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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 1:30 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Good afternoon and welcome everyone.

In the public gallery today, we would like to welcome members of the Bauline Community Committee comprising of Kimberley Randell, Valerie Hickey, Dianne LeGrow, Carol King and Kirby LeGrow. They are visiting us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also in the public gallery, I'd like to welcome students from Holy Spirit High School, Grade 10, French immersion social studies class and their teachers Melissa Lasinski and Margaret Murrin.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Terra Nova, Topsail- Paradise, Torngat Mountains, Stephenville- Port au Port and Cape St. Francis.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today to congratulate the Clarenville High Cougars male hockey team on winning the Boyle Trophy.

The historic Boyle Trophy was donated in 1903 by Newfoundland Governor, Sir Cavendish Boyle. It was the most prestigious trophy awarded within the province, equivalent to the Stanley Cup.

The trophy has many distinguished names engraved on it including Hockey Hall of Famer, Howie Meeker.

It is thought that the Stanley Cup is the only trophy older than the Boyle Trophy in Canada.

The cup was shelved in 1971, when the St. John's Senior Hockey League folded. In the 1980s, hockey officials, looking for a new home to award the trophy, decided provincial high school hockey was the right place.

The Clarenville High Cougars male hockey team won this historic trophy again this year, becoming back-to-back champions of the historic award, certainly a great accomplishment.

Please join me in congratulating: Jared Rideout, Devon Price, James Park, Russell Monk, Adam Currie, Cole Holloway, Aaron Avery, Logan Eddy, Chase Drover, Garrett Pitts, Kyle Penney, Isaac Harnum, Tristan Spurrell, Parker Spurrell, Keegan Morgan, Jaxon Wicks and Finley Newbury, along with their coaches and their manager.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, recently I had the pleasure of attending the Town of Paradise 2024 Municipal Awards ceremony where some of the best of the best were recognized.

This event is an opportunity to recognize and honour individuals, groups and businesses and present awards in various categories such as athletic, citizenship, volunteer and business, thus highlighting the accomplishment of deserving recipients.

Today, I am honoured to recognize the following recipients: Felix Sheppard, Junior Male Athlete; Emily Power, Junior Female Athlete; Gleb Evstigneev, Male Athlete 19+; Keith Glynn, Male Athlete for 50+.

Under the Citizenship and Volunteer category awards went to: Steve Nolan, Coach of the Year; Grace Norris, Youth of the Year; Frank Witherall, Citizen of the Year; Adele Burton, Volunteer of the Year; the Kin Club of Paradise, Volunteer Group of the Year.

Recipients of the Business Awards went to Banished Brewing for 15-plus employees and Avalon Karate for under 15 employees.

CE23, Carl English's basketball academy, received an award for Innovation and Resiliency.

Speaker, I want to extend my sincere congratulations to all recipients and the nominees on their great achievements and their commitment to the community. I wish them continued success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I pay tribute to the Arctic Inspiration awards winners from Nunatsiavut.

A \$1-million award went to Inotsiavik Centre project, which will create a cultural centre in Hopedale, revitalizing Inuttit and culture through education and cultural programming committed to strengthening skills, confidence and pride in Inuit identity.

Upon winning the \$298,000 prize, Hebron and – excuse me, Speaker, this is very emotional to have Nunatsiavut Government beneficiaries win three very prestigious awards that are so vital to the culture, the language and the identity of Nunatsiavut

Inuit. I'm very emotional right now, just with pride and so it's really hard to focus so I'd like to ask leave to start again, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains

L. EVANS: Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: Today, I pay tribute to the Arctic Inspiration awards winners from Nunatsiavut

A \$1-million award went to Inotsiavik Centre project, which will create a cultural centre in Hopedale, revitalizing Inuttit and culture through education and cultural programming committed to strengthening skills, confidence and pride in Inuit identity.

Secondly, upon winning the \$298,000 prize, Hebron and Nutak Reunions Project team leader, Lena Onalik, said – and I quote her: "In 1956 and 1959, 417 were forced to move from their homes in the former communities of Hebron and Nutak, Okak Bay in Nunatsiavut. A total of only 69 Elders remain. Some have not returned since the eviction. 65 and 68 years ago."

She quoted an Elder: We don't want to choose amongst each other who gets to go home. We want to go together. This AIP funding ensures this will happen.

Thirdly, L.O.V.E Inuktut was awarded \$100,000 for their ground-breaking project dedicated to revitalizing and safeguarding the 11 main dialects of Inuktut through the creation of beginner-level, immersion-style videos integrated through an innovation app.

Nunatsiavut members – and I hope that we will be able to applaud them all: Vanessa Flowers, Nicholas Flowers, Kimberly

Pilgrim, Reuben Flowers, Rosie Piercy, Valerie Flowers, Veronica Flowers, Lianna Rice, Erica Jacque, Ocean Pottle-Shiwak, Lena Onalik, Crystal Allen, Brent Denniston, Beverly Hunter, Dione Kohlmeister, Susan Webb, Edna Winters; I thank you.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Bay St. George Kinsmen Club has been a part of the fabric of Stephenville since 1962. Today, they continue to live up their motto: Serving the Community's Greatest Needs.

Two of the club members have achieved lifetime memberships: President Bill Janes, 35 years; and Harvey Bulgin, 44 years.

Over the years, the Kinsmen have made significant contribution to the community. The club was responsible for raising funds for the first library in Stephenville, which bears the name Kindale Library.

Most recently, they donated to a major project, a spectacular stage event area in the centre of town which hosts many outdoor events, appropriately named Kin Square. The club favourite is the annual Kinsmen Christmas parade, which they have been hosting for over 40 years.

Probably their most successful fundraising event to date is the Bay St. George Gold Rush, which is a weekly 50/50 draw that draws up to 40 to 50 volunteers every Monday night with a live show on Tuesday. With this fundraiser alone, the Kinsmen have donated in excess of \$1 million back to our local communities and Kin charities.

I would like to thank the Kinsmen for their dedication and wish them continued success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, communities rich in volunteers are vibrant places. When individuals come together to improve their local areas, a deep sense of pride, ownership and shared vision is fostered. That's what's happening in my district in the Town of Bauline.

The Bauline Community Committee was formed in 2016 and, since its inception, numerous committee members have contributed their time, energy and skills to support their residents and their municipal council. With events such as an Easter brunch, monthly afternoon teas recognizing special occasions, valentine dances and pub nights, the committee members are busy with various fundraising initiatives throughout the year. They support many community events such as Canada Day celebrations, seniors' events, Christmas parade and Bauline Days.

Speaker, Chair Kimberly Randell, Vice-Chair Valerie Hickey and members Dianne LeGrow, Carol King and Kirby LeGrow currently serve on the committee. They schedule and implement all the various events throughout the year. I'd also like to recognize past committee Chair Jackie LeGrow and all past members for their dedication to this committee and to their committee.

Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in congratulating these wonderful volunteers and thank them for their contribution to the vibrant community spirit in the Town of Bauline.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's an honour today to rise and present this statement during Victims and Survivors of Crime Week.

Being a victim of a crime can be life altering, and the provincial Victim Services Program is here to help.

Whether it is safety planning, providing case updates, court preparation, completing victim impact statements, or offering counselling referrals, the compassionate staff of Victim Services helps to ensure victims of crime have access to a variety of services to meet their individual needs.

As a government, we recognize the importance of the trauma-informed approach Victim Services provides to residents of Newfoundland and Labrador. Last year, more than 3,500 individuals were offered these services.

That is why through *Budget 2024*, our government is providing an additional three full-time positions for Victim Services, so we can enhance our ability to continue offering services that benefit individuals who have been impacted by criminal activity. This provides people with continued access to services that assist them in the aftermath of experiencing crime and in navigating the justice system.

The work done by Victim Services is often difficult and it is personal. However, I can assure you it is making a difference in the lives of the individuals they serve.

I encourage all victims of crime to reach out for help and to visit gov.nl.ca/victimservices for more information.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

As victims of crime face life-altering experiences, the Victim Services program plays a crucial role and vital role in providing valuable support. With services ranging from safety planning, to holding someone's hand in court, Victim Services ensures victims have access to the help and assistance they need.

But just today, Nicole O'Keefe, executive director of the NorPen Status of Women Council on Newfoundland's Northern Peninsula stated publicly about women who don't report being abused because they fear the justice system will deepen their trauma. She further stated: "We definitely need more support for victims, survivors and their families ... Police and women's centres and violence prevention organizations, everybody is struggling to do our best to support those who need us with very limited bodies in place."

When local advocates feel the need to speak out because it's difficult to do their job, it is up to government to listen.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

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

We commend the staff of the Victim Services program for all the work that they do. We ask government to offer more

supports and services to help survivors access justice and recover from traumatic events. We encourage government to introduce mandatory sexual assault training for lawyers so survivors of sexual assault feel safer when seeking justice in the courts. Also, to implement all the recommendations in the 2022 Auditor General's report on adult corrections so offenders can successfully rehabilitate and become safe, productive members of society.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Labrador Affairs.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

It is my honour to congratulate individuals from Northern Labrador who have received special recognition.

Just last week our hearts were filled with pride and much emotion as we watched in Yukon, projects from Nunatsiavut were awarded the prestigious Arctic Inspiration Prize. The program celebrates innovative ideas from Canada's North and then awards funding to make them happen.

A \$1-million prize was awarded to Inotsiavik, which means a place to live well. The goal is a cultural centre in Hopedale, which will offer educational programming, build Inuit cultural skills and enhance well-being in a safe, welcoming environment.

This is an incredible achievement for enterprising Indigenous youth who are dedicated to the revitalization of their language and culture.

A second project supports former residents of Hebron, Nutak and Okak Bay who are returning to their homeland this summer. Their reunions will provide Inuit with an

opportunity to heal and come to terms with their forced relocation.

The third project is the L.O.V.E. Inuktitut project, which will help youth revive and safeguard 11 main dialects of Inuktitut.

Congratulations to everyone involved. Praise also goes to the Arctic Inspiration Prize network for standing with northern communities and helping individuals turn their passion into action.

Speaker, we look forward to hearing more about these projects as plans are implemented in Labrador.

Please join me in celebrating the recipients of the Arctic Inspiration Prize.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Speaker, we'd like to congratulate the recipients of the Arctic Inspiration Prize. The common theme across these three recipients is healing, education and preservation; all of which are very meaningful endeavours.

Alongside the minister, we look forward to seeing the recipients' projects come to fruition and directly contribute to their communities. We also look forward to the day we rectify the deplorable conditions in Labrador. There are Indigenous people living in collapsing and mouldy homes. Unfortunately, achievement of this critical goal appears to be less and less likely under the current Furey government.

We hope that this grave matter is on the top of minds of government officials for action, not just words.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: I thank the minister for all her kind words in her statement. All three projects awarded represent healing the heart of Nunatsiavut Inuit by focusing on what gives Inuit strength and pride: their language, their culture.

These projects will keep the heart of Inuit alive. Residential schools were intended to rob our children of language, culture, connection to their parents, to the land. The forced eviction of Hebron, Nutak and Okak Bay harmed generations. Now, Inuit are winning awards by reclaiming what was stolen.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further statements by ministers?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

On Good Friday, torrential rain caused severe flooding in the town of Cape St. George, destroying at least one home, damaging several other homes and properties.

I ask the Premier: Why is your Liberal government refusing to help the people of this small rural town?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, that's a horrific experience for those people, all departments on this side who can help those people will continue to work with those people to help them get back to where they need to be, as we have in the past with other natural disasters like in Port aux Basques, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I hate to correct the Premier, but the fact of the matter is I spoke with the mayor of the town this morning and the government has absolutely done zero to help them. As a matter of fact, they got a letter saying they don't qualify for certain funding.

Again, these people have had their lives destroyed, their homes destroyed, and nobody from this Liberal government has offered to help in any way. We can spend \$21 million on a hotel that costs \$4 million, but we can't find a way to help the people of Cape St. George.

So I ask the Premier: Will you commit to helping and providing funding for the people of Cape St. George?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

All government departments on this side of the House will continue to work with the people of that community, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that they can get back on their feet, as we have been there for other

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians affected by natural disasters.

The Member opposite likes to conflate issues about expenses. I'll tell you that if we weren't spending \$740 million this year to ensure electricity rates weren't doubling, we'd have a lot more flexibility in helping people everywhere across our province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, the Liberal government has done nothing for the people of Cape St. George.

But let's talk about spending. Let's talk about the fact that there was \$12,000 alone spent on the Premier's travel the last time the Premier took a trip to Dubai. We can only assume that it will be at least that or more for this recent trip.

Again, I ask the Premier: Don't you think \$24,000 plus, plus would have certainly helped the people of Cape St. George?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'll tell you what would help the people of Cape St. George: \$740 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: As I've already committed to and will continue to commit to, we'll continue to work with that community to ensure they get back on their feet, Mr. Speaker. We've been here for every community that has faced a natural disaster and we'll continue to be.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: I still want the commitment that they're going to say yes.

But I ask the Premier: Since taking office in August of 2020, how much money has the Office of the Premier spent on travel?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I don't have that off the top of my head, but I can certainly get it for the Member opposite. They are part of Estimates, as well.

What I will say is part of the job of Premier of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is to celebrate the benefits of Newfoundland and Labrador around the world, around the country, to ensure that others recognize what incredible opportunities are here today in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: People from around the world are not necessarily looking at Newfoundland and Labrador. The people –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Premier. You have 20 more seconds, Sir.

