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Speaker: Honourable Scott Reid, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Admit strangers.

Order, please!

Statements by Members

MR. SPEAKER: Today we will hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Lake Melville, Stephenville - Port au Port, Mount Pearl North, Labrador West and St. John's East - Quid Vidi.

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

MR. TRIMPER: Mr. Speaker, when the Goose Bay Air Base opened in 1941, it completely changed society across Labrador. Indigenous and other residents relocated to the head of Lake Melville to join allied personnel at the great trans-Atlantic airport, all in support of RAF Ferry Command. Over 24,000 aircraft passed through Goose Bay during the war.

In a remote corner of the base lies Commonwealth Cemetery. Here lay 32 aviators and soldiers from Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia killed when their aircraft went down.

Just as poignant as the Lest We Forget Cemetery, and buried alongside are many civilians – including their children, who were also involved in this epic struggle.

On each 11th of November, our community gathers here for an emotional ceremony. Military personnel stand at each war grave while remarks and prayers are offered by the wing commander and base padre. The Act of Remembrance is read by the Royal Canadian Legion. Relatives and community supporters gather in support while the three national anthems and “Last Post” are played.

Please join me in thanking those in the service of our country at 5 Wing Goose Bay, and those who gather annually with them at this special place, to remember this ultimate sacrifice.

Lest we forget.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dave Rex is a very familiar name in the Stephenville - Port au Port area. When it comes to volunteering, Dave's dedication and passion in the community are obvious and he is certainly looked upon as an exceptional community member who always goes above and beyond the call of duty.

As a testament to his volunteerism, Dave has been recognized with a number of distinctions over the years. In both 1999 and again in 2007, Dave was awarded Stephenville Citizen of the Year. In 2016, Dave was named a Senior of Distinction by the Department of Seniors, Wellness and Social Development to acknowledge and celebrate the meaningful contribution seniors make to our society.

Dave has been a member of the Stephenville Lions Club for the past 30 years and has held a number of offices within the club, including serving as president. Under Dave's leadership in 2013, the Stephenville club was named a top five club in Canada. In 2016, he also received the Lions International President's Award.

To quote Dave: Service to others is the rent we pay for our place on earth, and of that service, the greatest is to our youth.

Please join me in recognizing and congratulating Mr. Dave Rex as an outstanding citizen and volunteer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Pat O'Keefe Sr. has made many great contributions to the community of Mount Pearl.

Pat began coaching hockey in 1975 when he coached the Mary Queen of the World hockey team. From there, he continued on to coach numerous all-star teams and served as vice-president and president of the Mount Pearl

Minor Hockey Association. Pat also coached soccer with the Mount Pearl Soccer Association and was a Cub leader and a Scout master at Mary Queen of the World. As well, he served on the PTA of two Mount Pearl high schools.

For many years, Pat served as a grand knight of Knights of Columbus Father John B. Kent Council and is still a member today. He held the position of president of Mary Queen of the World parish council for several years, served as director of the Children's Wish Foundation and was elected to the Mount Pearl council for two terms. Additionally, Pat has received numerous awards and recognition for his outstanding work in volunteerism, including Citizen of the Year and the Queen's Jubilee Medal.

Pat O'Keefe has contributed to the success of many supports and community organizations within our community. Please join me in recognizing Pat O'Keefe for his outstanding contributions to the community of Mount Pearl.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I rise to give recognition to the Labrador West Search and Rescue team. The Labrador West Search and Rescue team was formed in 1982 and currently has 35 members. Even with their near-total shutdown because of the pandemic this year, they have been on standby or in action for 11 call-outs and about 2,400 hours spent in the field, collectively.

The Labrador West Search and Rescue team trains for hours in every weather condition so they can be prepared to deploy at any moment's notice to give help to those who are lost or may be injured.

What some don't realize is that they are also at most community events, volunteering to help with traffic control, first aid during parades, marathons and hockey tournaments. These volunteers provide their service to ensure that rowers are safe during our Regatta. They also educate our residents on how to enjoy outdoor

activities safely and give presentations to all the schools.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in thanking the Labrador West Search and Rescue team for all the work they've done to keep our community safe and educate everyone year-round.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Today I recognize the life and work of the Right Reverend Dr. Geoffrey Peddle who was the bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Eastern Newfoundland and Labrador since 2014 and was ordained in the ministry for 33 years.

Geoff served in parishes across the province: Lake Melville, Cartwright, Arnold's Cove and Mount Pearl. He was the author of *From Mount Pearl to Mount Sinai*, *The Atonement of Jack Fowler*, a history of *The Church Lads' Brigade* and *The Church of England Orphanage in Newfoundland: 1855-1969*. He was outspoken in his support for same-sex marriage, better treatment of prisoners and interfaith dialogue. He did not back away from difficult topics.

I know I speak for all hon. Members as I send my condolences to his wife Kathy, sons Benjamin and Adam, daughter-in-law Magdalena and his new granddaughter Josefina. The family has asked that we give gratitude for Geoff's life by enjoying time with loved ones, walking in nature and being kind to one another.

I ask the hon. Members of this House to join me in celebrating the life and work of Bishop Geoffrey Peddle. May we all aspire to follow his example of kindness, inclusion and mercy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

MR. A. PARSONS: Mr. Speaker, today I participated virtually in the Maritime and Arctic Security and Safety Conference – MASS20.

This event has attracted a global audience and is showcasing the significant capabilities of the aerospace, defence and security industries in Atlantic Canada. Despite a challenging year, industry leaders have been quick to adapt to the rapid pace of change and take advantage of new opportunities.

Aerospace, defence and security all play a role in the growth engine of the Atlantic Canadian economy, accounting for almost 23,000 jobs and an overall economic impact of nearly \$3 billion.

In Newfoundland and Labrador, companies and researchers thrive on solving the technical challenges of operating in a cold ocean environment with innovative technologies, such as subsea imaging and radar technology, as well as aerial and satellite ice management. By establishing world-class technologies, academic and research facilities and developing highly skilled workers right here, our companies and institutions are competing globally.

I would like to congratulate the Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defence Association for changing course while keeping everyone's health and safety top of mind and putting together the virtual MASS20 conference. I look forward to continuing our partnership to help advance the opportunities that exist to enhance our international profile.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PETTEN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. On behalf of the Official Opposition, I join the minister in recognizing Atlantic

Canada Aerospace and Defence Association on their virtual conference, MASS20.

Mr. Speaker, as COVID-19 continues to reek havoc on our global community, more and more conferences and workshops are transitioning to the online format. While many participants miss the face-to-face interaction, the online nature allows more individuals and businesses to participate, especially smaller firms and start-ups.

I am pleased to hear that through MASS20 our environment and local industry has been showcased. Our province offers the unique ability to do research and innovate in cold-water climate while Labrador also provides the ability to work in a northern and remote landscape.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for the advance copy of his statement. I, too, congratulate Atlantic Canada Aerospace and Defence Association on a successful conference in these difficult times.

We have a gem here in Newfoundland and Labrador when it comes to research and technology sector and we have the responsibility to nurture and grow this industry further. I'm proud that we can continue to be a world leader in Maritime and Arctic safety, so let's continue to grow and support these industries.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

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

MR. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to highlight assistance provided through the

Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture Seafood Development program to help support the recent launch of Waspu – a new Indigenous brand seal oil capsule developed by the Qalipu First Nation. Waspu is the Mi'kmaq word for seal.

Funding of up to \$25,000 will be provided to the Qalipu Development Corporation to help launch the Waspu brand into the domestic market by supporting the development of social media, a website and marketing materials.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to commend the leadership of the Qalipu First Nation for recognizing opportunities that exist in our commercial seal fishery and pursuing the development of an Indigenous branded seal oil capsule.

The provincial government is pleased to support such an initiative that only helps promote the health benefits associated with our seafood resources but one which also sends a clear signal that the seal fishery remains active and an important component of the fishing industry here in the Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Qalipu Development Corporation has partnered with Newfoundland-based retail grocery chain Colemans to carry the product where it is hoped it will be welcomed by consumers here locally and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, opportunities to access new quotas of valuable fish species adjacent to our shores are anticipated in the near future. We look forward to continuing our advocacy on behalf of Indigenous communities and, indeed, all those living in our coastal communities to ensure rightful and fair access to future quota allocations is recognized.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement. Mr. Speaker, we would also

like to commend and congratulate the Qalipu First Nation on this new venture. We should be promoting all our seafood resources.

The seal industry is, in particular, often forgotten. I know that it's ignored and completely misunderstood by the current federal government, given that they continue to do the inaction addressing the growing number of seals and the poor judgment it showed just last month giving \$80,000 to the IFAW to do work in this province. That is why it's important to educate people about the valuable resource and the benefits it can offer.

Mr. Speaker, we're very pleased to see the seal fishery be promoted in this way. We wish the Qalipu First Nation every success with this venture. We look forward to seeing expanded markets for this and other seal products in the future.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I, too, thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement and compliment the Qalipu Development Corporation on the launch of its Indigenous brand, Waspu seal oil capsule, of course, with funding from the provincial government. It's a truly local and made-in-Newfoundland-and-Labrador initiative that utilizes Indigenous ingenuity, a renewable seafood resource and partners with local businesses such as Colemans to promote the product.

If there's a path to economic prosperity for our province, it is in partnerships such as these.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I acknowledge in this hon. House two gentlemen who recently passed away, both of whom recorded impressive achievements and made exceptional contributions to sport in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Enshrined in the Sport Newfoundland and Labrador Hall of Fame, the provincial athletics Hall of Fame and the Newfoundland and Labrador Soccer Hall of Fame, Ben Dunne was an integral member of our provincial sporting community for over 50 years.

A contributor as an athlete, a coach and a builder, Mr. Dunne was well known mostly for his impressive list of competitions within athletics and on the soccer pitch. From winning the Tely 10 in 1973, to participating in the prestigious Boston Marathon several times, he coached at the 1988 World Junior track and field championships, as well as the Canada Games and provincial games. On the soccer pitch, he led multiple teams, including the 2002 and 2005 squads at the national Jubilee Trophy for women's championships and the provincial entry at the 1993 Canada Summer Games.

Mr. Speaker, another pillar of provincial sports who recently passed was Dave Barrett.

In the days when top athletes typically played a couple of sports, Dave Barrett excelled in two sports during the winter and two sports in the summer. An all-round athlete who thrived in the sport of track and field. He led St. Bon's to three overall championships, medalling in shot put, discus, javelin, high jump and relay. In his brief tenure on the soccer pitch, he earned an MVP award and played for the St. John's All-Stars. Mr. Barrett also had great success on the ice with his beloved St. Bon's, where his squad won the Boyle Trophy five of the six years he played hockey.

But, Mr. Speaker, it was on the hardwood where Mr. Barrett's star shone the brightest. Winner of numerous city league MVP awards and scoring titles, he was inducted as an original member of

the Newfoundland and Labrador Basketball Hall of Fame.

Mr. Speaker, I ask all hon. Members to join me in acknowledging the life of Ben Dunne and Dave Barrett, two pillars in our provincial sporting community.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

Mr. Speaker, sports in our province recently lost two more sport legends and hall of fame members, Ben Dunne and Dave Barrett.

Mr. Dunne's contribution as an athlete, coach, builder and educator in this province is well known. Perhaps his greatest accomplishment was the young athletes and students who he aspired to reach their full potential either on the track, the pitch or in the classroom. Dunne was an athlete extraordinaire who competed at the Boston Marathon and won the Tely 10.

Mr. Barrett was an all-around athlete in multiple sports but best known for his on-ice exploits and five Boyle Trophies. He was an original member of the Basketball Hall of Fame for his excellence on the court. Barrett also found time to serve his community as city councillor for a number of years.

On behalf of the Official Opposition, I send my sincere condolences to the Dunne and Barrett families on the passing of these two sports legends.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I would like to thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

We here in the Third Party caucus send our condolences to the family and friends of Mr. Ben Dunne and Mr. Dave Barrett. The accomplishments of these two gentlemen have left a huge impact on the sporting community in Newfoundland and Labrador and their contributions will continue to inspire thousands of generations to come and do their best.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

MR. CROSBIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

During his leadership campaign, the Premier promised a chief economic recovery officer. The economy needs recovery and jobs more than ever, but this is another promise with no action.

When will action be taken on economic recovery and jobs?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We have already announced the Premier's Economic Recovery Team and they're working diligently currently. We've also made good progress on moving towards a chief economic recovery officer that will last beyond the Premier's Economic Recovery Team, beyond this Legislature and hopefully for years to come so that person can give updates regularly on the economic situation of the province well into the future.

We're continuing to work hard to create jobs and economic opportunity for the people of the province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: I thank the Premier for that, but he's had six months now to think through and work on the economic recovery officer and all he has to show so far is good progress.

He says he talks to Ottawa every day. When did he last talk to Prime Minister Trudeau about the jobs crisis in this province, and did the prime minister promise any additional help for industrial-based jobs, including Come By Chance and the offshore?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, the math from the Member opposite is once again wrong. Nevertheless, we continue to have open discussions with Ottawa on a regular basis. My last conversation with the prime minister was a first ministers' call, which occurs every two weeks or so.

We discussed, in particular, the Atlantic region and the impact that COVID is having. We discussed this at the Atlantic premiers' conference recently as well and how the region itself is suffering in particular with respect to the crisis in oil and gas in Newfoundland and Labrador. The prime minister is aware of the situation and is currently working through all solutions for all Canadians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, if I could respectfully suggest, if the Premier spent less time in the Trudeau fan club and more time fighting for us, he might get results.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: The Premier's government has rolled over on equalization, failed on fiscal stabilization and rate mitigation has been a total disaster.

Given that our six Liberal MPs have disappeared, when will the Premier use his supposed leverage to get help from Ottawa?

PREMIER FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Of course, we wouldn't be in a rate mitigation scenario if it wasn't for the Members opposite and then we're in this (inaudible) that we're currently facing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

PREMIER FUREY: The fact that they burdened the future of Newfoundland and Labrador and their children with this untold economic and fiscal crisis is something that we're working through currently as a government.

That said, the Member opposite may want to rip down flags, I want to build relationships so that we can work through this time of crisis, not in war, but to work together towards a solution for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Speaker, the flag I want to raise is the flag of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. CROSBIE: I might modestly suggest to the Premier that if he spent less time focused on the past and more time focused on the future, he could get some good ideas about Muskrat Falls from his friend John Abbott. A previous Liberal government under Clyde Wells used legislation to repeal collective agreements for economic reasons.

The Premier says attrition is not enough, so will he clarify whether he intends to use legislation to tear up collective agreements?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

PREMIER FUREY: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question.

Raising flags – we're all interested in raising the Newfoundland and Labrador flag. We do so every day. I'm not interested in tearing down the Canadian flag.

We're part of Canada; we're part of a solid federation. This is the benefit of being part of a Canadian family so that we can have open discussions with our federal colleagues to advance the Newfoundland and Labrador agenda in the face of an acute rate mitigation crisis that's been laid on our laps by the previous governments.

We will continue to work towards solutions with the Canadian government as part of that federation, which I know that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are proud to be a part of.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. CROSBIE: Mr. Premier, I think we heard a pile of platitudes from the Premier about collective bargaining, which amounts to no comfort for hard-working public servants. The hospitality industry says 7,000 jobs will not survive another year without a plan, and they need the plan now.

