



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
OF  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

---

Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 78

---

HANSARD

*Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA*

Wednesday

May 22, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

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

Admit Strangers.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

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

I rise on a point of privilege. This is the earliest opportunity, as it regards remarks made by the Minister of Justice just prior to adjournment of the House yesterday, and what we have discovered since then.

The minister stated he was offended that the privileges of Members were breached by the public release of draft legislation before it was brought to the House for a second reading debate. He characterized this as a violation of the long-standing rules of this House, and said it undermined the government's ability to function.

The Privileges and Elections Committee has now been directed to look at this. The minister clearly implied that someone in the Opposition caucuses, who was given access to the bill, deliberately leaked the draft. That was a shameful leap to judgment on the minister's part.

What we have discovered since the House adjourned is that it is actually not unprecedented or a violation of the rules of the House for draft legislation to be made available to the public and to independent experts for consultation and analysis prior to second reading debate. In fact, it was the norm under Liberal Premier Clyde Wells beginning in 1989.

In that year, his government introduced legislative review committees, with his Government House Leader Winston Baker stating the following in this House on June 30, 1989: "These Legislation Review Committees are an attempt by government to make the legislative process more meaningful, first of all to members of the

House, but, more importantly, to the general public. There are many pieces of legislation that go through this hon. House that are of major importance to various groups in the Province, and this will provide an opportunity for legislation to be examined prior to discussions in the House so that we never get into a situation where, all of a sudden, because of time constraints or something else, major pieces of legislation get rushed through this House, as has happened in the past, without adequate discussion both in the House and in the general public."

So this was false and highly offensive for our current Government House Leader to say that having draft legislation in the public domain for feedback and analysis prior to second reading compromised the integrity of the House and proper functioning of government. That was not true.

Moreover, allowing the public review of draft legislation in advance of debate was one of the foundations of democratic reform that the people of the province were calling for and this government promised to deliver, as early as 2017. The Premier Ball government tasked the current Energy Minister to deliver this democratic reform and he failed to deliver.

The current administration and Premier in mandate letters of April 15, 2021, commissioned the current Justice Minister, the one who raised yesterday's point of privilege, to do the following: As Minister of Justice and Public Safety, you will collaborate with the Government House Leader to lead our government's democratic reform efforts. This was in the minister's job description and mandate direction from the current Premier more than three years ago.

Not only has this minister failed to deliver democratic reform such as advance public review of proposed bills but, worse still, he has presided over the practice of rushing legislation into this House for debate by Opposition before anyone in the province

has even seen it and before we've had the opportunity to consult on and get independent analysis of it. In fact, we barely have time to review it ourselves.

Not only did the Government House Leader defend this outrageous practice in the House yesterday, we learned that he is actually prepared to treat as contemptuous any effort by the Opposition to get an external review and analysis of draft legislation prior to second reading. He's using an iron fist and veiled threats to prevent the Opposition from doing its job and fulfilling its sworn duty. He has even threatened to withhold important legislation if he does not get his way.

This outrageous behaviour under the minister's leadership violated our privileges as the people's elected Opposition to give due diligence to the legislation we are constitutionally required to examine, consult on, analyze, debate and approve through amendments and vote on.

The minister's behaviour shows utter contempt for the role of the Opposition and this is inflamed by statements he made yesterday saying: Any such consultation by Opposition would undermine the ability of the government to keep its legislative process a secret, and ought to be prohibited by rule or by force.

It's not our role as the Opposition to give the government's agenda a rubber stamp or be complicit in their flight from transparency and accountability. That may be a practice under some authoritarian regimes in this world, but not in a parliamentary democracy. We are not under the thumb of the Executive Branch; we are the Legislative Branch, and we have our own job to do, independent of any minister's demands. Most other jurisdictions' review committees have already recognized that governments do not get their bills perfect, and Opposition's job is to do their own due diligence, not to take the government at its word.

This is the people's House, not the government's House, and we are the people's elected representatives and their elected Opposition, not a nuisance to be tolerated or ignored or shut down. We are utterly appalled by the contempt the government has shown us and shown the people by denying us proper time and opportunity to do the work we are obligated to do.

Transparency and accountability must trump secrecy when it comes to fulfilling our obligation to give legislation our due diligence. Legislation impacts people profoundly and bad legislation can destroy people's lives. Consultation before debate is not only wise, but it has been the normal practice of this House and ought to be restored.

It is an offence to the people here and the people of this province that this government has blocked this from happening throughout its watch, year after year, when they had promised to restore the normal consultation practices that once ruled in this House.

We propose to the Speaker that the minister's statements and behaviour and failure to restore democratic norms such as legislative review committees, and his implication that such reviews violate our democratic practices, show contempt for the role of Opposition and our constitutional responsibility to give all legislation our due diligence through examination, proper analysis and consultation prior to debate. They show lack of understanding of the history of this House; they breach our individual and collective privileges as Members, and they undermine the proper functioning of the people's House.

We demand that the offensive statements of the Government House Leader yesterday be corrected, and that these anti-democratic practices be reversed, so we can fulfill our obligations as MHAs without our privileges as the people's representatives being

continually trampled on in this Chamber by government overreaching its authority.

If the Speaker finds there is indeed a prima facie case for a breach of privilege, we ask the House to refer this matter to the Privileges and Elections Committee for an examination and recommendations for action on restoring democratic practices to this House of Assembly.

Thank you.

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

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

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

A lot of comments made by the Member from CBS attributed to me, which I don't have *Hansard* from yesterday, obviously only just listening today, I ask you to go review what I said in *Hansard* to compare what he said today.

I'm pretty sure – you can check, that's why I'm asking you to check because I don't know for sure – a lot of what he's attributing comments to me, I did not say that. When he speaks about democratic reform and Committees, things like that, certainly that's things that can be done and worked through and suggested and in mandate letters, et cetera. I don't think there was a direction to me, as Minister of Justice, to do a democratic reform Committee. I was asked to review the Elections Act, which, of course, I did. We had Committees and individuals either chose not to join the Committee or leave that Committee before the work was done. But that's a separate issue altogether.

The fact is, I raised a point of privilege yesterday and there were discussions about that. That's a matter of debate between Members.

The Member opposite seems to run into an issue when – I respect people have opinions that are different than mine, that's the point of democracy, that's the point of this House of Assembly. He said things yesterday that I didn't agree with, but I wholeheartedly stand behind his right and ability and duty to express his opinion in the House. His opinion yesterday was why does it matter whether or not there was a breach of privilege – or if there was a breach of privilege, I should say – that the bill went public before it was brought to the House so all Members could see it?

The point I made was that it is a privilege of the House and those rights and privileges need to be protected. I've never shied away from debating things in the House. I did a corrections act last week, which I thought went very smoothly and very appropriately in the way this House is supposed to work. We did second reading and there were discussions about it from Members on both sides of the House. There were appropriate questions in Committee and we worked through that bill.

I'm not afraid to debate things in the House. I'm not afraid to put legislation on the table and hear what the other side has to say. In fact, what I said yesterday, I was disappointed that there was a leak because now it does affect the timing of bringing this *Limitations Act* amendment to the House. I'm not saying it won't happen. It will happen. It does affect the timing.

You can talk to members of the Department of Justice and Public Safety, yesterday, I was looking forward to discussing amendment. The Member from the NDP yesterday gave me a letter with three amendments and I spoke to them already. I said I look forward to talking about these amendments. Maybe we can do it before the bill comes to the House; maybe we'll do it while it's in the House.

But the point is being missed, Speaker, that there is a privilege of the House. These are

institutions. This is important. We don't have to look much further than what's going on in America. And I know the word he said yesterday was I'm making this a bigger deal than it has to be. I can't remember the exact word he said.

This is important. I know it might seem superficial, but it matters. We have politicians in a country right next to us who aren't taking seriously their institutions like the court and the presidency. I know he's going to laugh at this and say it's ridiculous, but it's not. If we don't care about our House of Assembly, if we don't care about the rules in the Legislature, if we don't care about what the courts are saying, if we don't care what the Speaker says, if we don't care what politicians say – it's a very slippery slope.

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

**J. HOGAN:** We don't need to look much further than Ottawa, where we have the Leader of the Opposition of this country making a mockery of things in Ottawa by calling our prime minister a wacko in the House of Commons.

Is that what's going to happen here next? I would be embarrassed if this is what this House comes to, Speaker. I think the opposite of what the Member said is true: As Government House Leader, I'm doing my duty –

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

**J. HOGAN:** – to raise a point of privilege.

The fact that this bill got leaked yesterday is the problem. It's not about whether this can be debated, and it's certainly not about consultation. He's the one that brought up Members consulting, not the government House side leaking this, we don't know who leaked it – consultation can still happen without the bill. They could have talked to anyone: experts, lawyers, individuals. That's fine. And then they could have brought

those questions and raised them in proposed amendments and we could have had that debate.

The point is, there's a privilege in this House for that bill to be only seen by Members until it's made public and that was violated. It's offensive to me that that opinion exists, that those rules don't matter because it's important to me.

I think it was the Member for St. John's Centre said you'll fight tooth and nail for something you believe in. I believe in this, Speaker. I believe in this House. I believe in the Legislature. I believe in rules.

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

**J. HOGAN:** I think it's important and I won't back down from that.

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

**J. HOGAN:** Thank you.

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

Listening to both sides, yesterday's point of privilege and today's point of privilege, my opinion of it, I think there are two issues here. One is the issue that it was brought forward by the Government House Leader, something got leaked, there is a convention on that. Fair enough. That was sent to Privileges and Elections to be looked at. The Opposition House Leader brings up a good point, too, about bringing back Committees, bringing them back.

I think there are two valid points that need to be discussed, and they are two valid things that I believe should go to Privileges and Elections, because I think we can find a way forward through this.

I think there has been a long standing – I guess on this side – about consultation,

about time, about timing of bills, things like that. That's a legitimate issue that we've always had and I think we've said it time and time again, about timing and stuff like that. I think we can work through that in both these Committees.

At the same time, the Government House Leader did say that something got leaked. That's fair, if that's a convention of the House and that's something that's got to be looked into, we send it to Privileges and Elections Committee, let's have a wholesome discussion in there about that.

Let's also have a wholesome discussion in there on this topic, about bill review Committees and stuff like that. I think we can find a good middle ground here between the two of these things. I think we could actually work through this and we could keep the function of the Houses.

I agree with the Government House Leader; I do care about this House. I care about how it works and its traditions, but also the privilege of this Committee. So I think we can find a nice middle ground between these two, Mr. Speaker. We can get through this and we can do this together as a fulsome House.

I think we can come together on this. I know some stuff has been said by both sides of this, but I think we can come together on this through Committees and actually do the work of this House. I think we can do this and we should do this and put down, I guess, some of the barbs we're sending back and forth. We can work together on this and we can find our way through this.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I hadn't planned on this, this morning. But anyway, it is what it is.

Speaker, first of all, I just want to reiterate my points from yesterday on the original point of privilege, and to say that as I said yesterday, I agree with the minister that we need to have rules. We have rules and we should follow the rules. So there's no argument from me on any of that and I have no problem with it going to the Privileges and Elections Committee to find out what happened, how that information got out there – no problem whatsoever.

But my colleague for Conception Bay South does raise some valid points and I'm not attacking the minister and what he said or he didn't say. That's not it. But I do want to speak to the point that he raised about review Committees and the proper functioning of the House and of legislation passing through this House.

I know, as someone who's been around for a while now when it was a different government on the other side, there really wasn't any difference than what it is now. I can say that. I can remember former Premier Tom Marshall standing in this House, a man who I had the utmost – and still have the utmost respect – for. He said one time: Oppositions have their say, government gets its way. That was basically the quote, what he said.

He was right; that is the way things generally operate in this House, unless you have a minority government. Of course, during the previous government to this one we had a minority government. I think all Members on this side would agree that it was definitely a different dynamic, a different relationship. There was a lot more consultation, whether it be on legislation, whether it be on the operating of the House. I know I was consulted more on things as an individual Member, because perhaps government needed your vote to get legislation through.

We saw that dynamic shift when this administration went from a minority to a majority government, and we're back to what Tom Marshall had said about government gets its way because they have the numbers. Now government doesn't just get its way when it comes to legislation in this House of Assembly. They also get their way when it comes to Privileges and Elections and all the other Committees of the House, because under the set-up that we have under our current system, government got the majority.

We can talk about sending anything we want to any Committee. At the end of the day everybody knows in this House, that whatever Committee anything goes to, pretty much, whatever the government wants, that's the way it's going to be. They're going to use their majority and they're going to quash every motion they don't agree with and they're going to pass every motion that they do agree with.

That's the unfortunate part, I guess, of our system. And we should have review Committees. We should have review Committees for legislation well in advance to have opportunity for Members to be able to have time to review the legislation, to talk to experts, stakeholders, bring it to their constituents. What a novel idea that would be to actually have the opportunity to bring legislation to your constituents and allow them to provide feedback as to any issues or concerns they have with the legislation, whether they agree with it or not, how they want you to vote because you work for them. It doesn't happen.

I can say the same thing about the regulations. How many pieces of legislation have come before this House of Assembly and all the details are going to go in the regulations? So you have a choice of I either vote for this in principle or I don't vote for it. If I vote for it, I'm going to leave it to the Cabinet of the day to decide how the details of how everything works out. No consultation with me as a Member – none. I

just have to hand it over to the Cabinet and they do what they want.

I want to end as well on this, whether it be any of these Committees of the House, the review Committees or anything else, I feel – and I'm sure my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands would agree. I won't speak for him. I'm pretty sure he does. I feel that my privileges, as a duly-elected Member of this House, are compromised in this House on an ongoing basis.

I was duly elected by the people of Mount Pearl - Southlands to represent them, like it or not, as an independent, not a Member of any party. Yet, when it comes to all these committees, guess what? Guess who's not included. I'm not included and the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands. We're not included on any Committees.

At one point in time, we did put in a Committee on Democratic Reform and the government of the day decided they were going to do that and they were going to include independents. Just about to have public consultations on campaign finance reform and the premier calls an election, that got scrapped and it was never reinstated after.

