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Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

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The House met at 10 a.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

SPEAKER: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 2. I understand there's consent of the House to proceed with Motion 2.

SPEAKER: Is consent given to proceed with the private Member's resolution?

AN HON. MEMBER: Yes.

SPEAKER: Okay.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

SPEAKER: I call upon the Member for Exploits to present his motion.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Before I start, I would like to say congratulations to one of our Pages here at the House of Assembly, Cody Dalton on his convocation from Memorial University Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: He convoked with a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science. Congratulations to him.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Bonavista:

WHEREAS Crown Lands application of the provisions of the *Lands Act* abolishing squatters' rights against the Crown has, in some cases, resulted in challenges to the claims of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who honestly, and in good faith, have occupied and developed their lands; and

WHEREAS some historical titles in Newfoundland and Labrador trace back centuries and are relied upon the public, but are not accepted by the Crown; and

WHEREAS people have occupied their lands for generations based on informal title without a grant from the Crown; and

WHEREAS some people have strong local community support for their claims of title but do not have their clear title from Crown Lands; and

WHEREAS some municipalities maintain records of land ownership that are not considered by the Crown determining their titles; and

WHEREAS some applicants for Crown lands access are frustrated by wait times for their applications to be resolved even for land which has long been occupied; and

WHEREAS the policies and practices of the province's Crown Lands division are impeding economic development in Newfoundland and Labrador and imposing high costs upon the public; and

WHEREAS this issue impacts potentially thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House urge the government to move expeditiously to bring forward legislative amendments to ensure fair reconciliation of existing claims for people seeking title to the land they have occupied in good faith for generations and which is recognized within their communities; and to take steps in the

interim to address Crown Lands actions against occupied properties in the province.

Speaker, this is an issue that has been ongoing. We've heard it time and time again from the residents of the province how there are a lot of problems plaguing Crown lands. We've known in the past few years, of course, adverse possession, squatters' rights, section 36 of the Crown's *Lands Act* is causing a lot of grief and anxiety to people in our province.

First of all, acquiring land is becoming a problem. If we're going to increase food security in our province, farmers need to access land and acquiring that land is very, very challenging. It becomes a cost to the farmers, it becomes a cost to the person trying to develop it, trying to get access just to acquire it, and by the time all those applications and red tape is done, that farmer or that person is gone, finished with it, had enough. We're not even going to start. We are out of here. So they need to be accessing the red tape on Crown lands and access to Crown lands in order to increase our food security.

Another big problem we've been hearing, of course, is seniors. Seniors today are trying to sell their properties, trying to move into smaller units, the seniors' homes, it might be health care facilities that they want to get closer to. There may be a number of reasons that they want to get closer to. They just want to sell their home and sell their lands to be able to invest into moving into another property, smaller property, that they can use, but they find themselves in court challenges.

They find themselves wrapped up in not knowing that they own the land, even though they've got deeds, they're paying community taxes to municipalities, they've kept that land up for years and when they go to sell, they end up with a challenge from Crown Lands, which today is unacceptable.

One case that's been very familiar to all of us is the Diamonds of Catalina. They became the poster child of Crown Lands, through no fault of their own, only trying to sell their land, trying to get access to their land so that they could move on to whatever venture they wanted to do at the end of the day. That's all they wanted to do. But the challenges that they faced were enormous, regards to lawyer fees, costs and anxiety and grief that came with it, just to try to sell their land.

There was a review done at Crown Lands back in 2015; almost 10 years later, there's still no legislation brought into the House of Assembly to address challenges within Crown Lands. That was reviewed back in 2015.

I can remember back last fall, we did a PMR, we'll start off there, we did a PMR last spring to bring in some legislation for Crown lands. The government opposed it and shot it down – not for legislation. In the fall, the minister said that we would see the legislation, but we asked two questions the fall, all he said was stay tuned.

How long do the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador have to stay tuned to get the *Crown Lands Act* changed?

Only this spring, the minister was asked in the House of Assembly, he was asked by myself, I asked a question about it, the Leader of our Party asked a question about it. The minister doubled down and said we would see legislation this spring. We're at the end of the session, there's no legislation.

They went as far as to say we'll give you a briefing on legislation for Crown lands. Last minute, the 11th hour, they pulled back the legislation, nothing coming to the floor of the House of Assembly to be discussed.

Ten years later, the minister says he needs more time. How much time do the people of the province need? How long can they wait?

The review was done in 2015. There was nothing adopted from that review, and now we're gone 10 years later and the minister still needs more time to get his legislation done. He's had lots of time, Speaker.

So that brings us to today. We're here to try to get some legislation brought into the House of Assembly to recognize the challenges, the problems within the Crown *Lands Act*, especially section 36, adverse possession, to alleviate some of the pain and anguish that's on the residents today trying to sell their properties, trying to sell their homes and move into other properties that they can access, just to sell their homes and be able to move on and maybe they just want to pass their homes off to their children to say that they've done that.

So those are the things that we are expecting. We'd like to see some legislation to be brought into the House of Assembly next session, I guess. This one is over, it's done. So, hopefully, if the minister needs more time, he's got to bring in some legislation. But having said that, we're more than willing to stay for this session. We're willing to stay here until we get some action on Crown lands and to get this done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. FORSEY: I mean to say, people have waited long enough, we've waited long enough. We've asked the government time and time and time again, but there's no legislation being brought forward. So if the minister had that few days, a bit of time to get his legislation together, bring it in and we'll discuss it. We'll stay as long as it takes to get some legislation done, some legislation approved to have the legislation approved here in the House of Assembly so that people can move on with their lives, the way they want to and to be more comfortable in knowing that they have the title to their land and be able to do whatever they want to with it at the end of the day and just move on to do other things.

So with that, Speaker, I'll leave that to others now to have their say on the Crown Lands Act and the PMR that we're debating.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. ABBOTT: Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this debate this morning on a very, very, very important issue to, I think, all of us and specifically to many, many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who are caught up in the Crown lands maze and trying to get title.

I do want to compliment the Member for Exploits for the resolution. It is clear. It is precise and I dare say, probably, one of the best-written resolutions that we have seen here in this House in this session.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. ABBOTT: So whoever the crafter is I give them full credit.

The important thing and the other thing is there's no poison pill buried in it either. So thank you to the Member for Exploits.

So in that context and in that respect, it's easy for me to get up here and talk to the resolution. As the Member said, this issue has really been talked about really for many, many years. The previous administration tried to tackle it. We are tackling it with the support of the Opposition.

I know that the Minister for Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture and his department are working on amendments to the legislation. I don't think we'll have it here this session but something is a priority of this department and certainly for the government. So we will be moving forward on that.

The Member talked about the public consultations done back in 2015, and a lot of those issues are still with us and is certainly incumbent upon this House and the government, in particular, to get this right. There's a lot of development to help up because of this, a lot of households are struggling in terms of transferring title of property from one generation to the next and it is time we, obviously, sort that out.

In the recent consultations back in last year – in January 2023 – I'm just going to flag for the House some of the things that were identified at that time in which the legislation will have to address when it comes forward. Interestingly enough, I would have thought there would be more submissions because of the nature of this issue, but in the consultations of last January, we received – I'm going to use the word only – 124 submissions through engageNL and we received 22 written submissions; 11 individuals representing six organizations, also with an interest in land transactions, attended the virtual session. Again, small numbers though the issue is pervasive.

While the proposed amendments, with the exception of the introduction of a limitation period, may have been seen as positive impacts on adverse possession issues and claims, the amendments, as been discussed at that time, were not seen as going far enough. I know the department is working through that issue.

There's lengthy processing time and the resolution speaks to the operational side of Crown Lands and how that needs to be improved, it needs to be done on a more timely basis and that's something I can certainly support.

I think, as I said earlier, the fact we have a lack of confidence in land title by many households or by many businesses is causing stress: economic stress, financial stress and anxiety within households and within businesses. We want to make sure that we again get this right so that on the

go-forward basis, we avoid that type of situation.

Of course, if you go back in time – and this speaks to the settlement patterns, of course, in the provinces, as a colony – when land and settling land was by original, at least, I'd say original from European perspective when we arrived on our shores, were dissuaded for settlement and that unfortunately is carried through for long periods of time. So we don't have a land registry and title system as other jurisdictions have. In my view, it's unfortunate but that's the reality we're in so we have to figure out how we can best sort that out in terms of land title.

I know in my family, we have had lots of reasons to go do adverse possession and look at how we can expedite that, but you have to be tenacious, you have to know what you're doing and you have to have good legal advice. You need to have good surveying in place and certainly you need the courts and others to be able to co-operate with you.

The time it takes to do a title search and to claim title on land, as the Member for Bonavista and others have said, folks have been living on this land for generations, and when I say that in Newfoundland context, you're maybe talking hundreds of years. The fact that the title was never done in a Crown grant in the first instance, maybe or maybe lost, but certainly not codified, really causes challenges. I know down the Southern Shore where I live, wherever the fence went, wherever the cows went, wherever the sheep went, were a determining factor on possession.

We know that our older generation is not there to identify that anymore, for individuals. Again, my family was involved in a case recently and we were able to identify a couple of elderly individuals who had good memories and they were recognized and trusted for that memory. But, in the absence of that, that transaction would not have

proceeded. So we have to get past that and we have to make sure we bring our system up to modern standards, i.e., 2024 standards. Again, the department is working on those issues.

So what rights are conveyed under a Crown lands title holder? When we get into the legalese, it becomes very, very specific and that's where obviously those involved in land transactions – quote, unquote – make their money. What does a Crown lands title convey? It conveys only the surface rights. All minerals, limestone, granite, slate, marble, gypsum, clay, sand, gravel, et cetera, are excluded from the title and are reserved for the Crown. That won't change.

So that's something that a lot of folks who are not involved in land transactions would not really appreciate, but it allows the Crown to still have an interest in the subsurface rights for mineral extraction and the like. Obviously, there are arrangements made with the surface landholder to access those resources.

For those who are paying attention from outside the House, Crown Lands are administered by the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture under the Crown Lands Division and the whole purpose of that in the Crown interest is to support social and economic development in the province. So that's sort of the larger public interest. But as an individual landowner or a title holder, we're more interested in our piece of land, what do we own. The fact that I have a bill of purchase and sale from my grandfather or an uncle or a neighbour in itself does not convey ownership.

Again, I've experienced that, where the land had been transferred through purchase of sale, but it meant nothing. Then when the estates are being settled, it's pandemonium within that family because nothing is sorted out and you have to really go back to the original records if you can find them. If not, then you're back into adverse possession and determining that. So it's a very, very

complicated system and something that we need to rectify.

So I want to, again, compliment the Member for Exploits for his work. He's been tenacious on this file. I know the minister responsible for Crown Lands, whoever he or she has been, has said they are going to address this, and I am confident that the current minister will address it. So stay tuned, if not this session, the next.

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

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, I want to acknowledge the Broadcast group who look after the audio for this House because they do a great job. I noticed that I sometimes elevate my voice in this House, but when the broadcast comes out, it speaks like I'm talking normally. So I really want to commend the Broadcast team.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I don't know what it is, but I have a tendency to elevate the decibels in my voice. And Crown Lands will do that to me for sure as well.

I thank the minister who spoke before me for his frank comments. He had made comments like, he fully realizes that people have a total lack of confidence in titles. They do – they do. He does want to make it better and realizes that there is a need to do it. Because whether it be residential or businesses, they are anxious about it, concerned about it. One thing he didn't mention was that the financial cost that's associated with not having the Crown Lands Act amendments done now. And there is a financial cost to the people. I'll get into that

in a short time with an example from my district.

I represent the District of Bonavista, one of the earliest settled districts in the province. In fact, we were in the 1600s with settlements on our peninsula – and earlier – but at least the 1600s. Our settlement predates the central government in St. John's. It predates when they issued the Crown grants in 1824, I would believe. So we've been on that land a long time. If you look at the Crown Lands atlas in Bonavista, you'll find that it's all Crown land.

Most of those settlements that have been there for hundreds of years are Crown land. Government lays title to it. I had the opportunity to speak to a gentleman who was an engineer, a surveyor privately, and he was an educator. He referred to government's operations as bureaucratic theft.

Now, that was his words. Because when this House sat in 1977, we said that in a 20-year period before, we didn't want to take land from people – we don't now – and we didn't want to charge people for the land that they had occupied for hundreds of years or decades. What we do now is charge them.

The MHA for Exploits mentioned the Diamonds in Catalina. The Diamonds in Catalina paid for their land. They paid for their land, following the system at that time with a lawyer, registered in the Registry of Deeds the title and they thought they owned the land until they sold it, only to find out that Crown Lands opposed it. But the bottom line is that we pushed them to court, where they had legal fees, and secondly, Crown Lands issued an invoice for \$16,000 for land that they already paid for. In conversation with the minister, I was thankful because he reduced it down to a little over \$10,000 to this senior couple who already paid for their land in Catalina.

It brings me to the point now that we have the Cullimores. We have Alex and Mary Cullimore in Bonavista. They just celebrated their 55th wedding anniversary.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: They bought land in 1967, built a house on it in 1968 and they've been living there and still live there today. Only to find out that they don't own their property because it is on Crown land and they have been there for decades – Crown land. Nobody opposing in Bonavista their right to that title – nobody – only Crown Lands.

I've written the minister this past weekend, and the minister may stand up and wish to talk about it. I wrote him and I had asked him: Can we have some kind of exception for the Cullimores so they don't have to go through the legal pursuit and they're not going to be charged in excess of \$10,000 for land that they've occupied for that period of time?

This is the difference between the legislation or the legislative body in 1977. There were names in that body, Minister Rousseau, and other names you may recall like Joseph R. Smallwood, Frank Moores, Tom Rideout, but the House was unanimous that we wanted to make it easier for people to obtain their title, those who lived on it for decades upon decades.

The Legislature is different now. Those people like the Cullimores, or those people like the Diamonds, or those people like the Abbots in Bloomfield, two of those three had to pay exorbitant amount of monies through the legal course and also to government. This is where the educator had stated, he referred to it at bureaucratic theft, when you ask people, or people that were on the land for decades upon decades, their families had it in some cases for hundreds of years, they often find that they've got to pay for their land.

The minister who spoke before me said they are on it. Stay tuned. The Member for Exploits said three sittings ago we asked for Crown lands to be brought to this House – three sittings ago. We all expected it this sitting. This was the sitting that we expected it and I think we believed, only to find out earlier, three sessions ago, that it's not coming.

So if you think what is the problem with the wait? Well, the Cullimores are going to get dinged by Crown Lands again in Bonavista, like many in the District of Bonavista with Crown Lands, because we haven't brought the amendments to the floor of the House.

This government came in power in 2015. At that time, there was a report that studied it. They entered in 2015 with a report that gave them direction on how to change Crown Lands, the *Lands Act*. Here we are in 2024, knowing that the Diamonds had to pay a lot of money and are still trying to get over the financial hit. The Cullimores have it coming, the Abbotts lost \$40,000 when they sold their property in Bloomfield because of the *Lands Act* and it hasn't come to the floor of the House.