Can the Premier tell the industry what the plan is?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the question.

Obviously, I think it's the first time the hon. Member actually brought up the tourism and hospitality sector in this House, which is excellent because it's a major economic driver in our province.

We've worked very hard on developing relationships with our colleagues in the hospitality industry. HNL has been with us along the entire way. We've developed a Tourism and Hospitality Support Program which has been greatly successful in reaching out.

Obviously, we're working very hard with our federal colleagues and the Minister of Tourism. We're looking at opportunities that we see to extend those programs, to ensure that those operators have continuity because they've done substantial work over the last number of decades and we want to continue that success into the future for that industry.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, just to remind the minister that he needs to be probably a little more attentive because we brought up tourism many times in this House and in this Question Period.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Education committed to consultation in January of 2021 with the child care industry about the \$25-a-day program that he announced two weeks ago.

Why did he not engage in a meaningful way with home-based operators before rolling out the program?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The consultation process that I announced would have a formal start of consultations in January is toward the statutory review that is supposed to be in 2022. We decided that we would have that early.

Mr. Speaker, we are always open for consultation. We're always open for feedback and for dialogue with those in the early learning and child care industry. In fact, I have a meeting with home-based workers tomorrow morning at 9.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, it reminds me of the roll out of the school re-entry plan on August 17.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, operators continue to speak out about forced cuts to their rates. In order to provide a \$25-a-day child care they will be forced to lose money or cut nutritious snacks and healthy meals.

Why is the minister forcing operators to choose between going out of business or a quality, healthy meal plan for our children?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Like the Member opposite's bosom buddy, he was also calling for half-day school, Mr. Speaker, or half-time school. Have one-half of the class in on Monday, the other half in on Tuesday. I think our back-to-school plan has worked far better than the suggestions from that Member, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the \$25-a-day child care plan is a phenomenal plan for parents in this province. It makes early learning and child care affordable for families in this province. Like any new program, as it was rolled out for the centres in 2014, it came with road bumps. I am fully prepared to work with our partners in early learning and child care to ensure that we have a good future for early learning and child care in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Mr. Speaker, if they had done homework when they rolled out the schools re-entry plan, they would've known that the largest school district, the Toronto school district, had that same idea. So it wasn't something new, it was something that a jurisdictional scan would've highlighted for the minister.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from operators who are devastated as they consider how to feed the children on \$2.50 a day for meals and 50 cents a day for snacks, which is outrageous.

Will the minister commit that he will fix this mess before the \$25-a-day child care starts in January?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will remind the hon. Member across the way that in Ontario they have considerably larger numbers of COVID cases than we do in this province. Maybe they needed half-day school in that province, Mr. Speaker, but we don't in this province. I will gladly listen to the advice of parents in this province who want their children in school full-time, as opposed to the advice of the Member who wanted them in school half-time.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of early learning and child care, the concerns raised –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

MR. SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

MR. OSBORNE: – by home operations are legitimate concerns. I've got a meeting with them at 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

Mr. Speaker, the plan for centres in this province, the subsidy for centres is about \$1 or \$1.50 more than we're offering home based.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. PARDY: Hindsight is a wonderful thing, Mr. Speaker. If we were back on August 11, there was a different perspective on our school system and what we would face here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of these home-based daycares are female entrepreneurs who are struggling to provide an essential service and make a decent living.

Again: Why is the minister forcing the operators to choose between quality of care and keeping the doors open?

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

MR. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, the plan that was rolled out in 2014 for our centres saw that 70 per cent of centres today are involved in the Operating Grant Program, which means about 30 per cent are not. So the 30 per cent have the ability, the freedom to charge what they wish. They still have children going to those centres.

Mr. Speaker, nobody is forcing a home-based centre to join the Operating Grant Program, so nobody is forcing anybody to do anything. We are willing to sit and speak with the home-based operators to find out what their concerns are and see if there are areas, red tape or other areas that we can make it easier for these operators.

I am meeting with them 9 o'clock tomorrow morning, Mr. Speaker, to hear their concerns. As I said, some of the concerns that they're raising are very legitimate concerns.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In 2016, the sitting administration announced its intention to implement regional governance and sharing of services. It has been four years.

I ask the minister: Why has it been so long to see no action?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for my first opportunity to answer a question. I'm sure my colleague, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, is more than delighted that I finally got my question.

As the Member opposite knows, and like so many in this department, regionalization does take a significant shift in government.

Since I've been in this role for the last eight, 10 weeks, I took the opportunity to meet with MNL and PMA to discuss regionalization. We set up a committee that has been working very actively to tackle forms of regionalization. Right now, there are a lot of success stories going on with regard to regionalization within our communities and that. We will continue to work on that and build on that, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, we just heard that this sitting administration has set up another working committee.

What mandate will this new committee be given and what results does the government hope to achieve?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think in order to do justice to this regionalization and shared services, we have to fully involve and be engaged with MNL and PMA and other stakeholders. I don't think, as a government as a whole, that we can make the decisions that are going to impact the residents and communities of Newfoundland and Labrador without the involvement of these organizations.

We're not going to rush this, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it has taken some time and we're working through the process. We're analyzing the public consultation that took place and we'll continue

to do so. We're not going to rush it. We want to make sure we do this right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, we just heard that the minister does not think government is capable of making decisions.

Mr. Speaker, government has already held consultations on regional government back in 2017.

Number one: Will they release the findings? Number two: Has this Committee been struck because they're afraid to make the decisions necessary?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not sure if the Member opposite heard my comments. No, we're not afraid, as a government, to make the decisions, but I think it's unfair for a government to make decisions without the key stakeholders involved.

PMA and MNL are partnering with us. They're supportive of the action we're doing. They're fully engaged in the process to date and they will continue to be engaged, Mr. Speaker. We have a great working relationship and we want to continue on that working relationship.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, for the municipalities in this province, particularly the smaller ones, compliance with the new federal waste water regulations is practically impossible.

What is the minister's plan to address the financial impact these requirements will have on municipalities across our province?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Environment, Climate Change and Municipalities.

MR. BENNETT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is a good question. It is a concern that has been addressed at various levels of government. Our government is committed to working with our federal colleagues to work on the waste water management plan.

We did support MNL and their federal colleagues to ask for an extension. The federal government did come back and commit that they will reconsider the time frames that are put into place.

As a government, we take this very seriously. We'll continue to work with municipalities through our different funding programs to achieve the goals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LESTER: Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 200 communities across the province with boil-water advisories. These municipalities are more concerned about having access to clean drinking water and waste water concerns are secondary.

What support does the minister have for these small communities that have unsafe drinking water?

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

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the Member opposite for the question.

The Member opposite should be – and I guess everybody should be – made aware that as of November 13, we've had applications open for

ICIP funding. That's funding for municipalities for waste water, for water, to treat their waste water and the boil-water advisories.

We put out an early call last year in which we didn't have a big uptake on it. I think it's about 160 at any given time that are on a boil-water advisory in this province. A lot of towns have chosen, just made the choice, not to turn on their infrastructure. We made an application available to these towns.

If the towns don't take up on it, we cannot force it down their throat, Mr. Speaker. We can lead people to the water but we can't make them drink. We have a program in place to help the towns out there to address the needs that will address their boil-water advisory issues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. Member for Exploits.

MR. FORSEY: We have been getting calls from constituents who have been waiting up to three weeks for an appointment with Motor Registration in Grand Falls-Windsor. We are also hearing that there are very long wait times to get a response on the phones.

What immediate action will the minister take to improve service delivery for those residents?

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

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Since we had the global pandemic this year, our staff at motor vehicle registration have completely changed how they deliver services. While you used to be able to walk into a branch, now you call; you make an appointment online. There are drop boxes where you do things. You do the transactions online.

My understanding is in Grand Falls-Windsor in particular, residents are able to get an appointment within the next day or two, so I don't believe there is an issue in Grand Falls-Windsor.

We are working on a new phone system that will allow us to share capacity around the province so that residents, when they call in, they don't have a wait and they can get services right away. We are trying to make things better for residents, and it's a very important priority for me.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FORSEY: This is particularly concerning for seniors and others who are unable to access service online as they have no Internet access.

What are government's plans to address their concerns?

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

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While we are putting services online, our services in person will not change. Residents can continue to call. They can use a drop box. They can make an appointment to come in to a motor vehicle registration branch. We are not changing the services. If anything, the online services will help alleviate capacity so that we can provide better services to those who do them in person and on the phone.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, that doesn't give any assurances to our seniors who cannot access services online.

Mr. Speaker, this question is for the Premier. We're in an economic crisis. I've heard from many people in my district and throughout the province, including seniors and people on fixed incomes, about the rising cost of groceries.

I ask the Premier of the province: What specific steps are being taken to ensure that consumers are protected from the rising cost of food?

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

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In our department we have the Consumer Advocate. In terms of complaints from residents and food, particularly on price gouging, during COVID-19 we did have a few complaints around price gouging, but they were all investigated and found that no one was actually price gouging in terms of the price gouging rules. We don't have any concerns about this at this point, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main,

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, the minister may not have any concerns, but our constituents who are calling our offices every day have serious concerns about this problem.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Mr. Speaker, the cost of living in this province is increasing, making life unaffordable and stressful for so many people. We are hearing from constituents with worries about not only the rising cost of groceries but other basic household essentials.

Once again, I ask the Premier of our province: What specific steps are being taken to protect our people from the rising cost of essential goods?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

This is a very important question. These are difficult times for people, we recognize that. That's why we have a very stable budget in very unstable times. There's \$123 million allocated in

this budget as the Income Supplement, as well as for the Newfoundland and Labrador Seniors' Benefit. There's \$12 million towards adult literacy programs.

Mr. Speaker, there is plenty of programming available for seniors, including through the Seniors' Advocate. If there's anything that we can do to support a senior, we certainly will. These are challenging times. We'll do absolutely everything we can to assist people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association has identified a "catastrophic shortage" of family physicians in my district.

Recently, I received an email from a lady who lost her family doctor and she needed a prescription filled. She called the 811 HealthLine and, sure enough, they gave her a refill on her prescription, but then they told her that if she wanted to refill that prescription again she needed to get a family doctor or go to the emergency room the next time.

Minister, what would you suggest I tell this woman?

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

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

It's an excellent question. It is ironic that at a time when we have more physicians and more family physicians in this province than we have ever had, access to those individuals seems to be more challenged.

The Member opposite should know that we work with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association. We actually provide them with funding of \$4.5 million a year for them and their family practice renewal project. We have worked with them on collaborative arrangements to look after orphan patients, as they refer to them, from time to time, and a team-based

approach that we have come to agree on will be a major pillar of our negotiations going forward with the NLMA.

In the meantime, we have mechanisms in place for episodic non-urgent care and we're looking to expand those as well, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. WAKEHAM: Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for his answer but, again, the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association have identified over 100,000 people in our province who do not have access to a family physician. It's not just in my district. It's in the St. John's region, it's in the Central region, it's all over the province and it's time that we do something because it's not working. While we say we have more physicians than we've ever had, it's not working.

Mr. Speaker, for over a year and a half the Sir Thomas Roddick Hospital in Stephenville has been without an internist and a surgeon. Now we are hearing that the second surgeon is leaving. Surgical services in the hospital have obviously been impacted and continue to be impacted. Clearly, there's a problem with recruitment, not just with family physicians but also with specialists.

Again I ask the minister: What is specifically being done to address the catastrophic shortage of doctors in the Stephenville region?

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

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

Once again, the challenge is distribution. We have, I think, the second highest per capita number of doctors per 100,000 of any provincial jurisdiction. It is of no comfort if they're all working in St. John's. We have, with the Medical Association, begun discussions as part of negotiations around a provincial strategy for

recruitment and retention. We will look forward to those rolling out once the negotiations have been completed. Again, as it is part of negotiations, I think it would be premature for me to say much more about that, Mr. Speaker, but it is a priority for us to get physicians in the right places.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in a recent press release NAPE reported that staff were working 12-, 16- and 24-hour shifts. Seniors' rights groups are calling for a staffing ratio of 3-1. It was good to see a conference between the regional health authorities, NAPE and the Government of Newfoundland took place last week.

I ask the minister: What was the staffing plan for long-term care facilities that came out of that conference?

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

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

With reference to 24-hour shifts, the department has had in place mandatory reporting of 24-hour shifts of any health care worker well prior to COVID. We are aware of maybe half a dozen over the course of the last six months. That seems to be a very infrequent – fortunately – situation.

With regard to the discussions with Mr. Earle and NAPE, as well as the other unions, we have agreed a process to look forward to this. We have increased enrolment of LPN and PCA courses through the College of the North Atlantic by 80 per cent and we are working with the unions about improving the working conditions of those who remain.

I'm pleased to report to this House that the average hours of nursing care in long-term care

has gone up to well above the national average. It's gone from 3.4 hours per day, which is above the national average, to over 4.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

Mr. Speaker, we have been receiving calls from constituents who are seniors and have no place to live. They are depending on the kindness of neighbours and friends who will board them for the night. Currently, there are 87 empty units in St. John's with the Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and over 900 people on a wait-list.

I ask the Minister Responsible for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation: What is the plan to ensure that seniors are not homeless this winter?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MR. WARR: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial and federal government signed a nine-year multilateral agreement back in 2019 that provided \$270 million in funding to preserve, renew and expand social housing and community housing here in Newfoundland and Labrador, and to bring new housing solutions to the people in core housing needs.

The first of three three-year action plans, Mr. Speaker, was agreed upon between Newfoundland and Labrador Housing Corporation and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation in March of 2020. This action plan outlines our targets moving forward with regard to social housing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

We still need to address the 87 empty units and the 900 people on the wait-list.

Mr. Speaker, a common practice I see is outpatient services sending mental health patients, some to homes owned by private landlords, many of which are not properly maintained. The substandard and often unsupported homes exacerbate the mental health conditions of people who live there.

I ask the minister: Where is the plan to support our most vulnerable neighbours across the province?

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

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

Again, a very important question and very timely. During COVID, we, through the Department of Health and with my colleague from CSSD, put together a vulnerable persons working group. This is co-chaired by our director of Mental Health and Addictions in recognition of the mental health and addictions challenges, as well as the representatives from NLHC.

This has become such a valued resource that it is actually practically involved on the ground in finding policy solutions, as well as operational solutions. This we have undertaken to continue regardless of when the pandemic ends, and that will then feed into our mental health and addictions strategy, as well as CSSD's housing plan, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much.

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

MR. J. DINN: Mr. Speaker, I invite both ministers to walk through our communities and

recognize the reality we are dealing with, which is basically a rise in violence, crime, drug addition and mental health complexities. Both ministers are welcome to speak to the people who live in our neighbourhoods and communities from St. John's to Labrador West to see the reality for themselves.

I ask the Minister of Health or the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development: Where is the plan to address these issues that we're facing right now?

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development.

MR. WARR: Mr. Speaker, again, I thank the hon. Member for his question.

There are, I guess, a whole list of complexities that the hon. Member has outlined and we continue to work closely through our interdepartmental approach to poverty – if I may use that word, Mr. Speaker. I know with regard to our Premier and our government, poverty reduction remains high on our priority list.

