In Norway, they are not afraid to do this, and they know the importance of a safe industry.

I ask the Premier: Will he commit he is going to open up dialogue with the federal government to create an independent offshore safety and environmental authority, separate from the C-NLOPB, as in global leaders in Norway, Australia and even the US?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER BALL: Mr. Speaker, what we commit is working with the federal government on all issues that impact Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and we have demonstrated that in the past.

What happened last Friday, that is a serious incident, and we're going to let the investigation unfold, as I said so many times. But I think it's fair to remind the Member opposite, as she keeps raising this issue and we appreciate that, there is an investigation that's ongoing. The chief safety officer that currently exists right

now is part of 29(b), which came from Justice Wells's inquiry, and he had said that he felt that this 29(b) recommendation could satisfy the concerns that he had based on the offshore in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I say to the Member opposite: Let's let the investigation report, let's see where the recommendations go, and see if we can make and strengthen the activity that happens offshore. We are committed to do that, with all stakeholders.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The time for Oral Questions has ended.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

In accordance with section 19(5)(a) of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act* I hereby table the minutes of the House of Assembly Management Commission meetings held on September 27, 2018. Pursuant to section 35 of the *House of Assembly Act*, I hereby table the 2017 annual report of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards.

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Finance.

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I will ask leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting A Pension Plan For Teachers, Bill 45.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I give notice pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that this House shall not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, December 3.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further notices of motion?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Industry and Innovation.

MR. MITCHELMORE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just wanted to put on the record, the Leader of the Official Opposition asked for the time when 50 per cent completion would be on the Canopy production facility. That is March 1, 2019.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

Further answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

MR. K. PARSONS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents of Newfoundland and Labrador humbly sheweth:

WHEREAS students within our province depend on school busing for transportation to and from school each day; and

WHEREAS there are many parents of school-aged children throughout the province who live within the 1.6 zone, therefore do not qualify for this busing; and

WHEREAS policy cannot override safety of our children;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to eliminate the 1.6 policy for elementary schools in the province and in junior and senior high schools where safety is a primary concern.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Now, I know the minister got up the other day – Minister, I know you were saying about the courtesy busing and the extra courtesy stop that's available but, in most cases, the buses are full, so this is no good for anything. Now, it's a good start and it is only a little start for the courtesy seating to have another stop so people can avail of it. Also, the other day when you got up – our caucus are willing to work with the department and willing to work with the minister. Perhaps we can start off with just elementary children. It's not the point of providing it for everyone. We know there's a cost available to that, but all this is about is safety.

I've given you lots of instances in my district where it's unsafe, where there are 17,000 cars a day traveling along a road where there are no sidewalks and people cannot walk. The north side hill in Torbay, every time there's a rainfall, where there are no sidewalks, it washes out and little children have to walk up that and go to school. It's unsafe.

I'm not asking you to change the policy completely. That person – like you said the other day – 50 feet away from the school, if it's safe for them to walk to school, then let them walk to school. But where it's not safe, that's all we're asking for, and that's what the parents are asking for.

There are areas in this province where it is safe to walk to school. Maybe the school is off the main drag and it's off on a shoulder road, and there are lots of room to walk down there and it's safe for the children. This is not about eliminating the 1.6. We understand that. We do understand that, but all I'm asking for today is the safety of the children.

In cases where it's unsafe to walk along the shoulder of that road, and parents and individuals feel that it's not safe for those children to be walking there, then address it.

We're not asking to eliminate it altogether. Perhaps we can work together and start with our elementary children first. Senior high, maybe it's option that we can keep the 1.6, but just look at it as a safety issue for children that are in line of being injured.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for a response please.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the hon. Member opposite because I think we're getting somewhere with this because, obviously, my big concern, and the concern for a lot of us – because originally we talked about the motion they made was to eliminate 1.6 kilometres, which would have meant for us, as a province, significant changes in our bus routes. We have 1,100 bus routes in the province.

What we're doing now, Mr. Speaker, we have implemented a new policy with regard to a courtesy stop. We are seriously looking at these courtesy stops and continuing to review them. We continue to review policy.

I just want to, again, add to all the people that are listening, and the people in the province, safety is number one for all of us. Right now, the existing policy very clearly states that if you're within the 1.6 kilometre, the safety of the children is the responsibility of the family.

While I say that, I am fully aware that there are different circumstances that families have. Some families do not have the transportation means to get the children to school. But right now, the policy is within the 1.6, the safety of the children is the responsibility of the family.

So, Mr. Speaker, understanding that and working with all of that, it is certainly something that I'm working with and I made mention before that we will continue, we're looking at and reviewing the courtesy stop and seeing how effective it is. If, in fact, it is meeting what is required, then that's fine; if not, we will continue to look at it because safety is always number one for us.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Further petitions?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

These are the reasons for this petition: The Bell Island ferry service provides a vital transportation link and is only eight minutes from port at any given time. Transport Canada regulations do not require individuals to exit their vehicles during the commute, and the provincial government's current policy related to mandatory exiting of vehicles put people at a higher risk of injury than the possibility of having to evacuate the vehicle due to an emergency.

In May 2018, a risk assessment recommended that the Department of Transportation and Works continue to require passengers to vacate their vehicle while travelling on the Bell Island ferry.

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to hold public consultations to discuss the findings of the May 2018 risk assessment for the Bell Island ferry service.

Mr. Speaker, there's nobody in this House of Assembly who would not argue, and no person who travels on any ferries in Newfoundland and Labrador would disagree with improving safety and guaranteeing safety as the primary objective when you look at how you provide a service in this province, but in this case we've talked about it, we've looked at it. We've had health professionals assess the situation, and it's been determined there is a higher risk, when you take into account at any given time these vessels are less than eight minutes from a port.

The evacuation time at minimum, on the most modern of the vessels here, is 23½ minutes. The time to be able to get a handful – and that's what we're talking, in some cases none – of those who have either medical issues or mobility issues out of their vehicles – which they're all going to have an attendant with, because that's the nature of the ailment they may have – to get to the muster station, would be less than three to five minutes. But the risk they face by having to get out of their vehicle, walk across, in some cases 200 feet of decking in winter conditions, get in an elevator to get to a lounge that is still a full level away from a muster station, which includes not being able to get out through – there are no ramps, as part of this, if you're in a wheelchair.

So the issue here is at the end of the day we've already known, in a short period of time since this has been instituted, there has already been three injuries to individuals, people who have mobility issues and those who are coming back from medical treatments as part of it.

We also know at the end of the day that we've had an independent assessor who said there's much more of a risk from a liability point of view. The unions have said, you know what, we're going to have to instruct our members they can't be engaged in helping somebody get from their vehicle to the elevator, then up to the lounge, and then if necessary – which has never happened in over 1.3 million trips we've had – to evacuate the ferry, to indeed do that at that point.

So at this point we're talking about, there's a higher risk for those. We're talking a small percentage. The travelling public who have the ability, that it doesn't interfere and doesn't put

them at risk of being able to get upstairs, should still be able to do it.

So, Mr. Speaker, we'll get to this again in the near future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Education and Early Childhood Development for a response please.

MR. HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd just like to take this opportunity to respond to that because, obviously, safety is very important on any of our transportation modes that we have. I know this has been a discussion and a debate we've had for quite some time.

Again, Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member made mention of the fact of trying to get people up, that's why we have the modern technology on our vessels to ensure that people with mobility issues are accommodated.

Mr. Speaker, there are also challenges. He mentioned the fact about the union has a concern about taking people out of their cars and getting them to a muster station. Well, Mr. Speaker, there's also a hazard in that they would have to record the number of people who are in the cars, how many are in the cars, who's in the car, who's not in the car. So on the surface, a lot of times when we want to talk about that it seems very simple, but it's not.

Again, one of the easiest ways which is follow the rules that are there, and all of our ferry systems throughout the province are following the same rules, Mr. Speaker. And that is we want to ensure that if there's an incident, we know and have the protocol that's in place to enable these people to safely get off the vessels. That's a very important part for us.

I'm sure these discussions and consultations will be ongoing, but right now, Mr. Speaker, we do have measures in place to protect the travelling public that are on these vessels.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At a time when the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are dealing with high levels of taxation, increased unemployment rates, increased food back usage, increased bankruptcies and many are being forced to choose between food, heat and medications, Newfoundland Power and Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro are continuing to seek numerous power rate increases through the Public Utilities Board.

Once the Muskrat Falls Project comes online, these rates are predicted to further increase significantly to unmanageable levels for the average citizen of our province. While government has indicated they are working with Nalcor to mitigate rates, they have provided no detailed plan as to how they intend to do so.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: To urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to publicly provide all the potential options for rate mitigation and develop a comprehensive detailed plan to deal with current and impending power rate increases. This plan is to be provided to the public as soon as possible to allow for scrutiny, feedback and potential suggestions for improvement.

Mr. Speaker, I present this petition again today. I have about 150 names here primarily from the Southern Shore, communities along the Southern Shore. This is a theme across our entire province, including Labrador. I've heard from many, many people who are concerned about what the power rates are going to look like down the road. We know we've had rate applications from Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. They took them back, thankfully. I believe it was all due to public pressure that that happened.

We had a rate application from Newfoundland Power. They took that back; again, I believe as a result of public pressure. But, at the end of the day, we all recognize in this House that there is

going to be – we’re looking down the barrel of a gun. That’s the reality.

When it comes to our potential power rates, we can all talk about blame. That’s why we have the Muskrat Falls inquiry. Very disturbing information coming out of there indeed. But, at the end of the day, regardless of what comes out in the inquiry, we have an issue.