A. FUREY: It's important for anyone who holds this office to ensure that everyone around the world understands what opportunities actually exist here in Newfoundland and Labrador, whether that's in our oil and gas industry, which we're incredibly proud of; a burgeoning and new hydrogen industry; whether that's in our fishery and protein supply to the rest of the

world. It's important that whoever is Premier to sell Newfoundland and Labrador to the rest of the world.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, let me tell the Premier how much his office actually spent seeing as he doesn't know it.

The Premier's office has spent over half a million dollars – let me repeat that – half a million dollars jet-setting around the world while people in our own Province of Newfoundland and Labrador can't afford their prescriptions, can't afford to put food on the table and have nowhere to live. That's the reality of what we're talking about here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I ask the Premier: Don't you think providing that half a million dollars to the people who are paying to see a nurse practitioner would be money well spent?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It's my job to continue to sell the opportunities in Newfoundland and Labrador to the rest of the world, it's an incredibly important function.

When they were in government last, they sold out – they sold out – the people of this province with respect to ratepayers, with respect to a project that doomed this province. We put together –

T. WAKEHAM: Not on my watch, Premier.

A. FUREY: Not on your watch. Well, you were certainly celebrating it the other day. You said it was a great project. You called it a great project. You said it was excellent.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

When Members are ready, we'll continue with Oral Questions.

The hon. the Premier, 20 more seconds.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So we'll continue to sell the benefits of this province to everyone around the world.

Right now, Newfoundland and Labrador has exactly what the world needs. It's our job to tell the story of Newfoundland and Labrador to the rest of the world so we can capitalize on that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, when the Premier first took office the budget for travel in his office was \$132,000. The budget Estimates this year, travel expenditure has grown to \$279,000. That's a 111 per cent increase.

I ask the Premier: How do you justify a 111 per cent increase when so many people in Newfoundland and Labrador are struggling to make ends meet?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite knows, when I took office, it was in the middle of the pandemic, so there wasn't much travel happening, Mr. Speaker.

With respect to escalation –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

A. FUREY: Do you know what's a good multiplier effect, Mr. Speaker? When they were in last, guess how much we were spending on rate mitigation? Zero. Guess how much we're spending now? Seven hundred and forty million dollars.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: A 740 million times increase – a 740 million per cent increase, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, after knocking on doors in Fogo Island - Cape Freels and in Baie Verte - Green Bay, all around that area of La Scie, there's a desperate move now by this Liberal government, paid ads trying to accuse us of Muskrat Falls. No one here voted on Muskrat Falls, nor did any Member –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: – opposite vote on the Upper Churchill. Let's even the playing field here.

It's a desperate move by a tired government, Speaker.

While the ministers won't get their hands dirty with so-called –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Are Members ready?

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: While the ministers won't get their hands dirty with so-called operational issues like \$100-million travel nurse

contracts, the Premier continues to handle operational issues like nurse recruitment in Dubai.

Does the Premier have so little confidence in this Health Minister and the head of the health authority that he has to personally do their jobs?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, one thing that we can say for certain is that Muskrat Falls is costing the people of this province \$740 million a year.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. OSBORNE: That is a reality, Mr. Speaker, and that money could be put into many, many health care items.

Mr. Speaker, we have been communicating and working with the provincial health authority on health care issues throughout this province. We have a Health Accord that has been based on two years of consultation and hundreds of individuals having input into that. That is a plan that will transform health care in this province and we are sticking with that plan. It is working.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, it used to be: My time, my dime. But now it's: My time, the people's dime.

COVID taught the world how to communicate virtually and save a lot of travel money in the process.

If the meetings in Dubai were so urgent and important, why couldn't the Premier sit in front of the computer, as so many patients

must do these days, and conduct the conversation virtually?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As the Member opposite is aware, we have an aggressive recruitment package and we're aggressively recruiting health care professionals around the world, Mr. Speaker.

Given the fact that part of that trip was personal, Mr. Speaker, that will be my time and my dime. So for me, there is no cost to government with respect to that trip to Dubai, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier puts out a news release announcing he's going to Dubai. It's on a government-headed news release; it's not personal, it's public. It has the Premier, he went down there as the Premier, the notice was the Premier. Stop misleading the public, Premier.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

B. PETTEN: I don't care. Stop misleading the public.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Address the Chair.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, the Furey Liberals continue to force Newfoundlanders and Labradorians to pay out of their pocket to access nurse practitioners while other provinces figure it out, yet the minister will

shovel tens of millions to private US-based Teladoc for virtual care.

Speaker, why the double standard?

SPEAKER: Before they answer questions, I remind the Members to refer by titles.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I seem to recall, literally about a minute ago, the Member saying that we've learned through COVID that virtual works.

Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that we have emergency departments in this province that are not closed on a regular basis, in part, because of virtual care. We've had the mayor, for example, of New-Wes-Valley, who has said that virtual care actually saved the life of an individual. He was in the media, Mr. Speaker, speaking of this.

Virtual care is an important aspect today, as it is in other provinces, Mr. Speaker. The virtual coverage by physicians is not only keeping emergency departments open, it is providing primary health care to individuals that don't have an in-person primary health care provider.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: We've been asking why doesn't the minister offer the same privilege to a nurse practitioner to do the same thing. That's all we're saying. It's not a complicated question, Speaker.

This is not much comfort to the 136,000 people without a family doctor, including the many I talked to last week on the Baie Verte Peninsula.

Speaker, 811 is another private entity, billing government for their services –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: – but won't give five cents to nurse practitioners.

Why is this, Minister?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we are providing funding to nurse practitioners through the public health care system. We have a plan, Mr. Speaker, that was well developed by the Health Accord; two years of consultations, hundreds of individuals involved. It is a multi-disciplinary approach to providing care, as opposed to creating more silos and further dividing how health care is provided.

We're providing it in team-based care, Mr. Speaker, with a hub-and-spoke model where, in our most rural communities, we can have clinics that are nurse practitioner led. These will be public servants where the health authority is able to ensure that communities have services. If these were privatized, individuals themselves would go to the most profitable areas.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, this is not complicated. We're not talking MCP that the minister likes to get up and go on and go on about, we're talking about setting up a funding model for nurse practitioners to take the pressure off people looking for family doctors. It's a simple concept, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Nurse practitioners have every right to be in the family care model but they also should have a right to practise privately, just like a family doctor does. What's the difference?

The minister can talk in circles. What's the difference, Minister? Why can't you approve this? That's what the people need, access to immediate, primary health care.

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we are providing is primary health care with Family Care Teams throughout the province that will provide primary health care in a multi-disciplinary approach with a team-based approach throughout the province.

Every individual in the province can be connected to a Family Care Team, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to setting up a for-profit organization or office. These will be public servants in areas of the province where they're most needed.

There's a plan, well-documented, in place, through the Health Accord, to ensure that every individual in the province has access to primary health care and that is happening.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: The Minister of Health would rather make every single senior who is trying to get their driver's licence renewed set themselves up as a vendor. It's the silliest thing ever spoke about.

The Premier's news release on Friday actually said he was going to Dubai to

receive an honorary degree and he would also have two meetings while he was there.

Were these meetings scheduled before he got notice of his honorary degree or did he tack those meetings on afterwards just so he could get the taxpayers to cover the cost of his trip?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As I already said, I'll be paying for that portion of the trip.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: With whom did the Premier meet in Dubai on energy last weekend?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

L. PARROTT: And what specific ways did this particular meeting – to quote his news release – advance our province's clean energy potential?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We had follow-ups with respect to health care. We had follow-ups with respect to energy. Right now, one of the companies, one of the biggest energy companies in Dubai, is looking at coming to Newfoundland and Labrador to look at investing in what we have here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: They have trillions of dollars to invest and they're looking at the West Coast of Newfoundland and Labrador to invest in. It's a huge opportunity.

We also met with the port because as we know in these projects, whether it's in oil and gas or in green energy, it's going to require a robust supply chain, Mr. Speaker.

The port of Dubai has 35 per cent of the world's GDP that goes through that, and they're looking at investing elsewhere. They're looking at investing in ports in our province, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: When the Premier's travelling around the world touting our green energy potential, I make the assumption, based on how they talk about Muskrat Falls, that he never says a word about it because he clearly thinks it was a bad idea, a bad project and does no good for this province.

What does the Premier think about Muskrat Falls?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to table this. It doesn't matter what I think. There was a full commission on it, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: It almost bankrupted the province – it almost bankrupted the province.

I've heard some chirping with respect to Churchill Falls. Churchill Falls was not a good deal, but there was no cash given. This was a ton of cash given, Mr. Speaker. We couldn't afford it. We can barely afford it now. We're giving \$740 million to stabilize rates, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I remind Members the use of props is not permitted, even if it's tabled documents.

The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, while the Premier's focused on jet-setting around the world rather than helping the Stringer family, who reached out to my office regarding long wait times for admittance to an appropriate dementia care facility, their dad, an 85-year-old man, is now 148 days waiting to be admitted into long-term care.

Minister, do you feel this is an appropriate way of treating our seniors?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we are putting a great focus on improving health care for seniors with centres of seniors and aging. That investment is in this year's budget. The Health Accord calls for that again. The Health Accord is a plan to transform and improve health care in this province.

We understand that services have not been what they should be. We understand that the system is based on an old system, that it has not been modernized, and this government is putting a huge investment into modernizing this system so that it better serves the people of the province, including our seniors.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, it's a terrible burden on the nurses, the families and the patients to be sitting in the hospital waiting to go into long-term care – 24-hour support around because there's no lockup facility.

Speaker, the family is outraged with the lack of action from the Liberal government regarding ongoing problems with long wait

times for dementia patients. The family said – quote – government is supposed to work for the people, but nobody is working for my father or others like my dad.

Critical health care staff remain strained. Families are sadly left with nowhere to turn for help with their loved ones in their greatest time of need.

I ask the minister: How can you let this happen under your watch?

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, what is happening under our watch is the transformation of our health care –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. OSBORNE: – because we understand that those situations are not acceptable. We understand that the health care system has been antiquated and has not been working for the people of the province.

There is huge investment in last year's budget, huge investment in this year's budget and a Health Accord, Mr. Speaker, which is a 10-year plan to completely transform health care in this province.

What is happening under our watch, Mr. Speaker, is we are fixing a health care system that was broken and antiquated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Speaker, social workers in my district are telling me I have patients out there 600 days waiting for admission – 600 days. They're transforming health care all right.

Minister, the nurses are working 24 hours around the clock in a hospital, in private

rooms, while patients who need health care can't get admittance into the hospital and they're dying at home.

You tell me how that's transforming our health care system.

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

T. OSBORNE: Mr. Speaker, we're not denying there are problems in health care. We understand there are, which is why we have the Health Accord to transform health care in this province, which is why we have the Health Accord, Mr. Speaker, to improve the situations like the one he just talked about.

One day they don't want agency nurses and the next day they want them because we need them.

Mr. Speaker, we are recruiting health care professionals, which is one of the biggest challenges in our system today because we don't have enough and every time we work on and spend money to recruit, they complain about that. I'd like to know what it is they would do.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: It's all great to hear about recruitment but what's happening with retention? How many are staying here? How many are leaving? They don't know.

Speaker, according to a CBC report, you only need Grade 12 and a vulnerable sector check to teach in any K-to-12 classroom in the province. I need more than that to coach youth soccer.

Will the minister finally admit her failure to address the teacher crisis has led to an explosion of unqualified, untrained people in our classrooms?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond and to let everyone know that there is a very high standard that is set by the Department of Education in partnership with the NLTA as to what qualifies as a certified teacher in our classrooms. There's a process that unfolds by which we fill the vacancies that occur in the system. Then, in the event that a suitable teacher cannot be found for that position, there are some things that have to be done to ensure that classrooms are supervised, that teaching hours are not lost and that we move forward and make progress in our classrooms.

In the event that there are no teachers available, there are times when emergency supply measures are drawn upon and, in that instance, we make every effort to have a student who has a background in education or somebody who's enrolled in the faculty of education to fill these roles, to support our classrooms.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Speaker, the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association has been raising alarms for years – for years – about the dire situations in our classrooms, increasing retirements, lack of retention initiatives and less people going into the profession.

Why has government ignored all these warning signs?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker, again, for the opportunity to respond.

I'm glad to get the chance to speak to our recruitment and retention efforts, as *Budget 2024* identified \$850,000 toward recruitment and retention efforts in some of our most difficult-to-fill, some of our historically difficult-to-fill areas in the most rural and remote parts of our province.

So we've been able to offer incentives to teachers who wish to take up positions in these communities. That includes some support for housing; there are housing units that are available, as well as transportation in and out of some of these communities, which oftentimes presents to be challenging. But we'll continue to work on those plans.

We've also opened up the NLTA collective agreement in recent discussions and now have committed, by the end of this agreement, three-quarters of a billion dollars to teaching services here in Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Topsail - Paradise.

P. DINN: Speaker, the use of unqualified, untrained emergency teachers has gone up 500 per cent – 500 per cent. Yet, the minister's solution is yet another study to outline a plan. Action is needed now.

What immediate action will be taken to address this situation?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Speaker, thank you.

I'm not sure, I'm going to have to check with the Member opposite to see if that number is valid, because I think he might have misspoken on the number that's being used. That is the number that's available.

During COVID, we had an agreement with the faculty of education that would see us be able to use some of the students who are enroled in the faculty of education as emergency supply teachers. That just means that they were available, not necessarily that they were used, but I will certainly check those numbers and get back to the Member opposite.