Just last week, we took the opportunity in our SPC meeting to address the issues that the Member is talking about today and we'll continue to ensure that this working group makes this a priority going forward, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

MR. SPEAKER: In accordance with subsection 44(1) of the *House of Assembly Act*, I am tabling a report of the Commissioner for Legislative Standards entitled: *Joyce Report*, November 3, 2020.

Further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Notices of Motion

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

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

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move, in accordance with Standing Order 11(1), that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, November 5, 2020.

MR. SPEAKER: 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 Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to clarify, in Question Period we talked about price gouging. It was a mistake for me to say we don't have any concerns. I feel sick about that, I should not have said that. I just want to clarify that obviously we take the concerns of the people of the province very seriously, especially with the price of food.

We have a Consumer Protection department within Digital Government and Service NL and we investigate complaints around price gouging and the price of food. I would encourage anyone in the province who have concerns that they're – not necessarily from an overall inflation perspective, but if they feel like the price of food is disproportionate or inappropriate according to regulation, then they can certainly contact our office and make a complaint and they'll be investigated. We take those very seriously.

I just wanted to apologize, I shouldn't have said that, and clarify the role of consumer protection legislation in the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

Any more answers to questions for which notice has been given?

Petitions.

Petitions

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

MS. EVANS: I'm presenting this petition for fairer electricity rates for Labrador Indigenous communities.

The reason for this petition is: We, the undersigned, are concern citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure that fairer electricity rates be provided to Torngat Mountains residents of Northern Labrador Indigenous communities of Nain, Natuashish, Hopedale, Makkovik, Postville and Rigolet.

The rates charged to Northern Labrador residents are cost-prohibitive to using electric heat. Therefore, rates are cost-prohibitive to adequately heating their homes. The rationale for this petition is to bring electricity rates more in line with what our neighbouring residents of Lake Melville region pay.

For the first 1,000 kilowatt hours, Torngat Mountains residents are charged the same rate as neighbouring residents of Lake Melville region. However, above the ceiling of 1,000 kilowatt hours, Torngat Mountains residents pay six times the rate of Lake Melville residents; six times the rate, jumping to 18.5 cents a kilowatt hour. The 1,000 kilowatt hour ceiling prevents many residents from being able to afford to heat their homes with electric heat. Low-income families and households that don't have the manpower to haul wood are the greatest impacted.

Poorly heated houses often result in damage, creating expensive repairs for frozen pipes, moisture damage and mould. Poorly heated

houses also create social and mental health issues that can be long lasting. We strongly believe that changes to electricity rates are needed to be made for Northern Labrador residents of Torngat Mountains.

Therefore, we petition this hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to increase the life block to 3,500 kilowatt hours when applying the Northern Strategic Plan subsidy to electric bills of Northern Labrador residents of Torngat Mountains.

Just looking at my petition now, on the North Coast, as was stated, if you go over a thousand kilowatt hours the rate jumps up to 18.5 cents a kilowatt hour. This is the highest rate charged to residents in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Mr. Speaker, 18.5 cents is cost prohibitive to anyone being able to heat their homes, let alone the most impacted, which is our elders, our children, single mothers and low-income families. They are the greatest impacted by the inability to heat a house, heat a home. In actual truth, everybody is impacted. Even people who have two large incomes in a household really can't afford electric heat because the bill gets up around \$800, \$900.

Just looking at that, I already talked about elders spending all their pension cheques on heating oil. I talked about cold houses. I talked about condensation because of the heating and cooling of not being able to provide a constant temperature in the household. I talked about mould damage, the cost of those repairs. All of this hits at the heart of the families on the North Coast of Labrador. This impacts not just low-income families or our seniors, our elders, it impacts all families.

Until we find an alternate source of electricity to this greenhouse gas-producing diesel that we rely on, we're asking that the life block be increased to 3,500 kilowatt hours. We're not asking for the world, we're asking for the life block to be increased.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the reasons for this petition are that: Whereas individual residents, municipal leaders, including the Conception Bay North Joint Council have spoken to the deplorable road conditions in the District of Harbour Main. The district is made up of many smaller communities and towns like Holyrood, Upper Gullies, Seal Cove, Cupids, Colliers, South River, North River, Roaches Line and Makinsons.

These towns and communities have roads in desperate need of repair and paving. These roads see high-volume traffic flows every day and drivers can expect potholes, severe rutting, limited shoulders and many washed out areas along the way. We petition the hon. House of Assembly to immediately take the necessary steps to repair and repave these important roadways to ensure the safety of the driving public who use them on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, here we go again. This is not the first time I've raised this petition in the House of Assembly. Last June, for example, June 16, 2020, I raised this petition; yet, Mr. Speaker, we're still waiting. We see inaction by the government. In the past 17 months since my election, one of the biggest issues I hear about from my constituents are the conditions of the roads. The roads in many areas of the district can only be described as deplorable. They're horrible. Many people, not only in my district but other motorists outside the district who have to travel on these roads, are concerned and have reached out.

Primarily, they're concerned about safety issues. They're concerned about hazards caused by the roads. People, motorists, residents are getting increasingly frustrated by government's inaction to address these concerns. We hear in our offices about these issues, but it's not just individuals that are upset, Mr. Speaker. I have letters here from Conception Bay North Joint Council, from the municipal leaders in these councils who have contacted the previous minister of Transportation and now the current minister, expressing their frustration and their concerns.

Let me say in particular, the area in South River is horrendous. We're talking about large potholes that are dangerous and difficult to avoid. Not only there; I'll just highlight a couple: Roaches Line, Mr. Speaker. This is a well-known road in my district. It's Roaches Line. Many constituents and residents travel this road. It's a popular thoroughfare for travellers and commuters from neighbouring communities like Makinsons, Cupids, South River and others.

Again, these roads need to be addressed. They need to be improved. I've heard from council members that the patching work that goes on is totally unacceptable. The quality is just inadequate.

Mr. Speaker, please, we ask the government, we ask what action will be taken to improve the conditions of these roads in the District of Harbour Main.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAZIL: Mr. Speaker, on July 19, 2018, Eastern Health announced that the services offered at the Portugal Cove Community Health Clinic will be relocated to Major's Path centre, with the transition expected to be completed by September 20, 2018.

The Portugal Cove Community Health Clinic has provided public health services for decades and is the only clinic in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, a town of nearly 10,000 residents. The clinic provided direct health care programs and services to the town on a daily basis and addressed the vital growing needs for the community's health services, particularly for the increase in youth and aged population of Portugal Cove-St. Philip's.

Therefore, we petition the hon. House of Assembly as follows: We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to take immediate action to ensure that the services that were offered at the Portugal Cove

Community Health centre be reoffered at the same level as they were prior to the closure.

Mr. Speaker, in 2018, in conversations with Eastern Health in trying to justify the announcement to close a clinic that had been there for decades, and keeping in mind it was established based on the needs that communities needed to be or could be better served by having the health professionals in that community for accessibility and understanding of the dynamics of that community. The community at the time was probably 3,200, 3,300 people. A community now hitting 10,000, the eighth largest municipality when you compare it to the over 200 in our province.

To me, it would dictate that you would not only continue the services that you have been providing, but you would find ways to expand them and offer other ones that normally or previously weren't the key issues that had to be addressed. That would be around mental health; it would have been around addictions. Not counting all the primary care provided services that were necessary, those related to new babies, those related to young people, inoculations, all the things relevant to that and the needs of seniors.

Mr. Speaker, not only was it taken away, it was done based on what they call a financial exercise. When we sat down and analyzed it, and I sat with the chair of Eastern Health, I sat with the CEO, I sat with their chief financial officer, and at the end of the day I showed – coming with all the monies that had been put into it and what it would cost now to run Major's Path and still have nurses or nurse practitioners or any other health professionals drive to and from Portugal Cove - St. Philip's on a daily basis, losing anywhere from an hour to an hour and a half of direct provided service in travel time, which also was a cost, which also added to a potential danger and some of the road conditions in the wintertime and that particularly.

At the same time, with no public transportation it limited the residents of that community to be able to get to Major's Path – of which we don't own. Government doesn't own it. They pay rent there. The rent for a facility in Portugal Cove - St. Philip's was minimal in comparison, and

most of the health professionals lived in that community because for decades when they found employment they relocated to there. It made no sense in a time when we're making communities to be more based around health care that we change it (inaudible).

I ask the government to lobby to get back to what was working. You fixed something that wasn't broken. Let's not only add to it, let's bring it back and let's make sure people have access to the service they deserve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I call Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 11.

Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that under Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 3, 2020.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded by the hon. Government House Leader, pursuant to our Standing Order 11(1), that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, November 3.

Is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

I'm pleased to know we had full support from the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

AN HON. MEMBER: Fulsome.

MR. CROCKER: Fulsome.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I call Order 7, Bill 49.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 49 – this is a bill we've already started?

MR. CROCKER: No, no.

MR. SPEAKER: Okay, the hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I moved, seconded by the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, that Bill 49, An Act To Amend The Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act, by now read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 49, entitled An Act To Amend The Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act To Amend The Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act." (Bill 49)

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

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

I'm pleased this afternoon to have an opportunity to sit in this hon. House and introduce An Act to Amend the Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act.

This measure will be put in place for non-bargaining unit employees, similar to the measures we've put in place with recent agreements with NAPE and the nurses union as well, Mr. Speaker.

These changes we are making today here will affect the – I will use OPEBs – other post-employment benefits for non-bargaining employees. A group that includes executive management, non-management, non-unionized, House of Assembly Service employees and Statutory Officers and employees and their offices.

I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, these changes are for employees hired on or after April 1, 2020, and will apply to group insurance benefits in retirement. Government currently maintains a blended group insurance program for both active employees and retirees.

Today's proposed amendment, in combination with other OPEBs changes, will work toward curbing the potential liability for applying changes to OPEBs for non-bargaining unit public sector workers, similar, again, to those recently agreed to by NAPE and the Nurses' Union. Mr. Speaker, this will mean that all current employees, as of March 31, 2020, will qualify for 50-50 per cent premium sharing in their retirement. All employees hired after March 31, 2020, will share a 60-40 per cent premium sharing in their retirement.

During bargaining, we have also ensured that government, as an employer, maintains its rights to administer and modify post-employment benefit and insurance group insurance programs.

Mr. Speaker, the majority of public sector plans maintain the same level of benefit premiums for both the bargaining and non-represented employees. It is important to note, this legislation falls in line with that for NAPE and the Nurses' Union.

Mr. Speaker, as a result of these proposed changes, in combination with other changes to OPEBs in 2018, we anticipate that over a 30-year period, we will achieve approximately \$2.2 billion in savings. We are committed, as a government, to addressing the province's fiscal situation through planning.

Mr. Speaker, the provincial government is committed to addressing the province's fiscal situation through delivering for our workforce planning and remains committed to other financial management through amendments to the other post-employment benefits, such as the ones introduced here today.

I will now actually take my seat and allow the debate to proceed.

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

MR. BRAZIL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Again, as we move forward in this sitting of the House of Assembly, there's another piece of legislation that's important to ensuring that people have access to services, or the legislation is updated to protect the individual. In most cases, it's the consumer and the citizen. In this case, are those who would work collectively within our civil service to a certain degree, depending on which bargaining unit they're part of.

Mr. Speaker, this goes back to a period of time when there had been a number of changes in our pension plan processes and our services or our access to provided services after one leaves a government within the realms of the civil service, depending on which bargaining unit they are. It's clearly about trying to bring everything in line with the other parts of the bargaining process here.

I remember a number of years ago, when we first talked about provided services and, at the time, there was some challenges around the pension plans being stable and ensuring that all of our retirees had equitable income and sustainable income, but it was also about the services, particularly health services that would be provided afterwards. I must give credit to the unions of the day and the leadership of the time that looked at: How do we equitably do this? It was one of the first times that I really saw a collaborative approach by all the leaders of all the bargaining units to sit down and have a discussion about how we best address this.

I remember one of my colleagues, the premier of the day, saying: The best way we can solve this

is ask the people who are most effected by it. I remember having a conference call with all the unions and telling them this is where we need to get. How we get there, that has less impact on you guys or protects the interest of your members and also covers off things in the long term would be the best way to go.

I remember the debate and the discussion and over the course of a couple of months, the unions and their leadership going away and talking to their membership and coming back with suggestions and alternatives, realizing we all had to find a common ground, financially, for stability of the funds and the services after retirement but also for the betterment of every Newfoundlander and Labradorian from a debt load and keeping our debt in check.

I do give credit. I do remember one time, months after at a social event, running into one of these leaders who complimented us around the process that was used. I think it should be a template for anything that we do now. Before we get into a negotiations, before its called negotiations, let's have collaboration. Let's go to the stakeholders, those most effected by it and say: Here's where we need to go. Here's the reality. Here's what we need to achieve. How can you best help us get to that level and still, at the same time, minimize the impact or make sure that certain gaps in services are covered off by what we negotiated?

That was an example there. Where we're moving to now is ensuring everything is in line so everybody is protected on an equal field here.

Some would think it's simple but if you're talking about the cost of your health insurance after you retire, that may have a dramatic effect from 70 per cent to 50 per cent is a big difference, depending on the reality of what your ailment may be or the interventions that you may need as part of that whole process.

The fact that the legislation, presently, is currently on a sliding scale where a retiree would pay 50 to 85 per cent of their insurance premiums based on their length of service. For example, an individual with 20 years of service would pay 70 per cent of their premiums. An individual with 30 years of service would pay 50 per cent of the premiums.

We're trying to make it equitable. We're trying to say if you've committed to a certain period of time to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador that we owe you the respect and the support, that we valued you agreeing to provide those services for a period of time.

We've gotten to a point where we couldn't just let people come in off the street for six months or a year and still reap all the benefits of everybody else, but there had to be an equitable and a fair timeline for commitment to the civil service because people come in with the civil service at all different ages, Mr. Speaker. I was fortunate enough to come in as a young man, so I knew had I continued through the civil service that I would have been entitled to a pretty good package at the end of it with a pension plan, a bit of security as part of that.

If people come in later in life there are maybe some challenges in what they may be entitled to. At the same time, the taxpayers can't be on the hook for people who come in a year prior to them retiring, and then all the costing be related to every other taxpayer in Newfoundland and Labrador. That wouldn't be fair also.

We did come up with an equitable recommendation at the time. I'm glad to see now the legislation moves it to the next level. All the other bargaining units that were sort of left out of that or weren't put in the same vein as what was normally negotiated by the larger stakeholders at the time will now be put in line.

Everybody coming in to the civil service, when they know exactly what level they are with years of service, they would know, when they're ready to leave, exactly what they're entitled to and would have a little bit of security to ensure that their quality of life after retirement also covers key things like health coverage and insurance coverage.

Mr. Speaker, on that note, we look forward to supporting this and ensuring that our civil service, when they retire, do have all the equal services as they would and their counterparts for their years of service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Further speakers?

The hon. the Deputy Premier.

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

I thank the Member for Conception Bay East - Bell Island. I found his speech quite interesting. It was interesting to hear the background of it and his support for this legislation.