So I would say I'm no longer hopeful. I was the one who was hopeful that this time we were going to see it, have meaningful input and how quickly legislation could come, the *Limitations Act* which came up in petitions this sitting. We've had legislation brought in of which we all got together and we put it out. We did it quickly. For three sittings in this House, we still don't have it. The same archaic rules apply. The minister was lucky that he can access some people to give affidavits. Rural Newfoundland in Bonavista is a challenge. You go to rural Newfoundland and try to find two affidavits in a rural part that can provide a reference point that you occupied that land and it's trouble.

In dying seconds, the educator that I spoke with, the engineer, he had said we have got the worst land registry system in the world.

Remember he's an educator. He referenced that Africa was much better – his words. I would say to you, that is another one. People got a fallacy or misconception, they got a deed in the registry and it's good. It's not good. We need action on the Crown Lands and the registry.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Lake Melville.

P. TRIMPER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's great to stand on my feet again and represent the people of Lake Melville. It's interesting that we're talking about Crown Lands this morning because I'd like to say that some days I kind of think if there was an H in Crown Lands, we could have the triple-H factor. In terms of my office, and I would suspect the offices of all of my colleagues, particularly in the more rural parts of this province, I've got health care, highways and if I could say H-Crown Lands with my H, then I would have a triple H.

AN HON. MEMBER: His Majesty (inaudible).

P. TRIMPER: His Majesty is responsible for Crown Lands. Good idea.

Anyway, with that said, yes, it is cumbersome. Yes, it is complex. Yes, we all look forward to seeing some revisions and some updates to the *Lands Act*.

With that said, when I listen to my comrade, and I've got to say he's a buddy from across the way from Bonavista, there's not very often that I hear something that he says that I'd like to challenge, but there's one point I just heard him say. He used the concept of bureaucratic theft. I think that is intonations on the bureaucracy because I would suggest the regulations, the policy, that's what we need to talk about.

The people working in there, I want to give a shout-out to them and I particularly want to recognize Lynn Durno who sits in our office in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Paul Baldwin who is the minister's EA, Dana Williams, Dan English and other people like that who have done their best to guide us through what we all agree is a very cumbersome set of guidelines, directions and so on.

By the way, the reason why this PMR is here, and I have to thank the Member for Exploits for bringing it forward, because it's timely, we need to make this front and centre, we need to get on with the action of it, but it is complicated. I think myself, and I'm sure each and one of us, could probably sit around a circle and vent about the individual circumstances that we're trying to fit in the pigeonholes of these regulations. I could, as again my colleague from Bonavista just said, he's listing off different family names that have struggled and so on, I get it and I can add many names, too, to that list.

However, you think of the different circumstances that have arisen over the years. The best advice that we can give anyone is get clear title of that land, consult a lawyer and get your house in order and let's just find out where you sit vis-à-vis that property. What often happens, of course, is you're coming before a transaction, you're trying to sell or buy a piece of land and as the clock is ticking and you're counting down, all of a sudden, you're faced with a situation where, according to the Crown, you don't own the land. Now you go down this chase of trying to find, as the Members have just said, two affidavits or other clear title or you proceed down a legal chase of trying to quiet the title, something I have some familiarity with and frankly had to walk away from one time, just because we couldn't clear the title. You couldn't quiet it down.

Some of the other areas that really challenge us, of course, are in areas like grants verses leases and some of the

situations that I'm finding in Lake Melville, particularly around the communities, of course, where somebody has been there for some time and then as they go to sell, they realize the might own the home, but they don't own the land underneath it. Of course, then the situation is now they've got to seek an opportunity to rectify that and usually the typical way that we're proceeding with right now is Crown Lands will go in and get an appraisal done. I've had to represent clients, constituents frankly, who are faced now with having to purchase land that maybe worth more than the house that they're trying to sell.

So it's a very tough option to consider that they may have to spend more than they would eventually receive if the transaction is successful. These are not predicaments that anyone wants or welcomes and absolutely we need to address them.

The length of time, of course, is another challenge and, as I said, when the clock is ticking, it is a great challenge for some of these bureaucrats and others that are in Crown Lands to get through that. The pressure is on them. They feel it. I feel we need to, hopefully, as soon as possible, and I look forward to with all the colleagues in the House here, welcoming these new changes to the *Lands Act*.

It's interesting that we refer to Crown land as in the property of His Majesty. When I think about this concept and being in Labrador as I am and look at the resolution of claims by the Indigenous groups in Labrador and elsewhere across the country, it's a concept that challenges me sometimes temporally in terms of thinking who actually was there first. This idea that the monarch way over in England is somehow land owned by His Majesty when I'm in a region such as I am in Lake Melville and throughout Labrador where I see argument and evidence much to the contrary. So I think about that a lot as we're representing different people that are going through some of the challenges.

I want to speak about another little particular situation and circumstance that we're finding in Lake Melville. That lies around churches and often churches were provided land – and it could be for the manse and/or for the church. And they're trying to now relocate, downsize, sell at market price and so on. Having this same challenge with declining congregations, limited budgets, now being faced with, again, having to put out a substantial outlay to secure the land before they can sell the land. These are, again, tangly situations and I can feel the angst of so many constituents and all of us when you look at the individual peculiar aspects of trying to find a way forward.

Frankly, it's blocked a lot of opportunity, a lot of economic opportunity. I'm thinking just in my own community where I live in Happy Valley-Goose Bay there are key pieces of property within our community that if we were to unsnarl them, legally, we could proceed with so much other development.

So there certainly is a lot of incentive. I do say that and believe that the bureaucrats are there trying to do their best. But it does take time because you have to go back through the history, the peculiarities of each individual case and make sure that you're getting the right decision. Because if you're not, now you can just imagine the legal implications and court actions that could follow. Selling property to somebody, they develop on it, only to be shown later that they actually didn't own it in the first place. This is why you have to move carefully. This is why we have to move and ensure that the decisions are the right ones and they're the accurate ones.

Just for the sake of the viewers out there, it was back in, I guess, 1977 or '76 when squatters' rights were essentially extinguished in this province. What that means is that you needed to have clear title according to the Crown land in the form of a grant or a lease. As we've alluded, to prove that you were there continuously, you require two witnesses who've lived in the

community over that period of time, usually that 20 years we're talking about or whatever is under discussion, and they have to be at least 77 years of age, thinking about it from this time frame.

So it's often very challenging to find these types of witnesses who have lived there consistently, who also were there over the period of that time, and say that yes, I lived there that whole entire time. So-and-so did live there and no one else was there during that whole period of time. It's a challenge and I get it, and this is why sometimes we have to get and seek other interventions.

I believe what the Member for Exploits is going to find is that there's great support. What I would ask, and I think some of my colleagues on this side have already mentioned, I think we're going to continue to say it's coming. I'm certainly doing my best to lobby the minister and his department to proceed and bring it to the House, and I can tell you we'll look forward to active debate and bringing all of our own collective experiences forward. It would be great to push the Crown Lands files into a more objectively driven and fair system for all residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

With that, Speaker, I'll thank you very much.

Thanks.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I, too, obviously have lots of people in my district and lots of people across the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador who contact my office about the challenges they're having with Crown lands. To be perfectly honest, I thought I would be here this morning in this House of Assembly on this Wednesday morning actually debating

legislative changes to Crown Lands instead of talking about another PMR.

That was a commitment that was made earlier on in the session that that draft legislation would be introduced in this session. We heard back from the minister later that he needed more time, and all of us on this side of the House understood that, accepted that and stood and said we're prepared to stay here in the House of Assembly and get this done, whatever amount of time it was.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We saw yesterday how that type of initiative or incentive could work with the *Limitations Act* and how quickly we were able to come together and make significant changes to what I would argue is also a very complicated piece of legislation, but it got done because the will to do it was there.

That is part of the problem here – and I do want to go back and refer to my hon. colleague for Lake Melville and some of his comments. Firstly, the comment about my colleague for Bonavista and bureaucratic theft. That was not his comment; that was a quote that he was referring to from someone else. So let's be clear about that.

The second thing I wanted to talk about is the Member for Lake Melville made a comment about the fact that perhaps people should get ahead of the problem by going out and getting their house in order before they decide to sell it. I know he doesn't mean anything by it, but that almost implies that people are to blame for their own problem.

That brings me back, again, to the bureaucratic thing about bureaucracy. I agree with the Member for Lake Melville. The people that work in our government system are working hard and trying to get the job done. Their frustration, just as it is our frustration, is the legislation that they have to deal with.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: They don't get the opportunity to change the legislation. That has to happen right here in the House of Assembly. And in the last nine years, we've had four different ministers talk about Crown lands, talk about the challenges of Crown lands, talk about the need to reform Crown lands legislation, yet we're still here again today, unfortunately, with no legislation in front of us.

So I totally agree with the Member for Lake Melville, that it is not the problem with the people that are working in our public service. It is a problem with getting the legislation brought to the House of Assembly so it can be debated, so changes can be made, so people will not be impacted. That's where the problem is.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: And again, I'll go back to the Minister of Transportation. He talked about previous governments, and he's right. This issue around Crown lands has been around for a long, long time. For many people, they don't know they have a problem until they go to sell their land. And because there are no changes in the legislation, then that problem gets compounded and the costs rise.

Because if you lived on your land for 50 years and you've paid your taxes on the land and you've got a deed to the land, why would you think that you don't own the land? That is the problem. So all of these people that we talk about, my colleagues reference here, these are individuals who have lived there.

Recently in the Baie Verte - Green Bay District, I met a couple of different people, a family who had built a house on her father's potato field 53 years ago. Her husband went in the woods, cut the lumber, built the house, and they've been living there ever since, paying taxes on that piece of land,

only to find out now that they're being told they don't have title to the land.

So that's the challenges we face. So, again, I think that what we ought to be doing is talking about, not how we delay this, but how we fix this. I think we've missed a real opportunity here in this session of the House of Assembly to actually get this done. Now we have to postpone it again, punt it down the road, and what will that mean? That will mean that these problems that we have identified, the problems are still there and will continue to be there until the actual legislation is introduced into the House of Assembly.

So that's the issue. The issue is not about individuals. The issue is about the legislation has to be brought to the House of Assembly and changed. Then, and only then, can we, anybody that's working in the system can turn around and actually get their job and make their job easier. You know, there was a report that came out not that long ago that said the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador leads the country in red tape. Well, let me tell you, those of us on this side of the House, we want to lead the country in red-tape reduction.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: And what better place to start than Crown Lands. Because all of us, all 40 of us, have heard those stories about the Crown Land issues. That's why this was so important and we've missed a real opportunity to do that.

But, again, I go back and say, we can't continue to keep punting it down the road. There's an old saying: If you don't start, you'll never finish. We haven't started yet; we haven't introduced legislation. There's been nine years of the Liberal government. Previous governments before, four different ministers, and I'm standing here today still talking about Crown Lands legislation.

That's a problem. That is the problem. We have not been able to move this forward.

Again, we have to find a way, collectively, to get this legislation to the floor of the House of Assembly so we can make those adjustments. There have been lots of suggestions about amendments and changes being made to the legislation. Those have all been there. Those are in the minister's hands. There are lots of things that have been put, but we can't seem to find a way to bring it here.

One of my colleagues mentioned a 2015 report. That report was never acted upon. Why? Why? Why are we standing here again today talking about Crown Lands legislation instead of talking about the actual amendments and changes that we're going to debate on Crown Land legislation?

When we talk about all these individuals and name them, it's not about individuals. When we talk about health care and we talk about everything else and we talk about individuals, the individuals – and the minister can stand up and said they can't talk about individual issues and they're right. There is that confidentiality that exists, we understand that. But when we talk about individuals, we're talking about individuals who represent a lot more individuals. We're talking about problems that exist in our system right now.

So whether it's in health care, whether it's in the cost of living, whether it's in our education system or whether it's in Crown Lands, which is what we're debating here this morning, we're talking about individuals. We're talking about people all over the province who have been impacted and are continuing to be impacted by the lack of legislative change right here. That's what we're talking about. They represent many, many more people all over Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is important to get it right, but it's also important to get it done and that's

unfortunately what has not happened. We have not been able to get this legislation brought to the House of Assembly. Four ministers, nine years, that's an issue – that's an issue. So we have to find a way.

Unfortunately, again, as I've said, the minister stood up, we took him on his word that it would be introduced in this session of the House. The minister turned around and said unfortunately he needed more time. We agreed. We said let's keep the House open to get it done and we are prepared to stay here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We're continuing to stay here, and if they want to start to introduce this legislation tomorrow, today, we'll be here to help.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Trimper): Thank you.

I now call on the Member for Corner Brook.

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

I will open up the debate, my comments and contributions to the debate, with four words: open, notorious, exclusive and consecutive. In common law, these are the principles, these are the four words, the four tests that apply to all squatters' rights, all adverse possession against the Crown.

These date back to Westminster edict. They're applied in the Canadian context by leading cases from Prince Edward Island in the early days of Confederation, and they are important because any solution to the Crown lands issue have to take into consideration these four words of open, notorious, exclusive and consecutive.

What do the four words mean? It means that in order for someone to dispossess the Crown – let me actually begin a little bit earlier. All land in Newfoundland and Labrador is presumed to be owned by the public, unless it has been conveyed by the public, by government, to an individual and the public lands become private, or the public has been dispossessed of the ownership of the land through occupation, through possession.

So what we're talking about here are instances where the public have been dispossessed of public lands in favour of private lands. In order to meet the test of dispossession, those four words remain essential: open, notorious, exclusive and consecutive.

What they mean is that: open, it means that occupation, possession must be visible to the eye. There has to be physical circumstance, which indicates someone has dispossessed the Crown through an occupation. There needs to be clearing of land, there needs to be fenceposts, there needs to be agricultural plots created, there needs to be houses built, something to that effect, that the occupation, the dispossession has to be open and openly visible to the eye.

It needs to be notorious, which simply means that the community at large, everyone needs to understand and accept that the public has been dispossessed of the land. There has to be an awareness that someone is now the true owner instead of the public.

It has to be exclusive. It must be to the extent that it does not engage anyone else's co-sharing of the property. It has to be exclusive to a single owner. That is important because, for example, a common pasture or a trail or something along those lines, automatically creates a lack of exclusivity. So no one else other than the public can own those lands.

Finally, it must be consecutive and this is, I think, one of the most important things. It says in common law that any break in ownership in any period of time within a prescribed period automatically deletes, voids, dispossession of the public.

So, for example, just to draw a perspective of this, if someone were to suggest that my family owned land in a particular area for generations and generations and generations, but within a period of time, my family did leave and go somewhere else to work or did not occupy the land, that period of time that we felt we owned the land but we didn't actually occupy it, we left it – if that period of time in the break of the consecutive was during the statutory period, the prescribed period, that would automatically void dispossession.

These four words are important because any prescription that's offered by any government, the current government, a future government, will abide by those four prescriptive words. It is common law.

So where are we in today's context? This issue was decided in 1976. The Frank Moores government, at the time, created an amendment to the *Crown Lands Act* and it prescribed that the dispossession period, the statutory period in which the open, notorious and exclusive consecutive occupation of Crown land, of public land, must occur shifted from a 60-year period to a 20-year period of 1957-1977.