In terms of our recruitment and retention plan, we continue to work on and build that. We want to enforce the importance that teachers play in our system and the role that they play in our classrooms by addressing some of their concerns, working on a plan for recruitment and retention with the NLTA so that we have the most accurate representation of the voice of our teachers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

J. MCKENNA: Speaker, as the fishing and tourist seasons begin, the residents of Fogo Island and Change Islands are left with more questions than answers on their ferry service.

Minister, when can the residents expect the *MV Veteran* back in service?

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

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to respond.

Just for the House, we spent roughly \$90 million on our ferry operations last year and subsidized that to the tune of over 90 per cent. So when we look across our ferry services, we make sure that each route and each run is supplied with the vessels we have at hand, and that will be the case with Fogo.

We're dealing with the *Flanders* and the fire last week, but we'll have the replacement vessels in place for all our services now and into the summer.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

J. MCKENNA: Speaker, the summer season is a busy season for both Fogo and Change Islands and requires a ferry service that is reliable to keep up with the demand. We already know the *Flanders* has significant damage meaning the *Beaumont Hamel* will be on the Bell Island run for many months.

Minister, how will you provide a two-vessel schedule for Fogo and Change Islands for this busy summer season?

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

J. ABBOTT: Again, Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

We're committed to making sure there will be two vessels on the Bell Island service and there will be two vessels on the Fogo and Change Islands service. There will be services on the south coast. There will be services up on the north coast of Labrador.

We will meet our commitments. We are working to make sure that we have those vessels in place and up and running when we need them.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fogo Island - Cape Freels.

J. MCKENNA: Speaker, the current replacement vessel, the *Kamutik W*, is often taken out of service because it cannot

operate in winds over 30 knots, making this service unreliable to those travelling for medical appointments, work and sports tournaments.

Minister, which vessel will replace the *Kamutik W* when it goes back to Labrador?

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

J. ABBOTT: Again, Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to respond.

It is not uncommon for wind and sea conditions to interrupt any particular run. It happens on Bell Island, it happens on Fogo, it happens elsewhere, that's just a fact of operating in our coastal waters.

When it comes to specific vessels, we're working to make sure we have the vessels in place. I will be talking to the Member on the specific vessels once we have all that lined up in the next couple of weeks.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

The federal cut of \$625 million top-up to the Labour Market Development Agreement translates into a \$16.5 million cut to Newfoundland and Labrador, resulting in a \$3.5-million reduction in direct supports to people with disabilities. The practical consequences could mean over 200 people, plus their support workers, could be out of jobs.

Considering the reality that this money is gone, I ask the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, will his department make up the federal shortfall to ensure these employment programs

continue and people with disabilities are not forced out of the workforce?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

G. BYRNE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The hon. Member's question, the premise to which, is flawed. There have been no decisions that have been taken. There has been no \$3.5-million cut to any program, except we had to trim the Canada Job Grant, which is a separate initiative. I recognize and this government recognizes we have a responsibility to those most vulnerable.

What I would suggest to the hon. Member, if he could ask his leader, Jagmeet Singh, to ask a question on the floor of the House of Commons about the \$625-million cut and ask the federal government to rescind that cut, that would be very, very helpful because we haven't heard one word, one question in Ottawa, on the floor of the House of Commons from either the Conservatives or the NDP while all provinces and territories of this country band together to fight this unnecessary cut.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, rallying the troops and waging war on Ottawa makes for great media coverage and public relations, but what is plan B?

I ask the minister: Tell us what you've done. Tell us what you're going to do to ensure people living with disabilities are included in the economy?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

G. BYRNE: Mr. Speaker, fortunately, we are in coalition with a strong and mighty group of people, the 13 provincial premiers and territorial premiers and all of the labour market ministers, fighting this cut. While the hon. Member defaults to the fact that he accepts the \$625-million federal cut and accepts the \$16.8-million cut to Newfoundland and Labrador, I don't and neither do the NDP, Conservative and Saskatchewan Member parties across this entire country don't accept it. That's why we're banding together to fight these unnecessary cuts.

If he could get his leader to ask a question on the floor of the House of Commons, it would be very, very helpful.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, questions won't keep people employed.

Speaker, the real possibility exists that the organizations supporting people with disabilities could shut their doors entirely resulting in approximately 700 people with disabilities, 500 support workers and staff out of work. That's over 1,200 jobs that could be cut if the minister doesn't have a plan B.

I ask the minister: Why wouldn't he provide provincial funding to compensate for the cut to the federal top-up? Wouldn't it be better to keep people employed and included in the economy?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills.

G. BYRNE: It's always the best recourse to keep people employed and keep people working in the economy. That's why we are

working in coalition with all 13 premiers, all 13 labour market ministers to come up with a better solution than a \$625-million national cut.

One of the things we are doing to advance this is, there was the federal minister of employment who came on Newfoundland and Labrador talk radio to say that there's a \$90-million federal program that he is offering to organizations to be able to offset this cut. We are working with organizations to apply directly to the federal government to offset the cut. We are working with the organizations to be able to offset this unnecessary cut by fighting the cut.

Why does the hon. Member accept the validity of the cut?

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Yesterday, we heard calls for nurse practitioners to be able to direct bill only because people are desperate for timely and adequate access to health care.

I ask the minister: Why has this government failed to open up enough of the promised collaborative care clinics that would give patients who need it access to nurse practitioners within our existing public health care system?

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

T. OSBORNE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

There are 19 Family Care Teams out of 35. That's a hub-and-spoke model. So while

those 35 are the hubs, there will be spokes to those as well.

Mr. Speaker, we are recruiting for these Family Care Teams, which is exactly why we don't want to create silos and a competing process where we have private offices because they are for profit instead of having public health care and public nurse practitioners.

The Family Care Teams, there will be enough of these throughout the province as we recruit, and we have been successful in recruiting for many of these. There are areas where it is more challenging, there's no doubt, but we continue to recruit. We will have Family Care Teams to provide service to all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

In accordance with section 56 of the *Automobile Insurance Act*, I'm tabling the 2023-2024 Annual Report on Automobile Insurance of the Board of Commissioners of Public Utilities.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Are there any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Question for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

The background to this petition is as follows:

Long Run Road is the main access road from Goulds to Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove. This piece of infrastructure is in need of major repairs. This road is in deplorable condition and is relied on by both residents and visitors on a daily basis. Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove is a well-known tourist attraction in this area.

Therefore, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: To complete the necessary repairs to the Long Run Road in Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove to enhance and improve the flow of traffic and to allow safer travel to and from this important roadway.

Speaker, I spoke on this a few times now, on the road going down into Petty Harbour, coming down from Goulds and to go right around to Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove. The road is in deplorable condition. I get a lot of calls on it.

I've said this before, there are a lot of tourists who have travelled this road. When they land in St. John's and go to a hotel, they want to go to a rural part of Newfoundland, 15 minutes away they're in Petty Harbour-Maddox Cove and they can get to visit.

We don't keep track of how many people go down there, but I'm sure if we tracked it, I would say it's the most visited spot in Newfoundland when it comes to tourism. I

have no doubt about it. We've got some great tourist stuff going on down there.

I got a message from the mayor in Petty Harbour wondering if I could check on the Long Run Road in Petty Harbour and where it stands.

I know the minister has spoken on it, but it's tourism season coming up now and it's time for the minister to do what they promised last summer, to go down and do a kilometre or a kilometre and a half and get this resurfaced and get it done, so it's up to the standard for the people in the community and for all the tourists that are visiting our area.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure for a response.

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I will note, for the House just in case certain people have forgotten, that the Member who just spoke did vote against the provincial budget, which has money in for roads. I can't do both. I can't do a road if I don't have the money to do the road that he voted against.

So, consequently, I don't have the money right now for that road. He knows that, but we will certainly look at it for the future.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure residents of our six Indigenous communities of Northern

Labrador are provided with access to timely and adequate mental health care.

Northern Labrador communities have long suffered the harmful impacts of government policies that have resulted in intergenerational trauma and it's falling on deaf ears. The lack of adequate mental health supports to Northern Labrador residents are impacting the ability of people to effectively deal with their trauma, resulting in new cycles of trauma. We witness the highest rates of suicide compared to other regions in the province. Survivors of suicide loss often suffer serious adverse mental health impacts. We witness deteriorating physical wellness such as diabetes and heart disease in many survivors of unresolved trauma. That is a truth. We witness increased children in care in our communities that is often tied to unresolved intergenerational trauma.

So, Speaker, I'm going to speak a bit on this petition, because this is a new petition and even though it falls on deaf ears and a lot of heckling a lot of times, and talking over me, mental health supports: Why do we need mental health supports in Northern Labrador? We witness a crisis all across the country and in our province, but I say that in Northern Labrador unresolved trauma from government policies that's harmed people back decades ago was never addressed. Recently, we've seen that unfold in terms of people dying from diseases that were treatable and we know that their life has been impacted by trauma from past generations and affected their health or affected their ability to survive.

We see people dying at their own hands. Why is that happening? Because the lack of supports to help people get over this unresolved trauma. Now we see the total failure of mental health supports in my district. We see people who have full-blown psychosis from non-trauma induced health issues – non-trauma – yet we can't even get them diagnosed. What it is, is they'll get a phone call and if they want – we're told to

tell a 16-year-old child – if you want to speak on the phone, to get some counselling for something. We know that's not adequate, but that is their only option. We can't even get them out to the Janeway. We can't get adults who are suffering and calling out for help. We can't get help for children, Speaker.

So, at the end of the day, even though this is a new petition, it's been old existing condition that we need to resolve.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

These are the reason for this petition. The background of this petition is as follows:

This is a petition urging the House of Assembly to ask government to amend the *Limitations Act* and clearly state there is no limitation period for civil claims involving child abuse of any form.

Eliminating the limitation period for child abuse ensures that those responsible for heinous acts can be held accountable, regardless of how much time has passed. This will act as a deterrent for child abuse, increase access to justice and ensure all victims receive the redress they deserve. It would also bring Newfoundland's approach to child abuse claims in line with human rights standards and the revised statutes in most other provinces.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* and remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims.

Speaker, this petition has circulated throughout the House of Assembly, I don't

think it should fall short on anybody on the other side that – I think everybody on this side is in agreement that we will sit and we will stay in this House of Assembly until this *Limitations Act* legislation, the amendments come to the floor of the House of Assembly on behalf of all victims and all future law enforcement.

We want to make sure that these kind of heinous acts don't happen anymore, especially in our public institutions where we put people in our care to make sure that they're looked after and we give them a help in life, not a hindrance.

Like I said, everybody on this side of the House, I think, feels that we should bring that legislation to the floor of the House of Assembly in this session and make sure that we pass it for the benefit of all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to: Amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred against a minor (a) within an intimate relationship; (b) within a relationship of dependency; or (c) where the defendant was in a position of trust or authority.

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitation periods do not run during any time a defendant: (a) willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about essential elements of the claim; (b) willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of proceedings as a means of remedying the injury, loss or damage.

The above-mentioned legislative changes should be retroactive and apply regardless of the expiry of any previous limitation period.

Mr. Speaker, we've watched the Whalen family sit here time and time again over the last two sittings of the House. Atrocities that Mr. Whalen suffered should be face by nobody. Not only has he had the courage to stand up and try and make a change, but he's lived those events and every time he comes here, I guarantee you, he relives those events. Nobody should have to experience that – nobody.

I believe that the Minister of Justice truly wants to bring this legislation to the floor. I believe that everyone in this House is in concurrence with this legislation. What I don't believe is that it will come to the floor this sitting.

That is why I'm standing here today, because it's incredibly important for this legislation to come to the House of Assembly during this session. The Minister of Justice has the ability to do that. I understand there are complications with regard to creating legislation and getting it good enough to come to the House, but the reality of it is, if the legislation is created and it's brought to the floor, we as legislators have the ability to put forward amendments and to shape this piece of legislation into what it has to be.

I urge the minister to bring this legislation prior to the end of the sitting of this House. Justice delayed is justice denied.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

The reasons for this petition are:

This is a petition urging the House of Assembly to ask government to amend the *Limitations Act* to clearly state there's no limitation period for civil claims involving child abuse of any form.

Eliminating the limitation period for child abuse ensures those responsible for heinous acts can be held accountable regardless of how much time has passed. This will act as a deterrent for child abuse, increase access to justice, ensure all victims receive the redress they deserve. It would also bring Newfoundland and Labrador's approach to child abuse claims in line with human rights standards and the revised statutes in most other provinces.

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 amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims.

Speaker, this is an easy fix. This is not complicated. Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, they've all removed these time limits. It's up to this government to do the same.

Speaker, this is about access to justice. This is about ensuring our laws increase access to justice for our most vulnerable. These are our vulnerable people and if we do not eliminate that timeline on processing trauma – and that's what it is, in effect, that's a timeline on processing trauma of people who have been victimized. That is wrong. That is unfair. That is illogical and I argue it's possibly unconstitutional.

So the Minister of Justice and this Liberal government can amend this law. I know that it's on the Order Paper but we need assurance from the Minister of Justice and from this government that this will be brought forward in this sitting of the House and we, as the Official Opposition, are prepared to stay here until it is done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, I stand on the same petition.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to amend the *Limitations Act* to remove limitation periods for civil child abuse claims where the abuse complained of occurred to a minor (a) within an intimate relationship; (b) within a relationship of dependency; or (c) where the defendant was in a position of trust or authority.

And amend the *Limitations Act* to state limitation periods do not run during any time a defendant: (a) willfully conceals or misleads the claimant about the essential elements of the claim, i.e., the fact that an injury, loss or damage has occurred that was caused by or contributed by an act of omission, or that the act or omission was that of the defendant; or (b) willfully misleads the claimant as to the appropriateness of a proceeding as a means of remedying the injury, loss or damage.