For the people who might just be tuning in, we're discussing legislation that basically speaks to amending the *Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act* to cover non-represented public sector employees not subject to NAPE or RNUNL membership and negotiated agreements.

I wanted to bring it forward because it's a little bit – so the people tuning in can understand what we're talking about here. Mr. Speaker, people in the audience, people who are listening may remember that NAPE and the Registered Nurses' Union recently finished negotiations and signed agreements with the provincial government on changes to Other Post-Employment Benefits. I recognize their leadership in helping to negotiate what I consider a strong settlement and a strong agreement. I think Members opposite agree that the leadership within NAPE and the Registered Nurses in moving forward here, I think is supporting not only their membership but also the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

What this basically does is it blends a group insurance program that's post-retirement. In light of the recent agreements with NAPE and the Nurses' Union, we've made changes to legislation to enact similar compensation and benefits changes for most of the non-unionized employees. Government currently maintains a blended group insurance plan for both active employees and retirees.

These amendments set out new rules for benefits applying to employees hired after April 1, 2020. These changes will apply to group insurance benefits in retirement. All current employees, as of March 31, 2020, will qualify for 50-50 per cent premium sharing in retirement. All employees then retired after March 31 will share a 60-40 per cent premium sharing in retirement. That is to equalize those employees that are not

covered by NAPE and the Registered Nurses' Union.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, that post-employment benefits – as the Member opposite and as my colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, alluded to – are very important to people, obviously, and form part of their post-retirement benefits and ensure they have the medical and health insurances they require. What we've basically done is made the changes to equalize between executives, managers, non-management and non-union employees, House of Assembly service employees and statutory offices and their bargaining unit office staff. So we're applying what was provided to NAPE and the Nurses' Union, now we're applying it to others. That's what the changes to this act do.

As a result of these proposed changes, though, which is important to all of us here in the province, is that over a 30-year period – and I know it's a long time, Mr. Speaker, but I will say that it will take that amount of time. It is a big benefit to the people of the province. It will result in about \$2.2 billion in potential savings. By just making this change from the 50-50 to the 60-40 will maintain about \$2.2 billion in savings and the other things that we've been able to do.

I listened intently to the Member opposite because he was talking about some of the changes that were brought in previously, Mr. Speaker, that were brought in prior to this government. In terms of the pension plan, I know those pension plan savings are also making sure that people have both a pension plan going forward but also ensuring it is sustainable.

I will say again, this is employees hired on or after April 1, 2020, that at retirement they'll qualify for pension benefits. They'll qualify for what they call OPEBs, as long as they're pension eligible, have a minimum of 15 years pensionable service and retire and commence receipt of a pension immediately upon ceasing active employment. Upon retirement, those employees who will become entitled to this will pay premiums of 60 per cent of the required premiums.

Mr. Speaker, I think it's very important for us to recognize how important our civil service is to

the effective management of Newfoundland and Labrador. We want to recognize employees for the amount of effort they give. We want to recognize how important it is to have these post-retirement benefits continue. Current, existing employees, again, will maintain their 50-50 cost-shared arrangement. For new employees it will be 60-40. It allows us to continue to offer these benefits, albeit at a slightly more premium but, again, they will be eligible.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, in the private sector a lot of people don't have these benefits. We all wish they did because, of course, these post-employment benefits are important to people as they retire. Health and dental and prescription drugs are very, very important.

Again, I'll say to the President of Treasury Board and my predecessor, the Minister of Finance, for bringing forward these amendments to the legislation to ensure that they are in line with the recently ratified and signed collective agreements with NAPE and the Nurses' Union. I think this is important to the people who are currently working in the civil service but it's also important to all people and all residents of the province for us to be able to offer these post-employment benefits but at a rate that is sustainable for the province. By saving that \$2.2 billion over the next 30 years, it will certainly ensure that we are fiscally responsible, that we are addressing our fiscal situation in the province and ensuring that we can offer post-employment benefits.

On that, Mr. Speaker, I'll turn it over to others to bring forward their comments on this very important piece of legislation. But, again, congratulations to the President of the Treasury Board for bringing this forward and to NAPE and the Nurses' Union for reaching an agreement to ensure that we are not just fiscally sustainable, but also making sure that we have the right employment benefits and the right employment contracts to ensure we have a robust and strong civil service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MS. COFFIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the rationale for this but I do feel a need to speak on this issue.

When we are talking about our responsibility for post-employment benefits, I've done a fair bit of reading on the Public Accounts, from the Auditor General, as well as budgets and a consistent theme throughout the Public Accounts as well as the Auditor General's reports is the ever-present and growing existence of an unfunded liability associated with post-employment benefits.

The reason we are in the situation that we are in – and I note in particular the Auditor General's report has a particularly good diagram showing just how much our unfunded liabilities have grown in recent years. If one was to have a look at that, group health and life insurance liability has been added to unfunded pension liability and our net borrowings and it has increased from a little over \$10 billion in 2013 to a little over \$20 billion this current year.

Now, it is a little bit reassuring to know that the group health and life insurance liability seems to be almost consistently the same amount, but that amount is going to grow over time. Now, I'm just looking at a picture so that can't give you the exact numbers, but our liabilities here come from the fact that we have not funded our obligation to help individuals receive health and life insurance once they retire. If one wants to look at what a wage package or a salary or employee contribution package is, when we look at salaries and benefits, post-employment benefits, including pensions as well as health insurance, is part of a larger employee compensation regime or scheme, if you will.

When we take on those obligations with individuals, part of our obligation is to put money into the accounts so that we can pay those group health and life insurance liabilities well before they come due. We put money into those accounts so the dollars will be there and we do not fall back into the very inappropriate pattern of doing things like paying pensions out of general revenue, which is what we have been doing since about 1981 when we went to a group pension plan.

We have been recognizing the need and the importance of including group health and life

insurance post-employment as being a key part of an employee compensation plan; however, we have not been managing our fiscal obligation towards that employee benefits appropriately. In fact, if one was to read the Auditor General's report or the Public Accounts, we will have seen that, time and time again, the unfunded liability in these post-employment benefits has not been addressed.

What we have seen now is this has come to such a head, has become such an important issue that a lot of our responsibility to these individuals, who when they signed onto – and I believe this was an argument made for some other pension plans, an inclusion into a previous pension plan – these obligations, we promised that this money would be there for these individuals once they retire. By not recognizing and paying into those funds, we have increased our unfunded liability.

What's now happened is in recent rounds of collective bargaining, not only are we not looking at increasing our salaries – our salaries are not being increased by, say, the cost of living – we are also now downloading some of the responsibility of these post-employment benefits onto the individuals who we are hoping to compensate for that. We've not really acknowledged our responsibility to our previous commitments so this unfunded liability has grown and grown and grown over time. That's somewhat disconcerting.

I am somewhat buoyed by the fact that collective bargaining has resulted in a reasonable solution for those who are engaged in the collective bargaining process, where everyone has agreed to pay a share of their post-employment benefits.

Reflecting on the fact that these post-employment benefits are part of our larger compensation for employees, we now need to recognize that our compensation for employees is effectively decreased. That's a concern and that's perhaps not something that was considered as this agreement was being put in place. Remember, we are also imposing a collective bargaining solution on our non-bargaining employees here. Wonderful that we are levelling the playing field, but we also must recognize what the consequences of our actions are.

I want to also reflect on the fact that quite often our budget is a point-in-time document. So it looks at a particular year and the circumstances in that year and says have we balanced our budget in that year. One of the key things that I have spoken about on numerous occasions is we need to look beyond the one-year snapshot and look at what are the implications of our decisions five years down the road or 10 years down the road, or perhaps whenever we all come to retire, might that be 20 years down the road.

What we have effectively done now is, if we are moving towards a defined benefit plan – reasonable. If it's a defined contribution plan, I'm going to be a little bit more concerned because in both of those plans, a defined benefit or defined contribution, you still end up with what is going to quite likely be a fixed income. That fixed income will be somewhat lower than what individuals are making prior to retirement.

Thinking ahead a little bit, what we see is people are going to be on fixed incomes; they will be lower incomes. They will be older. We all know that as we age we have more medical requirements. We have a higher cost of life insurance; we have higher health benefit costs. Now, we are imposing on future generations or on future employees and retirees, fixed incomes, higher costs associated with some of those post-employment benefits that must also come out of those incomes. We know that these individuals are going to be accessing health and life insurance at higher rates.

This is a concern that I do want to have entered into *Hansard* just to officially recognize that our decisions today will have consequences well into the future. We need to be very, very aware of this.

Now, I'm not going to vote against this bill. What I do want to say is I think this is a very, very good reason why we need to advocate for universal pharmacare and we need to advocate against the continued privatization of some of our health care services. I say that when I talk about we have private individuals doing blood collection, we have private individuals doing some scans, we have dentists, which is part of our health care system, that operate in a private manner. When we talk about our health care system and the importance of it being there, I

think we need to recognize that we do need universal health care and we do need universal and fair access to all of these services.

If we are making decisions, like we are today, then we need to also recognize that some time in the future, and what I expect will be the very near future, we are going to need to make offsetting decisions to ensure that the unintended consequences of what we are doing here are mitigated so that we are not seeing individuals with reduced income requiring additional health care services having to pay more and more of that lower amount of income to take care of their health because we have chosen to make this decision.

The other part of this that I think is also important is when we manage our health benefits it's important to ensure that those benefits themselves are not eroded. When we talk about how much dental will we pay for: Are we going to pay for 80 per cent of our dental? Are we going to have one cleaning a year or will we have two cleanings a year?

Well, when we start making those decisions in the management of our health care and life insurance plans, the more we reduce those services – we are still paying for them out of that fixed income. You're paying for those services, you're receiving reduced services, those costs are coming out of a fixed income and because you have less services, then you are going to have to find more money to pay for the services that are not covered on your insurance plan.

I just want to ensure that the House is very aware of the implications of the decisions that we are making and if any or all of us are here in 10 years, or five years or 20 years when this all comes to fruition, I hope we have the good sense to be able to address these in a comprehensive and sensible way to ensure the safety and health of everyone who is being impacted today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'm glad to have an opportunity to speak to Bill 49.

Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate what my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi is saying. I don't disagree with a lot of the points she's making, but I do look at it a little bit differently. First of all, I think it's important, once again, to realize where we are as a province fiscally with a huge year-over-year deficit and a crippling provincial debt that we have to try to manage our way out of. I do agree with her – absolutely agree with her, a hundred per cent – on the points of how we got to this place in terms of our government pension plans, our other post-retirement benefits.

Certainly, I have many people in my district, retired public service employees and so on, who I've had conversations with over the years and have raised concerns about the state of pension plans and post-retirement benefits, which, quite frankly, was caused by years and years – and you can't tag any particular administration. I'll say right back in Joey's day and onward, red and blue, of where money which should have been invested in pensions and post-retirement benefits was not.

Not only was money not invested, but the funds were raided, from what I can gather. Funds were raided by governments of the day to take that money and spend it on roads and everything else. Whether they were good expenditures or bad expenditures, whether that was required or not, we will leave that up to the historians, I guess, to figure that one out. It happened nonetheless.

I do know there was a point in time, even since my time or just prior to my time – I believe under the Williams's administration, I want to say – where they actually did put some significant money back in to pension plans. In the billions, if I'm not mistaken. There was a lot of money put in. Now, I know a lot of money got lost because of stock markets went, but there was \$2 billion, for sure, went in to one of the pension plans to try to right the wrongs that were done.

Regardless of that – I'm just going by my memory now. I know there have been efforts made to try to right some of those wrongs, but the reality of it is, as I said, we are in a lot of trouble financially and I think the public expect us to do what we can to try to get expenses

down. This probably would be viewed, I think, by many people as a responsible thing to do.

It is worth noting that this basically is – as has already been said, this is just basically being consistent with non-bargaining employees to the things that bargaining unit employees have agreed to. I think it's an important point to make that bargaining unit employees and their unions have actually agreed to this, and all that's happening here is simply applying it to non-bargaining unit employees. It's kind of fair and square across the board.

I think it's also important to note, based on what I'm reading here in the bill, that this really is only applying to I'm going to say new people or relatively new people. It says here you would be required to pay 50 per cent of the premiums for employees that were hired from June 1, 2018 to April 1, 2020, and then after April 1, 2020, it would be 60 per cent of the premiums into the plan would be paid by the employee.

I would have major concerns with this, Mr. Speaker, had we been going back in time and saying to someone who's been here for the last 20 years, guess what, we're going to change the rules on you now 20 years into your career, and whatever plans you had made or whatever – when you decided to take the job and work for the public service, we're going to change the rules significantly through your career when you're getting close to retirement or at least significantly into your career. I would have a concern with that.

That's not the case. We're talking about, basically, new employees. These people, at this point in time in their life and in their working life, they have lots of opportunity and time, if you will, where they can either say, you know what, I don't like these benefits and what I'm receiving and I'm going to move on to somewhere else and find another employer who's going to do better, or I know where I stand and now I'm going to judge myself accordingly and I'm going to invest in my own private plan in addition to this one. I'm going to put money away or I'm going to invest in RRSPs or whatever I'm going to do, so that when I do retire I'll be in a better place.

That comes down to personal responsibility, Mr. Speaker. There's lots of time here, in particular, new people, they have a career ahead of them where they can make decisions today so that in 25 years or 30 years from now they won't be in the situation that the Member, my colleague, has alluded to.

Now, I understand you could argue there are people in the public service that are not – not everybody is making – depends on what you do in terms of what wages you make, what you can afford and so on, but the point is, you do have an opportunity, lots of opportunity, to plan for yourself.

This is only applying to people who work for the public service. This is something we have to recognize as well. God love the public service, they do fantastic work. We all support them, we all do, but the reality of it is that it's the collective taxpayer that's paying for all this, it's not just people in the public service. We're asking every taxpayer in this province to fund these pension plans and post-retirement benefits and so on. That's who's picking up the slack – the taxpayer.

There are all kinds of people in this province who do not work for the public service, they work in private industry and so on; a lot of them don't have any pension plan at all, or medical benefits, they have nothing. So if they want to have a good retirement or benefits and so on, they have to go out and buy a private insurance or they have to go and invest in RRSPs, whatever they need to do, when they retire.

You have to remember, every time we sweeten the pot here, we're asking the regular taxpayer to subsidize and pay for this. That's not saying that we don't treat our public service well and provide them with the benefits that they've bargained for and so on. Not saying that at all, but there are two sides and we have to try to find a fair balance all at the same time, recognizing the fact that we have such a huge provincial debt that we have to tackle.

Again, the fact of the matter is: Are these changes somewhat of a downgrade to the people here that this applies to, from what it would have been? Is it going to cost them a little more? Yes, it is. Is it consistent with what all the other

unions agreed to? Yes, it is. Do these people have ample opportunity to adjust their retirement plans accordingly? Yes, they do.

With all that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I will be supporting the bill.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader, if he speaks now he'll close the debate.

Sorry, there's one more, the hon. Member for St. John's Centre.

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

I do want to say a few words on this for sure. I remember years ago when I served on the executive of the Teachers' Association and the question before the membership was: Do we raise premiums or do we cut benefits to the teachers' plan? I remember asking that question to a member on the staff and his comment to me was: Raise premiums because you'll never miss anything until you need it. For the most part, you want to have the services there when you need them.