That was what the Frank Moores government decided of the day, and they did so very intentionally because their intent was to void all future squatters' rights after a period of time, all adverse possession. The act was proclaimed on January 1, 1977, came into effect and so what the philosophy was of this Legislature which enacted this bill, the *Crown Lands Act*, was that you had to prove with evidence that you occupied the land openly, notoriously, consecutively and exclusively from 1957-77.

Therefore, an affiant – someone who would provide an affidavit – would have to be 40 years old in 1977 to be able to be able to speak affirmatively, with knowledge, about who occupied land from '57-'77. So you would have to have reasonable, personal knowledge of the entire land tenure from '57-'77. So that means you would have to have been, say, 20 years old in 1957. In the proclamation of the act, in '77, you would have been 40 years old.

Now, that was 50 years ago. Today, that pool of affiants that could speak to this act, speak to the requirements of evidence, would be 90 years old. It was a deliberate intention of the Legislature in 1977 when they passed this act that when the pool of affiants was no longer available because, in our senior years, we do pass, and there would be no available affiants. That was the intention of the Frank Moores government when they passed the *Crown Lands Act* in '77 was that Crown lands adverse possession would stop because the availability of affiants would no longer exist, and that was the intention of this Legislature.

So it's very fitting that we had a very historic moment last night with the amendment to the statute of *Limitations Act* because that's really what we're talking about now is changing the limitation. Any legislature that contemplates changing the squatters' rights, the adverse possession, the dispossession of the public from a piece of land, it has to take into consideration what will be the criteria on which that dispossession will be proven in evidence and can be made available. Is it someone, for example, who occupies a piece of land – a gravel-pit camper, just to use an extreme example; should they be able to claim now squatters' rights? I think we would probably argue, no. I think that would be fair.

The argument saying – it's interesting it came up in the Legislature this morning – that someone who occupied land for the last 50 years, and it's their primary home,

should be able now to declare squatters' rights and get title to the land. Well, 50 years ago was 1977, not '57-'77. By law right now, by design, they should not be able to claim adverse possession.

So the question is, what are the reasonable rules that should be amended to fix this problem? There's not a legislature, not a government that will ever sit that will ever be able to provide a solution which meets everybody's satisfaction – never. Because someone will come forward and say, listen, I have had my camper on that gravel pit land for the last 20 years, how come you're not giving me title to it? Is it reasonable that they should be expected to have title to it? What are the rules that would be put in place?

So, Mr. Speaker, I would say to you that we have to amend the statutory period in which the adverse possession is considered examinable and be able to be presented in evidence. We have to amend that. We also have to recognize that Crown lands jurisprudence have considerably changed since 1977. I take the Collingwood case, for example, where the Chief Justice actually just said, in appeal, that the context of the use of the land is important in identifying whether or not it's a legitimate squatters' right application.

We've had significant change in jurisprudence since 1977 that have to be reflected in the act. We've got a body of evidence that says the Newfoundland and Labrador association of surveyors should be more involved. We're got changes to squatters' rights to the quieting of titles that should be included. Mr. Speaker, this side will take any suggestions from any side (inaudible).

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The minister's time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: I now call on the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

First of all, I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Exploits for bringing this forward again. It is a year ago to this month that we had another motion similar to this on Crown lands and here we are, a year later, talking about Crown lands and the need for actual changes.

The Member for Corner Brook had some points there, that things do need to change and how do we change it and how do we do it in the fairest possible way. But it is true that there will always be a hiccup; there will always be someone that doesn't fit the right criteria. But we can never get as close as we possibly can to making amendments that we can actually fix a lot of these situations that arise.

Once again, like I said, a year ago today – I'll say again – it is a bit different in my area. The town was only put there in 1959. It was an engineered town and it was built completely on corporate-owned land and that was eventually devolved once the town became an actual recognized municipality.

So it is a little bit different, but there are some similarities. Instead of fighting with the province over who owns land, we're fighting with the mining company on who owns land, so it is a little slightly different. But when you start getting out of there – like my family originally lived in Central Newfoundland. You know, I hear lots of claims like that about land and stuff like that. It took my grandfather years to straighten out the family land in Centreville-Wareham-Trinity.

Recently I had my uncle – my aunt's husband – and his father passed away and they were trying to straighten out some land down in Wesleyville. Same thing, they lived on the land for generations there. They were fishermen. They lived there for generations and trying to find people and

stuff that could say they've been there for generations; this is their land. Just trying to straighten it out for the family.

So I think, without delving back into what everyone else has said, we need to find a path forward. I know that it was on the Order Paper to have the *Lands Act* amendment come through. We didn't see it. The minister asked for more time. It has been years in the making. It is a problem that has been faced by different sittings of this House for, I'd say, a decade now.

This is not a new issue. I think even if you look at it back the last time the *Land Claims Act* came in under the Moores government, they said they know this group of people will eventually be gone and there will be no more affidavits to be able to be made. But even then, you can see that there was a fallacy. There was a possibility that this could possibly have an adverse effect.

You can go back, lawyers and surveyors have said in the past that there has to be something come in, eventually, to actually settle this. So, you know, we have to make amendments; we have to do this, because we have seniors who don't even know if they own their land or they're fighting in court to take possession of land that they've lived on for years.

The last thing you want, now, is someone who has lived there for so long realizing they have to go through this whole struggle in a time in their life when there's supposed to be less struggle. They're supposed to be enjoying their time. They're supposed to be, you know, finished work, retired, enjoying it. Now, they're just in court paying fortunes in legal fees and other service fees and fees just to say that they own this piece of land and have peace of mind. Especially, people who are going to pass down this land or pass on their homes to other members of their family that might need it because that's the things that they're thinking about at that stage of life. Instead, they're in court paying

\$10,000 or \$40,000 just to clear up some of these issues that have come up.

I had a conversation with an individual who is telling me that her mother lived in this community their entire life and day in, day out, apparently, she's doing affidavits for people. She is 80 years old and doing these affidavits for people just trying to clear up a lot of these issues in the community so that people can actually have title to their property, to make sure that there is no issue.

We can find a way forward; we can work together. Once again, we have proven that we can work together to get this through. So I am disappointed that it didn't come through in this sitting. We're cluing up here now. I'm disappointed it didn't come through in this sitting, but I hope that day one in November when we sit again that we'll have this here in front of us so that we can actually get through it and actually help a lot of these people because that's what we should be doing.

We should be finding the best way possible to fix these things and to try to minimize adverse effects on as many people as possible. The Member for Corner Brook did say, there are always going to be one or two people that's there, and that's fair, but we got to get as close as we physically can to avoid that, as physically possible, that we can get that through to make sure that we're protecting as many people as we want and especially that this is a direct effect on mostly seniors in our communities.

These are people that have lived in these properties for generations, raised their family there and, in some cases, they have been there their entire lives in some of these houses. I don't want to beat it up anymore than I have to in the sense that I support this, I support the idea of this, I support that we have to get this fixed. I wish we could have done it sooner. If there is anyway to sit longer, fantastic, we can get this done. If not, first thing in the next sitting.

This needs to be something that has to be dealt with as expeditiously as possible.

With that, I do support this PMR. I'll always support this PMR.

Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I now recognize the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue.

J. DWYER: Thank you, Speaker.

It's always an honour to rise in this House and speak on behalf of the people of Placentia West - Bellevue. Crown Lands, of course, is the PMR that we're bringing today. Just for the people who are watching, I don't want people to think that this is a debate. We're not debating legislation because it wasn't brought to the floor of the House of Assembly. What we're doing is bringing a private Member's resolution to the floor of the House of Assembly in hopes that the government will listen and bring this legislation to the floor of the House of Assembly, because it kind of goes without saying. We've asked for three sittings now to get this legislation. We're told that they need more time. We've offered as much time as needed to get this done, but, unfortunately, it's still not on the floor of the House of Assembly.

We did a PMR a couple of weeks ago on drugs and addiction. The government brought in amendments that actually kind of flipped the whole PMR upside down and ended up making us vote against our own PMR. So I hope that's not the intention, because we are trying to bargain in good faith and we're trying to do that on behalf of the people of, not only Placentia West - Bellevue, but the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador because once people make an investment in a personal property and then they end up with no

value, after a lifetime of investment. Then on top of that, adding insult to injury, the government is taking them to court to prove their case, that they're more right than the people who are occupying the land. It just makes no sense.

Like I said, after three sittings, we've asked for this legislation to come forward. We see how important it is and how convoluted it is right now. To hear the MHA for Corner Brook speak, who was a former Crown Lands minister, for him to stand here and talk about open, notorious, exclusive and consecutive. To me, it's just about opening up the bureaucracy of the whole situation because you can take any small minute detail of any one of those points and if it's not proven, then you have a way out of saying that it's no longer your land, it's our land, it comes back to the Crown and we sell it at fair market value, but fair market value is certainly not what they walked into. When they walked into that piece of land, the value has increased because of their occupation of the land.

So where is the value then of their lifetime of investment into this piece of land that they feel that they own? Not only that, if they have a larger track of land, maybe they offered their daughter or their son or their grandson or granddaughter a piece of that land so they could build on that piece of land to help them get a head start in life. Now, all of a sudden, it's bogged down in bureaucracy again.

So, again, the MHA for Corner Brook was actually the minister of Crown Lands at one time, and they've been there since 2015. When this department was looking for solutions, their solution was to put \$25 million towards Crown Lands and move it out to Corner Brook. Did it improve anything? No. The only thing it improved was the amount of bureaucracy that the people had to go through to get the title to their land cleared and that's as simple as that.

To have somebody sit here and tell the House about how it all works and all that kind of stuff is fine and dandy, but maybe if that's the case, if they're that well versed in how the bureaucracy of how Crown Lands works, maybe they could have come up with some solutions while they had the opportunity to own that office.

Like I said, it's hard to believe that the government's been in place since 2015 and the only thing that they decided to do to fix the economy was line items through their budget, which obviously didn't work.

So like I said, to also hear the Member across the way talk about bureaucratic theft when that was a quote from my friend and colleague, the Member for Bonavista, as opposed to words that he spoke himself. He was quoting somebody else that was an expert in the field that brought that to his attention of how things were being done. So it wasn't the Members own words, it was a quote that he was using from an industry expert to say that this is how it is and this is how we see it.

There are many different reasons for the *Lands Act* to be brought to the House of Assembly. We talked about churches. I'm currently going through that with some of the churches in my district because, to me, the church doesn't own the building itself and it don't own the land because it's part of the community that was bequeathed to them to establish their church. Now that they're not going to be congregating or giving of those services, then I think that land should automatically go back to the community so that they can utilize then, not only the building, but the land and everything for their own use, for their own community centre or warming station to help them in a time of strife.

I had one in Goobies, for instance, that there was a family that gave up the land itself so that the church could be built on it. They actually went out and cut the logs to build the church itself. They've paid the light

bills on it, they paid the insurance and they paid the upkeep on it. Yet, now, the church is coming in and saying that it's their piece of property, which to me is nothing further from the truth.

It belonged to the community, it belonged to the congregation, it belonged to the people of the community that put in their toil and effort and raised funds to keep it going. I always compare it to the fact of somebody owning a nightclub and having a band come in and play to entertain their audience and their guests. But, at the end of the day, when the bar decides to close or they don't feel like they want to stay in business any longer with that investment, then the bands don't turn around and come back then and say we played in your venue, therefore we have title and ownership to your building. So that's not how it works.

It can't work both ways is what I'm trying to say. Because then we also have the family split that I talked about, but we also have the agricultural lease. If it's not carried on as an agricultural lease, then it goes back to the Crown and is sold at fair market value. But again, this is somebody that's probably been on – I've got a case down in Mooring Cove. This gentleman has been on that land for almost 50 years. Like I said, he's been developing the land, he's been raising sheep and all his animals and all that kind of stuff, but there was a whole convoluted story in how he would have access to that land or be able to pass it on to his own children.

Another thing with this, Crown Lands can't have it both ways because there are a lot of things that government are passing through people's properties, personal properties with water lines and sewer lines and stuff like that, where the property owner hasn't been charging the government on a lease for utilizing their land for the last 50 years either.

When we see some of the things like cabin areas, somebody that I've been arguing for,

for the last five years – and hopefully it's just getting straightened out now – has been occupying that land for 70 years. He actually opened up and gave ideas to the government of how we can make these lots into sellable lots in this cabin area. Yet, everybody else got their lease, but this gentleman doesn't have his lease. And he actually helped government sell the land in around the Garnish Pond, so it just makes no sense.

The bureaucracy is the reason why we want this legislation to come to the floor of the House of Assembly. We don't want the bureaucracy to increase. We want it to decrease. We want some of these arbitrary reasonings, like openness, notorious, exclusive and consecutive, to all – it just seems to be a little bit too much because the thing is that, as our populations age, these letters of support are obviously harder to garner.

With that being said, that should not be the way that it is. We know that all communities have been keeping a ledger of who is occupying land, where, when and for how long and all that kind of stuff. Yet, it's not acknowledged by the Crown Lands Act or the Division of Crown Lands. I think if we were able to work together on the *Limitations Act*, then we can certainly work with the communities that have been keeping this record for hundreds of years in order to make sure that Crown Lands becomes less bureaucratic and more for the people to understand title of their land.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Thank you, Speaker.

I am pleased to speak on this private Members' resolution and a couple of introductory comments about the actual PMR that was introduced by the Member for Exploits. He has been the champion of proposing amendments to this legislation on behalf of the Official Opposition. This is the second PMR that he has introduced, on behalf of the Official Opposition, trying to get government to deal with this serious problem that is facing and impacts potentially thousands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Speaker, we know that the fact that the Member for Corner Brook – I have to make a point about this. We heard from him just a few moments ago talking about the legislation in terms of the legal aspects, in terms of the adverse possession and what adverse possession means and other things, in terms of property law. While I appreciate the lecture on these points, I think the point that's being missed here is the importance of having this legislation brought before the House so that we can correct the deficiencies that exist with this legislation.

We know that many, many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, honestly and in good faith, have occupied and even developed their lands, Mr. Speaker. Yet, they are told that they do not have clear title. They have informal title, and this informal title has been reassured to them by strong, local community support and has been recognized within their communities.

What we need to see happen here is the fair reconciliation of these existing claims for these people who have been seeking title to their land. We have to understand that this has been going on – we're told it's three sittings of the House of Assembly where the people of this province have been patiently waiting for this government to get its act together and bring forward amendments to the legislation.

Now, we saw, this week, that that is possible to be done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: We saw it with very complex and complicated legislation involving the *Limitations Act*. So we know it can be done. We know when all individuals here, the elected Members, work together that we can address the complicated legislation that comes before us and deal with it.

I must say, the Minister of Justice and Public Safety did take the lead, as the minister, and he had a commitment in the past year to make sure this was brought before the House. Where is that same commitment from the Minister of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture to do the same? We need to see this. It is unconscionable. It's completely unacceptable that there is just delay like this. It's very disappointing to the many constituents that we represent in the Official Opposition.

I, in the District of Harbour Main, have had constituents that have faced these same problems. I have one case, in particular, a senior who was caused extreme stress and anxiety having to deal with this. The financial hit that she has had to take is just unacceptable and it's not being addressed properly by this government.