I stand, again, as all people – my colleague, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands, the Opposition and the NDP – united to have the *Limitations Act* amended. I still have faith in the government; I really do. I have faith in the minister that this will be done.

I understand the complications of getting amendments made and getting an act brought into the House of Assembly, but I'm a firm believer and I really, truly believe that they understand the implications of this, as Jack is getting ready for discovery in October. I honestly, truly believe that the Minister of Justice and Public Safety wants

this done. I honestly, truly believe that the government wants it done, but what we need is the Premier of this province to say let's have the legislation put forth in this session of the House. I really, truly believe that.

We heard yesterday about the different opportunities, how you can bring legislation to the House. It is done through the Cabinet. I know a lot of attention is on the minister to bring it forward as Government House Leader, but I understand how Cabinet operates. Once you get in Cabinet, you decide what the priorities are in Cabinet and the Cabinet is who decides what legislation is going to be brought forward to this session.

I'm putting my faith in government that it's going to be done; I honestly am. It's easy for me here now because I think everybody understands the seriousness of this; everybody understands the need that has to be done; everybody understands that it has to be done.

So I'm urging the government, whoever is doing up the draft of the legislation, to try to have it done because I still have confidence in the government that they will do the right thing for the right reasons, for the right people, the people that were physically abused in this province that, right now, there is no remedy for them. I have confidence in the government.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) that the House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 21.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Motion 3.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that pursuant to Standing Order 11(1) this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 23, 2024.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 4.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, that this House now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider An Act to Amend the Management of Information Act and the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act, Bill 22.

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 Bill 22.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We are now considering Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Management of Information Act and the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Management of Information Act and the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act." (Bill 22)

CLERK (Hawley George): Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

E. JOYCE: It should be the title, not the clause. (Inaudible.)

B. PETTEN: That's at the end, isn't it?

He wants to know the title –

E. JOYCE: It should be shall the title carry.

CHAIR: The Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Chair.

I don't know if there is any confusion about titles or clauses, but I'll carry on.

This is our third go around on this piece of legislation. I know that there has been much debate in this House of Assembly, much conversation. I guess back when it originally came up in the House last spring – I'm trying to remember, last fall, last spring – in the middle of the debate, the Privacy Commissioner actually notified all the House Leaders that they weren't consulted and they had serious concerns with this piece of legislation, which is really about duty to document.

Anyway, they expressed their concerns to us, as House Leaders, and then they made it public. It kind of created a lot more questions than the questions we already probably had. It added to the list of questions. The debate carried on and carried on and, finally, government adjourned debate. It was brought up then, I'm going to say, the fall. So it was last spring and it was brought back in the fall. We started to debate it once more and then government pulled it – well, after second, they pulled it and it never went into Committee.

So this is where we find ourselves to today. I don't really know if we're any further ahead than where we were back then. We have amendments; we have questions. We'll try to get all that expressed during the Committee stage.

I think the crux of the problem and the issue it comes down to is people may not realize when you're looking at duty to document, it's a broad term. Sometimes it doesn't

mean anything to anyone. Our concern is – and I think the Privacy Commissioner’s concern was – there are still avenues there where you can circumvent the legislation. Anywhere where you have a piece of legislation where there are ways around it, especially when you look at duty to document and serious key information, that’s a problem.

People may need to realize this duty to document legislation came out of the Muskrat Falls report. Because when they went back and reviewed, Justice LeBlanc pointed out during the inquiry they could not find any information. Things went to the Cabinet room, things went to board rooms throughout government and meetings were held and there was nothing to do any proper analysis or inquiry on because a lot of this information was missing. Obviously, that’s problem. Because if you go to any meeting and someone is supposed to keep minutes, you go to any meeting or you could be a volunteer group and there are usually minutes kept of that meeting. It’s a pretty basic concept when you look at it.

Keeping minutes in a board meeting, that’s a duty to document, no different than when you look at something as big and as important as Muskrat Falls and the amount of debate, the amount of time that went into it, the conversations, the endless meetings, presentations, on and on and on. So when the commissioner decided to do the review, chose to do an inquiry he was left with nowhere to turn. Where do you go?

So when this legislation was brought in, and there are lots of areas with it – and like I said, we have lots of questions and amendments. But I guess one big thing – and I know I spoke a lot about it – was that when you get to the Cabinet room, anything can be confidential, as long as the Clerk determines that. The Clerk of the Executive Council has the ability to determine what should be documented and shouldn’t be documented.

If I’m not mistaken, this was some concern that the Privacy Commissioner raised as well. We never got clarity on everything would be documented. We have clarity on what they deem necessary to be documented, as head of Executive Council, as head of the department, they will document. That does not say explicitly what’s going to be documented.

So that’s where we feel that the back door is open. You can really push everything through that process and, at the end of the day, you will not have much more information than Justice LeBlanc had if that caveat is there.

I’ll go a step further, too. This is one of them pieces of legislation that when you’re in Opposition, it’s a good piece of legislation and a good issue to argue. When you’re in government, it’s not so good. Because when you’re in government, you like to kind of have a bit of flexibility to make decisions and not have everything under scrutiny. When you’re in Opposition, it’s totally different roles. So you have to be careful what you wish for.

But I’ve given that a lot of thought as well. I believe that we need to be transparent and open. Everyone uses that word and some people like to use it, throw it around and, at the end of the day, they’re no more transparent than a concrete wall. I personally think that we need to be as a government – I think, generally speaking today in today’s world – I always use it when I’m out on the street and you’re talking – we’re living in a world of social media. There’s not very much that’s secret anymore. There’s not very much you can hide away. We live in a very open society, so I think, as government, I don’t see any reason why we wouldn’t have a piece of legislation come in that would prevent anything from being open and out toward the people.

Realistically, we stand in our roles and ministers occupy those roles, but we are

representing the public. So all this information comes forth and, really, why shouldn't the public be aware? Why shouldn't people be aware and be able to analyze any of these decisions, any of this information comes in? We have the most transparent ATIPP legislation in the country and, somewhat, probably in North America, if you ask me, probably in the world. It was very open and transparent that way, so why would you not have this stuff the same way? Why should this not be put into the same portal and if anyone wants to access it, it's there to access it?

Now, certain things, Cabinet confidentiality, you're not going to be able to release that stuff public to anyone who wants to ATIPP but if you have a Justice – you have someone coming in doing a public inquiry, there needs to be some place that that information is stored, that people can review. Right now, that's what happened during the Muskrat Falls inquiry. There's no guarantee if we bring this legislation, other than checking a box of the inquiry are we going to see any differences.

We're going to see the *Management of Information Act* and government are going to go out and herald, what a great piece of legislation. It's progressive. It's keeping with the times. We're following up on Justice LeBlanc's recommendation and it's going to be a pat yourself on the back, we're happy and look how open and transparent we are, but in actual fact they're not open and transparent, and we see that repeatedly.

If I'm not mistaken, with something so simple that I heard or read somewhere that was something from the Premier's office on something about travel, someone inquired. I read it somewhere. I don't even know now. Anyway, someone up in the office referred him to the Estimates line in the budget binder.

In the budget book, there was an Estimates line on what travel was. Someone asked what the travel was to date. Is that open and

transparent? I laughed because it was such a flippant, really ridiculous response to a legitimate question. Again, this is public money and no one in this House owns that money. That's money of the people of this province.

Governments are elected to manage that money in the best interests of the people but, ultimately, it's the people's money; it not anyone's in this House. We're tasked with challenging government on how it's spent, but government are responsible for the \$10 billion-plus budget. It's as simple as that. We're meant to hold government to account to make sure the money is spent properly in the right areas for the right reasons. Ultimately, though, it's every Newfoundlander and Labradorian; that's their money.

So if we're asking the question about the Premier's travel or we're asking a question about how money is spent, whether it be Muskrat Falls, whether it be any other issue, travelling nurses, you can look at it, all the issues that come up in this House, it's public money.

This duty to document, why can't we find out? Why can't we find out how these decisions were made, what basis they are on as opposed to having these roadblocks? I respectfully say that having the Clerk deem something that has to be documented and not – I mean people need to realize, too, that ultimately when you look at the Clerk of Executive Council, the Clerk is the head of the civil service and the Premier is who ultimately makes that decision. I've been around enough to know that as well.

So it's kind of a bit of a smoke-and-mirrors effect to say that. *Hansard* will show that we've spoken at great length on this piece of legislation and, for some reason, it doesn't move ahead. I know that when the Privacy Commissioner spoke publicly and notified us that he wasn't contacted, there was some, apparently, back and forth with the department at the time – I think it was

Digital Government – and it was a public statement, I think at the time, that said that the commissioner was okay with everything. We reached out to the commissioner to find out that that wasn't the case, that nothing really changed. Whatever was changed didn't address his concerns.

Unless we're missing something or we're not being told something – I'll see what comes up in debate – right now, we're no further ahead. Even though the Privacy Commissioner has moved on now and we are in the process of a temporary one – an interim one, I should say, while we get a permanent one again. But why do we have a Privacy Commissioner and a Privacy Commissioner is reaching out and making those issues, raising those concerns? What is the purpose of having a Privacy Commissioner if we're not going to adhere to their concerns, if we're not going to answer their concerns? It's kind of a moot point.

This government opposite made a lot of hay back in 2012, I think was, on the infamous Bill 29 that went through this House. Some Members are still there from that government at that time. I remember as a staff person up in the galleries, the debate went on for endless – it went on for days and days and days on Bill 29.

The Opposition at the time, which is the current Liberal administration, put up a great fight and raised a lot of very serious issues, but now, realistically, when I read a lot of the stuff now, they're going right against what they actually stood for. I'd say if I dug through *Hansard* far enough, I'd find comments that's backing up exactly what I'm saying here now.

Again, I guess that's why some people out there get disenchanted with politicians and the House of Assembly sometimes it's because it fits you when you're on this side, but when you go to the other side, the rules change.

As I just said earlier, I believe that this legislation is great if you're in Opposition because you can challenge government to disclose everything, but I also believe being in Opposition, and hopefully in time we will get that opportunity to be government, that I can live with that. I can live with that level of transparency because I believe we should be more transparent.

Transparent is a wonderful word; it sounds great. It can get you out of a lot of jams but if you're not truly practising that, they're only words. We see that throughout a lot of legislation that comes in here. We're given a piece of legislation and you're debating the legislation but the surprise comes in the regulations. So you debate a piece of legislation, but the regulations are never there. They're added in after. After, a lot of the concerns that you raised are never addressed, but they'll be in regulations.

I need to remind the House once more about the ATV regulations, about the helmets. We were assured there would be some consideration given to our debate before they come in with the regulations and what have you. Lo and behold, they brought in regulations with no consultation with our Opposition opposite, who raised very valid concerns late into one night.

The trust-me stage of our side, respectfully, we don't trust anything coming from the other side until we see it in action. We're not seeing it here. A phone call or the little back and forth with the Privacy Commissioner addressed nothing. It is not consultation and not dealing with the Privacy Commissioner's concerns.

You don't have to like the person that's in the office, but you have to respect the position. I believe that we ran into a situation with the Privacy Commissioner and this government that I don't think they were lined up with the Privacy Commissioner. Let's be honest, I know they weren't. We could see that. That was pretty evident.

The Privacy Commissioner was felt to be at odds with everything government was doing and they were challenging his court case – still ongoing – about client-solicitor privilege. I think that's still in the courts from the previous Privacy Commissioner. So why would you adhere to any of his concerns raised like that? In my opinion, the way I was hearing it was that they were concerned that the Privacy Commissioner was almost like running interference on them.

There were actually calls across the House one day from Members opposite that said that he was with us, he was a PC, which little do I know – he's in BC now, I never knew him to attend any political function on our behalf. So I'm at a loss with that commentary, too. These are not made up, this is what's been said that he was more lined up with us, but he was not. It was not political.

I really believe, in my dealings with the former Privacy Commissioner, he was very caught up in policy, so much so, I never always got the answers from him that I wanted, but he was very strict to the book, the privacy laws. He was very adamant on them; it didn't matter who you were or what party you were with.

So I had no reason, whatsoever, to feel that the Privacy Commissioner was in any way being political, being deceptive. I think he had valid concerns and government didn't like to hear what his concerns were so they just clouded the issue and we got clouded.

I know one of the other times – this bill has been kicked around for quite some time and we continued to raise these concerns – there were accusations that we were creating stuff, making stuff up. But all you have to do is look at his letter – unless someone can show me that letter has been totally addressed, the commissioner told us, while he was still commissioner and since just recently, within the last month, that nothing was addressed, nothing changed on

this legislation. The challenge is there for government to deal with those issues, we can make some headway then.

But we have a lot of amendments along the way that we'll get to eventually and some of my colleagues will also want to speak and ask some questions. Hopefully, we'll make some headway with this legislation today because, as it stands right now, we can't accept it in its entirety right now. We need some changes and improvements to it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Just a point of order.

Usually when we bring in a bill, before you go into a clause, you ask if the title carries. I think that was missed. You should have asked if the title carries. That gives people the opportunity when they want to speak on anything within the bill. Once you go into the clauses, you have to speak specifically on the bill.

I'm sure that was missed, because I go back to Muskrat Falls and I go back to Bill 29, once you ask if the title is carried, then you can stay on the title as long as you want to have discussion, then you go to different parts of the bill.

So I'm sure that was just an oversight, because it is a very important part that you can have to speak on the title and you can speak on the whole bill then of the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*, instead of the specific clauses that's on it.