Government has indicated they are going to mitigate rates. Again, as I’ve said many times, I wish them well in that. I certainly hope they will, but simply saying trust us, we’re going to look after it, is not necessarily going to put people’s minds at ease, Mr. Speaker. What the people are asking here is for a plan. Let the people know, what is your plan? If you’re working on stuff, what is it exactly you are working on? Give people some sort of confidence that you are indeed working on something to mitigate electricity rates.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the hon. House of Assembly of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador in Parliament assembled, the petition of the undersigned residents humbly sheweth;

WHEREAS Newfoundland and Labrador has one of the lowest minimum wages in Canada, and minimum wage workers earn poverty incomes; and

WHEREAS proposals to index the minimum wage to inflation will not address poverty if the wage is too low to start with; and

WHEREAS women and youth, and service sector employees are particularly hurt by the low minimum wage; and

WHEREAS minimum wage only rose 5 per cent between 2010 and 2016, while many food items rose more than 20 per cent; and

WHEREAS other Canadian jurisdictions are implementing or considering a \$15 minimum wage as a step towards a living wage;

WHEREUPON the undersigned, your petitioners, humbly pray and call upon the House of Assembly to urge government to legislate a gradual increase in the minimum wage to \$15 by 2021 with an annual adjustment thereafter to reflect provincial inflation.

And as in duty bound, your petitioners will ever pray.

Mr. Speaker, this petition and the plan that it asks government to consider is really quite modest; \$15 an hour minimum wage seems like a huge jump, but it’s over a long period of time. This petition, I believe, folks started it in 2017. So that’s four years, and we’re now at about \$11.15 or a little bit more than \$11 right now is our minimum wage.

There was a recent poll done by MQO Research in Newfoundland and Labrador. This is really interesting, Mr. Speaker. It shows that 87 per cent of the public support government raising minimum wage to \$15 – 87 per cent. That’s a really high number. All the research has shown that it’s good for the economy.

Also, the only plan that government has right now, and they keep talking about it, they’re saying we’re doing something; we’re going to index our minimum wage. But because we have among the lowest minimum wage in Canada, they’re going to be indexing the lowest minimum wage, which will still keep us as the lowest minimum wage. There’s no way we’re going to catch up with other provinces.

I don’t believe anybody in this House believes that people in Newfoundland and Labrador, primarily young people and women, and disadvantaged groups, are the ones who are working minimum wage jobs. I don’t believe that anybody here in Newfoundland and Labrador believes that these are the folks who should be paid the lowest in Canada.

I don’t believe that they believe that. So why don’t they do something? Mr. Speaker, why don’t they do the right thing? It’s happening all over Canada. It’s happening all over North

America. It's happening at leaps and bounds in some states in the US. So, Mr. Speaker, I would hope government will do that.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call Orders of the Day.

MR. SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 2, third reading of Bill 39.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Bonavista, that Bill 39, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2, be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2. (Bill 39)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Highway Traffic Act No. 2," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 39)

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

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

I move, seconded by the Member for Bonavista, for leave to introduce a bill entitled An Act To Amend The Canada-Newfoundland And Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Newfoundland And Labrador Act, Bill 41, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. Minister of Natural Resources shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Canada-Newfoundland And Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Newfoundland And Labrador Act, Bill 41, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Natural Resources to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Canada-Newfoundland And Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Newfoundland And Labrador Act," carried. (Bill 41)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Canada-Newfoundland And Labrador Atlantic Accord Implementation Newfoundland And Labrador Act. (Bill 41)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 41 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Provision Of Emergency Health And Paramedicine Services, Bill 43, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act Respecting The Provision Of Emergency Health and Paramedicine Services, Bill 43, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act Respecting The Provision Of Emergency Health And Paramedicine Services," carried. (Bill 43)

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting The Provision Of Emergency Health And Paramedicine Services. (Bill 43)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time? Tomorrow?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 43 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Natural Resources for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Management Of Greenhouse Gas Act And The Revenue Administration Act, Bill 44, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the hon. the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act To Amend The Management Of Greenhouse Gas Act And The Revenue Administration Act, Bill 44, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board to introduce a bill, "An Act To Amend The Management Of Greenhouse Gas Act And The Revenue Administration Act," carried. (Bill 44)

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Management Of Greenhouse Gas Act And The Revenue Administration Act. (Bill 44)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 44 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I call Order 6, second reading of Bill 40.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to stand here today and speak to Bill 40, An Act to Amend –

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MS. DEMPSTER: Mr. Speaker, I am moving Bill 40, An Act To Amend The Housing Corporation Act, seconded by my parliamentary secretary. Can we do that?

In the department, he's done a lot of work on that the Housing bill as well, Lewisporte-Twillingate.

MR. SPEAKER: Why not?

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Housing Corporation Act." (Bill 40)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. DEMPSTER: Off to a great start. It's been a busy day, Mr. Speaker.

But anyway, it's lovely to be standing here speaking to Bill 40, on what is National Housing Day. When we started working on the amendments that were required for this bill, we didn't realize that it would be brought into the House on National Housing Day.

So I was very pleased this morning to go down to city hall and to participate and celebrate with the City of St. John's on the launch, today, of their 10-year National Housing Strategy. There were lots of conversation there around how long it took them to get to where they are today, and they're quite pleased to be launching that 10-year plan.

The Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, in response to my Ministerial Statement today, spoke about our plan, our provincial housing plan now being delayed two years. I don't know anything about our housing plan being delayed two years. What I can tell you is we have folks that have been working extremely hard with a National Housing Strategy where we endorsed the principles of that multilateral framework back in the springtime, and then we moved into negotiating the bilaterals with the individual provinces.

There has been a tremendous amount of work done on that. We've asked for flexibility to come out with an agreement that is the absolute best agreement for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador. Why would we rush out with our provincial housing and homelessness plan in advance of knowing what are the details of this bilateral agreement that we are still working within? So, we're not out the door fast or first because we want to get it right. We could spend all day in this House talking about things that were rushed and then, with the fallout, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians paid the price because it wasn't right.

We want to get this housing and homelessness plan right, and we want it to be the best plan that it possibly can be for the people of this province. Over here on this side of the House, we certainly recognize that safe, stable and affordable housing is fundamental to the socio and economic well-being of the people of our province. We recognize that everybody deserves a place to call home, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we want to see at the end of the day in this housing and homelessness plan.

So what we're talking about here today – I'm just going to take a few minutes. It's a brief bill. It's An Act to Amend the Housing Corporation Act. We've been looking at this for a little while, recognizing that some of the language is outdated. We need to update that. We have appointments, board of directors there with no end date of their term. I guess they could stay on until they went to their long resting home. I'm not sure how it worked prior to us being here. You had your CEO and your chair that were one and the same. So, we're going to clean it up a little bit, Mr. Speaker, primarily just some housekeeping items here.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation, as people in this House would certainly understand, is a provincial Crown corporation with a mandate to develop and administer housing assistance, policy and program for the benefit of low-to-moderate income households.

Mr. Speaker, MHAs would certainly be familiar with the whole suite of programs that are offered under that social Crown corporation. The programs provide an immensely valuable support to people in our province that struggle day to day, that need things like Provincial Home Repair to bring their homes up to a fire and safety standard, our home heating rebates, affordable housing and I don't need to get into all of them.

The corporation is governed by a board of directors and reports to the provincial government through the minister responsible for Housing. Currently, as the *Housing Corporation Act*, the chairperson of the board also serves in a dual capacity as the chief executive officer and is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the corporation.

The Housing Corporation is a Tier 1 entity. As most folks in this Legislature would be aware, the Independent Appointments Commission is an independent body established to provide merit-based recommendations for appointments to tier 1 entities scheduled to the *Independent Appointments Commission Act*.

Since the inception, Mr. Speaker, our Bill 1 – I guess our inaugural bill as a government – we wanted to take the politics out of appointments. You can look back through decades of government and one of the things that comes up again and again is somebody put their buddy in a position and we discuss those things in this Legislature.

One of the things that we wanted to do was take the politics out of that. We have the Independent Appointments Commission, a merit-based process. Since the inception, Mr. Speaker, of the IAC many agencies, boards and commissions – including the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation – are reviewing their legislation regarding the appointment of board

members and chairpersons to ensure that they are in line with the IAC act.

What we're going to see here in Bill 40, what we're proposing today in the proposed amendments to the *Housing Corporation Act* is to separate the position of the chairperson and the chief executive officer. I'm not an expert in board structure, Mr. Speaker. I spent most of my adult life serving on boards and committees and, generally, I think you do see that a chairperson and a CEO certainly are two separate roles.

What I'm familiar with is generally the chairperson and the board of directors, these are volunteer positions. They work and they have busy lives. You have a CEO that's separate who would be responsible for running the day-to-day operational aspects of the corporation, but the chairperson wouldn't be that person because they simply would have another job, Mr. Speaker. We are going to apply terms to the appointments of board members and, as I alluded to at the opening, we are going to modernize language in the act.

Mr. Speaker, the amendment to separate the chair and CEO, under current legislation, the Lieutenant Governor in Council may appoint board members including the chairperson; however, the legislation specifies that the chairperson shall be the CEO.

Mr. Speaker, we're going through a process right now where when we reached out to the IAC to say do you have names of individuals that are interested in sitting on the Housing board. Now, I don't think any of these folks who put their name forward being interested to sit on the board really would be willing to take on the CEO part, so it's important that we separate those two.

With the new merit-based process through the IAC, people are putting their names forward to be considered as board members and they likely do not have the time, the interest or possibly even the skill set necessarily, Mr. Speaker, to fulfill the duties of a CEO.

Before the IAC, Independent Appointments Commission was put in place there was no process for applying to be on the board – no process. The Lieutenant Governor in Council

would just appoint a board. I guess they would likely know who these individuals were, they would know these appointees and the availability of the chair/CEO selected.

Mr. Speaker, we'll all agree that this process lacked merit and it lacked transparency. Now, with the IAC, the entire public, anybody in this province, who has an interest with sitting on the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation board, they can put their name forward for consideration. What happens is we'll reach out and say we're looking for X number of individuals and they will apply and the IAC will do their work and they will send some names along. The IAC will recommend qualified people, Mr. Speaker. The Lieutenant Governor in Council considers those recommendations. But the LGIC likely wouldn't know if any of those applicants wanted to be considered as CEO.

Those applicants themselves likely wouldn't be aware that the existing legislation says the chair would be selected from the board and the chair would be the CEO. So that's why we're moving forward now, Mr. Speaker, after all of this time to separate those two.

Conversely, there are people out there, Mr. Speaker, talented, passionate, capable – what I would call CEO material – who wouldn't have applied for the board, but they certainly would apply for a CEO-specific recruitment process. So having two recruitment processes through the IAC that are merit-based will best serve, I believe, the organization and the province and separating the chair from the CEO. And I believe, Mr. Speaker, also that this is a positive step forward in strengthening the governance of the board.