I must say that the comment that was made by the Member for Bonavista who was quoting an expert, as the Member for Placentia West - Bellevue just pointed out – he had quoted an industry expert, an educator in the field who had stated and had described the situation as bureaucratic theft. To suggest that was any aspersion on bureaucrats in our government is completely unfair. That is not what the Member for Bonavista was doing.

What he was doing is he was explaining that the wait times for applications and all of the bureaucratic legal quagmire that exists

within the Department of Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture with respect to Crown lands is just not acceptable. So to suggest or to attribute any liability or responsibility to the bureaucracy is totally false and is certainly not what was being done.

In fact, that responsibility, I would argue, Mr. Speaker, lies not with the bureaucracy, but with the department and with government, who has failed to create the policies and the proper legislation to deal with this matter once and for all.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: All the people are asking for, Speaker, is fair reconciliation of their existing claims for people that are seeking title to their land. We know that we can work together. If government had that will and took that initiative, instead of delaying now for another three sessions, we would be able to deal with this problem.

So I must say, it is very disappointing on behalf of my constituents in the District of Harbour Main and the constituents of the Official Opposition and the constituents of the entire Province of Newfoundland and Labrador that this is still going on. We were promised by the minister, or he made a commitment, that this would be dealt with in this session and yet here we are, forced to raise another PMR, which is not what we need here. We need to be able to get this legislation before the hon. House, debate amendments, bring them to a vote and get this resolved finally.

I must say, as well, I am very disappointed when we know that government has promised this and yet continues to divert and deflect and we see comments that are made which really do not address the problem. The issue is when are we going to get this before the House. It is not whether we're saying there are problems with the bureaucracy, that's not what we're doing, or we don't need to be hearing about all the

nuances of adverse possession right now. We need to get this before the House so that we can figure out a solution.

When the Member for Corner Brook says, well, a solution never meets everyone's satisfaction. Well, that's true. We're not looking for perfect legislation. We know that is impossible, like with the *Limitations Act*. There was not perfect legislation, but it was good legislation. Yes, it will not meet everyone's satisfaction but no one is expecting that. So to try to suggest that's what we're doing here – we want this legislation brought before the House so we can try to address all of the concerns within this Crown Lands. It's a mess; people are frustrated by their wait times for applications. We hear it almost on a weekly basis in the District of Harbour Main.

So government has to get it together and we're willing, as we have stated, the Official Opposition is prepared. We'll stay here for another three weeks or whatever it takes to deal with this once and for all.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

Certainly, a great opportunity to get up and speak to this. I've had many people in my district over the five years call me on issues regarding their own land or Crown land. It's very complicated. You know, when you sit down and listen to it, to believe that the government is going to come after them for money that they paid for land. It's terrible. It really is.

So I did listen to the Minister of Transportation say there was 124 submissions and 22 written submissions. I would say that myself and the Member for Exploits, the other day, spoke to a

gentleman in my district and he was questioning his Crown land. He had no written submission. He had no submission gone in. He didn't want to bring light to it in case somebody else might try to go in and claim it, that it's theirs. So he didn't bring light – he was wondering where we were to with the Crown lands application. He's got a fair amount of land. I am sure the Member can remember the conversation.

I would be the same if I was him. You know, you go up and you start putting marks down. If you want to know where land is in this province or know who owns it, go out and put a stake down and put your name on it and you'll find out that somebody is going to fight you for it, for sure, if it's not yours. Then you'll know who really owns it. People in the area certainly know that for sure.

That gentleman that day wasn't really comfortable with speaking on that and wanting to open up a can of worms to say that someone else could go in and claim it and he may say it's his. He's trying to wait for this legislation to come through, which is very important. It's very important to him and a good many in every district, not only mine, in every district.

So I look back at my property where I'm to, where my father lives now and my mother lives now. They're at that place 100 years. Was that ever granted to them? I'm frightened to death to find out. I'm certainly not going to check and put the pressure on them now in their years where they're to now, to find out if it's theirs or not. I'm going to leave it be. Whatever happens, happens in the end.

Do they own it? I'm not sure. I'm not sure that they own it, don't know. It's a hundred years they were given it by a family member. They built on it. They've been there now 60 years themselves. There was somebody there before. So it's pretty bad when you don't want to check because you don't want to put that stress on them. It's terrible.

There are lots of others. The land I live on myself, my father gave it to me, and his father gave it to him. Was it ever granted to him? We've had mortgages on it over the years, so I would hope that it was checked. I didn't go back and check it, but I would hope that it's done. But it's a scary feeling to know that it may not be yours. The people in Bonavista and people elsewhere in the province paying taxes on land and then the Crown comes back and tells them it's not theirs. It's terrible. It should never happen.

So this is an example I got from a gentleman that has emailed me. This is two years ago. I'm not going to read all the email, but I'm going to go through some important points on it because it's what's happening today in Newfoundland and Labrador. It really is.

In 1974, he said he was married, looked for a piece of land in the Goulds, built a house and raised their family – found a piece of land that was butted onto our land on Shoal Bay Road.

In 1975, they built a house on it. In 1992, Hydro power, upon the inspection of a sawmill deemed electrical service was not up to standard. As a result, the owner decided to close the mill and sell the property. He offered the property to me. I purchased it. I registered and surveyed and got a legal firm to do the necessary documents and purchase through the provincial registry.

For the next 30 years, the land was left vacant except for skating rinks in the winter and horseshoe pits in the summer.

In 2021, a local contractor approached me to offer to buy this property to build two homes there. He said it was time for me now to sell, move on, move into a seniors' complex. That was his plan, to sell his own house, sell the land and move into a seniors' complex.

He applied to the City of St. John's in 2022 for the necessary approvals and the building documents as requested by the contractor. They were eventually granted. On the day of the closing, the buyer's lawyer requested two affidavits would be required to finalize the sale.

This became impossible as the requirements were the person would have to acknowledge where the property was back in 1957. At that point, my lawyer suggested I apply to Crown Lands to get clear title. That I did, and after waiting several months for response, Crown Lands claimed that I did not own the property, as it was not fully occupied, in use in some form, such as farming, from 1957 to 1977. When I built the home in '75, he said it was in full operation. There was a mill there, it being totally clear as the government aerial photos indicate.

So Crown Lands then sent him an email saying the government owned the property. He would have to make an application to buy back the property at government market value – and I will finish the email in a second.

Government market value came back. The land that he owned and purchased and paid for 30 years before, the Crown came back, or the government officials came back and he can buy back each piece of property – which he was going to retire and sell his home – for \$94,300, based on their evaluation of market value, after he paid for that 30 years ago.

That's one example of what's happening in this province. That is something to deal with in his golden years. He wants to retire and go to a seniors' complex – and we all have those stories. But we need to put them out there so people can understand what we're trying to get and get the legislation. I mean, that is real life. It is right here in writing.

He said, on March 6, he got an email or phone call from the City of St. John's asking

what was going on with Crown Lands who requested that the city review the property with regard to its use. The city informed me that they would not have issue with any approval or permits if my application documents weren't in order. They were mystified with the Crown Lands request.

So going through the city, they gave him approval and then they turn around and say you don't own it. This government regulation claiming back people's land is insane and comes off as a money grab, which one senior Crown Lands official indicated to me in a conversation: It is a money grab. He said: I have documents on the property going back to 1918. There was a sawmill and I paid taxes on it for about 25 years. I owned the property for 30 years. I have close to \$100,000 invested in this property. I had to purchase the property, survey fees, legal fees, city taxes to St. John's this past 30 years. It cost him close to \$40,000.

That's one example. I spoke to this gentleman on a couple of occasions and he has called me back to see where Crown Lands is. So we're in here now and this is the third session. The Member for Exploits put forward a Member's resolution before and he had mentioned that and got turned down. We didn't agree to it. But we all know that this is important. We are beat out from looking at you on the other side patting yourselves on the back. Good thing you have a doctor; you got a torn rotator cuff from patting yourself on the back.

It is unbelievable that this has not been done in three sessions. It is incredible that we have not got this done. It just makes no sense. We've been here talking for three sessions about Crown lands and stay tuned is what we get – stay tuned. It is just unbelievable.

Anyway, I'm going to leave it at that. I wanted to put my story out for my constituent and just to get it out there. These are real-life stories.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm not going to take much time here. I just wanted to speak about what happens and what doesn't happen. We all understand that there is an issue with the legislation and that the legislation is being reviewed. The Member just spoke about how long it is taking. I'd go further than to say three sessions. I mean, we've been talking about this since 2019, and I'm sure that government before 2019 talked about it also.

It's a huge issue and what really blows me away is how quick these issues can be resolved when government sees it as a benefit. I'm not saying a benefit to them, but I'm saying as a benefit to the province. The ability to address these issues on any level are a benefit to the province.

But I'll just go back a few months ago and highlight and try to remind people what happened. It's only in the last 12 months, really, when all of this wind energy stuff took off and government immediately found a way to put a freeze on all Crown lands and found a way to make it so those Crown lands could be distributed to companies that were pursuing wind energy. I'm not saying that's a bad thing. But I'm showing how quick it was solved on a larger scale because government thought it was important.

But if somebody from Bonavista, my district or any district in this House is living on a piece of property and they're getting older and they're looking at going into a home or downsizing or doing everything that today's current economy has caused people to consider, and they find out that they don't own that piece of land, think of the mental

stress and the financial burden that that puts on an individual. It's incredible what it's done.

So while we're waiting for legislation – we all know that the minister or any minister of any department has certain authorities and abilities to do stuff. Instead of trying to find a way to fix some of these problems, we're taking people to court. We're actually taking people to court and fighting them over something that we have the ability to fix or pause or do a whole number of things that makes it right.

My district in 2019 when I got elected, I can tell you from 2019 up until 2024 right now, one of the largest issues we face – and I don't mean the biggest issue but one of the most common issues we face are issues with Crown lands. My office is located on the second floor at 8 Myers Avenue, and directly next to my office is the Crown Lands office.

In 2019, it was open five days a week. In 2020, or leading up to 2020, part way through 2019 after the election, they went to one day a week, Thursdays only. Then they went to by appointment. I can tell you right now – and I'm not making any comment about the individuals that work there. They don't have the ability to do it. You cannot get through to that office. You cannot get an appointment. The only way to get an appointment is for their MHA to send an email, which is absolutely ridiculous. It should not be like that. That office needs to be open full-time. I guarantee you there's enough work for it.

Now, the office has been rented and here's the issue: It's like the Premier's office in Grand Falls. The office has been rented for three years and there's nobody in it and it's still leased. It sits empty and it's still leased. We talk about saving money and finding ways to do things, so we've got an office that's full of stuff for Crown Lands and nobody is in it. It's leased. It's a privately owned building. My office is leased; it's not

a government building. That office is being paid for and there's no staff in it. So if you live in Clarendville or Bonavista or whatever, you've got to go to Gander or in here to St. John's.

I'll say something else: The minister stood this morning talked about consultations and he talked about we didn't get very many people who replied or whatever. There's no Crown land in St. John's, very little. So when we talk about these consultations, you've got to remember that the people that live in my district, on the tail end of Random Island or people that are running into these issues, the people who have lived in a house for 100 years, a lot of these communities don't have Internet. They don't know that there were consultations. They don't have access to government sites.

There's the issue that we run into with every single consultation that we've been doing over the last little while is the fact that we assume that people are engaged in engageNL. They're not only not engaged in engageNL, they don't have access to it. How we don't consider that as a major problem – it's okay to try to get advanced and get more technical and utilize these tools because we got to. It's where we have to go. But everybody has to have equal access to it, and they don't.

So I would argue that that's why you didn't get the consultations that you thought you would get. But the one thing I would say about this is that there are solutions, and those solutions don't mean taking people to court. Those solutions mean getting people back into the offices and certainly if we're renting space, occupy them. I can tell you right now the office that is in Clarendville has zero occupancy. You cannot get through to there, you cannot get there and it's absolutely shameful.

Anyway, on that note, I'll take my seat.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Thank you.

I now call on the Member for Humber - Bay of Islands.

E. JOYCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to stand and have a few words on this because it's brought to my attention, if not on a daily basis, at least five or six times a week – absolutely brought to my attention.

I know when I had the privilege of being the minister and Crown Lands was under the department, we made some major changes. A lot of those changes were reversed. A lot of them were reversed. The only department in government that I know, maybe the RNC or somebody, where you can't get into an office in Corner Brook. You can't get in.

I look at any minister here, you could walk up to your office here and say: Can I have a meeting? If the minister is around or someone's around, yes. Crown Lands – I'll just give you one example and I brought this to the minister many times. A person went up just two weeks ago and they're dealing with a septic design, and they said I've got to see someone about this. Okay, go online and make an appointment. He went home, made an appointment and the appointment is for late June. That was fine.

He wrote them, got a letter back: You've got to go to Service NL. He went to Service NL. They said: Oh no, we can't touch this because the land is not done yet. He went back to Crown Lands and said I still need that meeting because they won't talk to him. We can't talk to you, and they told you what to do.

You can't get to talk to nobody – can't get to talk to nobody, but one department is saying you can't do this. Another department is saying, well you got to get them to approve it. They're saying we're not approving until they approve it. That's the kind of frustration.

I'll give you another good example. There's one case I've been working on for years. It's simple, they want a cabin. They put in the application. It was denied because it's a wetland. The Department of Environment here in St. John's said it's a wetland.

There was a policy between the Department of Environment and Crown Lands that you would send a person out to look at it because they don't have the personnel to do it in Corner Brook. That was fine. They said, no, we're not going to follow the policy.

I go out there a lot. I went out and took pictures. In their map where they got the cabin, it's not even the right cabin. It's not even the right cabin. It's not even in the right area and the map they're talking about is 1945. That's the kind of frustration for people. I can't get no one from Crown Lands to go out and look at the land – you don't have to look at it, you can walk up to it. I got pictures.

On the land that's supposed to be a wetland, I went out and took a picture. I go in there on my mountain bike, I took a picture – all trees. Over by that wall, there's another cabin; down there, where the Speaker is at, there's another cabin, but they're saying this cabin here is in a wetland. They already approved about five in the same area. The size of this House of Assembly, there are at least two or three approved, but they're saying this one here, who's right here, right in the same area, is a wetland. They won't go out to say, b'ys there's a mistake on the map, the 1945 map.

That's the kind of frustrations people get. I even had frustrations from people with them putting in an application – refused. They come back and say, nope, refused again. I said, why was it refused? It's because the city had to go through it. I said, no, that's the wrong application, here's the application. Sure enough, misunderstanding. It took two years to clear that up – two years to clear it up that they're refusing, and you can't get to

speak to nobody. That's the most frustrating part for any of this is you can't get to speak to anybody.

I think the Member for Terra Nova mentioned seniors, a lot of those seniors who are trying to get their house straightened up, their land straightened up because they might want to move into a home, or they might want to pass it down to the kids, they got to go online. They don't even have a computer. They got to go online to book an appointment, instead of saying, okay, how can someone help us.

Crown Lands is not a service organization anymore, it's really not. I don't know if it's a direction from – well, it has to come from government, it has to. When you have to up there and you can't see anybody, you can't speak to anybody, you have to go back out of the office and go online to book an appointment. It may take five or six weeks.