I know there are Members opposite who spoke on Bill 29 and spoke on Muskrat Falls for days and days and days because we stayed on the title. So I just ask for clarification because I'm sure that it was a

misunderstanding there to have that done because that is the orders to ask if the title carries before we get into any specific clause.

CHAIR: I'll clarify for the Member that the title will be called at the end and debate can occur on the title then. So there's no point of order.

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

E. JOYCE: I have to ask the question: When did that start because all my time in here the title always got called first? I go back to any debate. I'll get *Hansard* just to show that the title is called first.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Pardon me?

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

E. JOYCE: Okay, so we can speak at the end of it on the title. I just want to make that clear.

CHAIR: The title will be called at the end.

There's no point of order.

The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, everyone.

I'll just speak to a bit of that and happy to answer any questions and deal with any amendments.

I guess there were two things, just to clue up, I did kind of an overview when this was here last month. I can certainly do another overview, no problem.

The Privacy Commissioner thought that this makes Cabinet records exempt from this process and I can assure the House and anyone listening, as I did about a month

ago, and I wrote the Privacy Commissioner, that letter, our correspondence has all been tabled in this House. It was tabled last year. This is from the March 29, 2023, email, I confirmed to the Privacy Commissioner, Bill 22 does not exempt records related to Cabinet decision-making process from the duty to document and proposed legislation. So I just want to clarify that.

I'll be fully transparent, though, the Privacy Commissioner did actively want to oversee the implementation of the *Management of Information Act*. The Privacy Commissioner wanted to oversee the *Management of Information Act* and that is not in the legislation. That does not exist in any other province. As it stands, it will be up to the public head, the permanent head of each public body to oversee the legislation.

I do want to note, the government, or the House of Assembly, commissioned a Review of the Statutory Offices of the House of Assembly from the hon. Robert Fowler and that was published on October 5, 2023, dealing with the statutory offices of the House of Assembly.

So just in terms of the Privacy Commissioner advocating for an increased scope of their office, because having significantly more responsibility would significantly increase the scope of their office. If you reviewed Justice Fowler's report, it clearly outlines that – I mean, the House of Assembly gives these officers their powers and they should not be advocating for increased scope of responsibility.

So, for example, on page 56: "The concern surrounding statutory offices advocating for mandates that expand the scope beyond what is legitimate" What else? "This concern has been underscored by statutory offices who have contacted the media to advocate for larger mandates that centre around policy making powers." "In the past, there have been significant tensions regarding statutory officers who

communicate directly with the media, bypassing the legislature or launching constitutional court challenges without consulting the legislative body. This raises the legitimate concern of statutory officer accountability challenging the broadness of independence claimed by these legislative officers.”

So I just want to also state that Justice Fowler did not agree with the independent officer strongly advocating for increased scope for themselves. I do also want to clarify, though, that within the *Management of Information Act*, this deals with how government stores and manages records. The Privacy Commissioner does oversee ATIPPA. So how the public accesses all government records is ATIPPA, and we are not making any changes to ATIPPA today.

All of the documents that will be documented as a result of this bill and this change, all the extra documentation that has to happen within all 160 public bodies, will be subject to ATIPPA and the Privacy Commissioner does and continues to oversee the implementation of ATIPPA. So the Privacy Commissioner will continue to oversee the implementation of ATIPPA as it applies to the *Management of Information Act* and the duty to document.

Happy to answer lots and lots of questions.

Thank you very much.

CHAIR: Okay.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Chair.

Just looking at Bill 22, its amendments to the *Management of Information Act* and amendments to the *House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act*. When I'm talking about a bill, sometimes people don't really understand why we're bringing forward bills or

amendments to bills. So it's so important to look at why these changes are needed or why new acts need to be introduced.

When we look at it, these two acts are being amended to include updated and precise procedures and standards for information management, because at the heart of everything that goes on in the House of Assembly is the information management. So these acts are being amended to update, but also to enhance reporting on information management activities, which is so critical for the House of Assembly.

Access to information, which I believe is at the heart of our democracy, depends on the documentation of key activities and decisions by public agencies and government departments. That's what democracy is all about.

Now, why do we need the amendments? Every year, information commissioners investigate complaints, where requested records do not exist because they were never created, and that's a tremendous failure. That's a failing of accountability. Also, it's a lost opportunity sometimes to actually take what action that's required, that's needed, that comes out of meetings and reports and investigations and just discussions.

So three things: records that do not exist because they were never created; an emergent culture that we live in now of oral decision-making that undermines public accountability and it undermines the historical record and also, very importantly, it's citizens' trust. What we see now is there's a distrust of government. This is across the province, across Canada.

The way that we can restore public trust is to be accountable and a lot of that accountability comes in being able to answer correctly and provide the documentation of why things are happening or why decisions were made in the past. This duty to document is all about

accountability for us, for everybody who has the power to make decisions or the power to influence decision.

The third point is records management in the 21st century is challenged by new communication technologies that didn't exist in the past, also the volumes of records being kept and their viability. So amending these acts will help us with that. This can be a very positive thing for us but, also, we have to make sure that we don't confuse duty to document with addressing poor governance problem that exists, and that I believe is at the heart of the problem that we see today when we look at accountability.

A duty to document addresses concerns by establishing a positive duty for public servants and officials to create a full, accurate and complete record of important business activities. Records should be properly preserved so they remain authentic, reliable and easy to be able to be retrieved when subject to access to information requests. We don't see that right now. We see so many gaps when there are access to information requests.

Records provide explanations as to what and why decision-making had occurred and that promotes accountability, transparency and, importantly, public trust. Calls for a duty to document have been heard in this province since at least 2015 when the report of the Independent Statutory Review Committee for ATIPPA recommended that government impose such a duty on the public sector. It's about accountability. Without that, we don't have public trust; we won't be able to restore public trust.

More recently, the Auditor General flagged some instances where the documentation behind certain actions or decisions by government departments or agencies is lacking. That should have never been allowed to happen and it can't be allowed to continue. There are examples there, but as the Member for Conception Bay South said,

this is our third go-round, so I'm not going to dwell on everything.

Just looking at these amendments, a lot of aspects of this legislation is badly needed. Upholding the duty to document – government could improve its accountability, upholding the duty to document.

Now, I worked in industry and if we didn't actually provide proper records, our company could be charged. We could be liable; people could lose their jobs. So we should actually govern ourselves the same way we expect the private industry, the rest of the province to govern themselves, upholding the duty to document.

This legislation would also ensure a single framework for documenting decisions and storing records across government departments and agencies. A single framework, overseen by the Government Records Committee, that was mentioned earlier. It creates a reporting requirement for all government departments and agencies, which would provide a means of committing them to more transparent and accountable decision-making practices.

Chair, a lot of what it talks about is about transparency. It's about being able to produce the rationale, the decisions, the conversations that go in and how decisions were made. Right now, we see gaps in that.

Previous records by the Auditor General and others have identified the lack of data management policies as their key concern, in particular an audit of the corporate systems at Newfoundland and Labrador CHI dated November 2016, flags a number of problems regarding the management of IT. There are other examples as well.

Now, when we're looking at these amendments and we're looking at a duty to document, one of the concerns that comes to the forefront is: What kind of burden is this going to place on those tasked with

documenting? That is always a concern. So there might be some concerns as to whether these reporting and information management requirements might place an added burden on the public service staff, many of whom are already facing high workloads, and a lot of times it's due to attrition policies. So that could be a big concern: overworked and overburdened.

I've got about five or six pages, Chair, but I'm not going to go through it all. Like I said, we've been through this. I've only got two minutes left too, right? What I'm going to say is, while it's highly important for government to keep records of decisions made and those who make them, there is little in this legislation to ensure those decisions are informed by better, more reliable information or improved practices of policy monitoring and evaluation.

That gets me back to also about poor governance. Poor governance is a problem that exists. So there's a duty to document in itself, but that may not necessarily produce better governance. What's needed when we're looking at amending to improve transparency and accountability and management of our information, what's needed is more stringent processes for gathering information on policies, political issues and social problems. This would help address the much deeper root of our poor governance problem.

This ability was whittled away through various budget cuts over the years, particularly in 2016; we all remember that. I was out there listening to the budget. Also, you've got to say: Why did that happen? But it's about politics. It's about politics; it's very self-serving. You have to ask, why would government want to record data if it only serves to show the inadequacies of their work, or if it only ever would lead to people identifying new social programs that needed to be fixed, creating more work for themselves, or putting themselves in a bad light?

But in actual fact, that's what needs to be addressed, problems that exist – new problems that exist that need to be solved, especially when it comes to the social welfare of the province. We have to make sure that it's not just about documenting, it's about good governance.

Thank you, and I've got more questions in Committee.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Chair.

So we're back to Bill 22. It's been a while since we last talked about it. I support the bill in principle. I do look forward to seeing what some of the amendments are going to be that my colleagues are going to bring forward.

Certainly duty to document, Chair, is an important piece of legislation. I'll just take the Muskrat Falls inquiry, as an example. I can remember watching the former premier being questioned and so on, on the stand about meetings, important meetings with people from Hydro and so on, or Nalcor, I guess, and talking about a project that was going to be, at that time, \$5 billion or \$6 billion. Of course, we know where it went. But the fact that there were high-level discussions and there were absolutely zero notes. I think the premier of the day at the inquiry said we didn't take any notes – very disturbing.

Of course, we can remember what we heard in the inquiry about SNC-Lavalin with that risk report. They're trying to give to Mr. Martin and Mr. Martin didn't want to take it. They said: Here, have the report. No, no, I don't want the report. La-la-la-la-la-la-la, I can't hear you. There's no report. They didn't want to see the report with all the risks.

These are things, disturbing things, that came out of the Muskrat Falls inquiry and

it's what led, I guess, to this whole notion of the duty to document and why it's important that when we're spending taxpayers' money, that there is a paper trail to show, not just what money was spent and where it was spent, but the decision-making process that was used to determine why the money was spent in a particular way. So that all makes sense and it's something I can support. I think it's something that everybody would support.

The Minister of Digital Government and Service NL talked about the former Privacy Commissioner. I thought he did a fantastic job, to be honest with you. I really did. He's going to be truly missed in this province, I think, because he was not afraid to put it out there, to take on anybody from any party, any Member or the government. If he thought something wasn't being done properly and above board, he called you out for it. That's what's needed in a democracy and if we're going to do things truly above board, that's the kind of thing that we need. That's the kind of thing, I think, that the people would expect.

So when the Minister of Service NL talks about the fact that the Privacy Commissioner wanted to have a more hands-on approach to this legislation, he wanted to go beyond his scope, if you will, and expand his scope to have a hands-on approach to the management of this information, one has to ask themselves: Why would he want that? What would be the purpose for the Privacy Commissioner to say: I need to have a hands-on approach over the management of this information, that ATIPPA in itself is not enough. Why would he say that I wonder?

Well, one of the things that comes to mind for me, I guess, what pops into my head, sort of immediately, is that he does not trust – I'm not talking about this administration. Certainly, it could apply to this administration, there are lots of examples, but any government, I would say, what he, in a sense, was saying, I believe: I cannot

trust the politicians of any stripe to manage this information the way it's supposed to be managed. I need to have a more hands-on approach with this.

What is it he's trying to manage? What is it he's trying to protect? Well, we've seen the former Privacy Commissioner be critical of this administration. I'm not saying the other administration didn't do it as well, but, in recent years, be critical of this administration. He talked about how this administration was using the exemption of Cabinet documents and client-solicitor privilege to hide information. Essentially that's what he came out and said and he was very critical of that.

So what does that mean? Well, what it means is that even if we pass this legislation – and I hope we do – we can document all the information we want. We can force officials to document their decisions as to how they came to the conclusion, as to why they were going to spend money on a certain thing and a certain way, but that in itself means nothing if you have a decision or you have a report and then the government of the day can take that decision, take that report and hand it over to the Department of Justice to have a look at and then say client-solicitor privilege, we don't have to show you that, or we can table everything at a Cabinet meeting and get the Clerk to stamp everything here, Cabinet document, yeah, we've documented it, but nobody can see it, so what's the point of it.

I believe that's the concern that the former Privacy Commissioner had and why he wanted to have a more hands-on approach. Because he did not trust governments to be transparent and to make that information available, that governments would find a way to hide it. Whether it be through solicitor-client privilege or whether it be through calling it a Cabinet document.

This will apply of course now to OilCo because it's a public body. It's going to

apply to OilCo; it's going to apply to Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro. But guess what? Remember all those embedded contractors? Remember former Premier Ball who, at the time, said I'm going to get all this information out to the public about all these contracts and so on, all these concerns? Later, he had to haul his horns in and come back when Mr. Martin came out and said: No b'y, sorry Premier, nobody's seeing it. We're exempt under ATIPPA. We are exempted under ATIPPA.

And when this administration dismantled Nalcor and brought in OilCo and Hydro, they had an opportunity at the time to fix it and to no longer allow those two entities to be exempted under ATIPPA. Guess what? They wouldn't do it. I brought it on the floor of this House of Assembly, numerous times, said to the minister, now's your chance to fix it. Your colleague, the former premier, wanted this information out there, they couldn't do it. You've got a chance to fix it now, let's start fresh with OilCo and NL Hydro and let's get rid of this exemption.

Now we're not talking about getting rid of an exemption for commercially sensitive information – legitimate information – but currently with those two entities, if anybody goes looking for any information at all, they can just basically say: No b'y, you're not getting it. They do not have to provide any rationale either, and it's not appealable to the Privacy Commissioner. So they can basically just do whatever they want.