Ever since then, as an independent Member, I and my colleague, we're not included on any Committees or any consultations on nothing.

**E. JOYCE:** Mental health.

**P. LANE:** The mental health is a good one. Here we are talking about the importance of mental health and this Committee on addictions and mental health. I've got people in my district; I'm sure my colleague does. We have as much to offer as anybody in this House. We're just as intelligent as any of you, but no, we can't be part of that.

Oh, that's right, we can make a presentation to the Committee. We could be like a half Member, a part Member.

**E. JOYCE:** We can make a presentation.

**P. LANE:** Yeah, we can make a presentation but we can't be part of it. So if you want to talk about the operations of the House and you want to talk about true democracy – true democracy – where everybody gets to elect someone to represent them and their Member can participate in everything in this House, if you're going to bring it back to a Committee now, I suggest you include that. Because from my perspective as an independent Member, this is a total joke.

It doesn't work. It does not work. It is not fair. It is not democratic in any shape or form when you exclude Members from these processes. That's what's been happening, but it won't shut me up. I can guarantee you that, it won't shut me up. I'll continue to have my say at every opportunity and I'll find opportunities, I'll make opportunities, but it still is not right.

We need democratic reform on so many things in this House of Assembly. Review Committees is one of them, for sure. So is lobbyist legislation. So is campaign finance reform. So is doing the review of numbered companies doing business with the government or benefiting from programs with the government. There are so many things.

Taking away the exemption from OilCo and from Newfoundland Hydro, from the ATIPPA legislation so they can hide everything they want. There are so many things that need to be done in terms of democratic reform. It's time we stopped talking about it. It's time we stopped saying oh, I'm open to talking about it. Do something about it.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, like the minister who's passionate about this House, I'm passionate about this House too, but I want a House of Assembly that is inclusive of all Members that represent all the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

I just want to speak briefly on this point of privilege. The Minister of Justice brought up a point of privilege yesterday and now the Member for Conception Bay South is bringing up another point of privilege. The two are related and I want to speak.

I, too, believe in this House and I, too, believe that rules that are made to guide the House of Assembly have to be followed. They have to be respected. I think, unfortunately, or I should say, sadly, we all believe that. What's at the root of this, I think, is good legislation.

The Member for Harbour Main has mentioned time and time again, in the House, about the fact that we have to be consulted. We have to be given the time to review legislation so that we can actually ask questions in this House of Assembly to make sure that the legislation being proposed is good legislation. The reason why I'm referring to my colleague from Harbour Main is because a lot of time she spoke before I did. What she did is she echoed what was in my notes to bring up.

We over here, on this side of the House, are not trying to get the government. We're not trying to undermine the government. At the end of the day, we're elected as MHAs to make sure that legislation that comes before the House is proper, it's good legislation and it's done with transparency. One of the problems that we've had in this House of Assembly is, basically, being blindsided sometimes by legislation. That's where the comments come from. Legislation has to be good legislation that's going to improve the lives and also improve the overall province.

Now, the reason why I'm talking about that, Speaker, is the point of privilege is about

leaking of information. We welcome the technical briefings. We benefit from the technical briefings, but I have to say, yesterday, it was talked about when information was supposedly leaked. Why was information leaked, even to suggest that. But, at the end of the day, what I want to talk about is the briefings we get are just before the legislation comes out.

What a lot of the people of this province don't know is that sometimes the legislation is slipped under the door at 8 a.m. and we're going to debate it in the afternoon. Are we lawyers – are we lawyers? We're not lawyers. Especially over here in the Third Party and with the independents, we don't have access to a lot of the services that are offered, and we can't even consult on the information that we're given from the technical briefings to find out if there's anything we're missing. If we miss things, we can't properly debate things. That's why we go back to we want good legislation.

This point of privilege and the point of privilege yesterday could've been avoided. The so-called leak of information could've been prevented.

The House Leader for the Third Party yesterday spoke up and he said: Why are we not tabling bills to send to Committee? When they go to Committee, they're public, there's public awareness. We can ensure that they're being properly reviewed. Also, too, is the general public, the people who vote for us, can actually send us messages. A lot of times you hear: Contact your MHA. So that's what is really important.

Now, I have to tell you, I spoke about things I heard in Committee with the budget Estimates. When we were talking about the budget Estimates for the *Limitations Act*, I asked questions. That's my privilege in the House of Assembly. During budget Estimates, I asked questions about the *Limitations Act* and the work that was being done. A deputy minister answered my question. What I did then is I shared that

information with people who wanted to know. But that wasn't considered a leak because the budget Estimates are actually televised. They're public information.

So, in actual fact, if we had Committees that could actually be there to review and discuss legislation before it's debated in the House, there could be more input. The more input, the transparency that we're calling for would actually force this government to produce good legislation; not bringing forward acts and amendments that have not been consulted with the stakeholders, with the advocacy groups.

We've had legislation come forward here for us to find out on the floor during debate that people weren't consulted with. In actual fact, there's a lack of transparency.

So when we're talking about legislation, what was said yesterday was very well spoken, but it was spoken to hide the fact that we have a poor system, a poor system for bringing forward legislation, a poor system that fails to ensure that we actually produce good, effective legislation.

So, to me, that's why it's important to speak on these points of privilege. Because your privilege in the House of Assembly is so important, Speaker. If stuff was leaked – I will refer back to an old saying: When the law is unfair, unfortunately you make criminals of law-abiding people. If the process in this House of Assembly forces people to leak stuff, then that's not only a reflection on the person or the people that is leaking information, it's a reflection on the system and it's a reflection on this government.

This government now has an opportunity to fix it and to make sure that when we bring forward legislation, it is properly debated, it's debated with knowledge and intelligence, it's debated with transparency, also, the public has a better idea about what we're debating and the public has an opportunity to actually voice what they want,

what they need, what they desperately need, Speaker.

I think when we look at these points of privilege we're discussing, we cannot ignore those facts.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I'm going to stand and speak on this.

The sad part about all this – the actually sad part – we're taking away from the great piece of legislation that we should be discussing here. That's the sad part, the information.

But the part that you're missing – I've been around since 1989 and I remember this. I remember when this was brought in, when Clyde Wells used to give around the legislation, once it was tabled: What do you think? What do you think?

Show me anywhere in this House of Assembly, any legislation, any rules of order where you say you can't discuss it. I've been in this House when people were in briefings that morning and stand up and ask questions that day. Show me.

If you can't show me, you cannot stand in this House, Mr. Speaker, to say it's tradition. Show me. Show me where there is some legislation; show me where there are some House orders. You can't do it. You can't do it, it's just not there – it's just not there.

So I have a piece of legislation coming through today and I can't go consult with no one, but I have to stand up that day and discuss it. It is just not right. Clyde Wells brought that in. I was there. I was with Clyde Wells in his office in Corner Brook when we sat down and we discussed it. I was there when ministers were discussing it. I was there. I say to the

government, I was there when there were public consultations on some legislation that was going to come through. I was there. I arranged the meetings for some ministers out in Corner Brook.

So just for your sake, Mr. Speaker, and for the government, if you can't show something where you say this is unparliamentary or this is breaking the rules, how can you break a rule that you say you can't have in this House? We should have it in the *Standing Orders*. If it's not in the *Standing Orders*, how can you, all of a sudden, say: Oh, yeah, that's a breach of privilege. You can't do it. It is just not right.

Then there are some days we could ask questions on it and other days we can't. We get to second reading; we could stand up.

I just want to talk about the Elections Committee. I had dealings with them and it wasn't comfortable. It was not comfortable dealings with them. I'll just give an example. You were involved with it. You know that I can't use the names. But something happened, it went to the Elections Committee. They never had no authority to go any further.

Do you know what they did? They asked you to bring it further. Do you remember that? You didn't have the authority to deal with it, but you did it. That's why I feel this going to the Elections Committee – whoever spoke about this outside this House, get ready, because you know who they're going to give it to. They're going to give it to the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, which is a political appointment, not even appointed by this House. That's what's going to happen.

I dealt with her. My dealings with her just a little while ago, the Commissioner for Legislative Standards, the same one who's going to do the investigation, she's the one who's getting lawyers and saying put it in the court so we can make this public that I owe money to the government. Do you

know one of the people – besides the Speaker's office – who were supposed to contact me so I could pay? It was her – not her, her office. They never ever did, but then they put it in the court so they could say I'm in arrears, which I never was.

So this is the political part of all this. The sad part is we're standing up because someone discussed this or someone leaked this here and they're saying, you broke our privilege. Show me where the privilege was broken. If you can't show – that's why we have *Standing Orders* – that the Standing Order was broken, what can you say. It's tradition. Well, I can tell you it's not tradition and I go way back. Memory is a good thing; history is a good thing.

So when we stand up here in this House today and yesterday and we're talking about this has been out, although we're going to introduce it an hour later, we can't discuss it with anybody. We can't ask for information on anybody, yet the whole concept of this here is to try to help the people that suffered years ago. Now it's taken away by two days of this House of Assembly. Yet, no one can show me anywhere in the *Standing Orders*, anywhere in any regulations, any act that we have in this House of Assembly, that once you get a briefing that you can't discuss it. Show me. You can't do it.

Mr. Speaker, the Privileges and Elections Committee, in my dealings: get ready. You know what I'm talking about. I'm not finished with that yet, by the way, but you know what I'm talking about.

When it went to the Elections Committee, when you didn't have the authority, after Bradley Moss removed himself, do you know what you did? You sent it to the Speaker. Do you know what the Speaker did? Sent it to someone in Ontario. No authority to do it. Absolutely no authority, nothing in the *Standing Orders*, nothing in the Elections Committee, all political. So get ready – get ready.

**B. DAVIS:** (Inaudible) I'm not afraid of you. You can threaten me all you want and threaten everyone in this House, I'm not afraid of you, like everyone else is.

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**P. LANE:** He said he's not afraid of you.

**E. JOYCE:** You're not afraid of me?

**SPEAKER:** Address the Chair.

**E. JOYCE:** He's not afraid of me. What are you getting on with, b'y?

Listen –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Address the Chair.

**E. JOYCE:** I mean, I'm trying to address the Chair, but someone is saying they're not afraid of me.

**B. DAVIS:** Stop threatening people.

**E. JOYCE:** Who am I threatening?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. JOYCE:** I have no idea what you're talking about. I'm just speaking the facts.

**AN HON. MEMBER:** He knows.

**E. JOYCE:** Oh, I am. Don't worry.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. JOYCE:** I know, Mr. Speaker, I'm speaking on an issue here that I dealt with personally and I know what happened. I know what went through.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Move on with – we're debating the point of privilege right now.

**E. JOYCE:** But I'm trying to –

**SPEAKER:** Stay relevant to it, please.

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

**SPEAKER:** Stay relevant to the point of privilege.

**E. JOYCE:** But can you ask the Member or the minister –

**SPEAKER:** I've asked the Member for order.

**E. JOYCE:** Okay, thank you.

**SPEAKER:** I'm asking you to move on with your points.

**E. JOYCE:** This is common. When you hit a sore spot, this is what happens. No one else got interrupted here. No one got interrupted. When I speak the facts – and there are people here from the NDP who were on that Committee and people from the PCs were on that Committee. They can verify everything I'm just saying, everything I'm saying. Everything I just said.

So this is why I'm saying that what happened here, there's nothing to show that you can't discuss it. Nothing to show you can't go out and get a lively debate. Nothing to show that you can't give it to someone. Absolutely nothing.

When you stand up and say that this is the norm, we don't follow norms in this House of Assembly; we have to follow the *Standing Orders*. What is the norm? Does it start since 1949? Does it start 1989 when Clyde Wells brought this in, or do it start today or tomorrow? What we have to go through is the *Standing Orders*. If there's nothing in the *Standing Orders* that guides all these

Members in this House of Assembly, who makes the final decision? That's why we –

**S. REID:** Precedents.

**E. JOYCE:** Pardon me?

**P. LANE:** Precedents.

**E. JOYCE:** I heard the former speaker say, precedents. That's what we go on. I can tell you I remember times that we asked questions after a briefing that day. We asked questions after a briefing that day. So when did that precedent start? It never started in '89.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**E. JOYCE:** It didn't start in '89, obviously. So when did it start? When do you start –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Again, address the Chair, please.

**E. JOYCE:** I am. I'm looking at you.

**SPEAKER:** You're pointing at the other Member.

**E. JOYCE:** I'm looking at you.

**SPEAKER:** He was looking at me. I was looking at you. I spoke to him too.

**E. JOYCE:** But I'm looking at you. I'm not pointing.

When does it start? That's the question that you've got to answer. That's the question. When you look at this today, I think what we all should do – here's what we, as the House of Assembly, should do today. Here's what we should do: put a bit of water in the wine. Let's all say, listen, let's go back to this legislation that is very important to a lot of people who were abused. That's what we should do.

We're (inaudible) in this House of Assembly that you shouldn't have leaked it. I discussed, many times, legislation that was given to me. I discussed it many times with people before it was brought to the House. I discussed it. I go back to when I first got elected in '89 when Clyde Wells did it. I go back when ministers did it. I go back to '99 when I got elected again; I did it. I go back years – back in 2003.

Can anybody tell me that were in this House – can anybody in this House tell me that when we got the debate on Muskrat Falls no one discussed it? Of course we did. When we got the legislation on Bill 29, you're telling me, we, as an Opposition, before it was raised in this House, we didn't go out? There are Members opposite that were part of it – that we didn't go out and seek advice? We did.

I was there. We got people into our office. Before it was debated in the House, we got people in our office to go through it. We were sitting down. We were, actually, sitting down. The same with Muskrat Falls. Do you think when we got the Muskrat Falls – do you think that we did not have people in, experts in, before it was actually brought before the House? You know we did.

What are we going to do? Walk in this House of Assembly with something as important as Muskrat Falls and say we've got to debate it now without us getting information? You know we did. That's common. It's common. We did it. People over there did it with me.

So all of a sudden, now, we're saying that we can't do it. Show me where. If you can't show me in the *Standing Orders*, then whatever we get here, we should be able to go out and discuss to find the best avenue possible to get the best piece of legislation brought to this House of Assembly.