Here's the other thing that many people brought to my attention, when you make an appointment, you go up and visit, oh no, you have the wrong person, you have to go back and make another appointment. Here's who you have to speak to in the department. Well, can you go get them? Oh no, you have to go back and make another appointment. This is on a regular basis.

Why we don't bring this legislation to this House of Assembly amazes me. It's so frustrating for people.

Just think, you're 75 years old, you may move on to a seniors' home, something may happen to you. You want to leave your land and your house that you lived there for 50 or 60 years to your wife. All of a sudden, you say, my God, I can't let her have that mess and trying to clean up Crown land that you lived on in a house for 50 years. The lady wants it straightened up because if she passes away, she doesn't want to leave the mess to her husband. The husband doesn't want to leave the mess to the wife. And they

can't get it straightened out – living in a house for over 50 years.

I've been dealing with one in Corner Brook. Here it is, I don't know how many houses, a hundred houses, and this guy said, okay, I'm going to get it straightened up. I'm moving up in life, I'm getting it straightened up. It's in the Corner Brook area, it's right in Corner Brook proper. He went to Crown Lands and they said, no, we have no deeds that it was ever signed over back in 1902. They had it where it was done. No, you can't get it. So he had to go hire a lawyer to get it straightened up. Crown Lands still won't accept it – still won't. There's about a hundred there and he's scared to talk about it around because everybody would go: Is our land part of that? Are we part of that?

A house that's been there, the earliest notification that the house was built was in 1947 and still can't get it straightened up. When the City of Corner Brook amalgamated with the four regions, Curling, Humbermouth, Humber Heights and Townsite, they were paying taxes then in 1956, paying taxes to the City of Corner Brook because they owned the land. There's proof that they owned the land, but you can't get it cleared up at Crown Lands that yes, here's the tax bill. Can't do it. That's the frustration.

I know the minister is now here, and the part that we all hear about the GH2, one of the biggest concerns they had out in Port au Port – and this is not for or against the windmills, this is not – is that a lot of people had their houses, their great-grandfather built the house there, their grandfather and their father, they lived in the house. So when GH2 was going out and putting up windmills, they just went on the Crown Lands map and said, okay, where's Crown land, and they started plunking down sites where they're going to put the windmills. You go along the road and there are about 25 or 30 right on people's houses. Now, the houses have been there 70 or 80 years but

you can't get it straightened up, you just can't.

Crown Lands definitely needs some direction on what has got to be done. They have got to have some direction. I know the minister, last week, I think, said that anybody who has any concerns, come ahead and show them to me. I'm waiting.

I wrote the minister and said, I've got a lot of concerns, I want a meeting. I'll give you some good concerns – not only concerns, I'll give you documentation. I'll give you documentation where there are issues that should be resolved that's not resolved. That's the frustration.

I don't know about St. John's, but anywhere in rural Newfoundland, I guarantee you, you're getting calls about Crown land. The biggest problem I got with it is that even when you present the documentation, even when you go to the steps of getting affidavits, even when you go through the steps when the house was built, you've still got to get a lawyer to get involved to get it done for you.

Because what could happen – I don't know if people realize this – when you go to court, imagine how frustrating this is, imagine how somebody trying to get their land straightened up, goes out and gets affidavits, goes out and shows that the land was used before '56, you've got to get a lawyer, then go to the court, get the court to say, okay, I want this application approved. You don't know until you walk in the court if Crown Lands is going to object to it.

So you've got to go through this whole process, walk into court, the lawyer has got to be prepared, that means you've got to pay him to be prepared. Crown Lands may say, we object to that. Okay, they object. Now, you have got to go up and wait again, go to court again to get the land. Now some they may not. They say we're not going to object to that, give them the land. You don't even know.

Can you imagine a senior going to court, trying to prove his house was there in the '50s and someone saying no, we're going to object. You've got to go back to court, a senior, 75, 80 years old trying to get his land straightened out.

It has to be fixed, government. It has to be fixed because there were commitments made to bring legislation back. It wasn't done. This has to be fixed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER (Bennett): The hon. the Member for Exploits to close debate.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

It's been a great debate, actually, and I'm glad to see – I think, for the most part, we've got all the Members in this House of Assembly, the ones that spoke anyway, that are in approval with this PMR. That's the way I take it. I certainly appreciate their discussions on it, and I'll just mention a few. Members have provided lots of examples where the legislation needs to be changed, should be changed and can be changed, when it comes to that.

First of all, the Member for St. John's East - Quidi Vidi, I appreciate the comments there. I thought he was talking about me when he said a piece of work –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

P. FORSEY: – until he put good in front of it and then I knew he was talking about the PMR. But he also agreed with the PMR and he realizes that we need to bring in legislation to relieve some of the stress off the Crown lands issues.

The Member for Bonavista came up with some other good points. He said the settlements in his district are owned by Crown Lands, and that's true, archaic

registration. So there are lots of changes need to be done. He gave the examples there and quotes, I must say, in his district, and I appreciate those comments.

The Member for Lake Melville: We need to get on with action for Crown lands. So that's an approval. Member for Stephenville - Port au Port: We need to get this resolved and we'll stay as long as it takes to get it resolved and reduce the red tape, especially on Crown lands. And we will do exactly that.

The Member for Corner Brook mentioned that the *Lands Act* is open, notorious, exclusive and consecutive – I always thought that it was continuous – but he would know, so I'll still say it's continuous. After 53 years, someone on that land should meet these points. But legislation interferes, so that's where that stands.

The Member for Labrador West, of course, agrees that changes need to be made, and he talked of his grandfather and it took years and years just to fix up their land. So that's another example of the situation that we're in. The Member for Placentia - Bellevue spoke of the churches being in the same precarious situations. So everybody is feeling it, every organization, every group, every church feels this situation with Crown lands. It's not just our issues that we want to bring forward, we're listening to the people of the province and bringing their issues forward, and we'd like to see some changes.

The Member for Harbour Main discussed the fair reconciliation; all she's asking is to bring in legislation so that we can do fair reconciliation and we can resolve those situations. She referred to how quick legislation can be produced. So it can be done and we can bring in fair resolutions.

The Member for Ferryland mentioned the resident in his district. The resident offered to buy back his own property for all those years for \$94,000. There are certainly changes that have to be made there. The

Member for Terra Nova, again, referenced how quickly this legislation can be changed and gave examples of how quickly it can be solved. With regard to bringing in legislation, it doesn't take nine years to bring in legislation.

The Member for Humber - Bay of Islands and the Member for Terra Nova, both referenced accessibility to Crown Lands facilities. Nobody can seem to get a hold of Crown Lands anymore, just by a phone call. That needs to change as well. Residents need to be comfortable and be able to have accessibility to Crown Lands facilities.

That's some of the statements that I heard. I think there is no longer anymore reason to debate it, no longer than that. It's just that we need to bring in the legislation. We need the legislation brought into this House of Assembly to bring the legislation up to date and to have this fixed.

We understand it's successive governments but, in 2015, there was a review that was done and it was not adopted. So let's get it done, it can be done, it should be done and we'll stay until it's done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour of the resolution?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

The resolution has carried.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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 recess.

SPEAKER: This House do stand in recess until 2 p.m. this afternoon.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin, we have a number of guests here today.

In the Speaker's gallery, I would like to welcome Lin Paddock, Member-Elect for the District of Baie Verte - Green Bay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: In the public gallery, I'd like to welcome athletes from the Paradise Warrior Elite Kickboxing Club, who will be recognized this afternoon in a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Also in the public gallery and visiting us today for a Member's statement are the friends and family of Mr. Harry Stone.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Welcome to Chase Marrie, youth representative for the District of Topsail - Paradise.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Here this afternoon for a Ministerial Statement, I would like to

recognize representatives from the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission, Executive Director Carey Majid, K.C. and Legal Counsel Hillary Winter.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Before we move on, I would like to rule on a point of order raised by the Member for St. John's Centre on May 16, in accordance with Standing Order 49.

The Member for St. John's Centre stated that the Minister for Housing, in response to a question during Question Period, used unparliamentary language when he stated that: the Minister of Housing chooses to characterize what I'm saying as misinformation, which is tantamount to basically saying I'm lying or that I am misleading.

The matter was taken under advisement at that time. I have now had the opportunity to review *Hansard* and I note that the minister, in responding to the Member's question, stated the following: The misinformation that he is continuing to spread about the situation with Housing.

In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker considers the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking. The Speaker also considers, too, the person to whom the words were directed, the degree of provocation and whether or not the remarks created disorder in the Chamber.

I note that in today's society, we often hear the terms misinformation and disinformation used. The dictionary definitions distinguish these two terms based on intent. While disinformation is deliberately false or misleading information; misinformation refers to information that is inaccurate but that is provided without an intention to share inaccurate information.

What constitutes misinformation, or what is accurate or inaccurate is not a matter for the Speaker to determine. It is a difference of opinion from two hon. Members. After consideration, I find that there is no point of order.

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today, we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans, Terra Nova, Torngat Mountains, St. John's Centre, Topsail - Paradise and Cartwright- L'Anse au Clair with leave.

The hon. the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor - Buchans.

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

After 10 years and a lot of work by some amazing groups and individuals, the Lionel Kelland Hospice received its first resident last month.

A vision that started from three true humanitarians, Ken Dicks, Dr. Jeff Cole and Dr. John Campbell, is now a reality. This would not have been possible without the help of so many, including present and past board members, the complete fundraising team and our community and regional support.

This year the Hike for Hospice will take place from June 9 to June 15 and I encourage everyone to take part.

A couple of weeks ago, we had the opportunity to witness what community hospice care was all about. On May 17, a resident was treated to a Side-by-Side ride across the Exploits River and into one of his favourite spots. There he enjoyed his favourite food and a big old boil up of tea. That is true purpose of the first Newfoundland and Labrador community hospice.

I want to thank all the staff and volunteers for their tremendous work, including Dr. John Campbell, for putting his heart and soul into making sure their last moments truly matter.

Congratulations to the Lionel Kelland Hospice, a place we can all be proud of.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Terra Nova.

L. PARROTT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I stand today to congratulate the winners of the annual Poppy and Remembrance Day Poster and Literacy contest sponsored by the Royal Canadian Legion.

The Royal Canadian Legion Branch 41 in Eastport is very active in the school community within the region from Greenspond to Eastport. There are seven schools in the region that participate in this event. Entries are first judged at the branch level, these winners advance to the provincials and the provincial winners advancing to the national competition.

I would like to congratulate our provincial winners: Avery Squires, St. Gabriel's school in St. Brendan's, first place in the Primary Colour Poster category; Lily Briffett, Glovertown Academy in Glovertown, first place in the Intermediate Colour Poster category; Jaida Burry, Holy Cross School in Eastport, second place in the Black and White Poster category; and a huge congratulations to Alexa Sturge and Mackenzie Quinonez of Smallwood Academy, who were selected to travel to France and Belgium for the 2024 Trail of the Caribou, after being national champions in the annual poppy Remembrance Day Competition, an experience of a lifetime.

Please join me in congratulating all those who took part.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Maria Merkuratsuk, born in Nain Nunatsiavut, spends her life out on the land. "I've been going out on the land since I was a baby. Even before I was born, when I was in my mom's belly, I was going north. I'm so grateful I grew up out on the land."

A strong Inuk woman, faithful daughter, sister, mother, grandmother, Maria was always an old soul, speaking and living the olden ways, even as a child. Maria has come full circle. Now an Elder, herself, Maria continues to spend her life teaching, educating others, especially our youth, about the ways of the land to hunt and gather food. She teaches traditional clothing making and she shares Inuktitut words that could be lost if not spoken.

Maria speaks of protecting the land and vocalizes the harm of climate change that's impacting the traditional knowledge and learning. She's invited to speak at international conferences. Her published book, *Feeling at Home out on the Land*, teaches our youth.

She was just awarded the very first annual Nunatsiavut Government's Cultural Preservations Recognition Award which acknowledges individuals who strive to keep the Inuit culture alive.

We trust Maria's voice and we are so proud the world, too, values Maria's wisdom.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, on Saturday, April 6, our province lost a great man with the passing of Harry Stone. Harry was a beloved husband, a father, a grandfather, community builder, activist and friend of many.

He was a strong supporter of the local arts community, hosting legendary gatherings with his wife Pat at their home on Barnes Road, featuring up-and-coming artists. He was a vocal advocate for social justice and a lifelong member of the New Democratic Party.

Harry served on the board of directors of the AIDS Committee of Newfoundland and Labrador and Wonderbolt Productions. He purchased a truck for others to use, whether filming a movie or moving house. He was known in activist circles and within our party as someone to seek out for counsel in good times and bad. His charm, quick wit and lifelong experience provided him with a clarity of perspective that is hard to find.

Though Harry enjoyed success in many aspects of this life, including a successful career in real estate, he would be the first to tell you his greatest achievement was his family. Harry remained humble in his success and never lost sight of the plight of our most vulnerable. His example inspired us all.

Please join me in extending our gratitude for his presence on this earth.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador kickboxers found plenty of success in the ring at the recent World Association of Kickboxing Organization's

National Kickboxing Championship held in Niagara Falls this past month.

Ten athletes, all from Paradise Warrior Elite Kickboxing Club, competed in 14 divisions: Isabelle Quinton came home a 2 division national champion; Leah Quinton came home with a silver and bronze medal; Amanda Roberts, two bronze medals; Karla Peters, a silver medal; Annabelle King, a bronze medal; Anna Snow, two silver medals; Braden Evans, a bronze medal; Caden Stock, 2 division national champion; Daniel Seymour, silver medal; Fred Holloway, owner and operation of Warrior Elite, brought home a bronze medal

The Warrior team was also named the most supportive club outside of Ontario. On top of that, Caden Stock, Braden Evans, Anna Snow, Isabelle Quinton and Leah Quinton all earned their spot on the national team that are heading to the 2024 WAKO World Junior Championships in Budapest, Hungary in August as part of Team Canada.

I can tell by the sounds next door to my office in Topsail - Paradise that this group continues to work very hard. I hope the gyrock holds out.

Speaker, it is my honour to congratulate all their accomplishments and wish these amazing athletes continued success.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Cartwright - L'Anse au Clair, with leave.

Does the Member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you.

Speaker, I stand to recognize the achievements of Aidan Sampson, a student

at St. Lewis Academy, who has a bright future ahead of him.

Aidan is the very first Labradorian to be selected as a Loran Scholar. He was one of 90 finalists selected from 5,000 applications and one of only 36 from right across this large country to receive a scholarship.

Loran Scholars receive financial support for undergrad studies to the tune of \$100,000. They benefit from a leadership enrichment program, experiential learning, mentorship and a lifelong, supportive community.

Aidan Sampson is deserving of this incredible honour. He received praise for his enthusiasm, leadership qualities and a commitment to looking beyond his personal goals. Aidan is also a shining example of the quality education students are receiving in rural areas.

With an enrolment of fewer than 20 students, St. Lewis Academy has dedicated teachers, and students benefit from the unwavering support of parents and the community.