The amendments we are bringing forth today are required to ensure that the CEO is appointed separately, as this full-time position is responsible for the general direction, supervision and control of the business of the corporation. Given that board members may well have other full-time employment outside their board duties, and the CEO is certainly a full-time position. So I think you'll know where I'm going with this. It wouldn't be practical to someone apply for a position on the board and then we say, okay, you're responsible for the day-to-day running.

Probably they're biting off a little more than they anticipated there. Not practical to fill the position from those who apply for the board of directors.

Under this amendment, the CEO would be a non-voting member who would provide operational and program knowledge to the board. While the chair and the CEO will now be separate positions, both – and I want to stress this. So while we're separating the chair and the CEO, both will be subject still to the IAC merit-based process for recommendation to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

So, Mr. Speaker, we're separating, but there are no appointments, I'm going to stick someone in that position. They're still going to have to apply through the IAC, only now it'll be clearly defined, I am applying to be the CEO of the Housing Corp., or I am applying to sit on the board of directors of the Housing Corporation.

Most agencies, boards and commissions separate the position of chairperson and CEO. This change would, I guess it would bring, as I see it, the Newfoundland and Labrador Corporation in line with what I believe is a generally accepted practice. So that's that piece.

Another amendment that we are proposing here today, Mr. Speaker, the second proposed amendment, it introduces terms to the appointment of board members including the chair. This will help to establish reasonable expectations for board members in terms of their appointments and will permit regular renewal of the board.

I found it interesting when I discovered, Mr. Speaker, that you could apply to go on this board, this Housing Corporation board, and there was never an expiry date. Most times we know we are applying to sit on a board and it's a two year, it's a four year, and then you're up for renewal after that.

This amendment provides for three-year terms with an option for three-year renewal. So a three-year term with an option for a three-year renewal for all 11 board members, including the chairperson. Because currently the legislation does not prescribe timelines regarding membership for those 11 board members.

This amendment would also ensure that the NLHC appointment timelines, again, are in sync with other agencies, boards and commissions. So simply trying to bring it all in line and to bring some consistency here, Mr. Speaker.

The third amendment is to modernize language in the act. The current legislation includes representation for persons with disabilities as well as regional representation. The final amendment that we are proposing here today will modernize language in the act in respect to persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, I have a whole bunch of information here around housing and the suite of programs and what they offer but I really don't think I need to get into that. This is pretty clear cut and simple, separating the chair and CEO, putting terms in for the board members and modernizing the language.

I'll have an opportunity I guess to answer questions once we go into Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - North.

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To speak to Bill 40; foremost, I would like to thank both the department and the minister for the briefing, and the minister for her previous speaking there. I believe she pretty well summed up what the intent of this bill is.

It's definitely something that is a sign of the times. Separating both the chair and the CEO provides a bit more continuity. Whereas, to the best of my understanding, the CEO is there by contract; whereas a chairperson or a member of the board can resign at any time.

Managing such a vital facility within government or within a Crown corporation, we need continuity. So that was something I did have a little bit of concern with as it came to the three years with the possibility of re-appointment.

I almost believe we should put in a termination clause for half of the board so that we do have a continuation on through it. I did bring it up in the briefing that I think every, say, six years half of the board should have to change up. That way we'll always have some experience going forward, and that will ensure a smooth transition and a smooth functioning of that board.

Now with both our aging demographic and our challenging economic times, this corporation in particular is going to come under extreme stress. It is very important that we have a full-time, dedicated, functioning CEO to be able to make decisions on their feet.

The same thing with the board, we need an active board. To make a full-time commitment to a board, for members of the public, often that's a challenge and it would probably exclude certain members of society from participating in the board.

So separating the CEO out from the chairperson, that definitely opens up that chairperson position for basically all members of society who could commit to the limited amount of meetings that they must attend and participate in on the board; whereas a CEO, of course, has to be – because you're dealing with someone's house and someone's shelter and basically sense of security in the form of their home, I'm sure the CEO is on call 24-7, 365 days a year.

That's important, that's a big position because, as I said, with an aging demographic we're looking at seniors who may either no longer be able to afford their homes or seniors who find themselves suddenly alone due to the death of their partner or a separation of their partner, whatever it may be, that's a perfect facility for them to move into, the housing units. Again, it's something we're adapting to.

The CEO, Mr. Goss, explained to me – because I had asked a question about the transition of three- and four-bedroom units down to one- and two-bedroom units, because right now there's a big demand for these one- and two-bedroom units. It's a challenge. It's not like you can just go and lop off two of the four bedrooms and there you go, you got a two bedroom unit. You have to use those other units.

A lot of these facilities, a lot of these buildings were built several decades ago and renovating them is a challenge. I'm glad to see the corporation is up for that challenge and it is a mandate of theirs – under the direction of the CEO – to start renovating and making more units available with smaller bedrooms.

As an MHA, when I first got elected, one of the biggest things that struck me – actually, I got the second most amount of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units in my district of that of all the province. I do see the valuable service it provides. The reality is there are lots of jobs in this province that just cannot afford to pay large salaries, but those jobs are still important. We as a people and we as a province are responsible for those individuals who complete those jobs. That means we do have to make housing affordable to them, as well as people who work at much higher paying jobs.

My theory and my belief have been: if there's work to be done, that's a job to be filled. It doesn't matter what the pay is, that's an important job to be done.

With disparity between the lower income and upper income and rising housing prices in the past decade or so, the ownership of home has been out of people's reach. So a lot of people on the lower end of the income scale have had to use – have been stuck in rental agreements or rent-to-own agreements. Largely, rent-to-own agreements are not really worth the paper they're written on because they're not registered with the provincial registry.

So, really, the owner of that piece of property could sell that piece of property right out from underneath people who thought they were paying into a rent-to-own agreement. Whereas within the Housing Corporation, I know of several individuals and families that have been decades in the one unit. You can see the pride of ownership in that unit. That's something I'm really proud of when people take pride in their home and put a lot of effort into putting some small improvements into it themselves, keeping it tidy, keeping it painted.

As we go forward, I cannot foresee housing prices go down that significantly that a home will be available to everybody in the private

market. I think there will always be need for a facility like the Housing Corporation to provide homes for people in certain segments of our society.

Again, that's part of the gap between the lower end and the upper end, and, of course, even middle-class people. With the highest rate of bankruptcy, the highest rate of family breakup and joblessness largely in our history, I'm getting calls to my office, people who had good homes, because they've lost their jobs they've largely – through no fault of their own, just a turn in the economy, now they're coming to my office asking how to get into the realm of social housing.

I'm very pleased to say that my experience with our contacts at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing has been very positive. Granted, there are always hiccups and there will always be bumps, but that's just part of the changing.

One example, and I'll never forget it, it was just before last Christmas. I had a lady call up and, unfortunately, her and her husband both lost their jobs. Then I guess the stress of the financial hardship, the two of them separated, and she went from living in a fairly large house in Southlands to one of the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing units.

Not only was there a home there for her to move into, but there was also a whole suite of other provincial programs that she was able to tap into to help in this transition in life. She had kids that were 13 and 14 years old, as I said, who lived in a fairly expensive home. Now she was in the social housing system. I checked in on them just recently and they're doing quite fine. That's where I could see her with pride of ownership or tenancy in her home, and I was very proud of her to be able to move on through that crisis situation in her life.

Again, I support this bill, and I think it makes sense. If the Independent Appointments Commission does continue or does function as it is intended, I believe that will go a long way to restoring the faith in these appointments and in these boards and agencies that it's not the individual, it's not who the individual knows, it's all about the individual themselves.

So, as I said, I'll be fully supporting this bill.

Thank you.

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

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's also an honour to get up today and speak to Bill 40, An Act to Amend the Housing Corporation Act. Mr. Speaker, I've been in the role of parliamentary secretary since December 2015, shortly after being elected. First of all, I just have to make mention of the great work that the staff members are doing at Newfoundland and Labrador Housing. They deal with very difficult situations on a daily basis and I have to commend them for the great work they're doing.

I just want to thank the Member for Mount Pearl North for his positive comments toward this change we're making in the act. One of the things he did allude to was the number of housing units and the size of units that are typical. Traditionally, most of our units were three- and four-bedroom units and now the demand, as families got smaller and our aging population, the number of room units that people are looking for now are typically one- and two-bedroom.

I had the honour to attend the affordable housing for St. John's this morning when they did their announcement on the 10-year strategy. Just looking through some of the notes on that, there was an interesting statistic they put forward, Mr. Speaker. Out of the estimated population in 2016, for the City of St. John's there were approximately 109,000 people. Sixty-two per cent of those households had one or two people living in that household. So it goes to show that the population in St. John's, and surely throughout rural Newfoundland, the houses and the number of people living in the households is getting much smaller.

Myself, I'm from a large family, 15 children. So, Mr. Speaker, a one- or two- bedroom house wouldn't do us much when we were growing up. We probably needed rooms on top of rooms. Most people, years ago when we were growing up we had a smaller house, probably only five or six bedrooms. When it got cold nighttime,

traditionally people would turn up the woodstove or turn up the heat. All we did, one kid jumped from the other bed; they still got to keep everybody else warm.

So times have changed since my family grew up in Lewisporte. I came from a very proud family. Like I say, we didn't have a lot of material things but we had a lot of other great things and a lot of love in our family. So, Mr. Speaker, that speaks high volumes of our family.

As the minister previously alluded to in Bill 40, the act, there are basically three components to what we're proposing. First of all, to separate the position of chairperson and the chief executive officer. I'm not going to take much time but, essentially, as the minister said, this is common with most boards and commissions now to have it separate, two separate positions.

Coming from a municipal background, like many others here, I compare it to a town council. The way it is now, it's basically the same thing as you're electing a town council and automatically your mayor is your CEO, a paid position. The way businesses and corporations operate today, that's a little different. People want to be involved, be engaged as a board member. It doesn't necessarily mean they want to run the corporation as the CEO.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, applying terms to board positions; right now under the corporation there are no terms. Someone could get on the board and essentially stay there as long as they want. There's nothing, no regulations in the act or no legislation saying that after two, three years or four years they have to remove themselves from the board.