Insurance and that, as another friend of mine used to say, it's a little bit like betting on a horse; you hope it's not going to win because if you have to call upon it, you're sick or you're dead, one or the other; if it's life insurance or health insurance.

Basically, what we're doing with insurance is we're paying for peace of mind is what it comes down to. That's what we're paying for. That's worth an awful lot to people. Certainly, to me, it's something that I try to instill in my own children. It's not just the salary; it's the benefits that go with it.

If you look at the Loblaw's workers, the Dominion workers, it's one of the things they are looking at, the benefits that go with it that allow them to live with some peace of mind.

Insurance these days – I can only speak to the teachers, some of the things we wrestled with. It's one thing to have years of the – it will come to me in a minute. Anyway, some drugs are

generics and others have a patent on them, but once the generics come on stream, you can lower the cost. The patented ones are – that's an increase. It gives the drug companies a lot more profit for a lot longer, but, on the other hand, they make it very expensive for plans to cover.

Now you have the advent of biologics, which are significantly more expensive. It can range anywhere from \$100,000 to \$130,000-plus a year for one person. Plans struggle with the – you look at benefits as to how do you manage this. I know one of the things we attempted to set up was reserve funds. In many ways, I think we look at putting it on to the backs of the individuals in government. I think there needs to be, in some way – my colleague from St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, too, said – a national pharmacare program. I think there has got to be some collective action by government to start finding some way to put pressure on drug companies to lower what they're charging.

I don't know if you remember in the news a little while – it was last year – the businessman who took over the insulin manufacturing company and immediately jacked up the prices up to several thousand dollars, but, basically, made it very difficult for people who are diabetic to be able to purchase the drug; a drug that they depend on. Gouging was what he was engaged in.

I can tell you it's interesting, in 2006, I think it was \$1.98 billion that was put into the teachers' plan to stabilize – not the health plan, that was the pension plan. That money got evaporated. That money disappeared in 2008 with the stock market crash. At that time, the plan was totally owned by government. What they didn't do at that time was to change the asset mix. Since the plan was just about fully funded and requires a different asset mix to make it work, to make it sustainable, that wasn't done and we were back to square one and now, lo and behold, it's finally stabilized.

But there was a cost to that because, at that time, there were drastic changes to sick leave for teachers – a huge change. I was fortunate enough to retire from my career with my sick days intact. As it is, I guess it indicates that I was privileged, lucky and fortunate enough to have a rather healthy life during my teaching

career. That's what it came down to. They didn't need to pay it out to me or anything like that, it meant that I retired in good health. But for some teachers, the change in sick leave is putting tremendous pressure on them, especially if they have families and so on and so forth.

I can only speak to what our bargaining unit, what the Teachers' Association bargained for. As far as I'm concerned, everyone is entitled – I don't care – to some sort of health care drug plan, health plan or retirement plan. I think that's got to be something we've got to strive towards because that's towards a more just, healthier society.

Where I'm going with this is this: One of the things – and I was talking to the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands about this. I noticed, certainly when I was going around campaigning, the number of people, some in the public service, who didn't retire necessarily with a great pension plan and found themselves in that position because now they're living on a reduced income. Mind you, they don't pay the union dues and CPP but still their income was shrinking, for two reasons: Prices were going up and there was really little or no cost of index living that was part of it.

The cost would go up in some of the places they were renting. They could never afford to own their own home, so they were renting apartments or renting places and the rent would go up in some of these buildings by \$10 a month every year. Now, \$120 a year doesn't seem like much, but after a while the cumulative effect is to drive the people out of their home. Where I'm going here is that looking at 60 per cent, that change, that doesn't seem like a lot. I would rather pay the premium and keep the benefit, but sooner or later the cumulative effect it's going to have on people is it's going to make life a little bit more difficult.

The other thing, too, I can tell you from bargaining is that often the two are connected because the benefit we get in one, in terms of when it came to the \$1.98 billion, resulted in the loss of other benefits; sometimes that's taken into the pay. So if you get a benefit, there are sacrifices people make to keep certain benefits. Yes, their pension plan they agreed to might very well be one they've already paid a price to

attain and then it's reduced in some way. I realize this is a sliding scale here, but my one caution with this, my one concern, is that people who are already on the edge, or pretty darn close to it, will find themselves teetering, if not falling over as a result. It is death of a thousand cuts, if you will.

That's my one concern with this. To maintain the plan, I'd rather have a plan than no plan at all. That much I would be certain, just to pay for the drugs. The older you get, the more likely you are to depend on pharmaceuticals to keep you ticking along until you gradually fade into oblivion.

I do believe, for the most part here, this is something that people seem to agree to but I think we really have to start looking at, how do we ensure that people who are affected by this will not find themselves in a position where they're unable to afford other necessities of life.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

If he speaks now he'll close the debate.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the Members that took the opportunity to speak this afternoon. I'll just quickly go through some of the things I heard.

The Opposition House Leader made some good points. He referenced this is just a continuation of the 2014 agreement. I know it was Minister Johnson of the day who signed that agreement that actually lets us get at the unfunded liability in the Public Service Pension Plan, which was an awful unfunded liability.

I stand to be corrected; the Minister of Finance can certainly correct me. I think every year on April 1 we have to invest some \$300 million into that plan just to make it stable over a 30-year period. That was one step that was taken. Again, this is just another one of those steps that we need to follow for stability and stabilization of our plans.

To the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, he actually made some really good points. A person that will be affected by today's change would actually be retiring somewhere around 2049 and given lots of time now to plan.

Today, we currently have 28,000 active members on this plan that won't be affected by today's change, and we have 18,000 retirees who won't be affected by today's change in the legislation. I think there are 17 people in management that have been hired since April 1 of this year.

It's unfortunate to have to make changes to plans, but this is really about stability. That goes to the things the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance were pointing out as well, that these are steps we need to take. They're incremental; they are slow going but they bring substantial stability. Because the reality is, if we don't make a move like this, in 2049 we'll have an unfunded liability of nearly \$6 billion in OPEBs. This change will allow us, by 2049, to bring the liability in OPEBs back to somewhere around the \$3.84 million. This does not solve the challenges in OPEBs but it will stabilize the program as we go forward, and that's important.

The Member for St. John's Centre made some points. I get the drug costs and how that affects people – the catastrophic drug costs – but this is the premium, this is not the copay. This is the premium that a person would pay. Thirty years from now they would pay a 60-40 split.

Mr. Speaker, I won't belabour the point any further. I will just rest and move into Committee.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 49 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK (Barnes): A bill, An Act To Amend The Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act. (Bill 49)

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

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

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 49)

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 49.

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 on the said bill.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this 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 49, An Act To Amend The Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act." (Bill 49)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clause 2.

CHAIR: Shall clause 2 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 2 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: An Act To Amend The Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification 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 carried 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. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

Madam Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 49.

CHAIR: Is it the pleasure of the House for the Committee to rise and report Bill 49 without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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 (Reid): Order, please!

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

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 49, An Act To Amend The Other Post-Employment Benefits Eligibility Modification Act, without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and has directed her to report Bill 49 without amendment.

When shall this report be received?

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

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

I call Order 9, Bill 52.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move Bill 52, An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations, seconded by the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair.

MR. SPEAKER: It has been moved and seconded that Bill 52, An Act Respecting

Tourist Accommodations, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations." (Bill 52)

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm very excited to have the opportunity; I'm sure everyone in this House is waiting with bated breath to hear this bill come to fruition in this House of Assembly. I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving us the opportunity to do this today. I'm pleased to bring forward Bill 52, the new *Tourist Accommodations Act*.

Mr. Speaker, the original *Tourist Establishments Act* was established in 1970, some nine years before my birth. The act and regulations providing a definition of the tourist establishment, the condition to obtain a tourist establishment licence, the requirement of a minimum one-star Canada Select rating and the obligations of licensed establishments to submit monthly occupancy statistics and maintain a list of their guests.

Since that time, the accommodations market has changed quite a bit, not only in this province but throughout the country and around the world. Collectively and collaboratively we need to adapt to it. Online accommodation marketing platforms such as Airbnb have become increasingly popular with travellers seeking a unique non-traditional accommodation and experiences. Local hosts are capitalizing on the demand by listing their income properties, vacation homes, condos and trailers on these marketing platforms, creating an increase in the number of short-term rental accommodators, which is creating an increase in the number of unlicensed short-term rental accommodations.

Mr. Speaker, Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador and many licensed tourism accommodation operators have been very vocal about the short-term unlicensed accommodations and requested that the provincial and municipal governments work on a solution to establish a more level playing field

for tourism accommodators. The proposed *Tourism Accommodations Act* represents a great step in a broader government approach to supporting business equity across the accommodation industry and better reflects the mix of accommodations provided to travellers that desire that in this public.

In addition to hearing from the tourism industry, in September of this year, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation and the Public Engagement and Planning Division administered an online questionnaire to inform the potential changes to the *Tourist Establishments Act*, with the majority of respondents supporting the proposed changes. Based on the outcome of the questionnaire results, there is support for tourist accommodations, including short-term rentals, be registered at a rate of about 73 per cent of respondents, with 60 per cent of the accommodation operators should not be required to have a Canada Select rating and pay that annual fee. In addition to that, there's also a room fee that goes along with that for every rental room.

The new bill is a modernization of the current *Tourism Establishments Act*, with changes substantive enough to repeal the current statute and replace it with the *Tourism Accommodations Act*.

The definition of a tourist accommodation in the new act is broadened to be more in line with the modern range of available accommodations throughout our province. The new act removes the licensing requirements and it is replacing it with a mandatory registration for all accommodations including short-term rentals. There is no fee to register.

In addition, the new registration requirements will replace the Canada Select rating requirements in the regulations when the new act is proclaimed. This will mean a decrease in the cost for tourism operators, as they will not have to pay the Canada Select rating fee. These changes considerably reduce red tape for licence providers and remove barriers for hosts to encourage registration.

Offences to the act will carry a minimum fine of \$250 with a maximum fine of \$2,000. The act

will also include inspection powers and the authority for the minister to designate inspectors to enforce the act.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the new act amends the *City of St. John's Municipal Taxation Act* to reference this new act, to clarify that all tourist accommodations are required to pay the city's accommodation tax.

Officials have investigated the successes and shortfalls of approaches that have already been implemented in other jurisdictions across the country, and this new bill brings it more in line with provinces right across our beautiful country.

Mr. Speaker, these amendments alone do not address all the issues of levelling the playing field for the accommodation industry; however, it is an important step in confirming that the government is aware of all the operators offering overnight accommodations and will treat them similarly throughout the act.

With mandatory registration, appropriate provincial and municipal regulatory bodies can access compliance with applicable legislation and take the action as required.

This is a good bill, Mr. Speaker. This is a positive change in the tourism industry especially during the unprecedented time due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the devastating effects to the tourism industry.

As a government, we encourage and foster conditions that support small business growth in the tourism industry. We feel that this new act will enhance the continued growth in the sector.

I encourage all accommodations in the province to ensure they are registered. We look forward to working with them through that process. I ask all hon. Members in this House of Assembly to join me in supporting this bill.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

AN HON. MEMBER: What a member.

MR. TIBBS: I try my best.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the minister for bringing this bill forward. It is a very important bill, you're right, Minister.

The first thing I want to do is congratulate Ms. Brenda O'Reilly for taking on chair of Hospitality NL.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. TIBBS: They couldn't have picked a better person for that job. Her passion came through for many, many years now. I'm sure she will do great and I wish her the best of luck, as I'm sure we all do.

Like I was saying, Mr. Speaker, this is a very important bill. One of the greatest things that I think is going to come out of this is the liability issue for anybody who is going to register their business, their accommodation. A slip and fall, a house fire, heaven forbid, anything like that. We all know we need certain insurances as we all go through life and it should be the same thing for any accommodation that's out there.

Basically, what it's going to do is it's going to cover them in the end and make sure that their accommodation, business will be profitable moving forward. That's something important that we have to get on the record and, hopefully, the accommodation sector sees that as that, for what it is.

The other thing, of course, is the privacy of these accommodations and who is going to get this information. I'm sure we'll touch on that as we go forward here with our questions. The information that the department is going to get, who that information is going to be shared with and whatnot, the state of these accommodations and who owns these accommodations. That's something we're going to have to touch on as we move forward.

I won't take much time. Like I say, it's a great bill, 1970, for a province that prides itself on tourism. I think it's definitely about time that we take on this bill and make the appropriate

changes as our tourism industry evolves, and I'm glad the minister has brought this forward.

A couple of things, talks should include Hospitality NL when it comes to different regulations moving forward for the accommodation to become registered. I'm sure that will be done, but also a collaboration with the owners of these accommodations to see where they sit and see what they need in supports from the government to make their accommodations registered and make sure they can move forward in a manner where they can still make a profit.

That's the other thing, affordability. We're not sure what the regulations are going to look like. I'm sure that's going to be hashed out, but we don't want to become a roadblock for these people as well. These people right now, we've talked about COVID. Everybody is trying to do the best they can, trying to make a profit. So I just hope these regulations are not stringent to the point where they handcuff a lot of these people.

I'm sure the government wants to work with these owners. These accommodation owners, I'm sure, are going to want to work with government but, of course, when it comes to red tape and roadblocks, we've seen it for a long time now. I just want to make sure these guys have a fighting chance as they move forward, if they want to register their business and have a profitable business for years to come. I'm sure we all want the same thing.

When it comes to the changes for the regulations or the changes for the accommodations themselves, you're going to have accommodations with character homes or an experience involved in that. We hope the government works with these accommodation owners to ensure that stays in there, because a lot of those places, pretty much that's their selling point, a character home or an experience that you can get within the community.

I just hope the conversation continues and it's a very open dialogue with government to see where they can go from there and help these homeowners or these accommodation owners. That's what we're here for at the end of the day, is to help business get off the ground, create new

business and make it as easy a transition as we possibly can for them all.

The tourism industry must be collaborative as they network as well. I think this is actually going to help. We've seen the boat tours with my colleague for the District of Ferryland – the two boat tours companies in Bay Bulls. They might have been rivals at one time but, of course, COVID brought those two companies together. Guess what? I'm sure they did better this year than they would have done if they had to have done it separately.

I also see, for instance, restaurants throughout my district or any other district – and it's great to see. If you go into a restaurant in a town and a tourist comes in, they ask for a specific kind of food. If the restaurant doesn't have it but there's another restaurant down the road or in the next community over, I love to hear tourism owners and operators of restaurants and accommodations have each other's back. They say we don't serve that here but two miles down the road at so-and-so diner or takeout you can get it down there and it's absolutely great food. That's something this tourism industry has to do and it's something we have to do as a province here in Newfoundland and Labrador. We have to make sure we have each other's backs so we can all stay profitable at the end of the day.

Finally, to the tax revenue side; of course, there's going to be a tax revenue on this. That's great for the province and whatnot, but we want to make sure that those people who have accommodations, as easy a transition as we possibly can moving forward. Like I say, everybody wants to make themselves a living and everybody wants to do well, but maybe just a small recommendation to possibly use that money to support a website that could showcase and promote our breathtaking accommodations.