Again, I'm not talking about now they're having discussions with Hydro-Québec about the Upper Churchill contract and stuff like that. I'm just talking about other things, expenditures of money and decisions being made. It's still taxpayers' money and ratepayers' money. They can hide it all and we did nothing to fix it.

As I say, when it comes to core government, under the system we have, even though this is a good thing, we can create all the documents we want but

government can still hide it and call it a Cabinet document.

We were in this House of Assembly when we dismantled the school board, Members would know. We were told by the Minister of Education of the day that there was this report, this decision was based on a consultant's report that said this was the way to go. I said: Okay, great. Can I see the report, please? No, you can't see it, Cabinet document.

That's why I voted against the legislation. I was being told that this was the right thing to do, consultants had looked into it, this was the right decision, but you cannot see that decision, you cannot see the information.

Madam Chair, I'm running out of time. I will have other opportunities to speak. As I say, I do look forward to seeing what the amendments are. I do, again, support the concept of duty to document. It makes good sense. We can pass this legislation, make it as great as we want, but until we deal with ATIPP exemptions, it's not worth the paper it's written on.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Madam Chair.

I'm happy to speak to Bill 22. I have to say, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands just stated that he agrees with the concept of duty to document. I would venture to say that all of us here in this hon. House agree with that concept of duty to document. That's not in debate, I would argue.

What is in debate is this bill and the fact that it goes to the heart of our democracy, Madam Chair. It goes to the principles of accountability and transparency, which are jeopardized by this very bill.

We are back here again, Madam Chair, since last year, March of 2023, and nothing has changed. The Member for Conception Bay South stated it accurately: The bill that is before us is still as problematic as it was in March of 2023.

I will explain why in my short 10 minutes, and hopefully I'll have other opportunities throughout this afternoon and as long as it takes to explain some of the concerns that have been identified by the former Privacy Commissioner.

I'll start with the exchange of documents that occurred between the minister, at the time, and the Privacy Commissioner, which have all been tabled, as well as the press release of March 22 that the former Privacy Commissioner had released. He had three concerns, Madam Chair, about this bill. I would argue that those concerns have not changed, despite what the minister may argue, they have not changed. They are still in substance problematic.

Now, there was an exchange of documents, a letter back and forth between the minister and the former Privacy Commissioner. The last letter, which was dated March 30, 2023, that letter by the former Privacy Commissioner still outlined his concerns with this bill and the issues that it creates for transparency and accountability for the people of this province. I might add, when we look at accountability and transparency, the ways to measure a government's performance, Mr. Chair, the way to guard against possible misuse of powers, Sir, is through rules and bills that are transparent and accountable.

When information is not freely available, when information is not directly accessible to the people who are affected by these decisions and by these bills, then we've got a problem. And when decisions are not properly documented and cannot get citizens access to government documents, to which they are entitled, then we've got a problem. When government cannot provide

information to citizens about what their government has done, then we've got a problem.

We've got a problem with this particular Bill 22. I'll identify three of the main issues that the former Privacy Commissioner had outlined in his press release. It's complicated sometimes; it is somewhat obtuse in terms of the nuances that are involved, but really the concerns – the red flags that the former Privacy Commissioner had, the alarm bells that he was ringing back in March of 2023, and nothing has changed, I would argue – nothing – to change that interpretation of the former Privacy Commissioner, but he identified three main concerns. The bill carved out Cabinet exceptions, there was an issue with respect to oversight and the duty to document.

Now, we heard the minister speak previously here today that the duty to document is intact. Well, I would argue, from my understanding of what the former Privacy Commissioner has stated, that it is not – that it is not intact. There's too much discretionary power involved with respect to this legislation. There is an implication, I would argue, that the duty to document can be changed. It's not set out, it's not mandatory, the language is not written in mandatory terms; therefore, there is discretion there, which could impact this duty to document provision. That is what the former Privacy Commissioner had concerns about.

I fail to understand why the government is so resistant. Why were they so resistant to the former Privacy Commissioner's concerns? Why? Wouldn't government want to see the most robust and thorough duty to document legislation that's possible? Why wouldn't government want the best legislation it could possibly have?

Yes, it's been stated, we all believe in the concept of duty to document, but there are nuances and there are idiosyncrasies here

that have to be clearly established, that have to be identified to ensure that we have the best legislation.

Why wouldn't government want to ensure that the legislation is reaching the maximum potential in promoting accountability to the people, to the public? I fail to understand why the government would not want that. Is it, perhaps, because the government does not really, truly, genuinely want to be bound by that duty to document? So I leave those questions for one to answer.

But I must say there are grave, grave concerns that we in the Official Opposition have with this bill. Those concerns have not changed. We're back here again and I look just to provide a little bit of background about some of the roles. For the viewing public who may be wondering about the role of the Privacy Commissioner, that is a very important role. It is a statutory office. It's independent and that's the beauty of that role, that's the beauty of that office, is because they are independent.

As it was stated by my colleague, the MHA for Mount Pearl - Southlands, our former Privacy Commissioner executed, I would argue, his duties steadfastly and with complete objectivity and impartiality so as to protect the rights of citizens to be able to access information which they are entitled to as part of the democracy that we have.

The fact that the former Privacy Commissioner had such serious and grave concerns, they were outlined in his letter which has been tabled of March 30, 2023, and my interpretation and our interpretation in the Official Opposition is that nothing has changed. There was one point where the commissioner stated that he saw a positive development regarding government addressing a concern relating to the duty to document, but it was not by any means an endorsement of this Bill 22 which we are debating today.

So for those very reasons, we're seriously concerned about this bill and are opposed to it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR (Trimper): The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, everyone, and thank you for the feedback. I'm looking forward to getting to lots of questions. I haven't heard a lot of questions yet.

So just for anyone watching and for the record in terms of this period of discussing the bill, I do want to explain why this is the third time this has come up. The first time, things got a little nasty and I left the room, Chair. While I had left the room, the House Leader shut down debate. So that was the first time. It was not about the subject. Frankly, things got nasty and the House Leader shut down the debate and we broke for the day.

The second time was about a month ago and I believe we were in second reading and some people may not have been paying attention and we finished second reading and went into Committee. Then there was some confusion around that. The Speaker actually recessed the House and went back and reviewed *Hansard* and that ended our second revisiting. So now we're back for a third time. The first and second and third time has nothing to do with the substance, has nothing to do with what the bill is, more procedural things, I would argue, Chair.

I also want to go back and look at the *Hansard* from last year. At that point, the Opposition asked for three months. They wanted three months to review what we're talking about and go away and talk to the agencies, boards and commissions that will be impacted. What they were simply asking, they want to take a three-month process,

engage with the entities, the Officers of the House. They wanted to share that back with me and staff so we can come back with clarification.

So in the last year, I have not had one email; I have not received one question. My team have been proactively discussing with the 160 bodies and we haven't received anything. It's crickets. They asked for three months. They've had a year and a bit now, so I'm here ready to answer questions.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South on a point of order.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Chair.

Respectfully, I want to correct the minister. During our original incarnation of this bill, I offered the House Leader and the minister indirect – I don't deal with the minister, the House Leader would. We would sit down with –

CHAIR: Are you getting to a point of order?

B. PETTEN: Yes.

CHAIR: Okay.

B. PETTEN: The minister just made – give me a chance now, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Continue.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Chair. You got backup.

The minister just said – and what she said is not correct. She said there was crickets. We offered as a caucus, critics and staff to sit down with the minister's officials to go over this bill because we wanted to explain our concerns and we felt that if we could do that face to face in a boardroom somewhere, we could probably find a way forward with this

legislation. Guess what we heard when we offered that option? Crickets.

CHAIR: This does not sound like a point of order at all. It's a disagreement between hon. Members. You'll have a chance to speak.

Back to the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, please.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you very much.

I'm happy to answer any questions.

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

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to stand and have a few words on this because I'm one of the ones that happened to go through Bill 29 and kept this Legislature open for almost five days, day and night, 24 hours a day to get it changed. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands said it right, the duty to document, if there's no need, why can't we see the documents that we gave \$33 million to the hotel unsolicited? Why can't we get the documentation on that?

Why can't we get the documentation on the Blackmarsh Road now where we're going to set up a health care clinic? Why can't we get the documentation on how that was selected? Why can't we get the documentation on how the Costco building – \$80 million – why can't we get that documentation?

If there's no need to bring in this legislation, why can't we just get the documentation? These are the questions that people ask me. These are the questions that people ask because you're in Opposition, and I know for a fact they are the questions that are asked to the Members opposite, and they can't give the information. So when people want to know why we need the

access to information changed, that's just three great questions.

Because if there's no need to hide things we would find out how the \$33-million contract was solicited, and how much it's going to cost for security, how much it's going to cost for food. We're going to find out Costco, why was that done so quick. I don't know of a sole source to not – my understanding is that two put it in, I'm not sure, but the one on Topsail Road and Blackmarsh Road, why can't we get that documentation?

Those are the kind of questions – once you ask the very relevant questions of why you can't get it, then you know why we need stronger access to information, to get the information. Because the general public wants to know. They'd love to know how you can set up a \$33-million hotel, who's worth \$3 million, and give them \$33 million over three years to rent the hotel that's only worth \$3 million. It's better to buy it. It's easier to buy it.

This is why you need this. I know the Minister of Housing is seriously listening, but that is a serious question though. That is a serious question that has been asked to me and asked other people around. If it's openness and accountability, you would table those documents. I mentioned that a couple times –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh

CHAIR: Order, please!

I'm going to have a little order here. We're going to start again fresh; we're going to listen to the speaker that's identified, and then when it's your turn, you're going to get to speak.

Continue, Humber - Bay of Islands.

Thank you.

E. JOYCE: We hear the concerns of the former Privacy Commissioner, and he

expressed some legitimate concerns. He really did. We heard from previous speakers, the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands mentioned Cabinet confidentiality. That's being used a lot. It really is. It is being used a lot. Roads are a good example. It is being used a lot.

The other is client-solicitor privilege. I'll give you an example from me, Mr. Speaker, and you'll be aware of this. We're talking about the duty to document. What's the penalty if it's not documented? None. None. They'll come back and say sorry.

I remember my situation with the House of Assembly accountability back in 2018, when the former commissioner spoke to the Management Commission. Guess what? There were no notes taken at the meeting. There were no minutes put into the meeting. Guess what? When I applied to Access to Information, there was two people who took notes but refused to put them in for the meeting because they said they're private notes. They actually had the notes, wouldn't document or put it in the minutes, but they turned around and said they're private notes, therefore we don't have to put them in.

What's the repercussions? I just want to let people know that's our House of Assembly that did that. That's the Management Commission that did that. So if we don't have any repercussions in this House of Assembly for the Management Commission and this House of Assembly, why are any officials going to follow it if there are no repercussions? There were just no repercussions.

I'll just give you another example for me, I'm just speaking on me and I don't think this even applies to the officers of the House of Assembly. I'll give you a good example. This situation that I found myself in, and it hasn't changed, we went to get the Rubin Thomlinson report. Guess what? We couldn't get it because it's client-solicitor privilege. That's why we couldn't get it.

So when you want to talk about the client-solicitor privilege, it's being used on a regular basis. I experienced that – I've experienced it. Now, if you were a government employee you can get it. But as the Member, they use that so they keep you from a report and it's not included in this here. It's not included in this bill.

The question I still keep going back and asking is: What are the repercussions of it? What are the penalties if somebody does not document?

I'll give you another good example – and the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands – Muskrat Falls. There was never any duty to document anything that went on, any meeting, any contract, how the contract was awarded. There was never any duty to document.

So once you don't make it strong enough, people will find a way not to put things in, trust me. There's absolutely no penalty involved for not doing it.

People always talk about Muskrat Falls and they keep looking over here and saying: Well, you guys approved it, as if it was the PC party. I just want to let people know (a) I was one of the ones that stood up against Muskrat Falls, a lot more with me on that side; and (b) the people that were on this side that I spoke to didn't know the information that was hidden – didn't know. I can honestly say that.

There are a lot of people I spoke to after: How could you approve this? They did not know the information that was hidden from the Members on the government side that made the decision. Some Cabinet ministers – some Cabinet ministers did not know because there was no penalty for the duty to document – absolutely no penalty. So when the government says to the Opposition: Well, look what you caused us, Muskrat Falls. That wasn't the problem. The biggest problem is that we kept everything secret. Even when we got in government,

there are a lot of things that we were digging into that we did not realize.

Then I remember asking questions in this House, and I remember bringing it up on numerous times – numerous times: How many people remember the dome? They were going to build a dome so that they can work during the winter.

AN HON. MEMBER: Astaldi, yup.

E. JOYCE: Astaldi built the dome. But what people didn't know, the Opposition – we were in Opposition – a lot of the government Members didn't know – is that when they built the dome and they took the dome down, they were doing it on an hourly basis. They weren't doing that as part of the contract. They were doing it on a service basis. So they got paid full amount for building the dome and tearing it down. It was on a cost basis. People didn't know that. People did not know that. There were people in government at the time, high-ranking ministers who did not know that at the time.

That's one of the biggest drawbacks of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, financially, today. But you can't blame individual Members when some of the senior Cabinet ministers didn't know. They just didn't know.

When we got in, in 2015, when the Liberal government got in, in 2015, we started uncovering stuff that we didn't know a year later, after we got in. We were uncovering information in 2016 and 2017; we were uncovering information that we didn't know for two years.

I remember the time when there was going to be a payout for something done – \$350 million. I can't get into the details of it, but up to that date, for almost two years, we didn't know. The only way we knew, we called a meeting, and we got answers. We demanded answers. That's how.