What we are proposing, Mr. Speaker, is that once you apply, you have a three-year term to start with. Obviously, people may leave for whatever purposes, whether it be family or personal reasons before their term, but they have a three-year term. If suited and they want to stay on for a second term, and the IAC is willing to keep them on, then they can do a second term for a total of six years.

After the two terms, Mr. Speaker, they will have to separate themselves from the board then, but that's not to say – after a year or two years they

can re-apply for another position. Again, they would have to go through the IAC process, and if it's deemed they're a great candidate again, then they can go back on the board.

Also, Mr. Speaker, the third item we're looking at is to modernize the language in the act respecting persons with disabilities. Currently, the language right now, which is a bit dated, calls for a person physically disabled to be on the board. And, as I said, that language is dated. We are proposing that it would be changed to a person with disabilities, because our government is committed to inclusion. We're just going to update that portion of it.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to take much more time. I just want to say that I will be supporting this bill and I'm quite sure all Members in this House will be supporting the bill.

Our government takes the well-being of all residents within our province very serious, and we are committed to better outcomes and a brighter future for everyone. I think our CEO, our acting CEO right now and all of his staff are doing just that, Mr. Speaker. They're working hard each and every day to make sure that persons that are struggling have the opportunity to have a good a life as they possibly can.

Mr. Speaker, I'm just going to close on that and saying that I will be supporting Bill 40, An Act to Amend the Housing Corporation Act, and I do encourage all other Members to do so.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I'm pleased to stand today and speak to Bill 40, the *Housing Corporation Act*. It's important that we all make our voices known about this because it is a very important act and it has a number of pieces to it. Modernizing the *Housing Corporation Act*, I would say bringing it into the 21st century actually, because there are some things that are in the act, an act which dates back

to 1970, that really are rather archaic when it comes to accountability and transparency.

I note from the briefing we received, that the Independent Appointments Commission actually has been recommending to public entities that they move away from the structure of having the chair and CEO of a corporation one and the same person. They've been recommending that the CEO be a separate position, and that's a paid position. Then you also have the chair of the commission, or whatever the public entity is, in this case the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

I think it's actually very, very good that the IAC, the Independent Appointments Commission, sees its role as making these types of recommendations and not just finding people for boards and commissions. So I was really delighted when I saw this, and I'm glad to see the minister took that seriously.

Having the chair and the CEO as the same person puts an awful lot of weight in one person and gives that person actually quite a controlling interest – to put it bluntly. The minister spoke to it from one perspective and I'm speaking to it from another. It's true that it means a heavy workload et cetera, but what I'm really happy about is it means that – it is a conflict, really. If the CEO is also the chair of a board or a commission, the CEO is sort of his or her own boss, and that surely is not a good way to go.

So to even see that the bill or the act will now say the CEO will, "subject to the direction of the membership of the corporation," be responsible for directing the business of the corporation but will not be the chair of the board. And that certainly, in this day and age, is the way we would want a public body and a public entity to be run. That the person in the role of CEO is a non-voting member of a board, and a board – those who are the volunteers and, hopefully, people with expertise are the ones who make the decisions that the CEO will then follow.

I really am delighted to see this. It hopefully will mean that the NLHC will continue to do the wonderful work it does, but will also now become a board that hopefully will have no ties to government, no ties to the CEO and will be a board that's there for the good of the people.

I'm not going to speak, at this point in time, to all the details in the bill. I think that's been done by some. There's nothing there that I have a problem with; things that I'm pleased about.

I am also pleased about the fact that we're changing the tenure of board members. Again, I use the word archaic, to think we had a bill that said: "All members of the" board "hold office during pleasure." As long as they want to be on the board, they could be on the board. Again, pretty archaic in this day and age.

So now with the appointment to be for three years with an option to renew just for one term, and to do it in a staggering way as is laid out in the bill so that not everybody comes in at the same time for the same period and then you change the whole bunch all at the same time, but to have timelines and staggering terms will be extremely important so that we don't have everybody going all at the same time. That's sort of the details I want to speak to.

I'd like to speak a bit about the role of the NLHC, because it is important. The Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation is responsible for seeing that people in this province have housing, and have good housing; have affordable housing and good housing. Its social mandate has really increased over the years.

I can remember back in the 1980s, I was doing community development work in the province, based in St. John's, and our office and one of my co-workers became involved with the people who live in Rabbittown. They had a vision, and their vision was they wanted to really deal with the issue of literacy. So many people who lived in the Rabbittown area were not literate, but in order to deal with that they also wanted a place where people could come from the community. They wanted a couple of units to be dedicated to an association and become a community base.

It took them a little bit of struggling at that time – I'm talking about 35 years ago. It took a bit of struggle at that time for them to get NLHC to understand the importance of having a community centre and having a tenants' organization and a centre that was right there where everybody lived. The argument was, well, if we take a couple of units that's taking housing

away. But this community group were very strong, they were articulate and they understood the importance of doing this. NLHC – it didn't have an L in it at that time – but NLHC at that time finally said yes, and turned over two units to become part of the community and to be used by the community.

So now it's taken for granted, that where you have NLHC housing you have a community centre, that you have a tenants' association, that you have staff from NLHC who interact with the people in the community so that, right now, with the range of programs that they have, it's wonderful. Their programs include affordable housing, down-payment assistance, home heating and repair assistance, homelessness programs, emergency housing for families escaping domestic violence and, as I've talked about, the community centres. So it has really developed over the last 30 years and it's been quite exciting.

Recently, the corporation reviewed its own mandate and went out and consulted, they re-looked at their mandate, their programs, their service delivery, how they use their money. They consulted with staff and community organizations, housing residents and clients of their various programs. From that, they have really brought in a lot of efficiencies in NLHC itself; 14 management positions were eliminated and an action plan was promised.

Now, we still don't have the action plan, but the minister did say earlier today in another context that it is hoped for 2019, the provincial strategy, and I think it'll be extremely important to have that put in place because the NLHC wants to use some of the federal-provincial strategy funds to renovate more large units into a greater number of smaller ones. People are having smaller families today than they did 30 years ago when these units were first built, so it's important to do that.

But there's one point I want to make, which doesn't have to do with NLHC specifically, but has to do with housing needs, and that is we have a lot of people who receive income support from AESL, and adult education and seniors. The income support from AESL takes care of housing needs of people. These people may be in apartments; they may be in boarding houses.

The condition under which some of them are living is abominable, but nobody has responsibility.

AESL does not have responsibility for the housing situation in which people are. They give money, so that people can be where they are, but they're not responsible for the condition of the living situation. It becomes really problematic because NLHC is only responsible for its units. Once again, it begs the question of why we don't have a housing division in our government, because housing is more than the units that are owned by NLHC.

I've spoken to this many times in this House, and earlier this year I spoke to it, because of a situation on one of the streets in my district where people, homeowners on the street, were having problems in relations with people who were in a house that was a boarding house. The conditions of that boarding house were really awful. Yet, the city was involved on one level, though it didn't have responsibility. The province was involved, but it didn't have responsibility. Nobody had responsibility for the housing situation of these people who were receiving money from government to be there.

So, I put this out because it isn't NLHC's responsibility; they're only responsible for their units. But it does beg the question of why we don't have a housing division inside of government that deals with the broader housing issues. Because homelessness is more than just having a roof over your head, whether that roof leaks or not is extremely important and everything else about the house in which one lives.

I put that out there; it isn't part of this bill in one way, but it is in a general way. If we're concerned about the housing needs of our people, Mr. Speaker, then we have to be concerned about more than just what happens inside of NLHC and what it's responsible for.

Having said that, I will be supporting the bill and I will continue pushing government to look at the needs of people and the needs for having a housing division in government.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to take a moment to say that I'll be supporting this bill. There's nothing earthshattering here, for sure, but, no doubt, it's sort of cleaning up some of the language, modernizing some of the language. It's more inclusive certainly for persons with disabilities. It's some of the wording, which is good to see. I hope we see that in all of our legislation.

Obviously, we're just making a separation between the chair of the board of Newfoundland and Labrador Housing and CEO; that kind of makes sense. The only question I had at the time was did that mean that by creating a CEO we're going to incur another big salary, but I'm told that's not the case because the person who is acting in both those roles is already working for the government with said salary. So it's not like we're creating a new one, which is a good thing, because obviously where we are financially we need to look at ways to save money, not spend more.

Anyway, with all that said, the terms of office is going to be a three-year term of office. The ability to have a second term, prior to now, someone could be appointed to this board and stay there forever, in theory. I'm sure that never happened, but they could stay there as long as they wanted or at the discretion of the minister of the day, as long as the minister wanted that person. Now, it's three years with the opportunity for a second three, so six years maximum.

Obviously, I think it's important that whoever's appointed to the board, that they be staggering terms so that we don't have wholesale changes and all of the institutional knowledge go out the door with everyone that was there, so staggering the positions on the board is important. I'm sure the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi would've been proud; I asked a question about gender equity, actually, at the briefing, and I was told that is definitely going to be a consideration for the board as well, so that's good to hear.

Like I said, beyond that it's nothing here that we wouldn't support, and I'll be voting for it.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: If the hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation speaks now, she will close debate.

The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the Members who spoke to the bill, the Member for Mount Pearl North, thank him for supporting these amendments that we're bringing forward today.

He referenced in his district he has a lot of housing, and I'm familiar with some, spent a little bit of time up in Masonic, and I have some pleasant memories from there, actually, where those folks really are a little community within your district. There are some good programs on the go and we've been happy to support some through our Community Healthy Living initiatives and things like that, because we recognize also that inclusion and getting out and about is good for their physical and their emotional and mental well-being.

I want to thank my colleague, my parliamentary secretary, the MHA for Lewisporte - Twillingate for speaking, does a great job assisting me in that really large social department, speaks very passionately about the issues, and he referenced coming from a family of 15.

This is exactly why, Mr. Speaker, we have a quite a daunting challenge on our hands right now. We have many, many large housing units because we had the large families of yesteryear, but to this day and age we have families, some that are having no children or some that are having one or two, and we need to figure out how we take these large homes and we break them down into smaller units, one- and two-bedroom units.