This young, Indigenous student has succeeded in working hard, reaching for the top and pushing boundaries. The sky is the limit from here.

On behalf of all Labradorians, Aidan, you have made us all so very proud.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Speaker, I rise today to share my commitment to preserving the history and

contributions of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians in the First World War.

On Monday, I addressed this hon. House, sharing the emotional journey to France to bring Newfoundland and Labrador's son home.

Speaker, while overseas, I found myself reflecting on the sheer magnitude of the experience. I found myself wishing that we could do more to ensure the sacrifices made on the battlefields of Northern France and Belgium over 100 years ago are never forgotten.

Each year, approximately 30 students participate in the Trail of the Caribou Pilgrimage, a partnership between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Royal Canadian Legion Newfoundland and Labrador Command and the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador. This includes Remembrance ceremonies at the five caribou monuments in Northern France and Belgium, including a very emotional July 1 ceremony at the Beaumont-Hamel Newfoundland Memorial.

Speaker, I'm proud to say that beginning in 2025, we intend to expand that program to allow 100 Newfoundland and Labrador students to travel overseas for this life-changing experience.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: So, Speaker, we will, indeed, do more. We will do our best to ensure that they are never forgotten. That their names continue to be spoken and their memories honoured.

Lest we forget and God guard thee,
Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement.

I join him and my colleague from Terra Nova who spoke on Monday in marking the arrival of our Unknown Soldier back home to Newfoundland and Labrador.

All Newfoundlanders and Labradorians are looking forward to July 1st, Memorial Day, when this young man can be laid to rest and honoured at the National War Memorial on behalf of all those who have fallen and rest overseas, not far from the battlefields, where they so tragically and heroically sacrificed their lives.

It is vitally important that we keep their memory alive by sending students each year to participate in the Trail of the Caribou pilgrimage.

We commend the government; the Royal Canadian Legion, Newfoundland and Labrador Command; and the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador for making this possible. For every student the experience is life-changing and unforgettable. Expanding the number of students who can participate to 100 starting in 2025 is a wonderful initiative.

I wish every young Newfoundlander and Labradorian had the opportunity to visit. Many find familiar names and similar ages among those who gave their lives and it resonates immediately with them. They understand that those soldiers hail from their own communities and many others across Newfoundland and Labrador and sail to war to keep war from coming to our shores.

Many of these young students may choose to step into service in their own time. Others will go on to lead in other ways, but all of them will be changed by the experience and do whatever they can to keep the memory of those who served alive.

We also thank the people of Europe for sharing the preservation of our caribou monuments. They remember our soldiers for the gift of peace they were given through the sacrifice of our citizens. They welcome and honour our students because they appreciate the price that young Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, just like them, paid for their own freedom.

They will never forget, and neither shall we. Where once they stood, we will always stand.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Premier for an advance copy of his statement.

In a cemetery in Belgium lies George Toomashie, an Inuk man from Labrador, my wife's great-great-uncle. Those who do not learn from history are doomed to continue to repeat it. That is why we commend the decision to expand the student ambassador program.

In commemorating the sacrifices made by previous generations, it is all our hope that the next generation will champion the causes of peace, freedom and democracy for all the people of this world. Let us all work together to build a better world for everyone here.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Justice and Public Safety.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I rise to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission.

Everyone has the right to a life of equality, dignity and respect.

In the late 1960s, our province passed its first human rights code, joining a generational movement as Canada led the world in the advancement of human rights. The code made us the first Canadian jurisdiction to prohibit discrimination based on political opinion and the second to ban sex discrimination in the workplace. In 1974, legislation was passed to create a permanent provincial Human Rights Commission to administer this code.

Since then, the Human Rights Commission of Newfoundland and Labrador has championed an impactful mandate that includes resolving complaints, educating the public, raising issues of public importance and working closely with community partners.

The work of the commission benefits all of us, and I urge everyone who feels discriminated against to reach out for guidance and for support. For information and updates on events marking this anniversary, visit thinkhumanrights.ca. The staff are truly a great resource and strive to make our province a more inclusive place to live.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in congratulating the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission on its 50th anniversary and thank its staff, past and present, including Carey Majid and Hillary Winter, for their contributions to our entire province.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

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

I rise today to acknowledge the 50th anniversary of the Newfoundland and Labrador Human Rights Commission. It is important to reflect on the progressive steps taken in the late 1960s when our province passed its inaugural human rights code, being the first Canadian jurisdiction to outlaw discrimination based on political opinion and the second to prohibit sex discrimination in the workplace, it showcased our pioneering spirit in fostering inclusivity and fairness.

The establishment of a permanent provincial Human Rights Commission in 1974 laid the groundwork for advocates and staff to resolve grievances, educate the public and amplify issues of social importance.

I was privileged to be legal counsel at the Newfoundland Human Rights Commission for five years. I had the privilege to work alongside a team of dedicated professionals. I can speak first-hand as to the commitment and the resolve of the Human Rights Commission to advance and to protect human rights of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

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

We celebrate the 50-year advocacy of the Human Rights Commission. We believe in

everyone's right to a life of equality, dignity and respect. The Human Rights Commission plays a critical role to ensure these rights are not denied. We, too, echo the calls of this government for people to reach out when facing discrimination including those living through the housing crisis.

We, the NDP, are clear in our belief that every human right is important.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statement by ministers?

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

G. BYRNE: Speaker, it is my duty to report to the House the current status of the Government of Canada's decision to cut \$625 million per year from the Labour Market Transfer Agreements.

Newfoundland and Labrador has led the formation of a country-wide coalition of provinces and territories of all political stripes to reverse these federal cuts.

Thirteen provincial and territorial premiers, rallied by our Premier, have persistently informed the prime minister that these cuts are ill-advised and must be reversed.

Newfoundland and Labrador has led a united effort of every labour market minister in the country to fight back. Collectively, we have demanded an urgent, emergency, in-person meeting with the federal employment minister, but the federal minister has yet to acquiesce. Federal Employment Minister Randy Boissonnault has, however, acknowledged to the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration, in my presence and the presence of 12 other ministers, that the federal budget was flawed and should not have included the cuts.

Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador has lost \$16.8 million annually to support our people. We stand by those whom these funds supported. I should note, the bulk of these funds are not derived from federal revenues. They are deployed from the employment insurance account. They come from Newfoundland and Labrador workers and should be given back to Newfoundland and Labrador workers. It's our money. It's the workers' money.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

G. BYRNE: We have already taken action to stabilize services to the vulnerable and will work within our means to ensure continuity of services. We stand with them.

While I fault the federal government directly, I take with concern the knowledge that not one question has been asked of the federal government about its impact or its lack of wisdom by either federal political opposition parties. Neither the federal NDP nor the Conservative Party have drawn any attention to this issue on the floor of the House of Commons.

Provinces and territories have taken a united position that backfilling federal cuts by raising provincial taxes is not the best answer. The money is already being collected from us but is being denied to us. The right solution is for Ottawa to give the workers' money back to workers.

I ask all Members of this House to stand in unison, in solidarity, with the same position taken by every Liberal, Progressive Conservative and NDP provincial government in this country. I ask for the ability to communicate to our provincial and territorial colleagues and, most importantly to Ottawa, that we as a Legislature demand these national cuts to worker supports be reversed.

I ask if we stand united on this issue.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

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

Speaker, the federal cuts to the labour market transfer agreements is a terrible decision by the government to rein in spending by impacting programs that assist some of the most vulnerable in Canada.

The wonderful work that supportive employment organizations throughout this province conduct and the impacts that they have on many people's lives cannot become a fight with Ottawa. We believe that those partaking in these programs should not live in anxiety, wondering what will happen beyond six months. Organizations need to begin planning for the next year and the hundreds benefiting from the programs deserve peace of mind.

In the absence of this federal government top-up, it is contingent on our Liberal government to assure that the program continues throughout the lobby for restoration of funding with your federal Liberal cousins.

I state the obvious when I say –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

C. PARDY: – there is too much at risk here for politics.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Leader of the Third Party.

J. DINN: Speaker, I thank the minister for an advance copy of his statement.

As we said in our press release this morning, this government did not have a backup plan. It is very typical; even though they knew about this funding cut for months.

We absolutely support the fight with Ottawa, but unlike the minister, we are not willing to play a game of chicken with the federal government and jeopardize the future of people who depend on the supportive employment program.

We, too, call on the minister to commit to funding, not just for six months, but at least until the end of the fiscal year, so organizations have stability and won't have to shutter their doors in the meantime. That will be the responsible thing to do, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there any further Ministerial Statements?

Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

On May 14, I raised the issue of the Town of Cape St. George who had suffered through a natural disaster with significant flooding and they were seeking some financial support from the government. The Premier stated on that date: "All government departments on this side of the House will

continue to work with the people of that community, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that they can get back on their feet"

So I ask the Premier if he could provide an update on what support has been provided.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to provide an update. I don't have it off the top of my head, but I am sure I can get the information for the Member opposite. It was a commitment made and it was a commitment that we will follow.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm sure the people of Cape St. George will be delighted to hear that response and look forward to that commitment.

Speaker, on Monday, the Minister of Housing said that \$13 million had been budgeted in the '24-'25 budget for the comfort inn.

With nearly \$7 million allocated for the payment of the rent for that particular fiscal year, I ask the minister: Can he confirm that there is \$6 million being allocated for operating expenses?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to answer that question from the Member opposite, the Leader of the Opposition.

We are spending money at the 106 Airport Road Transitional Supportive Living Initiative. It's money that's going to be spent on helping to improve people's mental health. It's going to be money that's going to

be spent to help them with their addictions. It's providing a safe place for them to stay, with the wraparound supports.

I will also say, Mr. Speaker, that we're going to be spending, today alone, \$2,027,000 on Muskrat Falls rate mitigation; a week we're going to be spending \$14 million and per month we're going to be spending \$61 million.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I'm not sure that the people that are homeless or about to lose their homes are really interested in that response.

Again, I ask the minister: Minister, \$13 million budgeted and \$7 million going to pay the lease; is \$6 million going to pay the operating costs?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, we said in our Estimates, we said in the budget that \$13 million would be earmarked this year. It's a phased-in approach, which we are continuing to do now. It provides a safe place for up to 100 residents – in the range of 100 people.

There will be staff there who will provide health care services. There will be a physician on site. There will be a nurse practitioner. There will be counsellors there who can deal with addictions. There is going to be food provided on a daily basis, three meals a day, to each resident who live there and who sign a lease through End Homelessness St. John's.

The whole idea, Mr. Speaker, is to end the cycle of homelessness, to end what is in some people who are chronically homeless, a continuous cycle of homelessness. That's

the idea, to provide those wraparound supports, to spend that money. It's a wise investment to help people.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, the minister talks about spending this money and stuff. I'm simply asking him now can he provide a breakdown of the \$6-million budget to operate the facility.

Will he provide the House with how they arrived at the budget that they have now for the comfort inn and provide the details of the \$6 million?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Speaker, we went through, in great detail, with the Member opposite's colleague, the Opposition critic for Housing, the numbers through Estimates and through the budget. I'm happy to reveal them to the House.

Obviously, with a large budget like that, I don't have all of them in my head right now, but on a piece of paper, I'm happy to provide them, yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

I look forward to that being brought to the House of Assembly.

In my elementary math, it would seem that based on the minister's numbers of \$13 million budgeted and 100 rooms being available, that works out to \$130,000 per room. Can the minister confirm that?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm not sure how the Member opposite got to that math.

As I mentioned, I am happy to bring back the full budget, but we went through it in great detail for several hours with the Member opposite, the Member for Cape St. Francis. We went through it in our budget; we went through it in Estimates.

I will, again, remind the Member opposite that this year alone we'll spend \$61 million on rate mitigation on Muskrat Falls. That's not money that's going to be well spent but it will keep people's power bills from going higher. The money that we're going to spend at 106 Airport Road will help people in the future as they transition out of homelessness.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it's great that the minister wants to talk about Muskrat Falls but in their own backgrounder under the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador climate change initiatives, this is what the Liberal government said: We've invested more than \$13 million in Muskrat Falls which will result in an electricity system that will be greater than 98 per cent carbon free.

That's in their own thing. Isn't that a wonderful investment? We're going to be carbon free. But instead of bringing back a carbon credit, the Liberal government brought us back a carbon tax.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: So I would ask the minister, again: Given the fact that you've talked about a phased-in approach, can the minister provide a specific date that the hotel has targeted for full occupancy?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to take an opportunity to address the preamble. We had to find a silver lining in what was a very dark cloud over the heads of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: The Member opposite thinks that Muskrat Falls was a good investment. It might have been at \$6 billion, but at \$13 billion, Sir, with doubling power rates, Mr. Speaker, there's no way that's a good investment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: No one would argue that's a good investment, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Another comment, Speaker, to the whole debate, his good friend, the prime minister, Mr. Trudeau was able to spend \$36 billion on a pipeline but the Premier couldn't get him to spend \$7 billion on taking an equity stake in Muskrat Falls. That's the real problem here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: That's the real solution. It should have been done.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

T. WAKEHAM: Again, I ask the Minister of Housing: When are we targeting full occupancy for the comfort inn?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, let me take an opportunity to address the preamble. This government was able to get the Hibernia NPI which no other government in the history of the province was able to, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: That money should be spent on hospitals and schools, instead, Mr. Speaker, it's being spent to make sure that electricity rates don't double. That is not a good investment.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Let me remind the Premier, didn't you go to Ottawa and come back talking about your rate mitigation of \$5 billion? Isn't that what's paying for this rate mitigation strategy? Isn't that what you're talking about here when you have a \$10-billion budget? You talked about \$5 billion coming back through rate mitigation. That's what's supposed to be paying for rate mitigation.

Again, I ask the Minister of Housing: When will full occupancy occur?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Mr. Speaker, once again, I'll address the preamble. The previous preamble from the Member opposite, his suggestion was for the federal government to take an equity stake. What we actually did was mitigate rates and we still own the project, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I want to go back to a serious issue and talk about the homelessness that I started to talk about.

So, again, I go back to the Minister of Housing and simply ask: When will the hotel be targeted for full occupancy?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I had an opportunity to spend some time at 106 Airport Road today to speak with some of the staff who've been hired by End Homelessness St. John's and some of the staff who were there from NL Health Services. These are folks who are going to be providing services to people who need the help.

We are investing in people's futures by ending the cycle of homelessness, by hopefully helping them with any mental health issues they have, any addictions issues they may have, any grief issues they have. The counselling services will be there.

I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to thank the staff who have come on board, who have put their hands up, who have stepped forward to work at 106 Airport Road to help the people who need the help.

We understand there's an issue, that's why there's a stand-alone portfolio for Housing, that's why we've doubled our budget this year, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, on Monday I asked the Minister of Housing what the total amount spent on temporary accommodations for those experiencing housing issues between January and March was, how much had been spent. The minister answered in the House that day,

but I think he gave me the answer related to one month. What I was looking for was the period from January to March. I can tell you, Minister, that it was actually \$4 million. So at the same time as we've leased a hotel beginning in January that has sat empty for all this time, except for 11 people, we spent \$4 million on temporary housing.

So again I ask the minister can he provide the total amount that has been spent, year to date, on temporary accommodations?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to address that.