Thank you.

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

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

It's great to have an opportunity to have this kind of procedural debate on this point of privilege in the House. A number of interesting points have been raised, so I'd like to just add a few comments on this point of privilege that's been raised here today.

The way I see it is we have a couple of issues that are being mixed up here. One is the idea of confidentiality in this House. Committees sometimes operate within an ambiance of confidentiality and materials shouldn't be leaked. To the point, I made some comments while the Member was speaking, which I shouldn't have done maybe, but I thought it important that people know that the way rules are made in the House, the way we conduct our affairs in this House, we look first to our own *Standing Orders*.

Is it in the *Standing Orders*? If it's not in the *Standing Orders*, we then look to the precedents of our House, how we have done things in the past. Then we look to other jurisdictions in Canada, then we look to parliament in Britain, and other parliamentary procedures around the world. That's how we conduct our affairs here in this Legislature. There are many books – I see some of them there on the Clerk's table now – Erskine May, Beauchesne, all these books that document the procedures of how things should be done in our Legislature.

When we look at the precedents in this House of things being leaked, we've had clear precedents of cases where Members of Committees have leaked preliminary reports of a Committee; in one case, a Member was sanctioned and lost a certain amount of salary, was expelled from the House, I believe. On occasions, we've had cases where that has happened, when people leak material in this House. So the

precedents in terms of leaking material are quite clear.

The issue of should we have Standing Committees – I was around as well as a junior researcher in the Clyde Wells years when legislative review Committees were put in place. It was a decision by government to refer legislation to Committees, and that Committees looked at these and do public hearings on them, gather information. But that's a sort of different case than we're dealing with here today, because the government did not make a decision to refer it to a legislative review Committee. There's no precedent based on that having happened in the past, so we've got a number of issues here tangled up.

Whether we should have legislative review Committees is another issue worthy of having a debate on, having a discussion about. I think it's important that we have, on some bills especially, some wide consultation and discussion about.

The point that the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands makes that the role of independents in these Committees and the Committees of this House, while I agree that Members should have input into legislation and Committees, I'm not sure that independents should have more input than other Members of this House. They should have the rights that other Members have, but they shouldn't have more rights than other Members do. So if he has a right to be on every Committee, then why shouldn't I have a right to be on every Committees? That's the sort of fairness.

Committees work. They bring things back to the House. The things that are brought back to the House, then every Member is equal and they have a right to have their say as to whether it should pass or not.

So those are the issues. I think we're mixing up issues here whether or not we should have legislative review Committees or

whether the issue is related to the leaking of material. So those are the points I would like to make.

Thank you.

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

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers, this House is going to stand in recess for us to take some time to review the point of privilege put forward by the Member for Conception Bay South.

The House stands in recess.

### Recess

**SPEAKER:** Are the House Leaders ready?

Order, please!

The Opposition House Leader rose on a question of privilege regarding remarks made by the House yesterday related to a point of privilege. I am satisfied that the Opposition House Leader raised the matter at the earliest possible opportunity. In my ruling, I will address matters in three separate components.

First of all, the Opposition House Leader referenced the comments yesterday saying that the minister clearly implied that someone in the Opposition caucuses who was given access to the bill deliberately leaked the draft, and that the comments were false and highly offensive.

In reviewing *Hansard* and video from yesterday, the Government House Leader referenced in his remarks, in both raising the point of privilege and also in speaking to the motion to refer the matters to the Privileges and Elections Committee, that there were two briefings yesterday morning on the bill: one to government Members and staff and one to Opposition Members and staff. There was nothing in his remarks that attributed the leaks to anyone in particular.

Secondly, the point of privilege also relates to processes that occur before the bill is distributed to Members, which is required under our current Standing Order 83 to occur before the second reading. Any briefings and consultations on bills before distribution in the House are outside the processes of this House.

Further, with respect to processes and procedures of this House as it relates to the review of draft legislation by Members, I refer to Standing Orders 79 and 80, which include provisions for review of bills by Committees of this House.

Thirdly, in terms of the appropriate process for reviewing the *Standing Orders* and processes of this House, the Standing Orders Committee is tasked with a permanent Order of Reference to review the *Standing Orders* and make recommendations to this House. I note the Committee only recommends: It is the House as a whole that makes the final decision. Should any Member wish to raise matters respecting House processes, they may raise this with the Standing Orders Committee.

Finally, the House has ordered the Privileges and Elections Committee to review the alleged premature disclosure of Bill 74. That Committee will report back to the House in due course with its findings.

My responsibility as Speaker at this point is to determine whether, at first glance, a point of privilege has been established. Based on the information presented and the reasons outlined above, I therefore find there is no prima facie breach of privilege.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

**J. HOGAN:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now recess.

**SPEAKER:** This House do stand recessed until 2 p.m. this afternoon.

### Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

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

Admit strangers.

Before we begin, in the public gallery today I'd like to welcome Judy Sparkes, Amy Donovan and Sadie Perry. They are members of the Paradise Centennial Lions Club and they are visiting us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Welcome.

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

**SPEAKER:** Also in the public gallery today for a Member's statement, welcome to representatives of the Madrock Theatre Troupe of Bay Roberts: Pat George, Donna Warford, Fronie Sparkes, Sandra Roach, Martin Bradbury, John Clarke, Lynne Strong and Bill Strong.

Welcome.

**SPEAKER:** Finally, welcome to Jeanie and Joe Dalton, parents of our Page, Cody.

Welcome.

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

### Statements by Members

**SPEAKER:** Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members from the Districts of Stephenville - Port au Port, Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Labrador West, Bonavista, Topsail - Paradise, Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, with leave.

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

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

Speaker, it's been said that if you want something done, ask a busy person. Well Bob Miller of Stephenville is one of those busy people who tirelessly gives his time and expertise to the Town of Stephenville and beyond.

As an integral member of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Knights of Columbus since 1985, Bob has been organizing numerous major fundraisers and community events. He is a fourth degree Knight and is serving in the role of Faithful Navigator. His family has been selected as Family of the Year at both the community level and, on several occasions, at the provincial level. He has also been recognized as State Knight of the Year for the province.

As the founding member of the Bay St. George Sick Children's Foundation, Bob is involved in the planning for the annual telethon fundraiser and is the first point of contact for families with sick children. He also acts as treasurer of this organization which has raised over \$1 million to date.

In 2020, Bob was recognized for his community service when he was awarded the Governor General's award: Sovereign's Medal for Volunteers.

Thanks, Bob, for all you do for the community.

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

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

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

Rotary International was founded in Chicago in 1905 and has now grown to over 46,000 clubs worldwide. The only thing that makes me more proud of our Exploits Rotary Club in Grand Falls-Windsor are the people who attend and the extraordinary work they have done in the past.

Chartered in February of 1970, this amazing group of individuals have accomplished so many projects throughout the Central district. Some notable work taken on by the members have been the YMCA, the Corduroy Brook Nature Trail, Rotary lookout at the Salmonid Interpretation Centre, as well as seeding the Upper Exploits with salmon fry.

Most recent has been the continued efforts contributing to our beloved Lionel Kelland Hospice, ensuring Newfoundlanders and Labradorians access to a beautiful, much-needed community hospice.

Three charter members still attend special events. These members include Frank Howard, Mun Ivany and Boyd Cohen. I would like to thank outgoing president, John Whelan, for his service and congratulate incoming president, Amy Critch, who will take over this coming July.

Please join me as we honour the Exploits Rotary Club and say thank you to all members who meet Thursday afternoon as they make our community a place we can all be proud of.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to congratulate the Dennis Drover Memorial Tournament on another successful tournament.

The tournament officially started last year and was created in memory of Dennis Drover, a coach within our community who supported many athletes and believed in the spirit of the game.

This year, unfortunately, a team member and friend passed away just hours before the tournament. He was a young man

named Brayden King, also known as BK. His friends and his team members dedicated every minute they played during the tournament to their friend, who they all had grown up with and played hockey with. Before the final game, they agreed that the winnings would go to Brayden's family.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in acknowledging the Dennis Drover Memorial Tournament, to the volunteers, team members, families and fans. This tournament has been around such a short period of time and has brought such spirit to Labrador West. Because of the tournament's success, two scholarships for graduating student athletes will be provided on behalf of the Drover family.

I also ask all hon. Members to join me in remembering Brayden King and his love for his family, teammates and the spirit of the game.

Thank you.

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

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

**C. PARDY:** Speaker, on Saturday, May 18, I attended the 47th Charter Night of the Port Rexton & Area Lions. The celebration of 47 years of service to the community had many important recognitions and I would like to highlight one of the most notable.

The highest civilian award of the Lions International is the Melvin Jones Award, named after the founder and recognizes and honours members for their volunteerism and dedication in service to one's community. The three Charter members, who were members since their inaugural year in 1977, were awarded this prestigious award.

Congratulations to Barry Pearce, Bill Long and Bill Hookey, who, for 47 years, have

served their community by assisting those who have identified a need.

It was Gandhi who stated, the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members. These three individuals have certainly done their part to create a gold standard for Port Rexton.

I ask Members of the 50th House of Assembly to join me in celebrating the lifetime of service of Barry Pearce, Bill Long and Bill Hookey of the Port Rexton Lions Club.

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

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

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

Speaker, the Paradise Centennial Lions Club mission is to serve the community and follow the motto: We serve.

With a membership of 29 people, the club often partakes in raising funds through bake sales, ticket sales and open mic nights, amongst others.

Since being chartered in 2018, the club has provided thousands of dollars in financial support to assist with medical travel, food for families, Christmas gifts, sponsorship of school breakfast programs, minor hockey, Scouts and meal services at both The Gathering Place and the Ronald McDonald House.

Throughout the community of Paradise, members of the club can be often found giving of their time to assist with town-supported events. They can be seen in their yellow vests cooking hotdogs for Canada Day, serving hot chocolate during Guy Fawkes' Night, flipping pancakes for brunches, organizing the Christmas parade and, as well, introducing newborns to seniors with The Circle of Life Program.

For their active role in the community, the club has been recognized each year of its existence during the towns municipal volunteer awards night.

Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the Paradise Centennial Lions Club for helping others and serving the community of Paradise so well.

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

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

Does the Member have leave?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Leave.

**SPEAKER:** Leave is granted.

**P. PARSONS:** Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today to acknowledge the Madrock Theatre Troupe of Bay Roberts.

Founded in 2008 by Michelle Gosse-Dove with just 12 members, its first performance *How's About a Time* was a huge success.

In 2020, the pandemic forced cancelled productions, but with eagerness the troupe hit the stage again in 2021 at All Hallows Elementary in North River. It was thanks to the generosity of Dr. Kevin Giles that secured the troupe's new home for the summers of 2021-2023. The troupe had then grown to 22 members.

This year they presented the play *Halfway There* at the Drama Festival in Gander. With newfound recognition, it was an historic event for the group.

One of their biggest challenges, Speaker, has always been a location to house their productions and store their equipment. In 2023, George and Donna Warford purchased the SUF Lodge in Bay Roberts to give back to the community and to support the arts. The troupe has a home, and now

to restore the building and work with the Warfords to bring the arts back to Bay Roberts and surrounding communities.

Please join me in congratulating the Madrock Theatre group on their accomplishments and to recognize each member for their talent and dedication to arts and culture.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Statements by Ministers.

### Statements by Ministers

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I'm pleased to share that Newfoundland and Labrador is expecting one of the highest rates of economic growth forecast for 2024 among all provinces in the country.

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

**S. COADY:** Real Gross Domestic Product is forecast to increase by 5.1 per cent. Total employment is forecast to increase by 2,100 jobs. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in April was 9.1 per cent, one of the lowest rates recorded in recent history.

Household income is expected to increase by 4.9 per cent, meaning more buying power for residents. We forecast retail sales increasing 2.8 per cent and new motor vehicle sales continue to grow, with a year-to-date increase of 22 per cent. Capital investment is expected to increase by 3 per cent to \$9.6 billion.

We've well surpassed our population targets for 2026 – 2026 – welcoming more than 5,400 permanent residents in the last year

and we expect similar numbers to join us this year.

Housing starts are expected to increase and early data indicates significant year-to-date growth and over twice the number of starts in the first quarter compared to the same quarter last year. Home sales increased 3.1 per cent on a year-to-date basis through April.

Inflation is decreasing, averaging 2.5 per cent during the first four months of this year.

Speaker, *The Economy* document, available on government's website and released through our budgetary process, forecasts continued strength, growth and optimism this fiscal year, all towards a stronger, smarter, self-sufficient, sustainable Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** I'd like to thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Speaker, while the minister talks about statistics, I prefer to talk about people, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

If our economy is doing so well, why are so many people hungry and homeless? Why are so many seniors unable to properly feed and medicate themselves? Twenty-six per cent of people in this province are never sure they will have enough to eat. Half of all single mothers are food insecure. The Seniors' Advocate said thousands of our seniors are splitting medication and living on toast and tea, unable to properly feed themselves.

Yes, employment is up but how many people need two or three of those jobs just to pay the rent and buy the groceries? Insolvencies are up. People are losing their homes and downsizing. While the

government talks of inflation decreasing taxes in this province are up: carbon tax, sugar tax and along with them the cost of goods people need in our stores.

The 2024 budget was the Liberal's ninth budget opportunity to do something about this and for the ninth time they have failed to get it right.

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

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the minister for an advance copy of her statement.

Strong economic indicators need benchmarks and targets. How do we know where we're going or where we need to be to help people of this province? What is missing from these numbers is how it actually is affecting people, cost of goods, food, services have gone through the roof. Most people cannot afford to even live. The increase in housing starts ring hollow as we have clearly been told time and time again, we are not building enough homes in this province.

So I ask this: Are we truly that much better?

**SPEAKER:** Further statements by ministers?

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Speaker, I rise to report a significant milestone in the protection and recovery of the species we typically refer to as the Newfoundland marten.

There's a marked improvement in the population that has resulted in a status change from threatened to vulnerable. As next steps, species management plans and actions are being developed to identify

conservation measures and ensure the marten continues to rebound.