I want to recognize the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi for supporting the bill. I'm sure there are lots of housing needs in her district as well. I want to say to her, I was fairly new in my portfolio when it was brought to my

attention the need for those support workers connected with the community centres. I went down and I met with five executive directors and I understood clearly the need for going out into those little neighbourhoods, where children are coming from school and that's where they are, and the value of having supports right there for the people. We were happy to be able to work through that and to address one of the needs there.

I've heard clearly from the Members, the importance of maintaining some of the positions on the board in terms of staggering – I guess we would call it – and having some of that institutional knowledge from the last number of years there and not just having a whole slate of brand new board members. So that's something we're certainly looking at as well.

Mr. Speaker, in response to the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi's comment about a housing division within government; now, I will say that Newfoundland and Labrador Housing have some fantastic individuals over there doing some great work, much of it in really challenging conditions. We've recently – from AESL and from our regional health authorities – folded in the transition houses and the emergency shelters. All part of a view with this housing first approach. There are, I would call, experts over in housing. It's about that housing continuum, all being housed under one roof.

In addition to that, here in this government, since I have been in this portfolio, there has been tremendous strides to work across departments to address things exactly like the Member talked about. Myself and my colleague, the Minister of Health and Community Services, my colleague, the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, we all work collectively.

Poverty reduction, Mr. Speaker; we recognize – just like we're adopting a Health-in-All Policies approach – that reducing poverty is something we need to work at because of the complexity of the nature of that across departments. So I would say to the hon. Member, there's a lot of work happening right now across departments when it comes to things like housing, poverty reduction, unemployment issues and support those that we might consider more marginalized or vulnerable in our society.

I also want to recognize the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands and to thank him for his comments and supporting this bill.

I guess right now, Mr. Speaker, I'll just take my place and see if my hon. colleagues have any questions as we move into Committee.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 40 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Housing Corporation Act. (Bill 40)

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Housing Corporation Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 40)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of Whole to consider Bill 40.

MR. 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 consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. 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 (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 40, An Act To Amend The Housing Corporation Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Housing Corporation Act." (Bill 40)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: I would like to know if there will be consideration in the future to put the staggering effect in for members of the board. Given that it is a possibility that we could have the whole board resign the one time because their terms are up. Is that a consideration we could look at?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. DEMPSTER: I thank the Member for the question. Having spent much of my adult life on boards, I certainly have a first-hand appreciation for the importance of that. We have a number of members that are on the board finishing up. So one of the things we could look at is not have the whole suite go out the door, to preserve some of that institutional knowledge and to bring that to the new board members that will come through the IAC process. So that's certainly something we're looking at.

CHAIR: The hon. The Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Am I correct in ascertaining that this will not actually result in any additional costs? Because the original CEO, being the chair of the board, will get paid for the meetings; whereas now, because it's two separate positions, the CEO gets his or her salary and the chair will just get their per diem.

So am I correct in ascertaining that there will be no increase in costs?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Member is correct, there's no additional expense. The CEO was a paid position, and that'll continue to be a paid position. The chair will be a volunteer member of the board, just like the directors.

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

MR. LESTER: Okay. Are there any efforts now under way to do energy audits on the units within the purview of the Housing Corporation?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

There is always ongoing review, but right now we have been really down in the trenches for the last number of months working out the bilaterals

with the federal government wanting the best deal. They have some targets they want to achieve nationally. We have some targets we want to achieve provincially.

One of the things as a part of the energy efficiency piece, would be taking some of those larger units and maybe a large house and making it into two – what do you call that, it's not coming to me – two units –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Duplex.

MS. DEMPSTER: Duplex – thank you to my colleagues – possibly looking at that as a cost-effective way.

Also, as you would know, we have programs like our Provincial Home Repair Program. We have a very big uptake in that program every year as people want to move to make their homes more efficient. We have the Home Energy Savings Program, that's always a big uptake there.

So I'm not sure if I answered your question. We have a number of things happening. We also went out and we did a review over a period of a number of months, and most of the recommendations that came back to us, I think probably 16 so far, we have implemented. And the other three or four we've heard as a part of that review, we're in the process of implementing right now.

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

MR. LESTER: In reference to the eye toward gender balance, I think that's going to be a very difficult parameter or benchmark to meet on the account of – gender is no longer a dual-defined division where we have – basically, if we're going to identify specific genders, well, we must be inclusive to all forms of gender. Is that something that we're going to have to deal with? Is that something that you have considered?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'll just remind the hon. Member that we have the independent appointments process. It is a merit-based process. I don't have the stats right in front of me now, but I believe when we look across our agencies, board and commissions and the appointments that have happened to date, over the last three years since the bill, we are running a pretty even balance there when it comes to male and female.

In addition to that, with this particular act, there's also some language around looking for regional representation because the housing needs on the North Coast of Labrador may vary a little than probably your district here in the city. There is a specific provision there for a person to represent a disabilities community.

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

MR. LESTER: I have to be more specific when I come towards the gender balance. When we look at there is no longer just male and female, we have LGBTQ and non-gender people. So I really don't think that that's going to be able to be a target we're going to be able to meet, that there's a gender balance. I think that we should be looking more at the merits of the individual and not focus on either the male or female gender.

Is that something that we can reconsider?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I will say to the hon. Member, inclusion is something that is very, very important to this government, and we've made many provisions to ensure that we are an inclusive society accepting of all individuals. Even in my department, I have groups from those that the Member would have referenced that come in to me, that look for various supports and camps for youth that may be struggling with different things. We've always been quite pleased to support that.

The IAC process, as it stands, is a merit-based process and we look for the gender, the male and

female. There is nothing prohibiting that a number of these people that come forward may actually self-identify in other areas as well. There may be someone that applies and they self-identify as an Indigenous person, or as a member of the LGBT community. We're certainly open to that. But, first and foremost, we look at the individual's qualifications because the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and their programs are so, so important to the people of this province, you want the people who sit on that board to be very qualified in the governance structure overseeing those programs.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Mount Pearl North.

MR. LESTER: Would it also be a consideration that in addition to the members of the board having a specific time frame, could we also consider the CEO being restricted to a time frame as well, albeit I would imagine it would be longer than three years?

So, is there a consideration for having the CEO – what am I asking – have a specific – a defined term? There we go.

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

So we would go through the Independent Appointments Commission to seek qualified individuals that would be interested in being the CEO, but we wouldn't put a term on that – would you like to have a job for three years, and then we're going to replace you.

Generally, if you apply for a job and you're doing a good job, you're in that job for, I guess, what would be an undetermined amount of time.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I say to the minister, we do that for four years now, but I know it's a little different.

I just wanted a point of clarification to the minister. It's not a big deal, but the minister did say earlier when asked about no additional costs and so on that these are volunteer positions. I guess just for clarity – and again, I know it's not a lot of money, but you might call it volunteer but my understanding is that all the members of this board will receive remuneration. They get, I don't know, is it \$200 a day, or something like that, for every day they sit.

They meet four or five times a year, usually for two days at a time, so that's probably like \$400 or \$500 every time they meet, four or five times a year, plus travel expenses and hotels and all that stuff. So, yes, we appreciate what they do, I don't have a problem with the remuneration, but there is remuneration. They're not doing it totally for free. Obviously if the CEO was getting paid – he indicated that he wasn't getting additional money as chair, well now with a new chair there would be that additional expense.

Again, we're only talking \$3,000 or \$4,000 a year or whatever, but I'm just pointing it out for clarity and for facts in terms of the debate. I think I would be correct.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Member is correct. It's a Tier 1 entity, so obviously those people that would apply to sit on this volunteer board – it's a volunteer board technically, but of course there would be expense associated with those individuals travelling in for the meeting, those who in particular who might be off the Avalon. The board would meet about four to six times a year and they would be reimbursed for that expense.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Again, it's not a big deal but, for clarity, they get reimbursed for expenses, but they also get paid a stipend of between \$200 and \$300 per day in addition to reimbursement for travel and

expenses and hotels and stuff. That's correct, right?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister Responsible for the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation.

MS. DEMPSTER: I know, Madam Chair, that they get reimbursed for their travel expenses to the meetings. If they get a daily stipend, I'm just waiting for an update on that. I'm pretty sure they do; I just want to be certain before it goes on the record here.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 11 inclusive.

CHAIR: Clauses 2 through 11 inclusive.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 11 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Housing Corporation Act.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill passed without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 40.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 40.

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.

MR. SPEAKER (Warr): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, Deputy Chair of Committees.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 40 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 40 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MS. COADY: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

MS. COADY: Tomorrow.

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

MR. SPEAKER: The Deputy Government House Leader.

MS. COADY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 3, Committee of the Whole on An Act Respecting The Protection And Promotion Of Public Health, Bill 37.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of Whole to consider the said bill.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

MR. 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 (P. Parsons): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 37, An Act Respecting The Protection And Promotion Of Public Health.

A bill, "An Act Respecting The Protection And Promotion Of Public Health." (Bill 37)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's indeed an honour to stand here. We had a great debate over the last number of days on this particular bill. It's a very important bill here for the protection of our society and ensuring people's security and safety and rights are adhered to.

So my first question here to the minister, I just need an update on the consultation process that was used for this bill to be put together.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

This has been brewing for a while, so it's not actually just peculiar to this government. Although, I think the consultations were very much on again and off again.

Essentially, from February 2018 we had a series of face-to-face consultations. So that would be:

RHAs, Department of Health and Community Services, obviously, CSSD, Municipal Affairs and Environment, Service Newfoundland and Labrador, Executive Council, because at that time, and currently, that's where Health-In-All-Policies assessment is housed. We had Public Health Agency of Canada, PHAC, and Nunatsiavut.

We had face-to-face in March, and an online survey started in February. We had EngageNL at it. We had consultations on the draft bill in the last couple of weeks, principally with the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Association, but we also followed up with Nunatsiavut, Qalipu First Nations, Miawpukek and Mushuau Innu First Nations.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the minister for that outline. It seems very thorough and very inclusive there, great for that.