So this idea, the duty to document, is a great idea but if we don't have it ironclad, if we don't follow the Privacy Commission's concerns, who is the expert on this, we will be doomed to fail again – we will be doomed to fail again.

I'm urging the Members of the Liberal government and especially the couple that were over with us here during Bill 29, this is the same situation that we're going to have like in Bill 29, if we don't come together and make this ironclad. So I urge the government to review it, review the amendments and then we can follow up from there.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you. Chair.

It's interesting, over a year ago at the technical briefing on this bill, it was asked with regards to if the Privacy Commissioner had indeed been consulted. The Chief Information Officer, at that time, said that, indeed, the Privacy Commissioner was consulted on this legislation but proved very evasive when questioned about the opinion of the Privacy Commissioner on that bill. It was noted that he said that the Privacy Commissioner was very capable of commenting on this legislation, if he felt the need to.

So think about that during a technical briefing where you get to ask the questions, you have an informed opinion of it, you're getting evasiveness at the technical briefing and the Chief Information Officer was very hesitant to let people know, at that meeting, whether he had received any feedback from the Privacy Commissioner in this bill. So why that hesitancy? Why the evasiveness?

Really, we're talking about transparency and public trust and accountability.

It's also interesting in that briefing, Chair, that a discussion came up of surrounding matters of provincial or national security, that, although, the federal government had a process for flagging and classifying all such materials related to provincial and national security, the province did not.

So there's a concern here and I think we're justified in having concerns in making sure that the legislation is right, is done in a way that it addresses the shortfalls and the problems that we've dealt with.

I do believe that the duty to document is not about a matter of mistrust. I think it's about transparency. It is about making sure that we maintain the public trust and we can see today in the political discourse of just how the trust in all politicians has been lowered. It's about accountability and, in the end, I do believe that's the purpose of the Privacy Commissioner.

We know that there have been a number of decisions, some that are near and dear to my heart, that it's been vague as to what kind of reports, if any, have been raised. The Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands talked about the school district. When the announcement came that the school district was going to be integrated into the department, there was no mention of the report. Later on, it came out that there was a consultant's report but we couldn't see it.

You might remember the debate around the health authorities. The Privacy Commission had issues with that at that time, about the privacy surrounding information. We had an announcement of a school in Portugal Cove-St. Philip's; no intent to even bring the district in on side with it. We've had aquaculture legislation that actually removes part of the legislation for duty to document by aquaculture companies. It's making it easier for them not to report. We've got the Rothschild report, which is

basically going to be a secret report that will determine what assets are going to be sold off.

I think even here almost a year ago, on June 9, we had the Privacy Commissioner issuing yet another press release about a request that he wasn't informed of to review a report by the Citizens' Representative on harassment at Elections NL. At that point, he said: "Less than a half hour later, before I had the opportunity to consider the request, Executive Council issued a press release indicating that documents had been sent to my office for 'review and analysis to ensure personal information of complainants is protected'." The media reported that the Premier had instructed him to undertake a review. He would scrub the documents as part of the due diligence, which indicates in some ways a lack of an appreciation or an understanding of the role of the Privacy Commissioner.

March 22 of last year, it has been referenced already, that the fundamental concerns of the Privacy Commissioner were that it exempts the entire Cabinet decision-making process, has no independent oversight, and does not actually create a mandatory duty to document due to the discretionary nature afforded to the Chief Information Officer.

The question is, in the follow-up, the minister can tell me or can tell this House as to what the consultations were with the Privacy Commissioner after. What was the formal correspondence, the formal recommendations that would improve this, if this bill is actually back in its same form or if it actually has addressed the concerns of the Privacy Commissioner? Something that would indicate a consultation because I hear a consultation significantly. I heard it in my previous life, consultation, as we see in the June 9 press release by the Privacy Commissioner, often involves a contact or an email or a phone call an hour before, if you're lucky.

"As it relates to independent oversight, Bill 22 would require the Minister to table an annual summary of compliance in the House of Assembly prepared by the Chief Information Officer, a government executive who serves at the pleasure of the Premier and reports to the Minister." So there is already a lack in independence there. "This avoids implementing the Wells Committee recommendation to provide the Information and Privacy Commissioner, an independent statutory officer of the House, with authority for oversight of the duty to document. Many reports are tabled in the House of Assembly every year, often while it is closed, and receive little attention."

We saw a recent one in the *Newfoundland and Labrador Gazette* about the decision to change the regulations around unauthorized use of public property, which occurred on the very day that people were being evicted from the Colonial Building, with what we had after a constituency week following, so there was going to be little opportunity to ask those questions in the House of Assembly and that's a concern.

The Privacy Commissioner says that "A duty to document is critical to access to information – and ultimately transparent, accountable, democratic governments," said Commissioner Harvey."

Now, we've had a, I think, member of the public, an access to information regarding the standards for shelter and what we got back were over 20 pages-plus with a big red X through it. We have asked what were the standards in place beforehand? We didn't get an answer on that. So I think there is a consistent theme over here about the need for transparency and getting evasive answers at times when we asked them, or when questions are asked addressing the preamble, or the preamble to the previous two questions, as opposed to answering the question itself.

Now, I understand, as the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL says, all this

information is 'ATIPP-able.' Well, it's 'ATIPP-able' if you have the wherewithal and the inclination to do so and the ability to write the ATIPP request, because there's a skill to that. It's one thing for political parties to do it or organizations, but for private citizens, it presents a barrier. If there's a barrier, then we're not really being transparent, are we? We're setting up that barrier, making it difficult to access information.

The last time we were here there were a number of amendments that were proposed. Well, I think there's an opportunity in that, if they come forward again, to engage in that and have that. And have a discussion that focuses on transparency and what that means for good decision-making, about having an independent Officer of the Legislature to make sure that we are living up to the Oath of Office that we took, and that we're operating in the best interests of the people of this province, Chair.

With that, I'll end. I certainly look forward in this process to hear clearly the consultation process that took place following the closure of the House of Assembly last year, and the fulsome discussion. Maybe the records that the minister has of those discussions with the Privacy Commissioner, as to how they could improve, that, I would dearly love to have presented. Then, maybe my concerns will be addressed.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I guess I'd first like to clarify to everyone that there is an independent auditor, an independent Member of this House who will be oversee this, and that's the Auditor General. The Auditor General has full

accountability and budget, team and authority given to the Auditor General from this House of Assembly to dive into whatever they see fit or –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

I'm not going to have it, not going to tolerate it.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

Or whatever the Public Accounts Committee deems they would like to request the Auditor General to dig into.

So if I were on the other side and I were the Chair of Public Accounts, this is something that's perfect. You could say Public Accounts could ask the Auditor General to do a deep dive into this after the first year. That is a perfect process whereby an independent Officer of this House does an investigation and duty to document.

I've just given the Chair of Public Accounts a great idea for next year, put it in your calendar, or the year after, you know, after it's been implemented. So there is an independent Officer of the House who has full oversight of this.

I do want to reiterate that the Privacy Commissioner will continue to have oversight over how all of these documents are released to the public. That is ATIPPA.

What we are doing here today is saying there are going to be more records. The 160 public bodies have to keep more records. There are a lot of criteria about those records. There's a four-part test. Those records have to be complete, comprehensive, accurate and timely. Decisions have to meet a bunch of tests, which I've outlined, and there will be more records that will then go through ATIPPA.

I do want to also clarify for anyone watching, and for the record, that we're not trying to do anything sinister here. We are genuinely trying to meet the recommendation of the Muskrat Falls inquiry. Recommendation 79: "The Government take the necessary steps to impose a duty to document, and that the proper legislation to express that duty would be the *Management of Information Act*, not the *ATIPPA*." That's what we are doing. It was also a recommendation of the ATIPPA review from Judge Wells.

I would also like to say that we will have the best duty to document in the country. It's only us and BC that has this, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: This will go farther than BC's. BC's only applies to government; this will apply to 160 agencies, boards and committees, Chair. I really find it hard to understand what all the fuss is about; this is going to lead us in the country, in terms of access. We are trying to do the right thing here. We will be best in the country; only two provinces in the country to have duty to document.

I would love to answer your questions.

Thank you, Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

CHAIR: Thank you.

Next speaker.

I now recognize the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair. I certainly appreciate it.

Do you know what they say about digging a hole? You should drop the shovel because you're getting deeper in the hole. It's unbelievable the way we're talking here – unbelievable. We have the Rothschild; we

can talk about that – no, we can't talk about that, sorry. We can't bring that up. That's one.

AN HON. MEMBER: The Rothschild?

L. O'DRISCOLL: That's one. The Rothschild, yeah, can't bring that up.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

L. O'DRISCOLL: No, that's not allowed to be brought up. Let's leave that alone. We'd like to talk about it, but we can't. We're not allowed. You bring it to Cabinet; you can't discuss it.

It's a trust factor. The Privacy Commissioner, when we started in 2019 – if people can remember, we started here in 2019. It was a minority government. Anybody remember that? When we had the minority government, they had a group of four people – I don't even know who they were. I was just new in here; had no idea what it was about, what they were doing. So these four people went in and made a judgment on who should be first hired to be the Privacy Commissioner in that order, at that time. Everybody remember that?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yeah.

L. O'DRISCOLL: All right, so we're getting somewhere. That's information that we knew. The information that we knew was that the Privacy Commissioner at the time – I'm not going to say his name; we know who he is. I don't think I'm allowed to say – I'm not going to say his name. So, fine, we knew who it was.

The minority government at the time wanted to take the second-ranked person that was on that list. Am I wrong or am I right? I think I might be right on that.

AN HON. MEMBER: You're right.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Okay.

So at the time that's how that worked. For people that weren't here, that's what happens. So the second-ranked person was the person that the Liberal government wanted to take and put in to be the Privacy Commissioner. We must've forgot they were ranked.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: I remind the Members I'm not going to tolerate the dialogue. We're going to listen to one Member at a time.

Thank you.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thanks for the protection, Chair.

So at the time they were going to take and put in the second-ranked person, because it might be somebody they might've known. I don't even know who the second-ranked person was. All I know is the person that was ranked number one, if you were hiring these people or do whatever they did, you would take the top-ranked person – not saying the other people weren't qualified. This was the person they ranked first. Why wouldn't they take them? I guess it's not the person they wanted.

So maybe the Privacy Commissioner sees the writing on the wall. Who knows how this goes? He's seeing something that he doesn't like. They see something they didn't like in him, obviously, and been at it. It's just this is the way it started. This is how it started out in 2019. Absolutely the way it started.

So now here we are again looking at this and thinking about trust. You had to vote for it after, because if they had to vote, they would've lost the vote and the government at the time had to vote and we all voted and they got full votes in the House of Assembly, if I'm not mistaken. The government had to agree to it at the time because they would've looked bad by taking the second-ranked person. That's the way

that went down to start. That was our first month in here when we were in the House of Assembly.

You want to talk about trust and bringing it back to Cabinet. So anything you don't like, you can bring it into Cabinet so the public don't see it and then it's duty to document, they don't ever get to see it. You don't ever get to question it.

The hotel, \$21 million given, or \$33 million somebody else used and we could've bought that for \$3 million. What kind of logical decision is that? I mean, we could've taken that and done something with it. Now we give somebody \$21 million and we can't ask any questions on it. It's incredible - it's incredible. That's the trust factor we got.

We started in here doing legislation, duty to document, on helmets. That went sideways. It was going to go to regulations; we'd be able to have a say on it. Did that not turn and go against us? Absolutely it went against us – absolutely. Do it in regulations, that's what was said. We're going to do it in regulations.

If you do it in regulations, give us a chance to talk to it. We spoke and debated it and when all decisions came out, we had no say in it. After we voted yes, okay, we'll go ahead and we'll see what comes out in regulations. We don't get any say in it when it goes to regulations. So we might as well stay here and debate it and get it right.

That is the problem. That's the trust factor. If I'm wrong – you keep looking at me saying I'm wrong. Everybody else over here don't think we're wrong. That's the trust factor. That's why we don't let this stuff happen.

I'm elected in here and we're all elected in here to change things. That's what we're elected to do. In this here, you paid for somebody for a report on Muskrat Falls. In the final report, Justice LeBlanc issued the following: "Government should legislate and fully implement a 'duty to document' policy

within six months of the submission of this Report. The duty to document shall also apply to Crown corporations and agencies.”

How long is that done? You paid somebody to give you a report and you don't act on it. Every other report you pay and you don't act on them. Go get a report, so it moves further on down the road. A year or two later, you get a report and you don't act on it. This report is done and hasn't been acted on and hasn't been corrected. We're going to let the same mistakes come back. It's incredible.

We talk about Muskrat Falls all the time. I don't know the exact date of start-up. I'm going to say 2012-13. You managed that for nine years. Nine years on the Liberal side you've managed that. You had a chance to stop it, I would think, at some point in time. So we come in here and we're elected in here not to make the same mistakes, but if we don't get a chance to speak about it, and give us an opportunity to speak on it, then we're going to run into the same mistakes again.

They're all throwing out numbers about Muskrat Falls. Now we're thinking about doing something else down in Churchill Falls, to do another hydroelectric project and they don't think that's any good? I mean I think it's a good idea, but it's got to be done right. It's got to be done right if they're going to do it and have some say in it. Because they made mistakes don't mean we got to stand here and make the same mistakes. That's the thing that we got elected in here to do, is not make the same mistakes and correct the issues and the problems.

We just seem to keep going and hiding everything – just hiding everything. If you don't want to see it, you bring it in to Cabinet, then there are no questions can be asked. They're not allowed to see it. It just happens so much. This started last year, back in March of '23, and the minister gets up and says well, we had a chance –

crickets, no emails. We were supposed to get some more information and I don't think that came back to us.