This marten population is one of just 14 mammal species native to the Island of Newfoundland. They are geographically isolated and genetically and ecologically distinct. First considered endangered in 1996, recovery programs have been ongoing and in 2002 the species was designated on the provincial *Endangered Species Act*.

The Newfoundland Marten Recovery Team, chaired by Dr. Brian Hearn, works closely with the trapping and forestry sectors, stewardship organizations, governments, Indigenous groups and the public to make the new status a reality. Numbers are steadily improving and currently estimated at 2,800 mature animals.

Speaker, I'd like to thank – sincerely thank – the wildlife officials in the department, the recovery team and stakeholders for their commitment to conserving biodiversity. Together we will continue to protect rare and at-risk species from extinction in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

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

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

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

We in the Official Opposition are pleased to hear the minister's news of the significant milestone that has been reached in protection of the recovery of the Newfoundland marten. The pine marten serves as a reminder of the importance of conservation efforts, inspiring a sense of environmental stewardship and connection

to the land among the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

We commend the work of the Newfoundland Marten Recovery Team led by Dr. Brian Hearn and we thank the public service and the service of our province for all they do to protect the Newfoundland marten and all other at-risk species in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

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

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

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

Speaker, having been a volunteer with the pine marten survey, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement and join him in saying that this is indeed positive news. However, we must remind this House that our province has the lowest percentage of protected lands in the country and is facing declining wild salmon stocks on the South Coast of the province due to open sea pen aquaculture. Furthermore, Indigenous communities are losing their way of life and access to country foods –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**J. DINN:** – because of rapid climate change.

Thank you.

**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.

Again, Food First NL has reported that Newfoundland and Labrador are leading the country and has the highest rate of severe food poverty: 8.5 per cent of people in this province are severely in food poverty. That's 46,000 people.

I ask the Deputy Premier: Is that number accurate?

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

**S. COADY:** Thank you, Speaker.

I can tell you that the Market Basket Measure is telling us that the percentage of all persons of low income in Newfoundland and Labrador is below where it was in 2015. I know the Member opposite likes to talk a lot about that things are worse, but I can tell you that they're much better.

But let me go to another serious question. Yesterday, in the House of Assembly, we asked questions concerning the candidate from Baie Verte - Green Bay who made very divisive remarks and I can tell you that we spoke a lot yesterday about this issue and we've asked the Member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition, for his clarification. He never gave us one yesterday. But I will say I did review CBC yesterday and he said, I didn't necessarily agree –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, let me be perfectly clear: There is no room for hate in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** None – none.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** I have spoken to the Friends of India Association. I have reached out to the Muslim Association. Our candidate has clarified his comments with the media and apologized.

Speaker, when is an apology not enough? That's the question here.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, when I talk about poverty, when I talk about 134,000 people, a quarter of our population are never sure they have enough to eat.

I ask the minister: Is that number correct?

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

**S. COADY:** While that is a very difficult question and I'd be happy to answer it, I have to address the preamble.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I ask the Members of both sides –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Are we ready?

The hon. the Deputy Premier.

**S. COADY:** Thank you.

I'll address the preamble. While the question is very important and I'll be happy to answer it, I'll address the preamble.

First of all, the candidate from Baie Verte - Green Bay said it was taken out of context. He went on to say it was probably not the best choice of words. We finally heard from the Leader of the Opposition, though yesterday he said he didn't necessarily agree with those comments. I'm glad he clarified.

The Premier has spoken very strongly to this issue; that showed true leadership. I'm glad we're finally hearing from the Leader of the Opposition on this matter because division and hate has no place in Newfoundland and Labrador society.

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

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

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

More than one on four Newfoundlanders and Labradorians live with food poverty. We are the worst in Canada. The East End Food Banks Coalition has seen a doubling in four years of those requiring their services.

I ask the minister: Has government established a targeted food poverty reduction plan?

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

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

Normally, the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology wouldn't answer questions about food security, although it is an issue that is of importance to everybody. But I have to point out that we would love to be able to do more again – there was more even done in the last budget – we would love to do more. But when we have to

contribute almost three-quarters of a billion dollars to ensure that all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians will not freeze out of their homes, that's the answer that I would provide to that question about why aren't we doing more.

We have to do more for everybody because, again, of a decision that was left to us by a previous administration.

Thank you.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, governments are elected to govern, not blame –

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** – and that's exactly what's been going on. Government continues to blame, and that's why the people of Baie Verte - Green Bay District are turning around and saying: Liberals got to go. And we agree with them.

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** So, Speaker, I'll try another serious question.

Is the Minister of Health aware of the people in Western Newfoundland that have to travel to Grand Falls-Windsor for EEG appointments?

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

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

And I agree, for once, with the Leader of the Opposition. We were elected to govern, and one of the biggest decisions we had to make was to spend to clean up the mess that he and his colleagues and their

previous leader and their previous leader made.

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

**A. PARSONS:** That was a decision that we made.

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

**A. PARSONS:** And again, they refuse – they're over chirping now. I'd be upset, too, if I was responsible for that mess; I would be upset, too. So what they should be doing –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. PARSONS:** – what they should be doing –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**A. PARSONS:** – (inaudible) mess is was is left to us.

Thank you.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I'd just love to keep going back, but unfortunately there are significant health and important issues that need to be addressed.

So I want to ask the Minister of Health again: Is he aware that people in Western Health must travel to Grand Falls-Windsor for EEG appointments?

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

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

Yes, we are aware. There was an unexpected vacancy in Western health. I understand that from the health authority and the Western zone that they are working to try and accommodate that position, Mr. Speaker, and create solutions for that particular situation.

There is a temporary situation that is happening where individuals have to travel for that service, Mr. Speaker, but it is due to an unexpected vacancy.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, I want to thank the minister for his answer and I just want to follow up with another situation with him that maybe we could get some help with.

There's an 85-year-old woman from my district who received a letter advising her she has an EEG appointment on May 28 at 8:15 a.m. Her daughter called Central health to potentially arrange an appointment later in the day but were told they could not be accommodated.

So I ask the minister: Does he think it's acceptable to put an 85-year-old woman on the road at 3:30 in the morning to reach Grand Falls-Windsor in time for an 8:15 a.m. appointment?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, the Member is just bringing this to my attention. While he can, under the health information act I'm not allowed to speak to individual cases on the floor of the House of Assembly. But if the Member wants to bring that to my attention and provide the details, I will contact the health authority to see if alternate arrangements can be made.

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

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

**T. WAKEHAM:** Speaker, again, I want to thank the minister for his answer, because that's exactly what we will do. But I just want to follow up again with the minister. Again, like him, I'm sure, I was shocked to learn that Central health told her daughter that all appointments on that day were for Western zone patients. All for Western zone patients.

So the solution we talked about here, Minister, and I'll ask you this: Don't you think the people on the West Coast would be better served by having the one tech from Grand Falls-Windsor come to Corner Brook a couple of days a week until Corner Brook is back in business, rather than having people on the road for hours at a time for a 45-minute test?

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

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, again, if the Member wanted true answers to this, I would've appreciated a call prior to Question Period, because I would've been able to get him actual answers from Western zone and the provincial health authority.

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Politicizing an issue like this that involves an individual's health, I am absolutely delighted to be able to look into this if the Member wants to provide me with the information. The suggestion that he made, Mr. Speaker, I can take that away as well, because it's perhaps not a bad suggestion.

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

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

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

I remind the minister this is the people's House and the people's issues come up in this House and they have every right to be brought up in this House and it's what we'll continue to do, Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

**B. PETTEN:** Thank you.

Speaker, it's been over three months since government became aware of unclaimed bodies in cold storage units outside the Health Sciences Centre.

I ask the minister: Can he provide an update on how many are currently there?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, again, that is an issue where the numbers can change on a week-by-week basis or a day-by-day basis. I'll be happy to contact the provincial health authority and get a number for the Member opposite.

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

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

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

I appreciate that, Minister.

Speaker, rather than building additional storage rooms, has government made any additional financial arrangements for families to secure proper burial for their loved ones?

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

**P. PIKE:** Mr. Speaker, my department is responsible for the funeral arrangements and helping families with funerals once it's reported to CSSD. Once we receive a phone call from a Public Trustee or a family member, we immediately get on it; we immediately start making funeral arrangements.

We cover the cost of a basic funeral, Mr. Speaker. Any additional costs that fall under the purview of what we had, we'll certainly cover those as well.

We do a number of funerals each year, basic funerals with basic funeral costs. I think last year it was over 300 and they were done by operators in the province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

Minister, you never answered the question: Is there any additional help?

These bodies are there, so has there been any extra assistance given to try to get these people a proper burial for their families? That's the question I'm asking you.

Have there been any extra resources put forth to try and give these people a proper, respectful burial?

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

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

**P. PIKE:** If I may, Mr. Speaker, I'll answer the question.

Mr. Speaker, we cover the cost of –

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Again, I ask Members on both sides of the House, if you want to take the conversation –

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

**SPEAKER:** Is the Opposition House Leader ready? If not, I can wait.

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

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

We provide the cost for a basic funeral. So basic funeral costs are covered, Mr. Speaker, plus additional costs. For example – I'll just look at the list – we provide clothing. We provide mileage if the body has to be transported to a burial out in another community in the province. We provide mileage for cremation purposes, Mr. Speaker. We provide cemetery charges, oversized caskets, embalming, removal of body from place of death to hospital, funeral notices, organists, clergy, use of a chapel: all of that is covered. That's in addition, Mr. Speaker, to the basic amount – that's in addition.

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

**P. PIKE:** That's why the average for a funeral is \$2,800 as opposed to what other people are saying.

Thank you.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, the question is simple. We have bodies in storage containers; we don't know how many are there, the minister is supposed to be updating me on it.

When can these people get a proper burial? We all know there's no money available for them to bury them. This falls back to the province, the Crown.

So Minister of CSSD, to ask the simple question: Are you going to provide those people with a proper burial? I don't need to know how the clock was made, Mr. Speaker, I need to know what time it is and it's time to bury those bodies.

Thank you.

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

**P. PIKE:** Mr. Speaker, we do provide the cost of basic funeral services once we're notified, which can be the same day, they can notify us and we will start the process. Who has to notify us? A family member or a Public Trustee. We'll get on it immediately, Mr. Speaker, and we will make sure that all costs are covered.

This is the best way to do it, Mr. Speaker, because you wouldn't have any bodies down in the morgue at that time. If somebody called us immediately, we would take care of the funeral expenses. So that's the way it needs to be and that's the only answer I have.

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

**P. PIKE:** Because that's what we really need to do. Call us. We'll take care of it.

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

**B. PETTEN:** Speaker, I'm not sure what all the clapping is about. What if there's no family to call them? Who calls then? This is

what you're dealing with. These are unclaimed bodies; a lot of these have no families.

When can they expect a proper burial or are they going to stay in those coolers, keep-cool containers down by the hospital, which is unsightly, it's distasteful and it's ridiculous? These questions are not complicated, Speaker.

I ask the minister again: First of all, you've not increased assistance in 20 years, but what are you going to do with these unclaimed bodies that can't pick up the phone and call you?

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

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

This is an important question, it's an important issue, it is a complex issue. We are seeing jurisdictions across the country with an increase in the number of unclaimed bodies. I know that the Department of Health and Community Services, the provincial health authority, CSSD, as well as Justice, are looking at this.

There may be changes in the legislation required to allow a more expeditious process by the Public Trustee to provide the guidance for the remains that are there, but under the current legislation and the current processes, Mr. Speaker, there is a process that needs to be followed in identifying next of kin or somebody connected to the individual before it goes to the Public Trustee.

We are anxious in getting a more expeditious process.

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

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

**B. PETTEN:** Again, Speaker, those bodies remain there.

Speaker, families are resorting to GoFundMe campaigns in order to provide a respectful goodbye to their loved ones.

Why is government refusing to help address the barriers to proper burial and get whatever legislative requirements are in place – do it sooner rather than later while we're in this House?

Thank you.

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

**P. PIKE:** Mr. Speaker, as I indicated before in this House, we're reviewing all of these supports and right now the review is ongoing. As I indicated before, as well, we are talking with funeral home operators. We have been for some time now. We've sent out questionnaires as well. So we are in the process of working with funeral home operators to make sure that we cover the full cost of funerals and that they are satisfied with that.

But I guess the other thing with this is, nothing will happen until CSSD is notified. So that's important. I hope the people are watching today, especially from Bonavista, they're watching and they're seeing that, listen, if we contact CSSD, we'll get action and we won't have a body down in the morgue.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, yesterday in the House, I asked the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development several questions about seniors but he was not given the opportunity to answer.

Seniors across our province are going hungry.

So I ask the minister that's responsible for seniors: What will he do to implement the recommendations of the Seniors' Advocate, as we know she has warned this government that keeping seniors underfed without their medications and poorly housed will only make them sicker?

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

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

While we don't choose who in the Opposition gets up to ask questions, I can guarantee you they certainly do not get to dictate who on this side gets to answer those questions.

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

**A. PARSONS:** But I do believe the answer that I provided yesterday remains the same because it's the same question and I gave the same answer and it's a good answer.

They're talking about seniors. So are we, but the fact is we had to put \$740 million this year – that's not multiple.

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

**A. PARSONS:** I say to the Member behind, you got a question, stand up and ask it. You've got all the time in the world.

What I would say is, we've had to put three-quarters of a billion dollars in, money that we would love to put into other seniors' benefits but we are forced to put it into this.

Again, to go back and ask about the Seniors' Advocate, the same one that they said was a luxury. Well, I find that rich, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Mr. Speaker, this is sad. This is truly sad. I am not dictating who answers questions. These questions are coming from the seniors of our province.

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** And they want to hear from the minister responsible.

Thirty per cent of seniors in Newfoundland and Labrador cannot afford the necessities of life and are going without food. Seniors who could once fend for themselves are now first-time food bank users.

I ask the minister responsible for Seniors: What concrete plans do you have in place to address this crisis?

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

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

Mr. Speaker, in this year's budget we are looking to take the silos down between departments to better provide services for seniors in this province. There is a \$10-million Seniors' Well-Being Plan, of which details will soon be announced, that will address some of the financial needs, the home support needs.