We asked this in the briefing, and I give credit to the staff who were very thorough on their briefing of a very intense bill itself, but I didn't get an explicit answer to the extra resources that may be necessary – either internally with the Department of Health or with the regional health authorities, or some other entity you may be partnering with – to ensure that if indeed we have to invoke the protection plan here, that we have the resources to do that.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The issue of resources is this work is going on at the moment. It's not something we are not currently doing. What it does through the act is to clarify roles and responsibilities. These existing functions already exist.

What we are trying to do, and what will happen over time, is certainly at the RHA level and the regional medical officer of health level, there will be a reorientation of emphasis amongst

various divisions within the RHAs. It's a collaborative thing. We have PHAC, we have MUN, and we have a variety of groups involved in this.

We don't anticipate in the short-to-medium term any significant increase in expenditure that can't be met from existing budget. We actually got federal money. We have three PHAC public health officers paid for by the federal government. One, as recently as the last couple of months, specifically for the addictions work. So we don't foresee, currently, any significant increase in resource requirement.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm going to ask the minister to answer this, because somebody had asked me to give a scenario in which we may enact the responsibilities and rights and privileges here.

Can the minister just outline – I'm not talking for a long logistical outline, but where the chief medical officer, health medical officer would invoke this particular piece of legislation?

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

MR. HAGGIE: I'm taking from that question the issue around the orders and the 25 pages of countervailing protections that are in there.

My experience in the office is only three years, but it's been used once. The old legislation has been used once, and that was used in a case of a gentleman with active tuberculosis who declined to comply with treatment. Because of that, there was an order issued under the old legislation for compulsory treatment. That process is simply one of supervised treatment. There are various options open should the individual fail to comply, but, in actual fact, none of those coercive measures were actually necessary. It was simply a question of kind of pinning this guy down to a specific location each day and observing him take his medication.

Again, it's a tiered response, depending on the level of co-operation. That's probably the

clearest example and the most likely one that I can think of.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to look at section 54, that says: "A person who reports a reportable event or who reports to an inspector or peace officer a violation or suspected violation of this Act or the regulations, a code of practice or an order made under this Act or the regulations is not liable to civil action in respect of the allegation contained in the report or for anything done in good faith to assist an inspector or peace officer ..." and that.

Can you explain, are there any liabilities on an individual? My fear is, since conversations I had with some entities, was that somebody could inadvertently or flippantly or through vengeance start making accusations on a constant basis that causes, obviously, havoc for the department in having to send in inspectors and this type of thing, but also may have a detrimental effect on the reputation of an individual or a company, or a loss of revenue because an inspector comes in and shuts something down while they're doing the investigation.

Is there a liability process here through assessment that somebody eventually – or do we follow the same laws that are in play now for false reporting?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much.

The assumption is that people will act in good faith and responsibly. And the key there, word or phrase, is "in good faith." The whole issue of vexatious reporting and vexatious litigation is not specifically mentioned in there and is dealt with in other statutes and other codes and practice. But the assumption here is that by and large the vast majority of people will act in good faith and responsibly.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I appreciate that answer.

Also here I'm looking at section 49 where we talk about the different authorities that can make the call here, and it talks about chief medical officer of health, regional medical officer of health, and environmental health officer and a person or class of persons designated by the minister.

Can you give us some examples of what that may entail, what particular individuals or group of individuals may also have those powers?

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

MR. HAGGIE: I think the first three are fairly self-explanatory. They are career paths. Chief medical officers of health don't grow on trees, and indeed one of the things that attracted Dr. Sarbu to the post on a permanent basis was the impending passage of this legislation.

Regional medical officers of health, again, are usually board certified or board eligible in public health in this country. Environmental health officers actually have a unique set of skills which cross both Service NL and public health arena.

The last piece is really one of those situations where maybe you might want, under certain circumstances, to designate a public health professional such as a public health nurse to have that capacity – under circumstances that may be reasonable at the time, but I can't foresee now. It's to build in that flexibility. I don't think it's ever envisaged again that the RMOH or the minister is going to just drag some random individual off the street and give them those kinds of powers.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm just looking at here section 43(4), "Where a person subject to an order fails to pay the expenses related to an action performed under subsection (1), the Chief Medical Officer of

Health may issue a certificate in respect of an amount by the person under the order and file it with the Supreme Court."

So who would pick up a cost at the beginning if there's a cost incurred to demolish a building, remove something, secure something, as part of the process at the beginning?

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

MR. HAGGIE: That section of the act speaks of the onus of someone to react appropriately to an instruction under this section of the act. If, however, that individual or entity failed to do so, the authority exists for the action to be taken on the authority of the officers under this act. Then, this gives the ability to file an application with the court to reclaim those expenses from the person who should have done it in the first place.

It's a protection for government so that we're not perpetually on the hook for the omissions or the sins of omissions of others. By filing it with the court, it gives it the effect of a court warrant.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm looking here at section 46(a), it notes the chief medical officer advised or take reasonable steps to notify a person who is the subject of an order. When we say reasonable steps, what are we talking about there? That's section (a). What would be considered reasonable steps to notify somebody that there's an order out against that individual?

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

MR. HAGGIE: I'm sorry I'm looking at section 46, but I don't think that's the right number.

MR. BRAZIL: We are on page (inaudible.)

MR. HAGGIE: So which paragraph are you referring to?

MR. BRAZIL: Advised or take reasonable steps to notify a person who is the subject of the order (inaudible.)

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

MR. HAGGIE: Well, I mean, firstly, to actually talk to the individual concerned and say you haven't complied; secondly, to use any reasonable method of communication so that, at the end of the day, there would be some evidence for anyone who has to review this, because it is subject to review and it's subject to appeal. So that there would be a chain of events that you could identify that said we did tell you, we did do our level best to inform you that you were subject to an order so that ignorance would not be admitted as a defence under those circumstances.

It would vary, the situation, but obviously actually telling the person face to face if at all possible. But if someone's trying to be evasive, and using the lack of ability for a medical officer or an appropriate person to communicate with you, I think that all that has to be demonstrated under this act is due diligence to make the reasonable effort to show a reasonable individual that attempts were made to convey that information, just somewhat, and that it was not possible, not through any lack of diligence.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you again, Madam Chair.

Under section 36(1): "Where an application has been made for an apprehension order or an apprehension order that has been issued under section 34, a regional medical officer of health may apply to the Supreme Court for a treatment order." I understand, obviously, it's part and parcel of the process, but if there's a specific treatment that's necessary outside of the province, who's responsible for arranging this, the costing and the supports that may be part and parcel of that treatment order?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much.

I can't, just off the top of my head, envisage a situation where that might be the case, except perhaps under a situation, say, something like Ebola. Essentially, what would happen there, would be that we have a process within the Department of Health for dealing with insured services that would be provided outside the province because they're not available in, and that process would be followed. That is a retrospective. The reimbursement and the reconciliation of those bills is always done after the fact. The initial is we get them out there to the care that they need. We'll worry about the money afterwards.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair, again.

I'm looking at page 8 here, section 34, process to be released. Under apprehension order, what would be the process used here to release somebody from a particular order, and who would have the jurisdiction to do that?

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

MR. HAGGIE: The person who issued, or who's decision it was to apply for and obtain the order in the first place – so, you would be looking at a regional medical officer of health or chief medical officer of health. The process to release them is either it expires because it's time-limited and not renewed or, alternatively, the individual would be simply notified that you're no longer subject to this examination and/or treatment order. So, it would be done in this analogous way to the way that order was sought in the first place.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you again, Madam Chair.

I'm looking at restrictions to travel persons, and I believe we're at section 28(h): "Make orders restricting travel to and from the province or an area within the province."

Who and what would that be based on directly making those restrictions for travel, and what would that include? How would you restrict? If you're out of the country, obviously you take away somebody's passport. But how would you do that within the province?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Some of the details of that could be generated under regulation, but the one that I'm familiar with in the past has been where you would want to isolate an agricultural premise, for example. The Member for Mount Pearl North may have some familiarity with processes in other jurisdictions, say, for foot and mouth disease where you would want to protect an area. You simply mark it off, put signage, put whatever footbaths are there that are appropriate. You would have officers, inspectors there to monitor passage through that area.

In terms of restricting people's travel, again, that could well be more of a blanket. These are unusual circumstances and really would probably apply more to individuals who would then end up under some kind of slightly different order. This is more envisaged in the case of epidemics rather than in the case of an individual outbreak.

I think, under those circumstances, you would find that there would be probably a significant amount of agitation and we may even then find ourselves in declaration of a public health emergency where those situations would be extraordinary.

So, individuals, that has happened in the past and I allude to the case of TB, tuberculosis, that was mentioned before.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to look at section 16 here related to release of medical information. "The Chief Medical Officer of Health, a regional medical officer of health or other person acting under the authority of this Act or the regulations may disclose personal health information without the

consent of the individual who is the subject of the information where (a) the Chief Medical Officer of Health or regional medical officer of health reasonably believes that the disclosure is necessary"

While I understand the necessity here, I do have a concern because we're going to, in some cases if we run into this scenario, probably be dealing with some people who have some mental health challenges or are not co-operative in some way, shape or form.

Has the Privacy Commissioner been engaged here to give you some advice on how and to what parameters you would have about releasing particular health information on an individual?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: The short answer is yes, the Privacy Commissioner has looked at this. The intent is to alter the fear as well in the future, but effectively the way that the Privacy Commissioner recommended was to make the chief medical officer of health a custodian under the act, and we will be doing that.

The point I would also make is if you look at the subsequent section, section 17, it also talks about some degree of monitoring of that and taking reasonable steps to ensure that only the information that is necessary is released, and that it's accurate before it goes out.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

To add on to that, I just need a bit more clarification. If you're accessing information from the Centre for Health Information, would the same process be used for that, and the same roles and responsibilities?

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

MR. HAGGIE: The concept around PHIA is circles of care. So, NLCHI, in the recent amendments to the act that was passed in this

House earlier, was actually made a custodian under PHIA also.

So, what the intent has been, after discussion with the Privacy Commissioner, was to keep everybody in this same level playing field. Again, the short answer is, it's all part and parcel of the same protected yet closely monitored arena.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island.

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you again, Madam Chair.

I thank the minister for that clarification here. I have a question around the time frames for putting the regulations in play and the process you're going to use.

Can you just explain that to us, please?

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

MR. HAGGIE: It's funny enough, we were discussing that in the department actually with the Deputy Minister of Justice and Public Safety today.