So instead of Airbnb, which you see worldwide, we could have something right here for Newfoundland and Labrador which that tax revenue could possibly put forward a portal or a website which showcases our own. Put all of our accommodations on that and say Airbnb is one thing, but here in Newfoundland and Labrador we have our own portal. We have our own website that you can come on and you can pick out which accommodation would best work for

you, the experiences around it and just specifically for those moving forward. I think that would help a lot of accommodations as well.

Again, any evolution with any industry, especially the tourism industry moving forward, it's something we have to – I embrace it and I look forward to more of it as we move forward, as long as at the end of the day we work with the people who are trying to make this transition. I'm sure the government will, but I just don't want to put up a roadblock for these people trying to make that transition because there are so many of them throughout the province. I'm sure they will be onboard with it, and we'll make that as easy as possible for them as we work with them.

I totally support it. I look forward to any other conversations here, and I have a few questions as we move forward.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MS. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy also to speak for a few minutes in support of Bill 52, An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations.

Mr. Speaker, I can't talk about tourist accommodations without talking about a corner of this province that is so near and dear to my heart, that I am so passionate about. I guess I'll say at the onset that as a government we recognize the tremendous contribution that the tourism industry makes to our economy and to helping preserve and share our cultures, landscapes and wildlife.

Just in my own district, Mr. Speaker, I have Red Bay World Heritage UNESCO site. The tourism numbers for Red Bay continues to go up year after year. They recently came online with community cell coverage, we were happy to partner with. We have Battle Harbour, which is a little island off Mary's Harbour. It's certainly a gem in this province. You get to that island and it's like a step back in time to when cod was

king in the 1800s. Point Amour, the tallest lighthouse in Atlantic Canada and the second tallest in the country. Polar bears, killer whales, humpbacks.

Mr. Speaker, many, many people have said Labrador has been a transformational experience for them and I love to talk about it because we are just opening up. My grandfather often called it Canada's last frontier, just opening up and we're looking forward to getting ready. Bills, like today, are going to help ensure that we continue to grow our tourism industry so that the experience is better for the people that come.

The Torngat Mountains National Park snowmobile trail; people know of Cain's Quest, a world-class event that attracts people from all over the globe. While Newfoundland and Labrador is a bucket-list destination in and of itself, Labrador is going to continue to be a bigger part of that.

I'm going to pause for a moment and quickly share a little story. Last year, I took a little walk down around the shrimp processing facility in my hometown. I saw this big fancy motorhome there and this very elderly man that was down fixing a flat tire. I got his attention and I said: You didn't mind taking that big fancy thing down over the road here? He got up and he said: Well, look at me. I'm 85; my wife is 83. They were visiting from the US. He said: I wanted to see this neck of the woods. We wanted to see this part of the world our whole lives; we're out of time. They didn't wait for all the road to be paved or things to be in place; they came.

Mr. Speaker, while the tourism industry has struggled through this unprecedented time during COVID-19 and, I guess, as a government, we certainly understand the importance of the many micro-business owners operating in rural communities and those that provide a valuable accommodation service to the travelled public.

That's what this bill is about today. It's about ensuring that when you book to go in, there will be a certain standard that will be met. This short-term type of accommodation provides our visitors the opportunity to travel to remote places and experience more of what our province has to offer.

The new act, Mr. Speaker, will require all accommodations to register with the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation. That's a very positive thing so that we know, so that we have a number, so that we have a database on the accommodations. There will be no fee – that's important for small business to know – to register. Future changes to the regulations will remove the mandatory Canada Select rating requirement as well as the associated fee.

The requirement to register will provide government and the tourism industry with more knowledge, Mr. Speaker, of all accommodations operating in the province. It will help us better understand our visitors with the feedback that we will get.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I'll just say that our government is committed to working in partnership with the tourism industry to ensure the highest quality experience for visitors in our province. I know that the changes today with Bill 52 will be welcome news for groups like Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador and their membership.

I certainly join with the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation today in support of this important piece of legislation, and I ask that all my hon. colleagues in this House do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a privilege to get up and speak to this, especially with my background. I used to volunteer with tourism organizations in Labrador West for a long time. One of the things we always did talk about was accommodations. I know sometimes in our district we get a bit of a constraint competing between the tourism industry and the mining industry when it comes to accommodations.

It's nice to see some changes and stuff here that modernize accommodations, especially in this

modern world we have a lot of online booking and stuff like that. You see a lot of different groups there. I know the most well known is Airbnb. It's a great thing, because, at one time, tourism was the fad of the wealthy. Now, we've come that everybody has the ability to be a tourist, either at home or abroad. Tourism has come a long way in a long time.

The last iteration of this bill was in the 1970s, this province wasn't really a tourism destination at that time. The bill was more of just accommodations for work and travel and stuff like that. So bringing it in to a more tourist lens will have its advantages and keep us a world leader in tourism because we have the ability, we have the opportunities and we have what people are looking for when it comes to vacationing.

This is a good step forward when we talk about modernization and building our tourism industry. We see all different types of accommodations. I know different leaders around the world in tourism have come up with unique and more novelty ideas of accommodations. You see the glass igloos in Northern Scandinavia and Northern Canada. You can rent a houseboat in the UK or a canal boat in the UK. You can sleep in an underwater bubble, from what I've seen. So when we move forward in this, accommodation is a broad term now in the tourism industry. This is great that we do our jurisdictional scans; we do our provincial scans and stuff like that.

I do want to mention, too, the registration of accommodation operators. Like my colleague for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans said: Where does this data go, who collects this data and who is it shared with? That is something that we need to make sure, in the cyber world, that we keep these things safe and only use when absolutely necessary and in the right context.

Along with that, I do want to say with online accommodation apps, websites and stuff like that, one thing I always think – and it even happened in my own district – is online accommodation booking fraud. Some people put up fraudulent accommodations and stuff like that. I hope that this – within the regulations, that we have a way of combating fraudulent postings of these accommodation things.

I know people are out money and out stuff like that, especially when they prepay and things like that. We need to make sure that we combat digital online fraud in the accommodation world because whenever we have a new technology or a new way of doing things, there's always a group of people out there who find a way to exploit it and use it for nefarious gains. We need to make sure that we keep down and combat this new world of accommodation fraud with those online booking websites.

Hopefully, the minister will take that under advisement and consideration, too, that we protect our guests. We don't want them to come here and have a negative experience; we want them to come here and tell their friends and then tell their friend's friends. Word of mouth is always the best advertising.

I do think this is great that we're moving forward, but we also need to support those who fell under the old act. They put a lot of time, effort and money, especially with the Canada Select program and all that, those older B & Bs, those staples of rural Newfoundland and Labrador, to make sure they have the ability and give a little bit of a guiding hand as they transition into this newer act. Also, give them a guiding hand to help them maybe set up an online presence, maybe give a webinar or a seminar on how do I put my B & B on an online booking site. How do I do these things to give them a competitive edge, too? Because we don't want those older establishments to lose out to the more modern establishments. We want to make sure they both have an equal chance in the market.

We make sure the supports and stuff are around for all those who have been around a long time as well. Also, those who want to be entrepreneurs and those who have a great idea – maybe someone wants to build glass igloos or something like that – we always have a supporting hand for those individuals and those entrepreneurs, too, because sometimes novelty drives innovation as well.

I don't want to go any further, but I want to say this is great. Hopefully, we'll see more modernization and ingenuity come forward in our tourism industry.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I certainly won't belabour this debate. I think it's a wonderful bill. It's progressing; it's moving forward.

I would be remiss today if I didn't acknowledge and congratulate the team at the Conception Bay Museum in Harbour Grace. Today, they are celebrating their 150th anniversary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MS. P. PARSONS: In our beautiful and historic District of Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, I certainly commend all of our volunteers that do all they can for our tourism. I just wanted to say that today. It's a special day for them. I can't be there, obviously, because we are in session here debating this very important legislation.

On that note, I fully support this bill and I look forward to the vote.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm just going to take a minute here now to have a couple of words about this bill.

I will also be supporting the bill. It's been a long time since we had any changes, so just the fact that we're modernizing it, I think, is a positive thing. That's something that should be done from time to time anyway just to ensure that all of our legislation reflects today's realities – if I can put it that way – and how we operate and how the world is operating. In that regard, I think it's a good thing to do that.

I do understand, obviously, why people in the hospitality industry would have concerns regarding unregistered accommodations and so on. Because, let's face it, if you have a registered business and you're trying to abide by all of the rules, regulations and everything else that may be in place, whether it be provincial rules and regulations or whether it be municipal ones and fire and safety regulations and so on, there's a cost to that. I can understand why, if I was doing that and playing by the rules, if you will, I would have a concern about individuals that are kind of doing it on the down low, if you will, and wanting to create that even playing field, if you will. I've heard that term used by the minister and a couple of other people talking about creating an even playing field. I understand that and I support it.

I also support the fact that we're no longer going to be part of this Canada Select program. To be honest with you, Mr. Speaker, I know myself, even when I travel, I generally don't go looking at how many stars a particular place has because that can be very misleading. I've seen 4½ stars that probably should've been two stars and I've seen two stars that, as far I was concerned in my experience, could have been a four star. I take the stars part with a grain of salt. What I do use all the time is I look at the reviews and other people's experiences and so on. That kind of guides me along the way.

The fact that we're going to no longer have this requirement to be part of that Canada Select and the cost – and significant cost, particularly to a small operator – to be part of that, that's going to be some savings for them that they can, perhaps, put into other aspects of their business. As I say, with social media and reviews and everything else, I think that does the job anyway. Removing that, I think, is a good thing.

Obviously, the City of St. John's also will benefit from this because, of course, they charge an Accommodation Tax. Again, if there are unregistered operations under the radar that should be paying this, then obviously they want to capture them, the same as they do with all the others.

Interestingly enough, though, on this Accommodation Tax – a little bit off topic, I suppose, but it's all related – the City of St.

John's has in place for Mile One, and that was put in place because of Mile One stadium and the Convention Centre, it will be interesting to see, if that gets sold to Mr. MacDonald or anybody else, if that tax would still stand or not. I'm sure the city would want to keep it, but I'm not sure how that would actually work out; if there was no longer a subsidy to Mile One, why people would pay it, but anyway.

The only part I'm little bit confused about or I just throw out there is when we did the briefing – and I do thank the staff at the department for the briefing. They were pretty accommodating. We were there a lot longer than they had anticipated because we had a lot of questions. I thank them for their patience. The part that I'm missing with all this is that they indicated that all you have to do is register. Everyone's required to register with the department that you have accommodations. There's no cost to the registration, we were told. There are also no requirements put on those individuals who do register.

Now, they say that there is a program that if you want the department to advertise your business through their tourism portal and whatever they have there, then there are certain standards that they would want your business to uphold, which I think if anyone is going to have any kind of a business – we talk about life safety and so on – I think it obviously needs to be safe.

There were other things, other standards there that were in place because, obviously, we want people to come to the province and have a good experience. We don't want them going to dumps and so on and have terrible experiences. So, obviously, the province would expect that if they're going to advertise for my business that the place that I'm renting is going to be inhabitable and it's going to be in decent shape and it's going to meet certain standards and so on. I get that. It was indicated to us that was kind of a voluntary thing; you didn't have to meet those standards, per se, only if you wanted the province to advertise you that you did.

If a business is not part of this now and now they simply register so that the government is aware of their existence, they're not going to have to meet any standards, per se, then I wonder, to some degree, what is the purpose of doing it.

Of course, a lot of these things we're hearing about the regulations, because once again we come down to this whole discussion around regulations. How many pieces of legislation – well, all of them, actually, is the answer – all the legislation that gets debated in this House, so much of the details are left in the regulations, which is at the pure discretion of the minister and the government.

So we agree to this bill because it seems harmless enough and it seems to be a good thing; I'm not arguing against it, I support it in the concept of it, but we support this and then six months or a year down the road we find out from people who have Airbnbs or whatever that, all of a sudden, these regulations came into play and now we have all of these onerous requirements that are being shoved down their throats.

Now, I was assured – and the Leader of the NDP can confirm this; she was at the briefing. We were assured that's not the case. That's not the intent. I'm not saying that the people who told us that were intentionally misleading us but I just don't understand, it just doesn't seem to add up to me why we would want to say to someone you're required to register now but other than registering your name, nothing else is going to change. If nothing else is going to change, how does that create an even playing field?

If the purpose is to create an even playing field, that's to suggest that registered businesses are doing stuff that unregistered businesses are not doing and that they should be doing; but, if no one is going to force them to do it, all they're doing is just giving their name so they can be on a list then they'll be left alone. That doesn't make a whole lot of sense in terms of how that's going to create any even playing field.

Common sense would tell me that the minute they register there are going to be things they're going to be required to do, and so be it. I would say if there are things that need to be done to make sure the accommodations are safe and they're doing things above board, I'm not against it; but, to suggest somehow that all we're doing is taking your name, you're registering and then we're going to leave you alone, that just doesn't seem to add up to me.

I have a feeling that while the regulations – because they said the regulations have not yet been created but something tells me that when these regulations are created there are going to be standards and different things that are going to be put on Airbnbs that are not there today, which may or may not be a good thing. I would say it probably is a good thing for the consumer and everybody else, but let's call a spade a spade and call it like it is. Let's not say nothing is going to happen because I just can't see that. That just doesn't make sense to me.

I can understand, like if you're in, say, the City of St. John's or one of the larger urban areas where you have larger businesses and hotels and now you have people sort of, I'll say on the down low competing against you, I can understand why we would want to even that playing field; but, I do point out that there are places across Newfoundland, particularly in rural parts of Newfoundland – I'm aware of a few of them – where there are people who, again, they might have a summer home or whatever the case might be, and they don't advertise. They're not necessarily Airbnbs.

They don't advertise as such, but people in the community – one comes to mind immediately, where people in the community know that property is there. It's not operating as an ongoing business, but in the summertime when there are people who live down in that area and they have family and extended family and people are coming down from the Mainland or whatever for a staycation – not a staycation – for a vacation or maybe there's a come home year or whatever the case might be, everybody knows this particular property is here and you can rent it out for a few days. They don't need to advertise. The people in the community know and everybody knows that.

They're not really an Airbnb in a sense, but they will rent out that property from time to time. I'm sure there are lots of properties and people with trailers – because this is going to apply to trailers – that are all across the province, that are filling a void that are not competing with, I'll say, registered business.

There are places in the urban centres, yes, they are competing with registered businesses, but there are places in some of the smaller areas that

are not competing with other businesses because there are no businesses. That's the only game in town. If you wanted to stay at a particular community, there might be a house or two that you could rent for a day or two. That's the only game in town. So they're not competing with anybody, really.

What impact would that have on those people in terms of the regulations they may have to abide by? Especially if they're only doing it every now and then. Now, that's not to say they shouldn't have standards or shouldn't be safe or they shouldn't pay taxes and everything else. I'm not suggesting that at all, definitely not. I'm just putting it out there that when these regulations get put in place something tells me that sometime in the future I'm going to hear from different places who might say, gee whiz, what happened here? All of a sudden I have to do this, have to do that, have to do something else. Things that may be considered onerous and unreasonable, possibly.