Mr. Speaker, we are putting in centres of excellence funded in this year's budget. We're putting a geriatric medicine fellowship in place at Memorial University, Centres of Excellence in Aging. The Home First program is funded in this year's budget; a Dementia Care Action Plan.

As the details are announced on the Seniors' Well-Being Plan, Mr. Speaker, we will see that there is additional funding for home supports and other financial supports to seniors in this province.

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

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

**H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER:** Speaker, I'm still hoping to hear from the minister responsible for Seniors. The East End Food Banks Coalition has seen a doubling of clients since 2020. Shelves are becoming bare; essential food hampers are becoming smaller. This is all because of the growing demand without meaningful action.

Seniors, alongside so many others – and we've heard 134,000 people are facing food poverty in our province. Many of them are seniors and they're struggling in growing numbers.

So I ask the minister responsible for Seniors to please answer the question and advise seniors of this province, what meaningful steps and actions are you going to be taking?

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

**P. PIKE:** Mr. Speaker, we certainly recognize the important role that seniors play in our communities and what they've done for our communities.

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

**P. PIKE:** There is no doubt about that. I mean, all of us agree that it is seniors who built these communities and who stayed in Newfoundland and Labrador and made it the great place it is today.

To support seniors, Mr. Speaker, we've done a lot. We've done so much and we will continue to do so much.

We have a targeted basic income, now that we have – the enrolment is going on now for seniors between the ages of 60 to 64. This will bring these seniors up, Mr. Speaker, to the same amount they will get after they

turn 65. We have a \$10-million seniors well-being plan.

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

**P. PIKE:** Mr. Speaker, that prioritizes home care, provides support for –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

The hon. the Member for Cape St. Francis.

**J. WALL:** Speaker, our office has been contacted by a former resident of Tent City who was moved to the airport inn. Despite promises of mental health counselling and wraparound supports, she has advised that nothing has been provided. She feels betrayed and lied to.

Speaker, the individual compares the lack of supports to a private, for-profit shelter. Is this the vision that the minister has for the hotel?

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

**F. HUTTON:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to address this Legislature.

I can't speak to a specific case or a specific person who is staying at 106 Airport Road, or if they were previously at the tent encampment. What I can tell you is the money that we have earmarked for that initiative, that Transitional Supportive Living Initiative, is to offer the wraparound supports. We are still in that phased-in approach with our partners, End Homelessness St. John's.

We are, as the Member opposite has pointed out several times in the last few months, spending \$21 million. When I was watching my colleague last week talk about the \$740 million he has to spend this year, next year, the year after and years after, I could not help but wonder what it would be

like to actually go to the Finance Minister and say: could I have that to build 3,000 \$25,000 homes?

That's –

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The minister's time has expired.

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

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

**J. WALL:** Speaker, the resident has confirmed she hasn't received any transitional housing supports as promised. Instead, in her words, her living allowance has been cut, locks were removed from the door, and she has still not received her belongings that the government received from Tent City.

What is the minister trying to do here with moving these people to the airport inn?

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

**F. HUTTON:** Mr. Speaker, what we are attempting to do is offer the supports that folks are not getting when they're living in a tent.

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

**F. HUTTON:** What we're providing is a room with heat and a private bathroom. What we're doing is providing three meals a day. What we're doing is providing secure areas of that hotel with security. And we are going to be providing, through NL Health Services and through CSSD, the proper wraparound supports.

It is still in a phased-in approach. We are in constant contact with our partners End Homelessness St. John's.

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

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

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

Speaker, the director of community health for NL Health Services told CBC News there has been no oversight of rental properties or of landlord, nor has there been a value-for-money assessment of the health authority's Assertive Community Treatment Team programs.

I ask the minister responsible: Why not?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, there are a number of services that have been added in this province to help those with mental health and addictions. It is a complex issue.

As the CBC article states: "As N.L. struggles to house people with complex needs, a homeowner feels caught in the middle." That speaks to the very issue, Mr. Speaker, of the complex issue of housing individuals with complex needs. Sometimes these are mental health and addictions issues, sometimes they are justice issues.

There's been a great number of new services, an increase in services since *Towards Recovery* and the 54 recommendations. Mr. Speaker, the focus has been on adding new services and ensuring that those services are available to people. We need to do more.

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

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

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

Yesterday, I, too, received a letter and spoke to a former resident of Tent City who's now at the Comfort hotel. The person said I don't want to be hidden away here

and forgotten. This is what I was scared of when we were all forced out of Tent City by government – out of sight, out of mind. I want help to find my own apartment and move on; instead, I feel like I'm jail, put in segregation alone, all by myself. At least at Tent City I wasn't alone. At least in jail they have to allow visitors.

I ask the Minister of Housing: Is this what he means by a human rights-based approach to housing?

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

**F. HUTTON:** Mr. Speaker, about a month ago we signed our agreement with End Homelessness St. John's. Within a matter of about five weeks they have managed to hire their key management team, which includes their site director and their four floor coordinators. They've also got two support coordinators and other staff who are on site. That is in addition, obviously, to the security staff who are there and, as well, the hotel staff who provide food services and other amenities to the people who are living there.

It is still in a phased-in approach, as we have mentioned. My colleague from NL Health Services, his department is also hiring and there will be folks on scene, on site in the very near future to provide those wraparound supports that are promised.

That is the key. That is the key to offering these wraparound supports, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

Your time has expired.

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

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

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

The reality for people living there is obviously different from what the minister is speaking to. Speaker, the CBC story of Susan Evoy, a homeowner in my district, should not be a surprise to several government ministers who advised her to report any suspicious activities to the police.

So I ask the Minister of Housing, or CSSD or Health and Community Services: Other than telling homeowners to call the police, what actual supports are put in place to support those with complex needs who may be difficult to house, and keep them housed safely?

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

**T. OSBORNE:** Mr. Speaker, there are numerous services put in place for people with complex needs. Again, sometimes these are mental health and sometimes they are justice. They are not always mental health issues; sometimes they are justice. They are not always justice; sometimes they're mental health. But there are subsidies through the provincial health authority for those with housing needs with mental health and addictions. There are wraparound services. There are FACT and ACTT; there are harm reduction teams; mobile crisis response. There are individualized and group specialized counselling services available and supportive living programs available. So there are a number of supports available.

While I can't speak to that individual case, Mr. Speaker, I can say, in cases such as this, supports are offered. They're not always accepted by the individual and not always necessarily needed because sometimes they are justice issues.

**SPEAKER:** The minister's time is expired.

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of CSSD just stated, we owe a great gratitude to our seniors.

The new hospital in Corner Brook will be open on June 2. There are over 40 patients in the old Western Memorial Regional Hospital who are long-term care patients waiting to be transferred to the new hospital from the Corner Brook and Bay of Islands area. There was a commitment that these long-term patients will be transferred to the new hospital. Families have confirmed this. Family members are now being told that their loved ones will be moved throughout the Western region to a new long-term care facility wherever the next available bed is.

I ask the minister: How can your government justify this very harsh decision? Is this the way that we should treat seniors and the gratitude that we should give them?

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

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

I thank the Member for his question because it is an important question to those individuals and their families.

That direction did not come from government, I will say. We became aware of it as a result of an email from the Member or his constituency assistant. We are looking into the issue to see if there are alternatives for these individuals.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** Mr. Speaker, family members help the loved ones who needed assistance to eat, socialize with them and bring them necessary personal items they require for their lives. Many are seniors who have complex issues who need family stimulation. Many can be hours away from

their loved ones. Many are celebrating the 75 years of Confederation and many of these seniors are the founders of Newfoundland and Labrador.

How can your government justify separating seniors from their loved ones at a time of desperation and move them away from their families and suffer the anxiety and stress of being alone in the hospital?

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

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

As I'd indicated in my first response, government hasn't justified this because this was not a direction of government.

We have asked the provincial health authority to look to see if there are solutions, as opposed to the solution that they have recommended or suggested. We are awaiting an answer from the provincial health authority, and I'll be happy to update the Member as I get answers.

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

**SPEAKER:** The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

**L. EVANS:** Speaker, I rise today on a point of privilege. I rise at my earliest opportunity as I wanted to review *Hansard* for information to understand the importance of what transpired this afternoon, and to take into account the Speaker's own ruling on similar points of privilege this week.

The point of privilege relates to our Members here in the House of Assembly – our Members' ability to scrutinize legislation and present the interests of our

constituents. I believe this ability has been put at risk.

I refer to Marleau and Montpetit: "The purpose of raising matters of 'privilege' in either House of Parliament is to maintain the respect and credibility due to and required of each House in respect of these privileges, to uphold its powers, and to enforce the enjoyment of the privileges of its Members. A genuine question of privilege is therefore a serious matter not to be reckoned with lightly and accordingly ought to be rare, and thus rarely raised in the House of Commons."

Now, Speaker, however, here in this House of Assembly, we've been dealing with a few examples of parliamentary privilege over the last few days related to the Members' ability to prepare to debate legislation. So why do I feel as though privilege has been impacted?

Today, I learned that MHAs can no longer receive advance copies of draft bills. I learned that today when I went to the technical briefing. It is a point of privilege because it erodes the ability of all Members – all Members here in the House of Assembly – to do the work necessary to ensure the good laws for governing the province.

Speaker, I spoke on that earlier when I was addressing two previous points of privilege. I ask that the Speaker refer to Chapter 3, Privileges and Immunities in Bosc and Gagnon, which references: "Any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its Members, either by an outside person or body, or by a Member of the House, is referred to as a 'breach of privilege' and is punishable by the House. There are, however, other affronts against the dignity and authority of Parliament which may not fall within one of the specifically defined privileges. Thus, the House also claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege: tends to obstruct or impede the House in its

performance of its functions; obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of the House in the discharge of their duties; or is an offence against the authority or dignity of the House, such as disobedience of its legitimate commands or libels upon itself, its Members, or its officers. As the authors of *Odgers' Senate Practice* (Australia) states: 'The rationale of the power to punish contempts, whether contempt of court or contempt of the Houses, is that the courts and the two Houses should be able to protect themselves from acts which directly or indirectly impede them in the performance of their functions.' In that sense, all breaches of privilege are contempts of the House, but not all contempts are necessarily breaches of privilege."

Speaker, therefore, not allowing Members to have copies of the legislation in advance is really an obstruction of our duties in the House of Assembly on behalf of our constituents. I ask the Speaker to rule on the prima facie breach of privilege.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

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

I guess I can just provide a little bit of clarity, from my understanding of the situation, just listening to the comments made by the Member of the Third Party.

So I think the bill that the Member is referencing is Bill 64, An Act Respecting Health Research Ethics. I'll just point out a couple things for your perusal, further to your consideration of this point of privilege.

One, the point of privilege was not raised at the earliest convenience, again, that could be done at the beginning of the session of the day, prior to Members' statements, Ministerial Statements and Question Period. So it's not the first opportunity and I've seen

that in the past before, so I would just give that to you now.

The second thing, though, is, I think from what I gather, this bill is actually in first reading, which means the bill has not been tabled yet. So I cannot speak to what different departments do when it comes to giving bills and reviewing bills during briefings, but there is no rule that says that anybody should have that bill and be able to have a hardcopy of that bill prior to the bill being tabled in the House during second reading.

So my submission to you is that this is absolutely not a point of privilege in any kind. Certainly, Members may be upset that they are not allowed to have hard copies, but, again, this is certainly not a point of privilege given the *Standing Orders* and given the precedents and given, in fact, some of the procedures that we followed over the last number of years in this House.

Thank you.

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

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

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

I want just a minute. I knew nothing about the point of privilege, but I do know that I couldn't attend because of this morning's proceedings. My colleague from Bonavista attended and he was quite surprised that he couldn't take any notes and bring anything back.

It's all fine. The Minister of Health can make that decision. As the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology stated, the different departments will have their own prerogative.

But there's one question I need to ask you, Speaker, and everyone in this Legislature and anyone listening: Do we not want good legislation? Do we not want the best

legislation? Because this is what this is coming down to.

We're using legislation as kind of swinging in front, like dangling in front of you to almost make it – we got it and you're not getting it. We got a secret; we're not going to tell you. That, to me, just defies all logic.

I put out a point of privilege this morning. I'm not going to question it. You ruled on it. Do I agree with your ruling? That we can discuss another day, but I'll leave it at that. That point of privilege is very clear.

There's no difference in what the Member for Torngat just pointed out that time. Really, ultimately, underneath all of the rest of the prima facie and whatever else you're going to put there, do you not want the best piece of legislation you can get?

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

**B. PETTEN:** Who wins? Who wins if you don't have that? Who wins? Nobody. I tell you, the people in this province will not win. It would be a political win for the governing Liberals, but who else wins? Nobody.

Oh, we got the Opposition; we got them where we want them. Who's winning in that debate? The public aren't winning. The Liberals are winning but the public aren't winning. If the Liberals are winning and the public – and government think they're winning, the public suffers.

That's what we keep hearing here day in and day out in our districts, across the province; we heard it in Fogo - Cape Freels, we're hearing it in Baie Verte -Green Bay and we're going to keep hearing it as long as this attitude that we-know-better-than-everyone-else position in this Legislature and in this province. Let me tell you, Speaker, people are tired of it. They're tired of it.

Thank you.

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

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

**J. DINN:** Speaker, earliest possible convenience – the technical briefing took place after the morning session and the afternoon session. So to come up with any possible reasonable point of privilege, means you're going to have to go and look at the Bosc and O'Brien. You're going to have to at least have a cursory look at what was said. I would argue that this is, first of all, the earliest possible convenience for the Member who sat in on that meeting.

Secondly, we've had several points of privilege raised here about access to legislation. Here we have, hot on the heels of the debate of the points of privilege this morning, where a Member is not permitted to have those documents. Forgive me, but it feels a little bit punitive. To me, if that's what it's about, then it is indeed an infringement on our privileges and rights in this House of Assembly. It's as simple as that.

We argued here, the various Members, about the need to have access to information to be able to make good, informed debate. It's bad enough that we're getting legislation sometimes a day before and then go into debate, now it's being denied. So there's no opportunity right here, after the technical briefing, to look at what was said in the technical briefing, look at the wording and, if nothing else, to be able to come up with some well-informed amendments, if that's the case.