In terms of giving full breakdowns of multi-million dollar budgets, I said that I will present that. We've done it through Estimates, we've done it through our budget process.

But what I will say as well is that this is a phase-in process, which I have said many times inside this House and outside to media and talking to others. What the plan is, is to phase in with –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

It's very difficult to hear the response.

The hon. the Minister of Housing, 20 more seconds, Sir.

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

What I did say prior to this is that there is a phased-in approach for accepting residents. What that will do, as residents move in and sign leases to stay there for whatever period of time it is, it will take the pressure off our emergency shelter system, which is experiencing a lot of usage right now. We understand that, that is why we're taking this initiative, Mr. Speaker.

The numbers I said I will get for the Member opposite. What we're doing is making sure that this is set up to succeed, not fail, as the Member opposite seems to want it.

SPEAKER: The minister's time is expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: What a boisterous crowd today, Speaker, what a boisterous crowd.

I will say this and I never heckled or nothing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: I have one comment for the Premier's caucus.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Like my colleague, the hon. colleague for Fogo Island - Cape Freels says: the Liberals have lost their ability to listen. They're tone deaf. By those responses they've proven it to the public once again.

Premier, on Equal Pay Day, April 16, you acknowledged pay discrepancies between chemotherapy nurses in rural Newfoundland and those in St. John's and you committed to addressing this issue with the Minister of Health and Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services.

A month later, have those pay inequities been corrected?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker, a very important question.

It is important that people are paid equally for work of equal value. The work continues with NLHS and the department to resolve this issue. Obviously, RNU are involved and as soon as we come to a consensus about how to proceed, we will proceed.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Obviously, they've been all denied, that's what we're being told.

My question was to the Premier because the Premier made this commitment.

Speaker, and let me quote the Premier here: "... I'm happy to take it back to see why there is a discrepancy. If there is, we'd be happy to take action to try to correct it." That's a month ago.

Given the appeals have been denied in Stephenville, Clarendville and Carbonear without explanation or justification and considering that all these nurses are trained by the same cancer centre, to the same standards, to perform the same work for patients with the same diseases: Why is the government paying rural nurses less?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

The answer, essentially, remains the same. We're quite happy to work with the RNU and through NLHS, who are the employer, to resolve this situation. It is important that people who do the same job, get the same money. That is our position.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Well, if that's the commitment, if they believe in that, it should have been done long ago. This is an easy thing to do; the stroke of a pen to fix this. These are only words; these people are not (inaudible) being paid properly.

If this government can spend \$100 million a year, \$300 an hour, on travel nurses and spend a fortune travelling the world to recruit new nurses, why are they now nickel and diming the nurses we already have instead of paying them equitably?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

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

We have said in this House, very clearly, that travel nurses are a necessary evil. The absence of travel nurses would mean the absence of care. That really leaves us with an absence of choice.

We have a plan in place – well, NLHS does – and it is actually published to show getting back to pre-pandemic levels of agency nurses by 2026. That's on the route. We are down by, I believe, 15 per cent so far this year and there are targets of 30 per cent for the calendar year. We're on track.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I have one final question and it's directed to the Premier: Do you believe that all cancer chemo nurses throughout the province should be paid the same rate?

That's a simple question Premier. Do you believe they all should be paid the same rate?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: I can do no better than paraphrase my colleague, the Minister of IET. You get to ask the questions; we get to choose who answers.

The facts of the case are, as I have stated in my two previous answers, we are working through HR in NLHS with the RNU to resolve this issue. When we get to a consensus, we will move.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Last day of school, Speaker.

I'll ask it again. It's a simple question, concept – and I believe the Premier, you should stand up for your government –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

AN HON. MEMBER: The Speaker handles that stuff, not you.

B. PETTEN: The Speaker can deal with that, Member.

Do you think all chemo nurses should be paid the same rate throughout the province? Should there be a different pay for someone in St. John's, Stephenville, Corner Brook, so forth? Should they not be paid the same rate?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

B. PETTEN: Premier, you owe the people the answer. You committed to it.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

For clarity, the answer to this question is the same as the first time it was asked, which is NLHS, Human Resources, the RNU, with some facilitation from the department, are working through this. Our position is quite clear: Work of equal value should get equal pay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. MCKENNA: Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

I ask all Members on both sides of the House, please keep the level of conversation down. It is very difficult to hear here.

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

J. MCKENNA: Speaker, we all know the Fogo Island-Change Island ferry service is in crisis. While the minister was blaming everyone in Health here yesterday, his decision has denied residents medical travel and compromised the operations of the Fogo Island Co-operative, worrying hundreds of families who rely on the plant for their livelihoods.

Speaker, why is the minister punishing my constituents?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

I certainly take exception to his phrasing of punishing. It's not in my way of doing business, whether it's in government or outside.

The challenge we have, and as I've said in the House yesterday and I've said to the Member directly, is that we have no extra vessels. I cannot create a vessel overnight. We have one vessel that is running on the Fogo service until the *Veteran* is out of dry dock, which will happen within the next 10 to 12 days.

So, in the meantime, we have to work with what we have. I have spoken with the mayor. I have spoken with the CEO of the co-op. They heard what I said, I have heard what they said and we will continue to dialogue, and we will continue to search for alternate solutions.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. MCKENNA: Speaker, the *Astron W* simply does not have the commercial freight and the vehicle capacity to service two islands.

Have you considered relocating the *Beaumont Hamel* to join the *Astron W* until the *Veteran* comes out of its dry dock?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

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

In terms of the Member's question, that did come up actually in the discussion we had a couple of weeks ago when I was on Bell Island. The former Leader of the Opposition was at the meeting. He is their consultant. He said in no uncertain terms: Do not allow the *Beaumont Hamel* to leave Bell Island.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

J. MCKENNA: Speaker, I say to the minister: Treat both islands equally.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. ABBOTT: Speaker, that is exactly what I am doing. That is what –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. ABBOTT: So now there will be a discussion or a difference of what equal is.

If we did not have the fire in the engine room of the *Flanders*, we would not be in the position we're in today. I had no control over that. And, as a result, we have contracted with another ferry to service Fogo until the *Veteran* is off dry dock. Then we will be back to normal.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Speaker, following the minister's latest child care photo op, private operators have indicated they received no information on new benefits for employees. In fact, they learned about it the same time as the public.

Speaker, why does the minister continue to ignore private daycare owners?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm very pleased to have the opportunity to stand on what is Early Childhood Educators Week and recognize the hard work –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: – of the professionals in the early childhood sector. These people are a foundational instruction model in our society and we're finally recognizing the value that these individuals bring. As part of that recognized value and part of our recruitment and retention plan, we were able to introduce medical benefits that would be implemented throughout the province –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

K. HOWELL: – for individuals who are part of our Operating Grant Program, ensuring that the quality of service that's provided is uniform throughout the province, that they're receiving high-quality education as implemented in our centres and that all of the early childhood educators are treated fairly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Thank you.

I think the private operators would argue that they're not being recognized. Speaker, operators have complained for years about the minister making arbitrary changes to rules and payment schedules, which are often sprung on operators with no warning.

Speaker, why do we continue to hear this?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

I take exception to the question that there is no consultation done with private operators because we do extensively collaborate with the sector, all of those who have a role to pay in educating our most valuable resource. There have been sessions conducted, time and time again, with our operators. Availability of our staff to instruct and to give any positive feedback or not such feedback, if there's any criticisms that can be addressed, then we do take in the department and implement it into our plans on how we build our future of early childhood educators and the operators here in this province, and we'll continue to do that.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

P. DINN: Speaker, I think the private operators would take cold comfort in saying that she takes exception to it. This is coming from the operators.

Speaker, now, talk about recognizing them and foundational and Early Childhood Educators Week; operators are still waiting for April's money and next week is June.

Again, why is the minister refusing to meet with the private operators' association to discuss this issue?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Education.

K. HOWELL: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, I have not had the request to meet with any private operator in recent times to discuss the medical benefits. So if the Member opposite has a request that he would like to bring forward to me, I would certainly welcome that opportunity.

As I said before, we do have extensive consultations with those individuals who are part of our Operating Grant Program, because we want to ensure that the delivery of service to our smallest learners is uniform and that it meets all of our standards so that we prepare them then, foundationally, for what is years to come in our education system, knowing that they're received high-quality education at a young age.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, the trial currently before the Newfoundland and Labrador Supreme Court regarding the death of Rayna Dove highlights the substandard and unsafe conditions at the bedsit in which she and her attacker were forced to live. Both lawyers described the place as a hellhole. I have raised the issue of shelter standards many times in this House.

Rayna's mother contacted me and would like the following question answered: How can government place people in bedsits and shelters without providing adequate supports and safety measures, and what are the standards for these shelters?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to address that question from the Member opposite, the Leader of the Third Party and to, first of all, extend my condolences to the family of the woman who is involved.

Obviously, I cannot speak specifically to any case and specifically this one related to something, a matter which is before our courts. I am, however, happy to meet with the Member opposite and get in touch with the mother of the deceased and have a conversation that way, but I'll not discuss any specific case in the House.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

The Canadian Parliament has just passed anti-scab legislation, unanimously. All federal parties agreed to it, surprisingly. When we ban scabs, we protect workers chartered rights to strike.

I ask the Minister of Labour: When will we get this done here in Newfoundland and Labrador?

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. Member for the question.

It is timely. It is some discussion that we've been having on the federal table. As I've said many times before, this is a very divisive issue within the labour and employment file. What we have to do, as Minister of Labour, we have to look at both the benefits and the wants and needs of the employers, as well as the needs and wants of the employees.

We're doing that. We're always looking at that from the federal table. We're going to

continue to do that. We are in discussions with our federal colleagues on that very topic.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

Northern Labrador has been without ferry service all winter. The Minister of Transportation said yesterday that he has three ferry services that he's trying to manage. Therefore, the *Kamutik W* will be leaving Fogo within the next two to three weeks to travel to Northern Labrador. We find that unacceptable. We've had no ferry service all winter. Our store shelves are bare. Passengers need to travel.

I ask the Speaker: Will the Premier step in to ensure our ferry is in Goose Bay for the June 10 start date?

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

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

As I said yesterday, we are working to make sure we have the ferry services we need and where we need them. In terms of the Northern Labrador coast service, the vessel has left Fogo. It will be doing some initial maintenance and then it will be in service. Within two to three weeks, the service will resume and we're very happy to see that happen.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, according to the *Canadian Medical Association Journal*, the housing crisis is forcing more seniors into shelters and homelessness. Since the summer of 2022, I've written several letters to the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL with examples of seniors facing excessive rent increases from 50 to 85 per cent and who are desperately afraid of becoming homeless for the first time in their lives.

I ask the minister: In light of this recent report by the *CMAJ*, will she implement rent and vacancy controls so that seniors do not have to worry about losing their homes?

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Rent increases for everyone would be very difficult. I have been doing a lot of research on this, talking with a lot of stakeholders. The last research that we looked at showed that rental increases in Newfoundland and Labrador were some of the lowest in the country, as well as rental rates are some of the lowest in country.

I know that does not help individuals who are receiving rent increases. I will happily review the information the Member has mentioned. If the data no longer supports that, I'm happy to make a change, but it's certainly something that we're keeping a close eye on.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Mr. Speaker, the Premier mentioned a dark cloud. Families in the Cormack area are under a dark cloud.

With the opening of the new Western Memorial Regional Hospital, long-term care patients were expecting to move into this facility. In late May – late May – families were informed that their loved ones would be moved to other facilities on the West Coast. This will separate family members from their loved ones, and they will not be able to give them the love and attention they desperately need.

I ask the Premier: Will you order reversal of this decision so that the seniors will have their family members near them at this very stressful time of their lives? Because there is no silver lining unless you reverse this decision.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you very much, Speaker.

After just shy of 40 years in clinical practice, I know how difficult it is when everybody in the care team and the patient and their family realize that the senior can no longer safely go back to their own home, which is ideally where we would like them all to be. That is a traumatic and a difficult period.

What is going on in Western at the moment is a discussion, case by case with each family, to decide which of the options presented by the care team makes sense. That could be rehousing, as it were, under the first available bed policy; it could be staying where you are in the new acute care facility until a bed in the geographical area becomes available.

Those are individual options, and I would encourage the families to continue to work with Western zone.

Thank you.

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

E. JOYCE: I just want to let the minister know there is no option to move to the new acute care. Whoever is telling you that, you should tell that to the family members. That is absolutely not true.

I'm just letting you know, I say to the minister, that people are called and said, come get your loved ones; we're moving them Monday. If you don't let us move them, then you have to take them home. A lot of them can't go home.

Mr. Premier, we're celebrating 75 years since joining Confederation. Most of these long-term care patients were born before Confederation. A lady from your own district stated publicly that her mother is being transferred, who is 83 years old. She only found out on May 21 and her mother needs additional supports. When asked what will happen if she refused to let her mom go, the answer was you take her home, which is impossible to do, due to her condition of a stroke.

It is obvious that your government kept this decision from the families. The old Western Memorial Regional Hospital will remain open for laundry services, administration and other activities.

I ask the Premier: Please have the decision reversed until a more suitable and compassionate solution is found.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let me address the preamble first, if that information is correct, and we're happy to take that back and discuss that with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services. It can be an incredibly stressful time when people are unable to go back to their homes, having seen that myself, as a clinician.

That said, it is a combination of clinical decision-making that, of course, we can't,

as a government, interfere with clinical decision-making. If there are operational decisions that can provide a more empathetic and understanding pathway for those patients, we're happy to have that discussion with Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The time for Oral Questions has expired.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Select Committees.

Tabling of Documents.

Tabling of Documents

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

A. PARSONS: Speaker, I am pleased to stand in the House today to table the 2023 annual report for Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro in accordance with section 5.2 of the *Energy Corporation Act*.

SPEAKER: Are there any further tabling of documents?

Notices of Motion.

Answers to Questions for which Notice has been Given.

Petitions.

Petitions

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

P. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

WHEREAS there are approximately 2,500 students currently enrolled in four elementary and one intermediate school in Paradise, with an additional 3,300 students

enrolled in intermediate and high schools in neighbouring communities; and

WHEREAS with a population of about 24,000, Paradise is growing every year with some school-age groups doubling in size over a 10-year period; and

WHEREAS there is no high school in Paradise and hundreds of students are being transported to nearby communities to attend school; and

WHEREAS nearby intermediate and high schools are beyond capacity and seeing class size escalate to unmanageable sizes;

THEREFORE we petition the House of Assembly as follows: To urge government to see the urgency for the need of a high school in Paradise and plan a course of action for when this will be implemented.

Speaker, this community has been very vocal on a high school for Paradise. They have formed a committee. There have been meetings after meetings. Since the budget, it's been certainly very discouraging comments I've gotten from many, many residents when you see \$50,000 put in the budget for the preliminary work on a high school. Through Estimates, sitting down and hearing the questions deferred to Transportation and Infrastructure is again doubly discouraging. Then speaking to Transportation and Infrastructure and hearing that it's a placeholder. The money put in the budget was a placeholder. That's extremely discouraging. Ten years ago, this was on the agenda, top of the capital works list and here we are no further ahead.