The time frame anticipated is July 1, 2019. A significant chunk of this, in terms of the regulations, exists already, because it's older legislation. What we need to do is simply to modernize the language there and essentially import, having done that modernization, chunks of those regulations into this act.

There will be newer areas where there is no regulation currently, I'm thinking mainly of codes of practice. That isn't as pressing. There is no time limit set for that. There will simply be a space left in the regulation while we negotiate, for example, with business on a consultation process to craft the regulations, which then in turn will contain its own consultation process as part of crafting codes of practice.

So, we anticipate July 1, 2019.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I thank the minister. I have one last question here around the process, be it a public awareness campaign of being able to promote this to the general public, so they would know their roles and responsibilities, and how they can be supportive of a situation that they may not be aware of now but that there would be certain identifying factors or issues that they could report through the reporting process.

Is there a plan to put some kind of a public relations campaign together, or an educational process?

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

MR. HAGGIE: In actual fact, one of the five pillars of this is around health promotion and kind of at a meta-level, you could see that that kind of public education campaign would be a key piece of this. Certainly, we would adopt a variety of strategies to do that both at local and regional level through the RHAs and the public health nurses that are out there, through the Newfoundland and Labrador Public Health Association, through things like NLMA and ARNL.

We're working on a communications plan to make sure the general public are aware of what we're doing. To be quite honest, I think what will happen with the communications piece is as each of these five cores starts to gain critical mass and a life of its own, each of them will have their own individual communications plan.

I see communications as a key piece of this going forward.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Because of the specific measures of orders that we see in the legislation, I'd ask the minister: Was the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission consulted? Did they take a look at this legislation before it came to the House?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much.

With the infringement or curtailment of personal liberties, the legislation that is paramount in this country is in actual fact the *Constitution Act* and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms where, on the recommendation of our constitutional advisors, we settled on that higher standard rather than looking at what is a provincial legal code.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I would have thought that, though, it would have been something to do –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

MS. ROGERS: – in addition to not exclusive of, that we do have a functioning Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission and I'm surprised that it would not have been consulted.

I understand that some of the regulations will be in place for proclamation by July 1. I'm wondering: Will there be any further consultation before that time?

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

MR. HAGGIE: The principal area of consultation really will be around the new pieces. The old pieces are essentially just modernizing the language of the status quo. As I referenced when the Member of Conception Bay East - Bell Island spoke, we will look to consultations with industry groups around the crafting of regulations for codes of practice and also what kind of consultation mechanism they feel there should be for developing specific codes of practice. So, again, yes.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

So I'd ask the minister: Would he be open to having our provincial Human Rights Commission look at the legislation before he proclaims it on July 1?

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

MR. HAGGIE: As I say, I have no problem with anyone looking at this. It's an excellent piece of legislation. It will stand anybody's scrutiny. Indeed, I was really quite amazed with the fulsome praise on *Open Line* the other day from the president of the Public Health Association who, when asked if he would change anything in the act, he said: No, this is the best you're going to get today.

So the short answer is I'm quite happy for anyone to look at this act but I think the important thing is to remember that this House of Assembly is the place where these acts have to come first. These bills have to be seen first by us in this House. That's our job, that's our responsibility and that's also our authority. But I'm quite happy to show this to anybody once you pass it.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

But I'm not talking about just showing it to somebody after it's passed. I think we have agencies and commissions in place whose role specifically is to be consulted on legislation and policy.

So I would ask the minister: Was there any gender lens applied to this particular piece of legislation? Was there an assessment done by the Women's Policy Office applying a gender lens to it?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Madam Chair, prior to bills being presented on the floor of this House it goes through an extensive consultation process

and Women's Policy Office is part of that process.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much.

So I would ask the minister then specifically: Did this legislation pass through the Women's Policy Office and did they write a report? Did they give any opinion on it in its draft form?

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

MR. HAGGIE: For clarity, every piece of legislation that comes to this House goes through Women's Policy Office. Any recommendations from Women's Policy Office would have been incorporated into this act.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I would ask the minister: Was it referred to the Disability Policy Office for consultation as well?

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

MR. HAGGIE: For my previous comments, insert Disability Policy Office where I said Women's Policy Office.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MR. ROGERS: Again, because of the breadth of this particular bill – and I also feel it is a very good piece of legislation and it modernizes our public health legislation.

So I would ask the minister: Was the immigration policy office consulted on this as well?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Ditto.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MR. ROGERS: Okay.

Looking at the five-year plan that the legislation asks the chief medical officer of health to do every five years, will there be any new resources required or allocated for the chief medical officer of health to be able to, in fact, do that?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: If the chief medical officer of health feels that he or she needs further resources, my door is always open.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall the motion carry?

The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

MR. ROGERS: The minister said that Health and Community Services, in fact, had a public health forum and the bill largely emerged from that.

Can he tell us a bit about that forum? How many people were there, who was invited, and were they able to review any of the direction that the minister was going in with this bill prior to presenting it to the House?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much.

The attendees at the public health workshop in February were public health representatives from the four RHAs, representatives from the departments of: Health and Community Services; Children, Seniors and Social Development; Municipal Affairs and Environment; Service Newfoundland and Labrador; Health-in-All-Policies through Executive Council; Public Health Agency of Canada; Nunatsiavut Government.

Face-to-face external consultation was launched in May. Since then, the draft was then reviewed with the Public Health Association of

Newfoundland and Labrador and Indigenous groups, which I listed before – risk of mispronouncing – Nunatsiavut, Qalipu, Miawpukek and Mushuau Innu First Nation.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

MR. ROGERS: Thank you very much.

So I ask the minister: Was there any outreach to women's groups across the province to be part of having that input through his workshop?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Well, I've referenced Women's Policy Office already. In addition to this, there was a widespread, well-publicized request for input through online EngageNL. We have gone very far I think with the consultation process on this act. So I'm comfortable that we have done the due diligence in this area.

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

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I understand when the minister says they reached out by inviting consultation online. But he had a specific forum – I think it was called a forum when we were at the briefing, but you've called it, minister, a workshop. So there were no women's groups who have the expertise on the ground about how health and public health impacts women. I would have thought that would be something the minister would really want to do. So there was no invitation then to specific on the ground women's groups about this major, major piece of work around a health population.

I ask the minister: Was there any specific outreach to women's groups?

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall the motion carry?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

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

MS. MICHAEL: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I think the issues that my colleague is pointing out are very important issues. If we are going to have a piece of legislation as important as this piece of legislation, then it is really essential that anybody who has an interest in it gets invited to consultations and gets to make their presentation based on their experience. So the issues around the concerns for immigration, the issues around the concerns for women, the issues around human rights concerns are very important.

So I'm asking the minister: Would he tell us who was invited to the consultations?

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

MR. HAGGIE: Once more, public health representatives from the four regional health authorities; representatives from the Department of Health and Community Services; Children, Seniors and Social Development; Municipal Affairs and Environment; Service Newfoundland and Labrador; Executive Council; Public Health Agency of Canada; Nunatsiavut Government – Nunatsiavut Government again was consulted – Qalipu First Nation; Miawpukek First Nation; Mushuau Innu First Nation.

Cabinet process, as Members opposite are aware, would require input from departments I've already listed: Disability Policy Office, Immigration through AESL, and Women's Policy Office.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

We know that it looks like there will be more responsibility, more duties for public health nurses, or community health nurses. That's a good thing; I think that direction is really encouraging.

But we already know that they have been so cut to the bone, so it looks like that there will be an expansion in the requirements for them and the

type of work that they can do, particularly in health promotion and health prevention, and that's a good thing, so it might require more resources.

I ask the minister: Will there be any resources, extra resources, assigned or provided so that, again, public health nurses who have been so cut to the bone, and we see the direction in trying to include them more in this great legislation – what's the consideration in terms of the need for extra resources for public health nurses?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: The work that will be undertaken in the short and medium term under this act is work that is currently ongoing. What will happen with time is, as the other core activities of public health become more activated, as it were, on the ground in terms of health promotion and these kinds of things, there will possibly need to be a shift within the RHAs to accommodate that.

We are doing public health promotion. We are doing disease surveillance. We are doing public health child clinics, vaccination clinics. All the activities that this act talks about are not starting from scratch on the 1st of July 2019. They are simply being put into a single, cohesive, coherent framework that goes from being the last of the pack, in terms of Canadian jurisdictions, to being the leading light, not just on the East Coast, but across the country.

None of this is new. It's simply going to be done in a coherent and cohesive way.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Minister, again, in terms of the proclamation target date for July 1, you've said that not all the regulations will be completed in time for that. Can you just identify – I may have missed that. You may have already identified this, so you'll have to forgive me if that's the case. Can you identify the priority regulations that you want to target for July 1?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Essentially, again, the work that is going on at the moment is the work that will continue under this new act. The regulations that exist at the moment need to be modernized principally in terms of language. They exist currently. The new bits are the ones which will need crafting from scratch. That is where the work between now and July will focus.

The area that will probably get left behind, as it were, in terms of priorities is the really new area about non-communicable diseases to some extent but, principally, around codes of practice. We never ventured into that space before.

So, part of the ongoing work of the department will be to have that consultation with industry and other stakeholders about how to craft regulations around codes of practice and, in those regulations, what kind of consultation mechanism about the regulations on an ongoing basis would be necessary.

I think that answers the question. The regulations that we will be using will be modernized versions of the ones we have already.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Leader of the Third Party.

MS. ROGERS: Thank you very much.

It is my hope, Minister, that you would consider in crafting those regulations, particularly in the new areas that this legislation is moving into in terms of chronic disease, et cetera, that there would be a very specific and targeted outreach to women's groups, particularly women's groups who deal with women and health issues so that they can also be helpful in strengthening this in any way that it possibly can be to make sure that we have the best possible legislation that takes fully into account as well the needs of women and health.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: I take the Leader of the Third Party's comments. I mean, we do already have

work ongoing. We do have a chronic disease action plan. We have a diabetes strategy. We will have a variety of other strategies being unveiled, as it were, over the course of the early part of next year.

It's not as though we're not actually doing women's health at the moment. Certainly, on an ongoing basis, those are much more operational level issues than necessarily policy or legislative issues.