But, to me, I will go back to what I said before, it's about transparency. I'm tired of being this House to have emails come from the Privacy Commissioner raising concerns, only to hear Members on the other side say, well, he's not really entitled to the legislation as well. This is about having access to that information, to the bill, so that we can have a reasonably well-informed debate.

Point of privilege after point of privilege and this doesn't seem to be sinking in with Members on the other side. The fact is if there's a technical briefing, then instead of just taking it back from the person, here it is, go and talk to your colleagues, talk to your researchers, consult with that – if I understood the minister this morning, consult with the experts you need to make sure that you can have informed debate.

It's about good legislation, pure and simple.

Thank you.

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

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

**G. BYRNE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it's the rules of the House which are relevant here. If there's an argument to be made that the *Standing Orders* and the procedures in the House are what causes the contempt, that's a convoluted argument because, of course, as you point out, and rightfully point out, the House is the master of itself.

The rights, immunities and responsibilities of Members of the House are defined by the rules of the House. If the rules of the House are such that this is what causes the breach, then you can find no prima facie case of breached privilege.

For those who are uncertain of whether or not legislation should or can be introduced prior to introduction to all Members on the floor of the House, I'll remind select readings or select decisions of various speakers. Some of the most notable and most recent being June 8 of 2017.

Speaker Regan said: As I explained that the right of first access has to be balanced with other considerations, the right of the House to first access to legislation is one of our oldest conventions. It does and must,

however, co-exist with the need of government to consult widely with the public and stakeholders but that need is balanced with the prima facie rules of the House, which are always that legislators all collectively and equally, at the same time, receive matters of draft legislation on the floor of the House.

So, that said, Mr. Speaker, for those that might suggest that this is not a convention, this is not a historical practice, this has been the case since Westminster first established these rules.

Thank you very much.

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

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

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

I wasn't expecting this again this afternoon but, anyway, here we go again.

I just want to say in the comment to what the minister just said about all Members are equal so you see it at the same time on the floor of the House. I would say that's not the case because, at the end of the day, I'm pretty sure that Cabinet, by way of example, all saw that legislation before it came to the House. So we're not all equal. We might be equal with the backbenchers, but we're not equal with the Cabinet. I just want to put that out there.

Mr. Speaker, this comes down to here we go again. It comes down to the whole concept, I believe, of having good debate, fulsome debate, with all the information. That's what the last three motions or points of privilege, I should say, have really come down to. That's what they're really all about. I've got to agree with my colleague from Conception Bay South that that's all, I think, anybody on this side of the House is really asking for. I think it's what the people of Newfoundland and Labrador are asking for.

I think the people want and deserve to have all Members of the House of Assembly to be able to debate legislation in this House, intelligently, with all of the information. I've seen situations in this House on both sides – and this is not a Liberal thing. I mean, it happened when there was a PC government too.

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

**P. LANE:** It would be nice, but it's true.

Where you get a briefing the day before, whatever, and we've all seen times here – people have asked me sometimes: How come a bill was on the floor and everybody in the House decided they had to talk to it and you went on and on, everyone was repeating the same thing over and over and over again? A few times I've had to say to people: Well, the reason for that in a number of circumstances is the fact that the legislation was kind of dropped on you at the last minute, sometimes it can be fairly complex; sometimes it's straightforward and the straightforward legislation goes through pretty quickly, but sometimes it can be pretty complex. There could be different definitions or interpretations of definitions and shall and may are two totally different things. So you have to really scrutinize it; sometimes it might even require someone from a legal background to scrutinize it.

A lot of times when you see Members speaking over and over again, it's to run out the clock, basically. We know that we're saying the same thing over and over again, but we're running out the clock so that then gives you another day to be able to do more research on the legislation. That happens lots of times. That happen when the roles were reversed as well, where you debate it and, like I say, run out the clock, just trying to drag it out so you have more time to understand exactly what was in the legislation.

We shouldn't have to do that. That's why having legislative review committees, by

way of example, which came up this morning, is a good idea. It's a good idea so that all Members have ample opportunity to understand what legislation is being brought forward, what are the details around it, a full understanding of who was consulted and an opportunity for Members to be able to consult with their own experts and people, stakeholders and people that they know that would be impacted or might have a position on it, and with their constituents. At the end of the day, we may all agree on that piece of legislation or it may require amendments. There's nothing wrong with amendments.

Now, the problem is that, generally speaking, we never see amendments go through – very, very rarely. Again, we're into this political game of, well, if we agree to an amendment, that means that they taught us something over there that we didn't think of. We can't have that. So we'll vote her through anyway, the way it is. We can't have an amendment. It will make us look bad. But it shouldn't be about that. It should be about the best legislation.

I think that the three points of privilege that have been brought up today, including this unexpected one, really ties in to one point. That point is all about having the best legislation for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I understand that you have to rule on the details around the point of privilege and the parliamentary precedent and all that stuff, I get all that. But at the end of the day, I think the bigger message for all of us here is that we need to, I guess through Privileges and Elections or whatever Committee it is of the House, find ways to do what we're doing here better; to make it more open and transparent; to provide more opportunities for input from the public, from stakeholders, from Members of the House; and for everyone to have all the information well in advance to understand the pros, the cons, all the nuances of the legislation; be able to propose amendments; and have a government to have a willingness to accept

amendments, if they make sense, so that we can actually bring for the best legislation. That's what we really need to do.

Anyway, with that said, I'll take my seat.

Thank you.

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

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

I'm not going to belabour debate on this, but I do feel I need to add – I've sat in this House a long time, I've sat as an Opposition Member, an independent Member, a backbencher, a minister and as Speaker, Mr. Speaker. I haven't yet sat as Clerk, but what the hon. Member just said, I don't disagree with, or what other Members have said I don't necessarily disagree with. But the reality is there are a set of rules that we all follow. We are hon. Members and we must follow the rules of the House.

If you are to maintain order and decorum in the House, it is incumbent upon Members to follow the rules. There is a process in place if we want to change those rules. We are masters of this Legislature after all. But it is not up to an individual Member, whatever side of the House it's on. And I don't know how this piece of legislation got out in the public realm or in the media, and I'm not going to make aspersions to that. But for an individual to take the House on their back and decide they don't agree with the rules, Mr. Speaker, is not how we operate.

We operate under the rules that are in place. If we don't like the rules, we go through a process to try to change those rules. But as the rules sit, Mr. Speaker, that is what is under debate here, not whether or not we should be going to Committee, not whether or not there is ample time. Those rules have been in place where we do not provide legislation outside of this Legislature until it has been tabled in the Legislature.

Providing access is a relatively new tradition – providing access to the legislation to Members of the Opposition, to independent Members, to have an early copy of that legislation. Is it early enough? Well, we can debate that. There are rules around that, we can perhaps even change that. But to provide that to the general public, Mr. Speaker, prior to it being tabled in the Legislature, that is what is under consideration and that is what is under debate.

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

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

I'm not going to suspend the House to review and do a full analysis of this point of privilege. I'm going to take it under advisement right now and report back to the House at a later time, and we'll move on with the regular business of the day.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Notices of Motion.

### Notices of Motion

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Proceedings Against the Crown Act, Bill 81.

**SPEAKER:** Further notices of motion?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Monday, May 27, 2024.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 28, 2024.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move that, notwithstanding Standing Order 9, this House shall not adjourn at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, May 29, but shall continue to sit to conduct Government Business and, if not earlier adjourned, the Speaker shall adjourn the House at midnight.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I give notice that I will on tomorrow move in accordance with Standing Order 11(1) that this House not adjourn at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, May 30, 2024.

**SPEAKER:** Are there any further notices of motions?

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

### Petitions

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

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

This is a petition I've presented many times.

The province's population has aged much more rapidly than any other province in the country over the last 50 years.

The number of persons 65 years of age or more has doubled over the past 30 years.

Many aging couples have been assessed and deemed eligible for placement in a long-term care facility and require different levels of care and are separated into different facilities in order to get the care they require in a timely manner.

Having support and assistance as close to their home and community as possible should be a key objective in developing and providing services to our seniors. As well, individuals want choice in living in a place that maximizes independence.

Couples who have supported each other should not have to face being separated when they enter long-term care. Keeping them together ensures a better quality of life.

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 enact legislation that allows couples to stay together, even as they age, and even at the highest level of care.

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

**P. DINN:** It should not be a surprise to anyone that our population is aging. We know the baby boomers, on the tail end, are 60 and, on the upper end, they're in their late 70s, approaching early 80s. This should not have been a surprise to anyone. I've heard stories and I've dealt with individuals where elderly people, married 70-odd years, are separated in their final months – separated – and can't die with their partner

holding their hand. This is where we are with this.

There is news release after news release after news release making announcement after announcement, and our seniors don't have the time. They, literally, do not have the time. The clock is ticking on them. They deserve better.

To announce this, this and this, but you still need individuals. You talk about aging at home. Individuals cannot age at home because we do not have the staff to do it. They're separated – they're separated. Think about it. Think about your own parents, your grandparents, when they hit their golden age, when they're in their 80s, 90s and they're separated. They're separated because they need different levels of care.

I really implore on this government that we need to enact legislation that allows couples to stay together as they age.

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

**SPEAKER:** The Member's time is expired.

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

Many rural communities in the District of Bonavista with speed limits of 50 kilometres or less do not have driveways off the main road with 150-metre sightlines to meet the requirement for road access. Many of these properties have large amounts of land and new residents are unable to utilize existing or historical driveways or roadways. This regulation of 150-metre sightlines in existing rural communities is restrictive and detrimental to property sales and, thus, a hinderance to new property development.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to adjust its regulations within such rural communities to

allow property development by granting road access to said properties.

The previous minister of TI spent some time in my district and we travelled around to two communities. We travelled to Harcourt and we travelled to Brooklyn. I would venture, in two of those communities, neither existing driveway has the regulation of 150 metres of sightline – not one in existence.

What does this government do? If someone wants to build in one of those communities, they have vacant land, but we know that it's impossible to have 150-metre sightlines. So what happens? They are denied. They are denied building and access to the main route, and that's wrong. We're looking at rural sustainability; we're looking at two communities with neither regulated driveway with sightlines of 150 metres.

What does this government do? Again, it's being restrictive. One of my first addresses in this House stated that if you have a regulation where everyone is pigeonholed as the same, that is your first indicator that you're off track. You are off track in denying them access to the roadway in those special communities.

Let me give one example. Mr. Austin Pelley in Harcourt is the latest one and he has an application in for a driveway. He has a historical easement on his property, which is right around a 90-degree turn and in that 90-degree turn, he's allowed to put a driveway. He wanted to move it 100 metres down the road and denied, but he's okay to put one in the dangerous turnaround.

**SPEAKER:** Order, please!

The Member's time has expired.

**C. PARDY:** Thank you very much, Speaker.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture for a response.

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

I'm not sure if I heard him right when he said previous TI minister or the previous best TI minister, I'm not sure. He might want to clarify that.

But he makes good points because in rural parts of the province, it's not just that community that challenge lies. It's within all of Newfoundland and Labrador. I believe we can find a resolution. But he didn't talk about the safety aspect as well. Because it's not government really making the rules in terms of I'm turning that one down or I'm turning that one. There is input from traffic engineers, and we take that – that's valuable information. If anybody's listening to it, it's leaving the impression that government makes it. No matter who is on government side, it's not just government making those decision.

There's valuable information which we all say, all sides of this House, that safety is utmost and more important. It is in this situation, and it will always remain. I just wanted to point that out, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

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

**L. EVANS:** Thank you, Speaker.

This petition is for timely and adequate access to health care for our Northern Labrador residents.

We, the undersigned, are concerned citizens of Newfoundland and Labrador who urge our leaders to ensure that our Northern Labrador residents are provided access to timely and adequate health care.

Frequently, patients are prevented from getting their medical appointments, treatments at outside provincial health authority hospitals because they can't get

on the medical flight. There are not enough seats on the flight.

Patients often can't get timely appointments to see a nurse at their clinic. This can be a critical delay for stroke, cardiac, cancer and other medical situations. We're asking for a standard to be established for appointments, especially when dealing with fill-in nurses. Makkovik patients do not have access to a doctor compared to other communities where the doctor visits throughout the year.

These are just some of the barriers that Northern Labrador patients face when trying to access timely and adequate health care.

Now, Speaker, when I presented this petition in the past, I always talked about the failure to get our patients out to their doctor appointments, out to their treatments. I even talk about cancer patients not being able to get out because they're bumped off the flight.

But, Speaker, I want to talk about adequate health care. Because now what's happening is we're seeing, over the past year, people in pain, suffering for a lot of time, often to be sent home with Tylenol. Not being able to see the appropriate health care professional or to have the proper diagnosis or have the proper testing until it's too late.

What I mean by too late is what happens a lot of times when people are finally diagnosed with the disease of cancer, it is too late. It is too late to save their lives. Often what we're seeing now is it's too late for them to even be able to return home to die surrounded by their loved ones, to have that comfort.

Just at new years we had a man diagnosed with cancer. It was only days that he was actually gravely ill and passed away. So how much time do you have for closure, Speaker? We've had a person that's loved, not only in their home community but throughout all of the North Coast by

students, teachers and residents who loved and adored her. All fall she suffered in pain. It was only after Easter that she was sent out here. Then, when she was properly diagnosed with cancer and it was terminal, she was put in palliative care. There was no option for treatment.

Speaker, I know we're disenfranchised. I know the people of Northern Labrador are marginalized. I know there is a failure to provide supports but our lives matter.

Thank you.

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

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

The background to this petition is as follows:

WHEREAS the residents from Cape Broyle to St. Shott's are lacking a full-time family doctor; and

WHEREAS Eastern Health is failing to accommodate a physician who is willing to practise full time in the area; and

WHEREAS the Trepassey region is the furthest away from a primary care hospital on the Island portion of the province; and

WHEREAS the Trepassey region has only one ambulance and the Cape Broyle ambulance service has major staffing concerns, the region can be under a red alert for multiple hours at a time;

THEREFORE, we petition the House of Assembly as follows: To immediately address the doctor shortage in our province by accommodating those who wish to practise here and to immediately address the physician shortage in Trepassey and Ferryland by accommodating physicians to practise in the area.