I just put that out there as a little red flag. I'm not saying it's going to happen for sure; I don't know. I'm told it's not. I just have a feeling that when we pass this – I just want to make the point that when I pass this legislation based on what's on here, I don't know that those other things won't happen, because they might happen in the regulations. They might happen in the regulations. I'm just saying for the record that I'm raising this, that things could happen in regulations that we have no control over.

Just because I'm voting for the bill doesn't mean that I'm necessarily going to support the regulations or all the regulations. I might support them, but I may or I may not. I don't want someone coming back if there's a problem with regulations and red tape and onerous rules being placed on small operators in parts of the province and say, oh, you voted for it. No, I voted for this act based on what's here and based on assurances that there's not going to be over regulation. Hopefully, it won't be.

Anyway, with that said, I'll vote for the bill.

Thank you.

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

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's a pleasure again to speak in this House. I couldn't let this pass by without speaking on tourism, especially in the district that I'm in. It's such a big district for tourism. I certainly agree with the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, we'll support the act but the regulations are something that we have to look at a little deeper for sure and I will certainly agree with him on that.

Just to touch on the area, you start on the first part of my district down in Maddox Cove, Petty Harbour and you look at all the tourists that come in there. I spoke yesterday on it, that there are a lot of people who come in there that we probably don't even track. From the aquarium and the boat tours that are down there, and the zip line and all the tourist attractions that are there, it's unbelievable in the area.

I'll work my way right through the district, and coming up through. Along the coastline you have boat tours in Bay Bulls and you have B&Bs in all these districts. You have Airbnbs and you have also bed and breakfasts.

I know the Minister Responsible for Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation, Labrador Affairs, was up in my district this summer and asked me some different areas that she could visit. I'm pretty sure she had a pretty good time. Some of the places I recommended are some great areas in the Town of Ferryland, and up in Trepassey as well. She visited a few of those and I'm sure she had her own experiences.

We also have boat tours in Bay Bulls. We have a boat tour that was in Mobile – I'm not sure if it's still there or not. Ferryland, as it relates to tourism, we have the Colony of Avalon, we have the lighthouse picnics that people go up and do. Unfortunately, this year the Colony of Avalon wasn't open, but the Ferryland lighthouse picnics did go ahead. You have kayaking in Cape Broyle.

You have the UNESCO site that's up in Portugal Cove South. There's a lot of tourism. They noticed last year, in the first year it was designated UNESCO, that it was really busy in the area. You could tell by the traffic, not alone

the people, just the traffic going up and down. It was really good.

Also, you get to Trepassey, you got the Edge of the Avalon, a hotel up there that you can stay in right at the end of the district. There are a lot of areas, and another minister was up there and visited.

We have a couple of parks there. We have Chance Cove Park and we also have La Manche Park. There's a lot of tourism.

I would say another great one in the area – I didn't want to let this go without having a couple of words on it. Another great one in the area, and it starts way down in the northeast, is the East Coast Trail. I had the opportunity to do, I'd say, three or four during COVID. You go out and do them on a weekend. I know that some Members over there have done pretty well all the East Coast Trail during this as well.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Yeah, they're pointed out.

When you go out there, there's a lot of work put into these areas to get that done.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible) the Spout.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Was he down to the Spout? Yeah, the Spout is a great one; the lighthouse in Bay Bulls and you just go on. You go right up the shore, right up to Aquaforte. You go right along the East Coast Trail. They're still working on some of them.

I certainly couldn't let this pass without speaking on tourism and how it affects all the Airbnbs and all the rental units that are there for the tourists to use. When you live in the community that you have boat tours and you go down at 9 in the morning, again at 11 o'clock, again at 1 o'clock and again at 3 o'clock and the boats have 75 to 100 on each boat on both sides of the harbour, it's great for the area and great for all the attractions that are there.

Thank you very much. I appreciate the opportunity to speak.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. BRAGG: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It is indeed a great opportunity to speak here today on Bill 52. The Member opposite who just spoke before me wished Brenda O'Reilly really well on her term as chair of Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador. I also would extend greetings to Mr. Steve Denty for his term as past chair. I look forward to his future endeavours, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I guess for me in my prior role in the department of municipal affairs and environment, I met with people from Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador. They were the ones that really kept this going and said we need to bring in some regulations and rulings in this province about the unlicensed or unregistered rental units.

Mr. Speaker, I think it sums it up in section 3(1). It says: "A person shall not operate a tourist accommodation unless the tourist accommodation is registered in accordance with the regulations." It just makes good sense.

I come from the municipal side, Mr. Speaker, where in my small town from time to time there are multiple places that you could use for a rental on a weekend, on a week or for a month, if you needed to. The town councils would always struggle with taxation. Is it a business? Is it not a business? Should we regulate it as a business? At least this brings everybody on a fair and even playing field.

I come from an area of the province on the Northeast Coast of my District of Fogo Island - Cape Freels where tourism is one of the strong points. Yes, the fishery is the staple but tourism is one of the strong points, Mr. Speaker.

In my hometown there's a renovated school called the Hub of the North that was busy all this summer. Even in the poor times of the tourism industry this year, I saw great movement in my district. Hare Bay Adventures told me they saw so many people this year it outnumbered last summer; the coffee shop, Washed Ashore, in

Centreville-Wareham-Trinity. They saw some numbers but they were all local people, Mr. Speaker, local people looking for accommodations.

Mr. Speaker, for this move for us to have these registered in such a way that when you go there you know it's registered, you know it's insured, you know it meets the requirements that you need. Canada Select is going to be a minimum of one, but if you look at it, most people don't look at Canada Select anymore. They will go on and if they rent an Airbnb or if they rent a hotel room, you read the reviews, Mr. Speaker. This just brings everything in line, it helps tourism in Newfoundland and Labrador and it actually promotes it.

One time, Mr. Speaker, I had a meeting with the mayor of St. John's who informed us that there are that many rentals in this area on the Northeast Avalon, they could actually build two new hotels. Private accommodations have taken the place of two hotels. If you look at two hotels, you look at the work that it generates, the taxation it brings and what it brings to any part of the province.

Mr. Speaker, I commend the minister on bringing this legislation forward, and like everyone else in this House, I look forward to supporting it.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. FORSEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's nice to get up and speak on Bill 52. I know Hospitality NL and the tourist industry has been advocating for such a bill. It puts everybody on a respectful and even par in regard to the tourism operation. It advertises much better for the tourism industry, especially on the accommodations. If you're looking for a good accommodation and you got a five-star accommodation and whatnot, it puts everybody on the same scale line. The tourism industry can be advertised in that way and all accommodations be on the upper-end scale of

the accommodations and that's what this bill is all about, Mr. Speaker, is to upgrade the accommodations.

Now, what will be in the regulations? That's to be seen, I guess, in regard to what exactly will be in the regulations. I don't know what the government intends to do there. That's probably some questions to be asked.

The regulated accommodation for tourism, I know in the Exploits District, tourism is becoming a favourite thing. We have lots of tourist attractions. We have the Gillespie House down in Fortune Harbour, that's a bed and breakfast and tourist attraction. We have places in Sandy Point, Bishop's Falls, Botwood and Fortune Harbour, Mr. Speaker, all those places.

To see that Bill 52 respects the accommodations for tourism and it will build a better relationship to the visitors that come here for the accommodations that we have, it will keep tourism a big part of our industry, Mr. Speaker. Tourism already is a big part of the industry, but it will help grow the industry with knowing that the accommodations are there and that we're able to attend to the accommodations. That will keep it viable.

Mr. Speaker, just with tourism getting pretty active in the Exploits District, it was just nice to note some of the places that we have in the Exploits District, especially in Sandy Point, Fortune Harbour, Leading Tickles, Botwood and Bishop's Falls. We have areas like that, so it's good. Norris Arm, again, has those places.

Mr. Speaker, it's just good to touch base on the tourism part of it because I know tourism is a big industry to Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation, if he speaks now he will close the debate.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I wanted to make sure you would recognize me.

I'd just like to say thank you to the hon. Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans. I look forward to the questions with respect to privacy

and the regulations that we're discussing. I won't get into the answers now because I know it will be easier when we go through the question side and it'll be a bit more focused. I know Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador has played a vital role in working with us on this, as well as making sure the Office of the Privacy Commissioner was involved as well, so that's an important piece.

I know that you talked about the experience is so important in tourism product development, which is so key to this. You talked about tax revenue and the fact that this will give us an opportunity to re-engage. We do have a very strong website, newfoundlandandlabrador.com, which lists all the accommodators and all those licensed currently. What we'll be able to do now is add those that register after that point.

Also, I'd like to thank the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair. Her passion for tourism is amazing. She talks about it all the time. She has some beautiful assets in Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair in Labrador, in the Big Land in particular. She highlighted Red Bay, Battle Harbour and the lighthouse at Point Amour, which is amazing. I look forward to getting up and seeing them. I was hoping this year to get up to the Big Land to see that this summer, but I didn't get the chance.

One of the big key pieces in Labrador, from both Lab West as well as all the districts in Labrador, is the Cain's Quest. It's a great tourism piece for us. It's a great showcase for the Big Land; it's a great showcase for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. I'd just like to say thank you to her for highlighting some of those key assets there.

The Member for Labrador West talked about the unique products that are available in the Big Land. That's true. Newfoundland and Labrador is a bucket-list destination for tourists to travel to. It's about experiences, a unique experience you can't get anywhere else.

Talked about the protection of privacy. That's going to be a focus for us for sure. Talked about the fraud issues as well. One of the things, I think, that's really important that all Members understand in this House of Assembly is the tourism industry is a huge economic driver in

the province. It employs some 20,000 people from 2,700 businesses with an economic impact of \$1.14 billion prior to this year. I know that's an important piece for everybody.

Thank you to the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave for her kind words in thanking the volunteers and the people that worked so hard in the tourism industry. I think that's an important piece. So many of us should take the opportunity to say thank you to those volunteers because without that, the tourism sector – outside the employment aspect of that it has a huge volunteer component and aspects that way as well.

The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, thank you for the support. Levelling the playing field, I'm sure. You talked about the stars; I think they've aligned with us for this House of Assembly vote today, so I'm quite happy about that. You are correct that the City of St. John's is very supportive of this amendment as well, because it'll allow them to help collect the TML, tourism marketing levy.

Also, I'd like to say a thank you to the Member for Ferryland who I had the pleasure of visiting in his district. It's a beautiful area in the province. Mistaken Point is amazing. Anybody in this House that hasn't been to Mistaken Point, please visit that location. The Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels, thank you for that, as well as the Member for Exploits.

I'd like to thank all of you for the support in this bill. As they say, the music is playing for the Oscars, as I'm starting to go. As you can see tourism is a passion for me. Thank you very much for the support. I look forward to moving into Committee so we can have a few questions on some of the burning issues, or maybe no questions, but we'll see.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 52 now be read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations. (Bill 52)

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

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

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 52)

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 52.

This will also give the minister an opportunity to thank a few more people.

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

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this 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 52.

A bill, “An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations.” (Bill 52)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

I see the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

Just one question there for clause 1. Along with HNL, who else will be consulted?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Yes, thank you very much. Very hard when you have the earpiece in as well.

In the consultation period, there was HNL, of course; there was a public consultation piece done through the Public Engagement department here in government. We reached out to about 230 different people that reached back to us. We also had conversations with MNL on this very issue, as well. Then operators, in addition to that, had submitted reports and/or emails and/or their concerns over the past number of years while this has been coming to fruition.

There has been a lot of public consultation on this. We're very happy to be where we are today.

CHAIR: All good?

Any further speakers?

AN HON. MEMBER: Clause 1?

CHAIR: Yes, clause 1.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Madam Chair.

One question I have about it is digital protections for fraudulent listings online. That seems to be a growing concern for a lot of individuals. I was just wondering, is there anything in this or the regulations plan to protect against fraudulent digital listings?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

To answer the question, we did go to the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who is supportive of this and going to work with us on the regulations, as well, to ensure privacy. Your question about fraud will be – this act will actually help in that process because if you're not regulated now or licensed now and you move into a regulation situation, then at least you will be on our website as a regulated operator. That will help with the fraudulent activity for protection of customers, which is an important piece.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the minister – the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Maybe one day.

Minister, if someone has a current listing online on a platform, such as Airbnb, how will they be notified they have to now register their establishment within the department?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: A very good question. Thank you for the question.

There's going to be a reach out from a communications standpoint, similar to what we do for encouraging people to be a licensed

establishment. Discussions just like this will help. HNL is going to be very focused on trying to reach out on this as well.

I think this is a perfect opportunity to say congratulations to Brenda O'Reilly as well. As my other colleagues have said, it's an important piece. We're going to be working very closely together so I look forward to that. I have worked with her very closely already.

From that standpoint, it's going to be an all-hands-on-deck type of an approach to make sure we reach out to everybody, but we've taken away some of the barriers that short-term accommodators were having with this process. By taking away the Canada Select one-star rating, that allows them to jump into this a little easier. Through our consultation, that was one of the stumbling blocks.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

If an individual has a second building or trailer on their home property – same piece of land but a second structure – does this have to be registered or does this fall under the exemption in (2)?

CHAIR: The Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: The exemption in subsection (2), the section you're talking about, deals directly with when you live within the property itself, not in the physical structure, not the adjoining properties that may be on a large piece of land or whatnot.

CHAIR: The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

It's the property, not just the establishment. How long will operators have to become registered once notified?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: We're going to work with Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador on that very issue. We're going to be working closely.

This is not a punitive measure here; this is about working with the operators, both those that are currently licensed and those that are unlicensed, to try to bring them in compliance with where we want them to be.

This is about providing a level playing field, like a couple of your colleagues have mentioned already, that's what it's about. It's not about punitive matters here; we're just trying to bring people in compliance. We're going to work with them to ensure that compliance happens. That's all.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: That's great to hear. I'm sure they'll appreciate that as well.

What will the registration process include? Will it be paper or electronic?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: As it is today, when you move into a licensed accommodation with us, it's all on a digital platform. It will be the same scenario for registration. It will be digital.

We'll work through that with our staff to work with the operators to ensure compliance and ensure they can get through with limited impact to their operation and/or to their abilities. It's fairly straightforward.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

A big question, Minister: Who will this information be shared with?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: That's a very good question. The information will be housed, similar to what it is now, in our document management system here.

We will share that with municipalities that may be requiring that and Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador, obviously. It's not going to be widely shared, if that's the question or concern. We don't want that information to be out publicly like that. We want it to be housed within, shared with public agencies like other government departments or municipalities.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Currently, the province has a large number of accommodations listed online. These will now have to register. What steps will be taken to notify them of this requirement, follow-up and enforcement?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Can I ask for that first part of the question again? I missed that for a second. Sorry.

MR. TIBBS: Currently, the province has a large number of accommodations listed online. These will now have to register. What steps will be taken to notify them of this requirement, follow-up and enforce registration?

CHAIR: The Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

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

That's a fairly easy process from our standpoint. They're licensed already, so they'll just be moved over fairly quickly with a few movements to happen.

HNL is going to have a big role in helping us with the communication side of it as well. There's going to be absolutely no doubt that there will be widespread knowledge of what we're doing here. We're going to give everyone the opportunity to comply without having any punitive measures taken.