I wouldn't like anyone to think at the end of that question that there is nothing in these areas, because there is. Certainly, on an ongoing basis, this is going to be a living document in the way that all good legislation should be. Because of that and because of the five-year review and the five-year plans, there will be ample opportunity for people to come back at the end of a period of time and say that worked or that didn't, and we'll listen to that.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I just had a couple of things I wanted to say because we are talking about the health act, which is very broad. I guess when we talk about health, there are a couple of areas in particular I just want to comment on. First of all, long-term care, which is obviously going to be part of this.

I presented a petition, as well the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, on behalf of a group called the Advocates for Senior Citizens' Rights, specifically to legislation that they're looking for entitled Lillian's Law is what they refer it as. Obviously, that wouldn't necessarily be what the legislation would be called, if there was such legislation. Overall, their concern with long-term care deals with staffing ratios and so on.

I've heard many stories through that group and other people have reached out to me about concerns with seniors in long-term care homes throughout the province, not just in this area but certainly Central Newfoundland is one area in particular that I've heard a lot of complaints about as it relates to not having enough staffing, not having proper staffing ratios; about seniors who are in long-term care that are there for

extended periods of time, lying in their own body fluids and so on because the staffing is not there to ensure their changed out; issues around seniors not being fed, simply food being put in front of them and then the person leaves but they're not actually eating the food, perhaps they are not able, and there's no one to help them eat the food.

I am certainly hearing issues about seniors falling, hearing issues in particular about seniors who are perhaps with dementia, Alzheimer's and so on that are in sort of like a day room type setting and there's no staff person there to make that they don't hurt themselves, or that they don't hurt other patients through no fault of their own because of the disease that they're suffering from.

So, I would certainly say, and just to put on the record and for the minister – and I'm not suggesting – I know he's aware of these things, and I'm sure he's committed to trying to improve things, but I think it is important, when we're talking about public health, we're talking about an aging demographic, that this issue around long-term care goes way beyond bricks and mortar.

It's great that we're building new long-term care facilities. I certainly applaud the government on that. I believe there's certainly a need for that, but bricks and mortar isn't going to cut it if the people that are actually in those facilities are not being cared for properly. Those people, of course, are our grandparents, our parents and, one day, some of us sooner than others, it's going to be us.

It is something that we all have to be concerned about, and I think it's important as we look at – I know this is sort of a broader perspective, this legislation is, but certainly long-term care is an issue that currently exists and the need is only going to get greater with the aging demographic that we have. It is important that as the policies and the regulations, which we don't get to debate in this House of Assembly – which is nothing new, it's just the way it works. We all understand that. But the regulations and the policies, which we don't get to debate, that will be developed, flowing from this, I certainly hope that we're going to be working hard to address the issue of seniors' care in long-term care.

The other thing I want to mention around seniors' care is personal care. I listened to the minister in Question Period talking about there are only five homes that have an issue with personal care and the new policies or at least – I don't know if they're new policies, or the strict interpretation of existing policies. I can't say to the minister if that's right or not. I don't know if there are five; I really don't.

I can speak to the fact that there are at least two in my area, because I've spoken to two. Actually, one in my area and one in Mount Pearl North, but I don't draw lines through Mount Pearl, really; Mount Pearl is Mount Pearl. But at least two in that area that have the same concern as Mr. Oram and his home has, about this new interpretation, or this enhanced interpretation around personal care.

Again, as we're developing these policies – which we don't get to debate on the floor because policies, of course, are going to be made by the department and by the health authorities and so on, flowing from regulations which are made by the minister and Cabinet, not anyone in this House of Assembly – I just want to say for the record and for the minister that people are concerned about personal care as well. I think everyone understands there has to be priorities. Obviously someone that has, what he would refer to as clinical need and so on, would have to be a higher priority than those that do not.

But when you think about seniors – and in the past, if you were a senior, you were living home, and let's say for argument's sake your spouse died. Now you have a senior maybe 80 years old, for argument's sake, living in the house. More often than not female, because men tend to pass quicker than females; that's just a fact. But now all of a sudden you have this lady, she's in her house and she's by herself. She's able to get up and get herself dressed, she's able to bathe herself and get herself a cup of tea; but, at the end of the day, she's finding it very, very difficult to maintain her house, to do the laundry, to do the cleaning. She's finding it very difficult and stressful and worried about how do I get the grass cut, how do I get the snow shovelled. Worrying about the bills and all this kind of stuff. Finding it difficult to do basic things in the house. Not that she can't do it, but she finds it difficult to do.

Finding it lonely, social isolation – a lot of seniors I've dealt with are scared; they're literally frightened to death, especially when they turn on the news, they hear about break and entries and stuff. Frightened to death in their house by themselves. Especially in the nighttime, they're afraid to be there. In the past, they could just go in to a personal care home where they're taken care of. What we're hearing now, and I've heard it directly from homes and from families, and other Members have as well, we can deny it's happening, but it is happening, that those seniors are being told you're not getting in a personal care home, or you may be on the list for a long period of time trying to get in there, because the subsidies are not meeting the demand of seniors wanting to go into these personal care homes.

I say to the minister, it is a real issue. You'll say the policy hasn't changed; you'll say we're just putting a stricter enforcement of the policy. Well, the stricter enforcement is a concern for many seniors in this province and for their families. So, as we are addressing these issues around health and so on contained within this bill – which I support, and it's good legislation. Not knocking it one bit. Support it 100 per cent, really do. But as we're developing regulations, as policies are flowing from those regulations, we have to bear in mind the aging demographic, the seniors in our province who have contributed a lifetime – like I said, our grandparents, our parents, and one day, God willing, us, and it's very important that we get this right.

There are concerns out there. I certainly ask the minister to take that into consideration. I know he is. I'm not going to accuse him – I'm not going to say the minister doesn't care. I know he does; we all do. But it still is important to know that these concerns are real and they're out there. If I'm hearing about it, and other Members over here are hearing, I can guarantee to you there are Members on that side of the House hearing it too – guaranteed. There's no way they're not hearing it.

It is a concern, and I'd certainly ask the minister to put some focus and some energy on dealing with this issue that we have with this aging demographic. It's very important to everybody, I think, in the province.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

MR. HAGGIE: Thank you very much.

In no particular order, and whilst I didn't hear a question, I think I will use the opportunity just to stand and address a couple of things. This bill is about public health and health promotion. Sometimes it's very difficult – and maybe my oratory has failed to separate the clinical, the individual patient, from the population approach that this act is concerned with.

The Member opposite raises important points, but raises important points that do not fall, directly, under this act at all. The issue of long-term care is one that is important. The health of seniors is certainly something that, in aggregate, that public health, as a discipline, would address. However, the issue around standards of care in long-term care are very much duties and responsibilities of the regional health authority. There is a patient safety quality assurance act, which was recently passed by this House, which actually directly addresses any concerns brought to the RHA by anybody about the standard of care in one of their facilities, if it falls below acceptable or best practice. So, that area is not germane to this act.

The other piece around personal care homes, again, unfortunately there's some conflation with what we're talking about here. Personal care homes provide an invaluable service. I am not going to repeat what I said in Question Period about some of the validity of the comments that are out there, but I will, as a matter of fact, insert into the record that, outside of Central Health, the only reason for people waiting for a personal care home place is that they are waiting for a home of their own choice, not a bed that is vacant in a personal care home. That is the only reason.

For those people who are waiting, the average wait is two to three months. That has not changed between 2018, 2017 or 2016. Over the province, there is a 17 per cent vacancy rate, in aggregate, across the personal care homes of this province.

So, that's just to read into the record some correction for some of the inaccuracies that are out there. I'm happy to debate that, but this is not the place to do that. This is around a public health act and this stands by itself as, literally, a landmark beacon of legislation across this country, not just on the Eastern Seaboard.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I say to the Minister of Health when he's talking about the 17 per cent vacancy rate in the aggregate, I'm not disputing that there's not a vacancy rate. I don't think anyone – I don't know, maybe people are disputing it. I'm not. The issue is not around vacant beds.

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member for relevance. Please keep –

MR. LANE: Pardon me?

CHAIR: I remind the hon. Member to keep relevant to the bill, please.

MR. LANE: Thank you, Madam Chair.

To my understanding, this is about the public health act. It covers a whole broad range of things. The minister indicated it does cover a broad range. I'm just making that point, but I will try to keep it more on track, Madam Chair.

I would just say that the 17 per cent vacancy rate in the aggregate has nothing to do with the issue. The issue is around subsidies. I'm not talking about open, empty beds, we're talking about subsidized – subsidized, that's the key; seniors who need a subsidized accommodation. There are not enough subsidies. So, you can have a bunch of rooms there that if people can afford to pay for them and if they can't – which is why there're vacant. There are not enough subsidies for people who can't afford to pay the full shot. That's the issue.

I'll leave it at that, Madam Chair, other than to say that I do realize, I say to the minister, that I was being a bit specific about certain things. I do realize what the bill is about. It's not that I don't realize; it's that I was using the opportunity to

raise a very important issue on behalf of seniors in this province. That's why I raised it and my comments remain the same.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Seeing no further speakers, shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 67 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 67 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 67 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act Respecting The Protection And Promotion Of Public Health.

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I move, Madam Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 37.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 37.

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.

MR. SPEAKER (Trimper): The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave and Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

MS. P. PARSONS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Committee of the Whole has considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 37 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and have directed her to report Bill 37 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. A. PARSONS: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

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

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I call Order 3, third reading of Bill 37.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Member require consent of the House?

CLERK: No.

MR. SPEAKER: No, okay.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. A. PARSONS: I know we shouldn't question the Speaker, but maybe you shouldn't question the House Leader.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Right, it was Committee and then third reading.

MR. A. PARSONS: It's Thursday, Mr. Speaker, we're all a little stir crazy.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, that Bill 37, An Act Respecting The Protection And Promotion Of Public Health be now read a third time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the said bill be now read a third time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting The Protection And Promotion Of Public Health. (Bill 37)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting The Protection And Promotion Of Public Health," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 37)

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Advanced Education, Skills and Labour, that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, the third day of December, at 1:30 o'clock.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Monday, at 1:30 p.m.