Speaker, I have done this petition over the last – well, this petition here was signed last

year on April 3. I've done it – I'd say I had seven or eight copies and I'm down to one or two about the doctor in the area.

Last year, we had a doctor that was looking to practise in the area and the government didn't see it fit to hire her on and pay her a salary. They wanted to go on a fee-for-service basis. She's more than welcome to go up there, but she's in an area that's two hours away. They said they would try to help the situation and it didn't work.

So now the doctor is out in Holyrood and the people, the residents of Trepassey and surrounding area; even though the doctor moved, they moved with her. So now they have to drive two hours to see the doctor, or an hour and a half from Trepassey to go see the doctor.

Even though we have nurse practitioners – last week, I was being political by bringing up the nurse practitioners. We did have a meeting after and I did speak to somebody in the department. We're going to have a meeting on May 29, but it seems like we're letting it be acceptable that we're not going to have another nurse practitioner there or a doctor back in the area. That's not acceptable. They should be working on putting a doctor back there. Tell us the numbers.

Last week we were arguing they had one nurse practitioner there. Since last June there have been three nurse practitioners in the area. There was one in Ferryland, there was one in Trepassey and another lady worked two days in Ferryland, two days in Trepassey and one day virtual.

When we spoke last week, I thought it was just based on not having to go to the clinic until you get all the details. The lady was there since last June and they decided that there are not enough calls. Well, tell us the numbers if there are not enough calls.

The people are after me saying we're giving up on this, taking a nurse practitioner,

bringing it down to one for each area. What happens if she's not there? What happened last time when there was only one there? There was no one there. They said, well, they could go to Holyrood or go somewhere else. That's not acceptable. They should have someone in the area. There were three people in total. So they really have a person – 1.5 for each area. It's not acceptable that they don't have that.

So someone wants to go on holiday, somebody gets sick, they don't have coverage. Then they've got to leave and drive somewhere else. Everything seemed to be going fine. Now they say there are not enough calls. Totally not acceptable.

We did have an opportunity a year ago to put a doctor back there. We had three nurse practitioners to do the whole area. Now we're down to two and they find that it's acceptable and we're going to take it and it's not acceptable.

**SPEAKER:** The hon. Member's time has expired.

Orders of the Day.

### **Orders of the Day**

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Health and Community Services, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Medical Services Act, 2011 and the Psychologists Act, 2005, Bill 80, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that the Deputy Government House Leader should have leave to introduce Bill 80 and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

The motion is carried.

Motion. The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Medical Services Act, 2011 and the Psychologists Act, 2005," carried. (Bill 80)

**CLERK (Hawley George):** A bill, An Act to Amend the Medical Services Act, 2011 and the Psychologists Act, 2005. (Bill 80)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

**AN HON. MEMBER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 80 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Order 14, second reading of Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act.

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture, that Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act, be now read a second time.

**SPEAKER:** It is moved and seconded that Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act, be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act." (Bill 76)

**SPEAKER:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture is very important. Speaker.

Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity today to rise to speak about amendments we are proposing to the *Crop Insurance Act*. The purpose of the act is to establish the Newfoundland and Labrador Crop Insurance Agency. It mandates the agency to provide insurance plans for crops. Insurance is funded through a federal-provincial program called the AgrilInsurance Program.

Through the AgrilInsurance Program, eligible crop producers who suffer a crop loss through uncontrollable natural events, such as weather— which we're not exempt from in this province as we've seen before — plant disease, insect infestation or wildlife damage can receive financial compensation.

Speaker, there's no question that the program is valuable to Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are working hard to produce healthy fresh food for the people of the province and beyond. From a numbers perspective, approximately 115 vegetable farmers in Newfoundland and Labrador that could avail of this crop insurance is availing of it or can avail of it — or could, let me add. In fact, in recent years there was well over 1,000 acres of fresh market vegetables grown in the province with about 10 million

pounds harvested at nearly \$7 million annually.

Speaker, the amendments are designed to support these farmers by expanding the availability of insurance for crops. Currently, farmers are able to insure beets, cabbage, carrots, parsnips, potatoes and turnip. I call it the Jiggs' dinner combination. However, as the type of crops and the way they are grown have changed, the types of crops that can be insured should and will also evolve.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Crop Insurance Agency reports that it has received multiple requests, including from the Fruit and Vegetable Growers Newfoundland and Labrador, to insure fresh market vegetables such as but not limited to: lettuce, kale, spinach, leek, green onions, melons, pumpkins, squash, peas, beans, corn and more. While this is a smaller piece of business, Speaker, than some of the amendments to legislation that are often brought forward to the House of Assembly, it will make a significant difference to those stakeholders involved in fruit and vegetable growing. That is important.

With these amendments in place, the legislation will be more enabling and more streamlined. Most importantly, the Newfoundland and Labrador Crop Insurance Agency will be able to establish an insurance plan for a particular crop without the need for regulations.

Speaker, at this time, I also would like to make note and give thanks to the departmental staff. We can't do that enough. In addition to the improvements of the availability of insurance, I'd like to thank the departmental individuals working in the agricultural divisions of the department who are very hard at work with stakeholders, agencies and particularly with the federal Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

Partnership is very important, Speaker. Together, the two levels of government are efficiently administering the new Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership agreement, often called the Sustainable CAP. The agreement is a five-year joint funding initiative that provides more than \$42 million to strengthen the competitiveness, the innovation and resiliency of our agriculture, agrifood and agri-based products sector. The department also provides funding through the Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program.

The proposed amendments, Speaker, build on the broader commitment the Department of FFA has made under the provincial government's Agriculture Sector Work Plan. Through the plan, we continue to work to increase the promotion of business risk management programs to provincial producers by introducing new crop insurance plans, which provide better financial protection for farmers.

We provide, Speaker, assistance to producers every day and with these changes in place we anticipate being better able to get the funding and the support to the people who are contributing significantly to food self-sufficiency, which is what we hear every day, especially in the last couple of days in the news, and ultimately to the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador.

By making these amendments to the act, we will enable the Newfoundland and Labrador Crop Insurance Agency to offer new insurance plans so as to increase the participation in and increase the sustainability of the AgrilInsurance Program.

Ultimately, once these amendments are in place, we anticipate being able to respond more quickly to industry request for new insurance products, build on our commitments to increase the promotion of business and risk management programs to provincial producers and potentially increase the number of participants in the crop insurance program.

The amendments also incorporate gender-neutral language throughout the act, which is very important, and removes the requirements for a use of a seal for documents executed by the Newfoundland and Labrador Crop Insurance Agency.

In closing, Speaker, I would like to thank all hon. Members and the Speaker today for being invested in and contributing to the debate as we discuss the increased supports for enhancing the AgrilInsurance Program overall and the improvements we are collectively making to the agriculture sector in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I look forward to the process of Committee stage and hopefully questions that are asked that I could answer; if not, I'll find the answers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

It's an honour, actually, to get up and speak about this bill, the Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act. It's a great bill, no doubt about it, and to be upfront with the minister, I certainly agree with the bill. I really do. But I guess it's time now to address the importance of the crops in our province and what we need to do.

So to see this bill come through, right now, as the minister stated, root crops basically is the main insured crops, but I know we've been trying other crops on the Island. So it's good to see that farmers have the availability now to receive insurance on all the crops that they grow basically in the province and will help them along the way.

We all know that farmers certainly have challenges, great challenges, especially when it comes to climate change and dry climates and the changes that we're seeing on a day-to-day basis. They go through

droughts, they go through a lot of rain sometimes that is probably not good for the crops. Then they go through droughts that's there and ends up to be dust products. So it's great that farmers can have those opportunities to have insurance on those crops and to claim back some of the cost that can be incurred with a yield that's probably not there sometimes in the summers or in the growing seasons. So it's the kind of thing that certainly needs to be done for our crops.

It's good to see that we're expanding into different crops, but the minister did allude to the things that they are doing for the crops in our province with regard to food on our table. Food self-sufficiency is always a challenge in our province and to increase the food self-sufficiency, we need to have more land. We need to have more farmland for farmers to be able to grow those crops and we need to be able to alleviate some more land for more crops for more farms so that we can grow more crops – more food self-sufficiency in our province.

We need to get to that stage as soon as we can because we know that, right now, farmers do have challenges, even to acquire the land to grow those crops. Once they get growing, the cost of developing that land, getting that land cleared for farming, they get discouraged and they up and leave because the cost and time and the red tape sometimes through going through Crown Lands and getting the agriculture land to do so. So we need to certainly be able to free up some of those challenges.

Increase food self-sufficiency: I know that within some of the agricultural land that's how they made the decision. We've got our food self-sufficiency up to about 20 per cent, but the yields from those new agricultural lands would be interesting to know how much yield is coming from those agricultural lands; how much we are really getting from those expanded lands, especially on new crop, what's being kept and grown from the new crops that are going to be insured now;

what are we already up to with regard to the root crops that we've had before. So those are some of the things, Speaker, that we like to see done for the food products.

"The Newfoundland and Labrador Crop Insurance Agency is a Crown Corporation of the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. In March 2013, officials from both the Provincial and Federal governments signed the Growing Forward 2 Framework Agreement. A subsection of this Agreement states the parameters of and allow for the cost-sharing of the Agri-Insurance program. The Agency provides an affordable and effective Agri-Insurance program for vegetable producers and operates within the Crop Insurance Act.

"Agri-Insurance is designed as a management tool to provide producers with financial protection for crop loss due to uncontrollable natural perils. The producer's investment is protected against the effects of drought, excessive moisture, wind, frost, hail, snow, wildlife, disease and insects."

So there's good coverage there for the products that need to be, so the insurance will be changed into other products. It's certainly something that we need and certainly I would agree with the changes in the legislation to allow that to happen.

So with that, Speaker, I will have a few questions in Committee.

Thank you.

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

**J. BROWN:** Thank you, Speaker.

I won't take up much time there. This is a good thing, we're exploring new crops, we're protecting farmers who are doing that work. I just want to go back and mention some of the interesting things – I have to mention the test farm or the study farm in Happy Valley-Goose Bay who has been

growing all kinds of different things and exploring different ways to grow in the north. Everyone thinks, living in living in Labrador, farming isn't a thing. Well, it's been a long-standing tradition in Happy Valley-Goose Bay.

When I happened to live there in the early 2000s, I was blessed to be able to go and get fresh eggs and fresh vegetables. I can't do that now in Lab West. It's a little different, other than my little potato garden. But other than that, we don't have a tradition of that growing in Lab West. But it's a long-standing tradition in Happy Valley-Goose Bay. Knowing that the Filipino community and stuff that are living over there, they've been growing all kinds of different things as well, practising and learning and seeing how we can adapt different crops to that region.

It's good that we're going to start moving forward and make sure that those crops are protected and make sure that those farmers who put a lot of time, effort, energy and money, and put their finances on the line, when they do sow a crop, that they will be protected to a degree. It's nice that we are moving past the Jiggs' dinner growing and actually moving forward and exploring different options and different things that we can actually grow in our interesting climate.

So, once again, this is fantastic to see that we're going to protect those individuals and protect the yields and make sure that those who put the finances of their farm on the line, when they sow their crops, that they have some kind of thing to make sure that if something does happen – because we know our weather. We understand it's changing rapidly; it's not the same as it was 10 or 15 years ago. There is risk and a lot of risk now from that.

I won't take much more time and I do have a few questions for Committee.

Thank you.

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

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

I will be supporting Bill 76 as well. I think it's a good piece of legislation. It is basically just expanding upon something we already have for farmers. But just recognizing the fact that there are different kinds of crops than what traditionally have been grown in Newfoundland and Labrador are being grown here now and providing insurance for it. I hope that we get to a point where we have to expand it even further for other products. That would be a good thing.

I'm just going to take this opportunity now that we're talking about farming and so on. I just want to agree with my colleague from Exploits there about the fact that we need to be expanding farming and freeing up more land. Hopefully, the other legislation that I understand is coming forward on Crown lands, I'm hoping that that's going to be an opportunity to make it a little easier for farmers who want to expand their farms or for new people who want to get into farming, that they would have an easier time and less red tape and so on in trying to obtain land so that they can do farming. So I agree with my colleague on that one for sure.

Another quick point I just wanted to throw out there is in terms of farming – and I don't think we do it because I think now when it comes to – I stand to be corrected – with our health care centres and so on, I think it's all part of this contract now with the Compass Group. But I've often said, and people have said to me, they could never understand, you would think why wouldn't government, for example, when you have prisons, you hospitals, and you have long-term care, boys' and girls' home out in Whitbourne, and places like that throughout the province, you would think that the government would be the number one customer for local farmers.

So all the vegetables, everything going in that, the government would be buying it all. So that would be an opportunity for farmers to be guaranteed, to some degree, a certain amount of sales and stuff, and that people would be eating healthy, local vegetables. You'd be helping the farmers and, at the same time, you're providing food to residents in long-term care, whatever the case might be, instead of getting stuff through Sobeys or whatever, or through using some third party contractors providing food.

I just throw that out there because that's something that has come to my attention. A lot of people have asked me that and I don't really know what the answer is, why we don't do it, but it's certainly something I can see why people would ask. It would make sense to do something like that.

The other thing I just want to throw out there, just on the general topic, I guess, of farms and so on, is the whole idea of a social enterprise. I've raised this in the past before as well. I've raised the issue about food banks and the fact that food banks are struggling. As time goes on, they're getting more and more people looking for food. They're having to lessen the size of the hampers. They're not getting the same donations they once got. Why is that we can't be, from a social enterprise point of view, helping out the food banks more than we do?

We have the Sharing the Harvest, by way of example, a great initiative that Barry Fordham and his group put in place where hunters go out and they hunt moose and whatever, and they provide moose and caribou, I suppose, to food banks. I'm not sure if they do rabbits and stuff like that, but they certainly could. That would be a good idea, too.