CHAIR: The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: We may see inspectors going into people's homes. Will there be any notice given?

CHAIR: The Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Absolutely, just like they would have in any other case now. Obviously, we're not knocking on the doors and asking to come in right away. They will be called; there will be meetings set up.

It really depends on what the nature of who's going in there. Municipalities, obviously, have their own rules to do that. That's not what this act is looking at today anyway. It just gives us the ability to ensure that those operators are registered. What other departments may do with it, whether it be Municipalities or Service NL, based on a complaint-based system or based on what they need for their municipality or service district, that will be up to them on how they do that. Nothing will change (inaudible).

CHAIR: The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: That's great to hear, but, of course, you can appreciate a lot of people are going to have concerns as they've had these homes for quite some time now.

What analysis has the department done on how this will impact cost of accommodations?

CHAIR: The Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We've done some analysis, obviously, from a jurisdictional scan across the country on where we stack up from a legislative standpoint. This brings us more in line with that and brings us more modernized. With respect to costs, we see the removal of the Canada Select star rating as a savings for the operators, which, depending on the size of the operator, could be substantive. We see this as a cost benefit to the industry.

One of the stumbling blocks, as we said earlier, to the short-term accommodators that remained unlicensed was the fact that they had to pay a fee for Canada Select. We've tried to minimize that and support the industry as best we could.

CHAIR: The Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: What taxes and fees will operators pay?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Very good question. With respect to this bill, none. There will be no fee with respect to this bill. From that standpoint, there are no additional charges. Actually, this is a Red Tape Reduction strategy initiative for those that are already licensed. This is going to be positively received within the community.

Obviously, those that have been short-term accommodators in the past that were unlicensed, some may not like the idea of having to do this, but we've reduced those barriers that would impede those individuals, so there is no fee to do that and we look forward to having this instituted in the near future.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

When will this act come into effect?

CHAIR: The Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: As was highlighted by my colleague from Mount Pearl - Southlands, the regulations are in process now to be dealt with as soon as we pass this bill. We're hopeful in the next coming months that this will be implemented.

We need that for our operators and we want to make sure we support them as best we can. This is a difficult time for them, as we all know, dealing with COVID and we're working very closely with Hospitality Newfoundland and

Labrador. This is one of the instruments we can use that supports our operators.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor -Buchans.

MR. TIBBS: I thank the minister for his answers here today. I just have one last question, Madam Chair.

What communications are planned to educate all operators on how to become registered in the future?

CHAIR: The hon. the Minister of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation.

MR. DAVIS: Absolutely, Madam Chair, we're developing a communications plan for that. We're going to be working in close concert with Hospitality Newfoundland and Labrador. You're going to hear that an awful lot.

Obviously, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador are supportive. We're going to work with our partners in this to try to reach the most people we possibly can, to reduce any lack of compliance that could come from just lack of knowledge. We're going to be out there as best we can trying to ensure that those operators become registered, which is really important to what we're doing.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 17 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 17 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 17 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 Tourist Accommodations.

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 Bill 52 carried 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. CROCKER: Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 52.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): The hon. the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave.

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 52, An Act Respecting Tourist Accommodations, without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole has reported that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and directed her to report Bill 52 without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

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

I call Order 8, Bill 51.

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

MS. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 51, An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-Operatives Act And The Corporations Act, now be read a second time.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 51, entitled, An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-Operatives Act And The Corporations Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, “An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-Operatives Act And The Corporations Act.” (Bill 51)

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

MS. STOODLEY: Mr. Speaker, I’m pleased today to speak to these amendments to Bill 51. I’ve heard from many of my constituents, and I’m sure many Members have heard, some of the annoyances that they’ve had recently from corporations or organizations in their districts around the fact that they haven’t been able to hold AGMs, annual general meetings, a very important part of corporations and organizations around the province. That’s essentially what we’re allowing today.

I know during COVID-19 we’ve all had to change the way we work. There are a lot more Zoom meetings and Skype meetings. We’ve all had to get used to that. In our legislation up until now, corporations, condominium organizations and co-operatives, it was not clear that they could have annual general meetings virtually or electronically. As a result, we’ve put forward this revised legislation. Apologies – I’m just going to go to the next page – I’m slightly distracted.

Meetings of directors and AGMs is a legislative requirement under the governance structure for

condominium organizations, co-operatives and corporations, including not-for-profit corporations. Currently, however, the *Condominium Act, 2009*, the *Co-operatives Act* and the *Corporations Act* do not contemplate or allow for virtual meetings.

This means that these organizations could potentially encounter legal issues should they choose to hold meetings in ways not explicitly authorized by their legislation. It also means that some organizations may have to delay key business decisions if they cannot meet virtually or hold in-person meetings in compliance with Public Health guidelines.

The amendments introduced today would allow these organizations to use virtual collaboration technology for all meetings and allow shareholders, members and condominium owners to participate virtually. There are certain conditions that must be met, such as the requirement for participants to be able to hear one another and have the ability to speak and ask questions; furthermore, voting procedures would need to maintain anonymity where required.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to recognize that these changes we are introducing today are not about requiring organizations to conduct AGMs through virtual means; rather, it’s about providing the flexibility for them to do so if they choose that option. We recognize that some participants and entities may face challenges with respect to virtual meetings; therefore, the proposed amendments will not remove the option to hold in-person meetings, subject to appropriate Public Health measures. This will allow for virtual or hybrid meetings. As I stated earlier, the intent here is to provide additional flexibility for entities to determine the best and safest way to conduct their business, particularly in light of COVID-19.

In May of this year, timelines were varied for holding AGMs under the *Co-operatives Act* and the *Corporations Act* and we provided an additional six months for those to happen. As there was no section in the *Condominium Act* requiring a meeting within a specific time frame, there was no timeline to be varied or extended.

Now, Mr. Speaker, we feel that these amendments have been brought to the floor and

will go far in allowing condominiums, corporations, co-operatives and provincial corporations to continue meeting their legislative requirements and conduct regular business during COVID-19. I'm happy to bring forward these amendments to the House and I look forward to answering any questions on them in Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the minister for looking after this, and congratulations. It's my first chance to get to speak to you while you were there and congratulations with your new arrival. I'm sure you're pretty excited with it.

Just to start on this, I would like to congratulate the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans on his first piece of legislation. He just told me: I'm worn out from doing it. That's his first one.

Just to touch on it, and I have a few notes here and it's a pretty quick piece of legislation. I'll just read from some of the notes I have and just a couple of examples, I guess.

The *Condominium Act, 2009*, the *Co-operatives Act* and the *Corporations Act* are under the purview of the Department of Digital Government and Service NL. As the names of the various acts suggest, the *Condominium Act* relates to the condominium corporations, the *Co-operatives Act* relates to the co-operatives and the *Corporations Act* relates to the corporations, including not-for-profit corporations.

These pieces of legislation require condo corporations, co-operatives and corporations to hold various types of meetings, including directors' meetings and annual general meetings, which is the main part. I agree with the part there; it doesn't make them have their AGMs in person, it gives them the option if they want to go the other way. I just listened to the minister speak on that. That's pretty important.

While virtual meetings have been a common means of addressing these challenges, the current legislation in our province does not provide the opportunity for virtual meetings, including use of telephones for general memberships of condominiums, co-operatives and/or corporations. Virtual meetings are, however, permitted for directors and boards, but not for AGMs, I guess. Because the authority for virtual meetings is not currently outlined in the various acts, stakeholders could face legal issues if they have such meetings. Department officials noted that the majority of the provinces allow virtual meetings, including AGMs and board of director meetings, and this has been in place even prior to COVID.

The amendments proposed of Bill 51 allow entities to use audio and visual technology for all meetings and allow shareholders, members and condo owners to participate virtually. Department officials noted that the proposed amendments have been vetted by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner.

During COVID, we had our caucus meetings and I'm sure the government side had their meetings. We all had to do telephone calls or virtual meetings. Just for businesses or condominiums, people that are on the board of directors trying to have an AGM, they can't have it without having everybody together, so it's an important piece of legislation that needs to be changed. It just needs to be updated and it's pretty simple.

Looking from a government perspective, I think we could look at that. We look at all the meetings that we go to – and I'm not saying us, as government, when you fly away to go to these meetings, I think there's a cost-saving measure with these virtual meetings as a government as a whole. I think it's something that they could look at over the next stretch of period – well, right now you're not going to go anywhere because of COVID.

If that ever changes – and hopefully we'll find a vaccine for that – to be able to get back on with life and get back to the way we were. Government should be looking at this and saying maybe we can have our meetings and do this virtually, do some stuff without everybody having to fly in and costing us money. I think

it's a good cost-savings technique. I think it's just something that the government should look at.

Overall, Bill 51 will amend three different acts to allow virtual meetings: the *Condominium Act, 2009*, the *Co-operatives Act* and the *Corporations Act*. The proposed amendments are outlined separately under each of these acts, but the amendments to all these acts are to allow people to participate in meetings virtually by telephone and electronic means of communication.

I'll leave it at that. I'll have a couple of questions when we get to Committee.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

MR. LANE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just have a couple of words here on Bill 51. It's a very small change but an important one nonetheless. It certainly recognizes where we are as it relates to COVID-19. Not just COVID-19, because there could other reasons why it may not be possible for everybody to attend an annual general meeting of a condominium corporation or co-op housing or whatever the case might be.

We have a lot of Newfoundlanders who work abroad, work out on the rigs and work in Alberta and things like that, so it may not even necessarily be COVID-19 related. Obviously, it will address COVID-19 issues but it could be any number of reasons why members may not be able to attend. I'm assuming this could be both as well. I'm guessing there could be some members who would be face to face while there might be other members who can't make it to the meeting. As I said, maybe they're visiting their child on the Mainland or something, who knows, but they can sign in virtually and be part of that meeting. It doesn't mean it's all virtual. It could mean that a combination of in-person and virtual, I'm assuming, would be permitted under this.

It does make a lot of sense. There would be a lot of people actually impacted in my district and in Mount Pearl in general. Mount Pearl has CHANAL, which is the Co-Op Housing Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. They actually operate over on Barbour Drive. Mount Pearl has more co-op housing than any other part of the province by far. I believe it's something like two-thirds of the co-op housing, or more, in the province is actually in Mount Pearl.

We have co-op housing over on Barbour Drive; we have it on Forsey Place. We have it over on Jeffers Place. We have co-op housing over on Whiteley Drive. A couple of streets in the Power's Pond area in Mount Pearl North are co-op housing. There's a lot of co-op housing. Munden Drive is another area. They would all avail of this.

We also have a number of condominiums in Mount Pearl. Condominium Corporation is up on Farrell Drive, which would be in Mount Pearl North. A number of the units up there are condominiums. On Fairweather Avenue we have them, White Place we have them. We have condos down off Dalton Avenue. There's an apartment building that's a Condominium Corporation. We actually have a whole bunch of these throughout Mount Pearl, in my district and certainly in the District of Mount Pearl North as well, that would benefit from this legislation. It just makes sense. We have technology; why not utilize it?

Again, I'd say that while the intent for this may have been COVID-19, which may have spurred this on, I think that whether there's COVID or there's no COVID, having that option available to have the meetings virtually in totality or, as I say, to have the option where you could have face-to-face meetings, but certain members of the condo board or the co-op board could attend virtually – because they may be away for work, they may be out of the province for some other kind of business or visiting family or whatever the case might be. Or maybe they're just home sick or whatever and not able to go to the meeting, but they could sign in on their computer and join in that way. I see it as a positive thing and I will be supporting the bill.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

MR. BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I won't take up too much of the time there. I just wanted to say we do support this because through our experience on the Standing Orders Committee and the Committee on digital presence in the House, we did come to the conclusion that using this kind of technology even for our Committee meetings – and in the worst-case scenario even the House of Assembly could meet like this.

Allowing corporations, condominiums and co-operatives the ability to do this is just a logical next step. It's good to hear that this was all reviewed by the Chief Information Officer as well. We have to look at those kinds of things too. It's important that we move forward in the digital age. The pandemic has exposed a lot of things, some things that we fell behind on, and moving forward in technology that some other jurisdictions probably had a heads-up on.

It's great that we are giving the ability to these organizations, as they are regulated, to meet and conduct business this way and protect themselves and their families. Avoiding travel is key too. If you don't need to travel, you shouldn't do so.

I just wanted to say that we do support this. We hope that we can move forward on this.

Thank you.

MR. SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, if she speaks now she will close the debate.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to thank my colleagues, the MHA for Ferryland, the MHA for Mount Pearl - Southlands and the MHA for Labrador West for contributing to the debate today. I appreciate everyone's support. I think this is very important for the organizations in the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 51 be now read a second time.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt this 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 Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-Operatives Act And The Corporations Act. (Bill 51)

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

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

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-Operatives Act And The Corporations Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole presently, by leave. (Bill 51)

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, that this House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole and consider Bill 51.

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 this 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're now considering Bill 51.

A bill, "An Act To Amend The Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-operatives Act And The Corporations Act." (Bill 51)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Just a couple of questions here. Was there any consultations with stakeholders on these changes?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Yes, Madam Chair, we did consult with stakeholders from these three organizations as well as from – we considered legislation across other provinces. This is certainly in alignment. I'm very happy with the consultation that was undertaken.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Were all stakeholders supportive of these amendments? Were there any that were not supportive?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

As far as I'm aware there were no concerns raised by stakeholders. Everyone was supportive.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Madam Chair.

When will these changes take effect? How soon can entities start holding virtual meetings with members?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

My understanding is as soon as this receives Royal Assent it will be in effect and then organizations can start having annual general meetings, virtually.

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Member for Ferryland.

MR. O'DRISCOLL: Last question I have.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

How will stakeholders be informed of these changes?

CHAIR: The Chair recognizes the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

MS. STOODLEY: Thank you, Madam Chair.

We will certainly post this on the website. It will be in the *Gazette*. We'll be communicating these to corporations as we usually communicate changes to corporations and condominiums and co-operatives. They'll all be apprised that these changes have been made.

CHAIR: Thank you.

Any further questions?

Shall clause 1 carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 10 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 10 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 10 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 Condominium Act, 2009, The Co-operatives Act And The Corporations 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 Bill 51 carried without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The hon. the Government House Leader.

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Madam Chair, for your efficiency.

I move, Madam Chair, that the Committee rise and report Bill 51.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

MR. SPEAKER (Reid): Order, please!

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

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 51 without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee has considered the matters to them referred and directed her to report Bill 51 without amendment.

When shall this report be received?

MR. CROCKER: Now.

MR. SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

MR. CROCKER: Tomorrow.

MR. SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

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

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

Order 2, third reading of Bill 41.

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, that Bill 41, An Act To Amend The Insurance Contracts Act, 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.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Insurance Contracts Act. (Bill 41)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Insurance Contracts Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 41)

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

MR. CROCKER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I call Order 3, third reading of Bill 44.

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

MR. CROCKER: Mr. Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Finance, that Bill 44, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration 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.'

Carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2. (Bill 44)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act To Amend The Revenue Administration Act No. 2," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 44)

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

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

I move, seconded by the Minister of Immigration, Skills and Labour, that this House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that this House does now adjourn.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

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

Carried.

This House now stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Wednesday, at 10 a.m.