It's incredible, just sits here. If it was so good, it'd be passed long ago. If you thought it was so good, it would be passed long ago. We wouldn't be here debating it if we had some more say in it and that's where it goes. If it was so good, it would be like the rest of the legislation, when we do a good job on it we'll get it passed, but we're certainly not interested in not being able to speak about it.

Again, we're talking about money spent properly. I'll go back – you look at some of the contracts we've got out there that we give up, and the government go ahead and sole source it and we don't get any say in it; it just happens. It's terrible that we do this to ourselves. The general public sit here and watch and they're the ones that are throwing out these questions. We sit here and hear these questions come into us: Well, the government did this; did you have any say? No. That happens.

We just run down this road every day. People don't trust what's happening and we'd like to have this set and be able to come back and have it so we can have a say in it or at least debate it in this House of Assembly, not put it in Cabinet and never see it again. That's not the way it should happen. It should be in this House of Assembly to be debated and then you'd make your decisions based on that.

So, Chair, thank you so much. I wanted to get up and have a chance to speak.

CHAIR: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Chair.

I do want to get up and stand in my place and represent the people of Placentia West

- Bellevue when we debate Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Management of Information Act and the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act,

I guess what we're looking for here and what we're talking about from a lot of the speeches that I've heard here today is that we'd like to see that accountability and integrity restored on behalf of the people of the province. We're all public servants. We're not here on our own volition. We're here to serve the public and the only way that we can do that is by representing them to the best of our ability but be open and transparent and honest and let them know what's going on with their government. What's so wrong with that? I don't see any problem with that and it's not private money. It's not Liberal money. It's not PC money. It's the money of the people of the province. They deserve better.

I would say also, where's the most expensive bookshelf in the province? It's right here in the Confederation Building somewhere. We're just not allowed to see it, or we are not allowed to take books off it. We can't take any reports off it or anything like that. As some of my colleagues said, the Rothschild report was \$5 million. Holy smokes, we could run a lot of libraries with that, but nobody's allowed to look at it. It makes no sense.

Why did we do a report for that exorbitant amount of money? It's a report. No work got done to build anything. It was a report that was done for \$5 million out of a company in the States. I'm pretty sure that we have enough educated people here in our province that can put that together and not tell us that we're not worth anything.

When it comes to the Privacy Commissioner, for this person in that role to step out and say that they weren't consulted, then do you know what? He's never, ever given me any reason not to trust him; whereas the other side has given me lots of reasons not to trust them. So I would

think that it being an independent office, why would you want to circumvent that office? That office is there for a reason. It's there to hold the accountability and integrity of the bill that we're actually talking about. So why not consult with that person? They obviously got something to add, but then they turn around and say yes, we consulted them – unbelievable.

Cabinet secrets – as some of my colleagues said here earlier today, you can have any kind of presentation done to Cabinet, you can have anybody brought into the Cabinet office to talk around that table and then you can turn around and say oh, that was in Cabinet. That's private. We don't have to open up to that. It makes absolutely no sense because to be open and transparent, yeah, I know it takes a lot to be honest and do stuff like that, but do you know what?

I've said it in this House before. A lot of us need to take a recheck and realize that doing the right thing might be hard, but it is the right thing to do and that's the way we should be going down the road. It's the people's money. They deserve to know how they are being represented. When we come to a decision on how the people's money is going to be spent, like the \$7 million we could've got for the virtual care, nope, they spent \$21 million on it but we weren't allowed to say who was bidding or anything like that. We could've got it for \$7 million and we paid \$21 million for it.

I'm not sure that we should be patting ourselves on the back on the other side for being such good fiscal managers.

AN HON. MEMBER: Muskrat Falls.

J. DWYER: Yeah, again, that's all you've got to fall back on. Like, that's the problem with the whole look at this. If you go up in the Emperor's Club up in Toronto and it's the biggest thing, it's the greatest thing since sliced bread. But you come back here to Newfoundland and you've got to crap on the people. None of us on this side made

the decision. I think my colleague up in the corner there might have been here in this House. So why would you throw that in our face?

We're not here throwing Churchill Falls in anybody's face. The whole point about Churchill Falls is that if we had to get a good deal on that, Muskrat Falls would be more than paid for, plus money in the bank. That didn't happen. But nobody wants to talk about that. That's the problem right here. Everything is glossed over and everything's peachy-keen. We're great fiscal managers and all that kind of stuff.

I would debate that you lucked in to \$86 a barrel oil. I'll leave it at that. But while doing the right thing can be difficult, it's the only way to serve the public. That's a very important point. We're not here as each person; we're not even allowed to use each other's names. In this hon. Assembly, I am the MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue. I am not Dennis and Bernadette Dwyer's son. I am the MHA for Placentia West - Bellevue.

We all need to be open, honest and transparent and do the right thing, because it is the right thing to do and not because there are eyes on us or appeasing somebody or anything like that. And you got to take it on the chin; sometimes you have to make that difficult decision on behalf of the people because you know that is what's in their best interest. It is not about making a personal decision or put your own personal lens on it. I would contend that everybody in the House has a good moral compass, but don't throw that out the window when you sit in a group setting. Let's make sure that's all open and transparent.

We all took that Oath of Office, I heard one of my colleagues say that earlier, and that needs to be upheld. But right now, people are getting kind of up in arms because we're over here debating this piece of legislation that doesn't go far enough. And it doesn't take care of the people of the province in a concise manner.

I think that step that the legislation does follow and does have a look at is bringing agencies, boards and commissions into this legislation because, in my opinion, they should have to come to the floor of the House of Assembly. It doesn't have to be on public TV or anything like that, but we need to get it in *Hansard* and we need to have it in *Hansard* for the people of the province to know that the people that they asked to run the province are doing a good job and are doing a right job.

How are we going to gain the people's trust? Like, out there right now, there is no trust in the government because of the decisions. Another one is the \$100 million, plus, plus, plus, plus, plus that we know about: the travel nurses, which was a single-source contract. So if we had of had this legislation a little bit more robust and had that in place already, then that's the kind of things that don't happen. And that's the kind of things that the people deserve not to happen, because people are weighing in on it.

Again, another one of my colleagues mentioned today we paid \$30 million for a hotel that was on the market a couple years ago for \$3 million or \$4 million. Could have bought it and put \$26 million into it, refurbished it, housed it and staffed it, the whole works. But that's not the way we did it and it was a single-sourced contract. There's no benefit in that.

The people deserve to know how Cabinet, agencies, boards and commissions come to a decision, because we all have to live with it at the end of the day.

I tell you, I would love to know how they came to an agreement on this sugar tax, when they're writing the prime minister of Canada about a carbon tax that they already agreed to. You should write yourself a letter, actually. That's what you should do over there, write yourself a letter and complain about the sugar tax.

So why shouldn't the people of the province know how you came to a decision? It's their money. We're spending their money. We're making decisions on their behalf. Let's let them be part of that. They probably won't be a part of the decision-making, because we are elected officials to represent them and do our best to represent them. But with that being said, how are we going to gain the trust of the people?

I'll go one step further to say how are we going to get the trust of all these companies and everything that we're trying to attract to our shores, if they think that there's collusion within government and it's not open and transparent? That's the first thing that they run away from. That's why they end up down in Guatemala and all that kind of stuff.

But right here, right now, we have the best natural resources, we have the best people, we have the most beautiful province in this Dominion. I think that we can do better and I think it's going to be through openness, honesty, transparency and integrity.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I now recognize the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, everyone.

I just want to remind anyone listening, and for *Hansard*, a few key points of this debate. There is an independent Officer of this House who will have full oversight of this duty to document and that is the Auditor General.

What we are proposing today will take us best in the country, Chair. Only us and BC, if this passes, will have duty to document legislation and this will take us further because this includes 160 public bodies.

So just a reminder to anyone listening, this will take us to best in the country.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. STOODLEY: Thank you.

I also want to remind anyone listening that this is about how government creates records and manages and stores records. Access to those records is ATIPPA and that is not what we are talking about today. We are not talking about ATIPPA; we are not talking about the access to records. We are talking about the duty for public officials and staff to create records.

I have a whole team ready and waiting on standby to answer and I have lots of things here. I'm ready and waiting to answer lots of questions about this very important piece of legislation.

Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I now recognize the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Chair.

It's certainly an honour to get up here and speak on this bill, Bill 22, the *Management of Information Act*. It's a very important piece of legislation, no doubt. I would like to remind the minister that it's not the best in the country at all. The minister claims this law is the best in the country because it applies so widely. There is only one other such law in the country in BC. The BC law is also not mandatory. It's a shared flaw. The BC law also lacks adequate, independent oversight – a shared flaw. The difference is that the BC law does apply to Cabinet, unlike Bill 22. So, in fact, BC law is better than this one.

We have the opportunity to address all three flaws. We have the chance to truly be the best in the country. Why not, the bill is right before the House. We can fix it right here,

right now and pass the best bill in the country. Why is the government deciding to address neither of the three flaws? The government does not want to be bound by duty to document. It wants loopholes so it has created three loopholes: no oversight, no mandatory duty and no application to Cabinet decisions, yet we'll be the best in the country.

So the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, in the fall in his draft, at the time, we expressed three fundamental concerns and they were: it exempts the entire Cabinet decision-making process, it has no independent oversight and it does not actually create a mandatory duty to document due to the discretionary nature afforded to the Chief Information Officer.

So without knowing the regulations that are going to be in this bill, each government, of course, is always looking for clarity, said we're going to be always transparent, to be the best at what we do and be transparent. That's not always the case because if they were transparent, we wouldn't have to go looking for answers. All the answers would be there. It's how it's regulated in the documents, so that when people go looking for it, asking questions, this would be done, and it would be easy to see.

When it comes to information, it's public monies; it's public funds. People are interested in how it's spent, how it's done, why it's done. That's our obligation to the public, of why this is done, and the information is there to be accessed to the public, to different venues, to different people.

So it's a duty to all of us to make sure things are done right. That's why the regulation in this document will be so important as we move along. The minister did mention the Auditor General; the Auditor General, yes, does go looking for information. Why? Because sometimes things are turned to the Auditor General because things are not documented right. So we certainly need to

get those documents done but we need to see the regulations, what's going to be in the regulations for the duty to document. The Auditor General can go in, yes, and look for that information.

We look at Muskrat Falls, everybody seems to be talking about Muskrat Falls today, they love it. I remember there was a hearing here in the House of Assembly with Nalcor due to deficiencies that should have been efficiencies, and that was done because there was no duty to document.

The minister also brought up Public Accounts, she brought up the Auditor General. That's the reason why the Public Accounts went ahead to look at the Nalcor situation and how and why they did what they did because there was no documented information at the time, we went in to try to find out why it was done.

So, again, it's a bill that's very important to this legislation, a very important bill that needs to be documented and regulated, and we need to know what's in the regulation to know that we're doing our jobs as best and thoroughly as we can.

Again, when we look at public funding, overruns are enormous. We saw it during the Nalcor hearing; we saw that overruns were enormous. We see it constantly in different pieces. I've heard the Rothschild report brought up. I've heard discrepancies in the travel nurses. Back in 2020, I think it was, \$35 million was gone out to streamline health care. We've still got no report on that \$35 million. So there are lots of places where government is spending the money. The efficiencies are not there, the deficiencies are there, yet when we go looking for that information it's not there to find.

Yes, duty to document would be a good document, no doubt. But it's got to be – it's in the regulation of what we're going to find. The minister did bring up the Chair of Public Accounts; she brought up the Auditor

General. We go looking for those. If the regulation is so well, then the Auditor General, she won't go looking for the information.

So to put forward this duty to document, we have to make sure that this bill is done and done right. We certainly need to be on top of that bill because of the transparencies and obligations to government to provide answers on how public funds are spent and how they come to those agreements.

I did hear a couple of times when it comes to regulation the minister has disagreements about the helmets, how that got passed. I did hear everyone else – and I heard it on this side – that we'll bring back the regulation to the House to get approved for the helmets. We left and it didn't come back to the House. We don't know where it is. It did not come back to the House.

Being transparent is part of this document, is part of these regulations. If government is going to be transparent, then we have to be transparent on all accounts.

With that, Chair, I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I now recognize the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Chair.

I just want to clarify that there are no regulations associated with this bill. There are some policies that will be publicly available, made available to all 160 public bodies. Those were developed a year ago. I've already gone through them with a fine-tooth comb. They're already developed but there are no regulations associated with the legislation.

I do want to note that Members keep referring to the *Off-Road Vehicles Act*. We

did make helmets mandatory in that act. I did say that we would consider any possible exemptions for helmets. I never committed to bringing anything back to the House. I committed to considering helmets.

Our government considered that and helmets were made mandatory on Side by Sides. It is completely non-factual to say that I ever said that we would bring it back to the House because I never said that. All I said repeatedly is that we would consider it.

Thank you very much, Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you.

I now recognize the hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Chair, I move that the Committee rise and report progress and ask leave to sit again.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise, report progress and ask leave to sit again.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Thank you.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Lake Melville and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

I've been directed through the Committee of the Whole to indicate that Bill 22, An Act to Amend the Management of Information Act and the House of Assembly Accountability, Integrity and Administration Act has made some progress and ask leave to sit again.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and direct him to report progress and ask leave to sit again.

When shall the report be received?

J. HOGAN: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the Committee ask leave to sit again?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, report received and adopted. Committee ordered to sit again on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Again, I'll remind all Members that the Moose Hide Campaign will be tomorrow

morning. You should have your email on that there.

This House do now stand adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

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