But why do we not have more social enterprise? Why couldn't the Department of Agriculture be working with CSSD, as an example, and have a social enterprise,

where you're putting people to work, you're growing vegetables, those people are getting employed, and then you're supplying the food to the food bank so the food bank got healthy food to give to people that require it? That's an idea, for example.

I know, for example, in Whitbourne, the boys' home that's in Whitbourne, or whatever it's called – I'm calling it the boys' home, but that might not be the proper term on it. It used to be four buildings. I think they're only down to one building being used now, with a handful of offenders. It's not like it used to. But at one point in time, that place was full and they had a farm. I suppose they still got the farm up behind. That farmland, I assuming, is owned by the provincial government.

I don't think they have any programs there growing food anymore because there's not enough young offenders there to even do it. So I doubt the programs even exist now. But why couldn't that farmland, why can't we have a social enterprise, like I say, through CSSD, and put some people to work, teach them some skills and grow some vegetables and take those vegetables and give it to the food bank, to the Food Sharing Association? I don't think it's a bad idea.

I would go further to say we should be doing the same thing with a quota of cod. We should be going after the federal government to say that we want a social enterprise quota of codfish that we can give to the food banks. It's our fish in our waters, why shouldn't people be able to avail of it?

So I appreciate the latitude, Mr. Speaker. I understand –

**SPEAKER:** You are not getting a lot.

**P. LANE:** I'm really straying; I get that. I'll come back to it.

But I did want to just put it there because I thought it was an opportunity to speak about

the whole concept of social enterprise, of the fact that we have a lot of people that are really struggling, availing of food banks, food banks are finding it hard to survive and this could be an opportunity for more social enterprise through farming to supply that food and now this insurance to bring it back would apply to that social enterprise as well.

Thank you.

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

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

**E. JOYCE:** I'm only going to speak on this bill for a second. Also, I'll be supporting the bill. It's a great move. The little bit of farming that I know about, it's a tough business. You've got to love the farming to continue it in Newfoundland and Labrador. I know the minister is working hard with the farmers because, I hear, when they chat, they're trying to get things done and to expand itself.

Just for the record, back four or five years ago, there was, I think 127 – I'm not sure the amount of acreage that was given for farming, that was put out for tender for farming about four or five years back. There was a number. A lot of it could be used. A lot of it couldn't be used because of Crown lands because it's not suitable for farming. So I know there were steps taken to put out land for farming to try to increase the farm products. This bill itself is great to recognize the crops and great for the insurance itself.

Just for the record, on a personal note, I'm no farmer but my wife – we have about 300 feet of vegetables; we have about 20 beds. We have carrots in the wintertime, we have garlic all year, onions all year: all the ones that we can grow. So I know the little bit of work we do, I know the hard work for the farmers that are going to it. God bless the farmers; they're making a living. I always say if we could buy local, it would be great for Newfoundland and Labrador.

The work that goes into a farmer is tremendous; it's a full-time job. You don't take holidays if you're a farmer in Newfoundland and Labrador. Especially through the six or seven or eight months when you're farming, you don't take holidays. You do it because it's a passion, and the passion helps out Newfoundland and Labrador in their food insecurity.

So I just want to say to the minister, do what you can. I know you're working hard and all the officials are working hard with the farms around Newfoundland and Labrador. I agree with my colleague for Mount Pearl - Southlands; if there are any extra Crown lands that we could open up, they will find a way to put crop and product on the land, if he can.

So I will be supporting the bill. I think it's a good idea to have that in place for the farmers.

**SPEAKER:** Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture speaks now, it will close debate.

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

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Members across the way for their comments.

It's hard to respond to it all. I've always said that agriculture is not talked about enough, but as minister responsible, I'm going to try to change that. I make it very clear that I'm very, very supportive of the farming and agriculture industry and whatever I can do to support them.

The Member for Exploits talked about challenges. There are challenges, because you're dealing with Mother Nature in terms of trying to grow food. We are doing great things. In terms of farmland itself – and I might be getting ahead of myself, but I visited a young farmer down on the Burin Peninsula. He wants more land.

It's not just as easy to say, Mr. Speaker, to give him, give him, give him the land. Absolutely, if there are no barriers – because there has to be a business plan, obviously. If there's not, there are no hurdles or any walls put up from me, the department or this government because nothing would be better than supporting a young farmer, no different than a young harvester. To see what this young man is doing down on the Burin Peninsula, he needs help. I'm there to help him, but we'll certainly work with him and all areas of this province.

We do have separate programs for land in the province. But to keep in mind that we have to protect some of the land because we want it for agriculture, so we can't be just giving out land. I know the Member for Mount Pearl said about the Crown lands piece. Well, let me tell you: Crown lands or not, if there's a business proposal that makes sense, as far as I'm concerned, when it comes to that young farmer and the industry, to me, it's tiered as most important. I let the department know that as well. That's a conversation that's changing in terms of the importance of it, because you're growing vegetables, you're employing people. It's a wraparound return in terms of what we're investing in.

I believe it's like \$4 per hectare is what I wrote down there from staff. We want to keep it affordable for the farmers. We assess them in clearing of land, as well, to prep it for all the things in terms of growing.

Mr. Speaker, over 20 per cent self sufficient, we are, as a department, as a government, in terms of food self-sufficiency, which is a good number. Also, the agriculture sector – and I was out in the Goulds area back sometime ago to announce funding to support the milk industry. I'm proud to say that we are fully self-sufficient in production of fluid milk, chicken and eggs. That opportunity for those farmers – I told them and I'm looking forward to the day to see what the results of that investment will be,

because it is a good investment. Plus, it leaves more control, I guess if you want to use that word, for the producing of milk in Mount Pearl, in Newfoundland and Labrador, to supply Newfoundland and Labrador and keeping it local, which is important.

The Member for Mount Pearl also talked about expanding what we already have in terms of the legislation. Yes, we are, and yes, I agree with you. Hopefully we'll be coming back for more and the results will be very positive.

The food banks; we worked with – when I was in this role before – Barry Fordham and now it's Sharing the Harvest. When I was in the department, I gave him the approval, in terms of the moose meat being supplied to food banks, but we have to ensure, as well, that what meat is supplied to them has to be safe, if that's the right word, Mr. Speaker. I only spoke with them at the showcase that was in Gander a few weeks ago and talking about other things, such as salmon or whatever the case may be to supply food banks.

I said my door is open to any suggestions that will supply food banks, but make sure that what we supply is safe in how it's done. The social enterprise piece, we would accept it right now. It's a good idea and not lost on me. The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands talked about the business as being tough. It is a tough business, but it's province wide and there are a lot of people that are working hard at it. I'm looking forward to seeing it growing, pardon the pun. I think what's important is that support for the young farmers. I'm certainly there for them.

Mr. Speaker, before I conclude, I think it's worth noting in terms of the support for farmers from the departmental perspective, we offer funding programs for farmers, producers and new industry entrants. From the Provincial Agrifoods Assistance Program, which is valued at \$2.25 million,

the Canadian Agriculture Partnership, which is referred to as CAP, there was an investment of \$700 million for 700-plus projects over five years. Also, the Sustainable Canadian Agriculture Partnership, SCAP, allocates \$42.6 million in the next five years.

Again, support for farmers and it's important. Within all of that, we provide affordable and viable farmland, farm equipment leasing program, limestone subsidies, vegetable transplants, certified seed potatoes, agriculture, business development and farm planning advice. Mr. Speaker, let me not forget the community gardens, as well, which is very important. It is from a wellness perspective.

The community garden, I believe, can be classified as not just growing vegetables, it's supports for the well-being of individuals. In my district, into Rencontre East, they take their money and they've invested in a greenhouse where families can come in and their name will be on plots that they can plant whichever they want. So it's a community-based support system and it's going over very well.

I don't know about anybody else, but I remember as a young boy pulling up the potatoes and seeing all those potatoes was excitement. That's good for the soul, we'll say. I have a father-in-law who's always been – he's into the greenhouse, all kinds of vegetables, tomatoes, rhubarb, everything, and it gets him outdoors. It keeps his mind well and active as well. So that's important.

Also, as we're talking about now, insurance, we have crop livestock insurance, we have crop livestock production advice, business risk management programs, soil, plant feed, testing and associated recommendations, nutrient manure management and composting advice and farm veterinary services and food safety pest management training.

There's more, Mr. Speaker, but I think it's important to highlight not just the numbers but what lies under those numbers and what we're doing for farmers. We'll continue to support farmers; I've assured them of that and we'll continue to do that.

I'll end there and leave it open for questions in Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**SPEAKER:** Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 76 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Motion carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act. (Bill 76)

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House, presently, by leave. (Bill 76)

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act.

**SPEAKER:** And a seconder please.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Seconded by the Minister of FFA.

**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 76.

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 76, An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act." (Bill 76)

**CLERK:** Clause 1.

**CHAIR:** Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Exploits.

**P. FORSEY:** Thank you, Chair.

I just have a couple of questions in Committee on that clause. How much does the insurance cost per acre right now?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** Insurance costs per acre?

I do have numbers here, but I'm just trying to sort through them to get to what he's asking about.

I'll have to defer that question. I'll get the information for the Member.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

Also, would the insurance increase by adding on those extra products and produce?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** The answer to that is no. The hope and the intent obviously is for more participants, so therefore stabilizing, even decreasing, the insurance premiums.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

Right now, mostly root crops are covered under the insurance. What other products, produce would be covered? Do you want to give us a list or can you provide us with a list of what would be covered?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fishery, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** Sorry, I have to ask him to repeat that because there was a little bit of noise in the background here.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

We know that root crops are already covered with regard to the insurance. There are some other products. Can we get a list or do you know most of the list of what will be covered along with this new insurance?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** I think I said that in my notes. So you're asking what is current and what would be additional based on what I'm introducing here?

The ask from the fruit and vegetable growers to insure fresh market vegetables such as, but not limited to, lettuce, kale, spinach, leek, green onion, melons, pumpkins, squash, peas, beans, corn and more. So it's an open door there.

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

**P. FORSEY:** Okay.

Does this insurance include hydroponics?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** I'm going to defer that one. I'll take that under advisement but I will get the answer for you shortly.

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

**P. FORSEY:** We asked in Estimates and I'll ask it again, government has increased some land for agriculture; for food self-sufficiency, you said that we're up to about 20 per cent.

What percentage of yields are you getting from those new agricultural lands? Do you have a number?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** Yeah, Chair, I don't have that in front of me, but I will get it, as people are reporting to me.

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

**P. FORSEY:** I appreciate that, if we can get a number on that, Minister.

One more question, I guess. Now you did mention chicken, milk, eggs and, of course, we all know that we've been self-sufficient in those products long before me and you have been here in this House of Assembly.

To increase food self-sufficiency and farmland, what are you doing for current farmers to try to acquire new farmland?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** In terms of what we're doing, it's \$4 a hectare, which is a good deal for farmers. I guess other than evaluating a farmer's business plan, the best thing that we can do is certainly heighten the assessment process in terms of their business plan because not every business plan works. Obviously, we have to protect land in the province for the purpose of agriculture land.

But I think the best way to sum that up is that the working relationship door is open for farmers. If it makes sense, then we will not prolong, we will not put barriers in front of them. But sometimes barriers are perceived as barriers but they're not. They're just realistic restrictions or protections or whatever of the land.

I visited many farmers in this province and they've said to me that the department is a good department to work with, and that's good to hear. We'll continue to do that, to open up doors for more farmland in the province.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

For the criteria for the crop insurance product, is any of the criteria going to change for introducing into this, or is there a new set of criteria, or is it going to be similar to what the products that are already offered now for farmers to get into this?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** The intent of this is to make it easier and to streamline it. Again, it goes back to the business model and if we can to, say, reduce red tape in terms of moving a farmer's business case forward.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

With this, obviously, we are expanding on what we're going to insure. What are the criteria to have a crop added to the list to be able to be insured? Is it like so many hectares of it have to be farmed or there has to be a market for it? What is going to be the rule of thumb now for adding a crop for insurance?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Chair.

I don't have that in front of me. I do have a bunch of numbers here but, to be fair to you and the answer that you required, I'll certainly get back to you on that in terms of what that number would be, what would be the expectancy terms of the criteria.

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

**J. BROWN:** Thank you.

I know it has been quite a number of years since any changes – I think about 30 years

or something since any other changes were made. What was the motivation? Was it a group of farmers come to you who are having different crops? What was the rationale for after 30 years to put this in and not done sooner, I guess, is the best way to say it?

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** I think there are a couple of things in terms of clean up of some of the language that's in the act, which is always important. A lot of legislation has been around for a long, long time. But I can answer that in terms of, we heard from the industry. That's what they asked for. We listened and we're responding to what they're asking for, and they're happy and we're happy.

**CHAIR:** Any further questions?

See no further questions, shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

**CLERK:** Clauses 2 through 10 inclusive.

**CHAIR:** Shall clauses 2 through 10 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 10 carried.

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

**CHAIR:** Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

**CLERK:** A bill, An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act. (Bill 76)

**CHAIR:** Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

On motion, title carried.

**CHAIR:** Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

**CHAIR:** The hon. the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture.

**E. LOVELESS:** Thank you, Chair.

The Member for Exploits asked about hydroponics. No, it's for outdoor crops only, at this point. We had that discussion: Will it

get to hydroponics? It's an ongoing discussion.

For the Member for Labrador West in terms of the criteria, that criteria is publicly available right now, but I'll get you the additional information that you asked for.

Thank you.

**CHAIR:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 76 carried without amendment.

**CHAIR:** The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act, carried without amendment.

Shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

**SOME HON. MEMBERS:** Aye.

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

Carried.

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

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

The hon. Member for Placentia - St. Mary's and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

**S. GAMBIN-WALSH:** Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 76, An Act to Amend the Crop Insurance Act, carried without amendment.

**SPEAKER:** The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have

considered the matters to them referred and directed that Bill 76 be carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Now.

**SPEAKER:** Now.

When shall the bill be read a third time?

**L. DEMPSTER:** Tomorrow.

**SPEAKER:** Tomorrow.

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

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

**L. DEMPSTER:** Thank you, 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.

This House do stand adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

On motion, the House at its rising adjourned until tomorrow, Thursday, at 1:30 p.m.