Now in my capacity as shadow minister for Education, I'm also getting calls now on Kenmount Terrace. They're calling me because they can't get an answer from anyone else. They're telling me the same thing with Kenmount Terrace is there's not a shovel in the ground. There's mixed messages on whether the piece of land is

already secured or not. They're extremely discouraged that there's no plan there.

So we have these schools announced, but in this petition, which I've presented many times, we ask for a plan of a course of action for when this will be implemented. Currently, there is no plan. There is no knowledge of enrolment numbers, as we learned through Estimates. There is no thought on where a school may go. There is no engineering or architect work done on it. There is absolutely nothing, at this point in time, done on this school. That's extremely discouraging.

So I can speak for the committee in my district that we will continue to push for definite and definitive answers and timelines for when this school and others will be built.

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

J. ABBOTT: Thank you, Speaker.

I just wanted to respond to the petition. I'm concerned by the Members sort of statements or implications that there's no planning, that things aren't happening. That is the furthest thing from the truth. We are working diligently on each of those schools. They're at different stages of planning. Like anything, they're not designed overnight, they're not built overnight. We are working on that and we will keep the House informed and the Members informed on their progress.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

Throughout rural Newfoundland and Labrador, a significant number of Local Service Districts, unincorporated areas and small municipalities, have no civic address,

only a post office box number. In today's world, there is much frustration with availing of online deliveries and even the responses to 911 response calls.

We, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to commence immediately a plan to have all rural Newfoundland and Labrador with civic addressing before the end of the 2024 calendar year and registered with the national database, that of Canada Post.

The first inquiry I had about this came from a graduate of this year's convocation at MUN, who was home in Spillars Cove, Bernard Fleming, and well, just for the Speaker's own information, he's convocating with a Bachelor of Business Administration.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: He would like to have had deliveries come to his home from FedEx or UPS or Purolator, but those MHAs representing rural Newfoundland would know they don't deliver because there is no civic numbering. It's an item that doesn't cost money, but it's an item that takes a little bit of coordination in order for it to happen.

I speak from George's Brook - Milton when we became incorporated, we went through about a year, ourselves, trying to get registered with what we perceived to be the national database of Canada Post.

Anybody in their district recently would have known if they had applications for the federal government's Greener Homes, if you were in rural Newfoundland and didn't have a civic address, boy, you had a heap of trouble. Woody Power in Newman's Cove, you had Barry Pelley in Harcourt and many others like that, they couldn't access the Greener Homes Grant. They also asked why the provincial government didn't work with the federal government for the smooth

delivery of the program for rural Newfoundland.

But I would say this is not a big effort. I'm not sure why the government hasn't already endeavored to create municipal addresses or civic addresses in these areas because it would make it much smoother for any federal programs and other programs that would be forthcoming.

Thank you very much, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. Minister of Environment and Climate Change for a response.

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I just had to jump up. I wasn't planning on getting up but I did want to clarify something that the hon. Member from Bonavista just said.

We can't control what the federal government Greener Homes can do and the way they administer their program, but one thing we did do, and we did listen to the constituents that we all represent in this House of Assembly, and made changes to streamline that process to take in the lower income part of the Greener Homes program to streamline that process and allow that to be faster for the constituents that we all represent. I know that in St. John's versus Bonavista there are differences, of course, and we worked through some of those concerns.

But I did want to clarify that we can't control the Greener Homes program from the federal side and I do share some concerns with respect to that, but I do want to clarify that's not a provincial initiative from that sect. We are talking with them on the provincially run program through Newfoundland and Labrador Hydro as well as Newfoundland and Labrador Power, we're working with those individuals.

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

This is a petition for social housing from Ms. Hart's class at Lakecrest Independent School. These are the reasons for the petition:

If people had decent homes that didn't have mould and did have heating electricity and safety, they wouldn't get sick as often and have their basic needs met, costing the government less on health care expenses.

The minimum wage has risen to \$15.60, which is still not enough to have one's basic needs met or to buy a decent house.

If people had government-funded homes to live in they would only have to pay 25 per cent of their monthly income instead of the astounding 50 per cent to 75 per cent or more. They could use that extra 25 per cent of their income to fulfill basic needs, have health insurance or even acquire an education to help lift themselves out of poverty.

Poverty hurts people and society. By investing more in the prevention of illness and extreme poverty, the government should focus itself on reducing poverty for the individual's sake and the whole community.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goal's number one focus is no poverty. The goal is by 2030 to eradicate extreme poverty for all people everywhere. The UN Sustainable Development Goal 11 is to ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing for all. How can a nation like Canada not have safe, affordable and adequate housing already?

Therefore, we, the undersigned, call upon the House of Assembly to urge the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador to build more government-funded housing

and social housing markets to help people in need.

It's quite clear, Speaker, there may be a role for the private market in housing but maybe not in the affordable housing area. We've called for more non-market, community-based housing on a number of occasions and they have even offered solutions. We had the CMAJ report. We've got a prisoner who's opting to stay in prison because he is homeless. We have a number of people who are facing eviction as a result of significant rent increases. I've had one landlord tell me he increased his rent from \$1,100 to \$2,500 because of the number of people chasing after the property.

So the fact is that we have a problem here; it is affordability when it comes to housing. There is a role here for government and community organization to fulfill that need so that people who do not have the capability to take part in the private market have a decent place in which to live and an affordable place.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

This House is going to stand recessed for two or three minutes in order to prepare for Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

This House do stand recessed.

Recess

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Are the House Leaders ready?

This House is back in session.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Mr. Speaker, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor of Newfoundland and Labrador has arrived.

SPEAKER: Admit Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor.

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor takes the Chair.)

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: It is the wish of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor that everybody be seated.

SPEAKER: May it please Your Honour, the General Assembly of the province has at its present session passed certain bills to which, in the name and on behalf of the General Assembly, I respectfully request Your Honour's assent.

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, "An Act to Amend the Income Tax Act, 2000." (Bill 35)

A bill, "An Act to Repeal the Atlantic Provinces Harness Racing Commission Act." (Bill 44)

A bill, "An Act Respecting King's Counsel and Order of Precedence in the Courts." (Bill 53)

A bill, "An Act to Repeal the Colonial Building Act." (Bill 57)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Liquor Control Act and the Liquor Corporation Act." (Bill 62)

A bill, "An Act Respecting the Practice of Pharmacy in the Province." (Bill 66)

A bill, "An Act Respecting Recognition of the 75th Anniversary of Confederation." (Bill 67)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Memorial University Act No. 2." (Bill 69)

A bill, "An Act to Repeal the Economic Diversification and Growth Enterprises Act." (Bill 70)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Correctional Services Act." (Bill 71)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Limitations Act." (Bill 74)

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

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Vital Statistics Act, 2009." (Bill 77)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Credit Union Act, 2009 No. 2." (Bill 78)

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Highway Traffic Act and the Provincial Offences Act." (Bill 79)

HER HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR (Joan Marie Aylward, ONL): In His Majesty's name, I assent to these bills.

I would like to take this opportunity right now to say a few words to each of you here in the House today. I would like to thank each of you for your determination for what seems to be a very successful session.

I would also like to take this opportunity to offer Minister Tom Osborne well in his retirement. And I want to thank each of you again, as you go back to your districts for the summer to spend time with the people that elected you and to return those services to them, so a successful summer.

I hope to see many of you as we do our repatriation of our Unknown Soldier this summer. I think it's a very important event for all of us. Many of us have had the opportunity to bring our Unknown Soldier home to this soil for all of us to acknowledge and be able to visit and pay homage to him for his service to all of us. Very emotional and very important event as we look to that repatriation.

So, once again, thank you all so much. I recognize that being an elected representative is not always easy. I know you spend a lot of time away from your families and it truly is a family issue. So, once again, thank you and thank you for your successful deliberations over the course of this session.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: All rise.

(Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor leaves the Chamber. The Speaker returns to the Chair.)

SPEAKER: Please be seated.

Order, please!

Before we call upon the leaders to have a few closing words, as Speaker, I am proud to announce the inaugural House of Assembly mace tour, an education and outreach initiative in which myself and House officials will travel to various areas of the province with the mace, visiting schools and hosting broader community events. The underlying principles of this initiative is to increase citizen engagement with Parliament for people in areas who cannot readily visit the Legislature in person and to increase awareness respecting democracy, governance and citizenship.

The mace tour also complements commemorations for the 75th anniversary of Confederation, given that our current mace was gifted by the Province of British Columbia upon Newfoundland and Labrador joining Canada – or Canada joining Newfoundland – as a 10th province.

As Speaker, I wish to acknowledge the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation for supporting this initiative as part of Confederation 75. That partnership has been invaluable to the House of Assembly in bringing this exciting education initiative to fruition. Also, thank you to Transportation and Infrastructure for providing a vehicle for our tour.

The House of Assembly also acknowledges, with regret, that it is not possible to visit every area and corner of this vast province with the time and resources available for the inaugural version of the tour. We will endeavour to visit areas in close proximity

to the capital region later this year and to other areas and electoral districts not captured during this tour in subsequent years.

The mace tour will kickoff on Monday, June 2, at Bishop White School in Port Rexton and conclude on Friday, June 14, in Menihek High School in Labrador City, travelling a total of 5,627 kilometres, including a flight to and from Rigolet. Over the course of that time, the mace will visit 13 electoral districts, including 10 schools, five municipalities and will explore opportunities for friendship and learning with Indigenous governments and organizations.

The final schedule of the inaugural mace tour will be distributed in the coming days. I encourage all Members of districts we are visiting and those in close adjacent areas and residents of Newfoundland and Labrador to join us during this exciting educational initiative.

Thank you.

I now call upon the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Speaker.

The end of a session in the House of Assembly is often a time of reflection and appreciation. We look back at the last number of months and all the hard work that has been done to create a stronger, better Newfoundland and Labrador. The debates are energized by that desire, regardless of the side of the House that you are on, and we both respect that.

This year, I can't help but recognize that, along with some exciting and meaningful progress and events, we also navigated change and loss together. We bid farewell to esteemed colleagues as they embarked on new chapters in their lives and we laid to rest our dear friend, colleague and minister, the hon. Derrick Bragg.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: It has been busy and there's no doubt that these are indeed challenging times across the world. So I want to take this opportunity to say a special thank you to my colleagues on this side of the House and their families who support them, for your hard work, for being steadfast in your efforts, for supporting each other and the government, the people, the province and me, as your Premier.

I want to offer sincere thanks to the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the Third Party and all Members of this hon. House and their families, because while you sit here, it is your families who serve. You take the responsibility of representing your districts and bringing their voice to the people's House, to this Legislature and for that, despite the debate sometimes, I, certainly, as Premier, am entirely grateful.

Your dedicated service to the hard-working people of Newfoundland and Labrador is honourable and hard work. While our debates here in this House are lively at times, we know that they are motivated and inspired by the people who we represent.

Speaker, *Budget 2024* is titled: *Transforming Our Health. Our Economy. Our Province*. It bolsters record-high investments in health care, seniors, housing and poverty reduction. It invests in an economy that is adapting to change and taking the opportunity to put Newfoundland and Labrador first in the world.

It highlights our commitments to improving the well-being of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians. An incredible amount of work goes into preparing and delivering a responsible budget, one that is socially progressive but fiscally responsible. To our Minister of Finance and her extraordinary team in the department, my caucus, colleagues and all those working in all departments across government in Newfoundland and Labrador, thank you.

Our government is making a historic \$4.1-billion investment in health care. This supports our work to transform the health care system with a focus on improving access to primary care and different ways to deliver services, with a focus on recruitment and retention of health care professionals. We are already seeing those results: over 500 nurses recruited, over 100 doctors recruited. We are making progress and we are committed to those who are finding trouble accessing care to continue to improve for them.

Throughout the province, there are now 19 Family Care Teams in various stages of implementation with four more announced in *Budget 2024*. These were new terms to the people of the province just two years ago. Now they are being fully embraced as the change that is required to transform our health care system from the 1960s to meet the modern demands of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Urgent care centres are providing services in two locations with two more coming in 2025. Again, since April 2023, just over a year ago, we have recruited more than 100 doctors and more than 500 nurses.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: Outstanding work, and there is \$10 million in *Budget 2024* to continue with our aggressive recruitment and retention efforts. We are establishing mobile primary care teams to deliver the care where patients are, people are, families are.

We are expanding the Mobile Crisis Response Team, reducing surgical wait times and expanding options for those seeking mental health and addictions support.

Is there more to do? Absolutely, but we have a plan and a vision for all Newfoundland and Labrador.

Speaker, this year we also made Housing a standalone portfolio giving it the attention it deserves, and *Budget 2024* provided \$44 million in new funding for the department to create more affordable homes and repair and maintain existing ones. We are making housing more affordable while increasing affordable housing.

In addition, *Budget 2024* announced a record investment in our province's seniors that included \$10 million for a Seniors' Well-Being Plan and new centres of excellence in aging in regional hospitals. This is a new concept but one that is so important to meet the changing demographics of our province.

On top of that, *Budget 2024* included \$41 million in new schools; \$26 million to support early childhood educators' wage grid; and \$288 million for provincial highways and roads.

Speaker, these are just some of the highlights. We're able to do this while also keeping money in Newfoundlanders and Labradorians' pockets. We know that the cost-of-living crisis is a global phenomenon, but we know that we need to employ local and provincial solutions. That's why we continue our plan: no new taxes, no new fee increases; maintaining the eight cent per litre reduction on the price of gasoline and diesel – the second lowest in the country; increasing the Child Benefit by 300 per cent; maintaining the elimination of the retail sales tax on home insurance; maintaining a 50 per cent cut in the cost of vehicle registration; 15 per cent increase to the Seniors' Benefit; covering the cost of drivers' medicals for people 75 years and older; continuing the Home Heating Supplement.

While that is a lot, we know families still struggle, and there is still more to be done. Our government is supporting families, strengthening our economy and is still scheduled to achieve a balanced budget. This year, we announced the creation of an Education Accord to reimagine, like we did

with the Health Care Accord, the K-to-12 education system. It is in need of modernization, and our government is not afraid to tackle that challenge head-on.

Nearly 9,400 children are in, now, \$10-a-day child care spots. Just four years ago, that number was zero. Today, it is 9,400 spots, with 2,000 more spaces to be achieved within the department.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to grow our population to meet the demographic challenges that exist in Newfoundland and Labrador. We proudly welcomed more than 5,000 permanent residents to our shores in 2023, meeting and exceeding our target of 5,100 newcomers. We did it, Mr. Speaker, three years ahead of schedule.

We know our province is perfectly transitioned, right now, Mr. Speaker. Despite the challenges, our province has, not what the country needs, what the world needs right now. This is our time. This is Newfoundland and Labrador's time to lead, not just the nation, but the world. We have all the key ingredients: critical minerals, low-carbon-emitting oil and gas products, an abundance of new green, clean, renewable energy resources.

As we work together reaching net zero, we continue to proudly invest in our valuable resources, our critical minerals. Responsible offshore oil, which we continue to be so proud of and will continue to support that industry as it is crucial not just for the Newfoundland and Labrador economy, but it is crucial and necessary for the global supply of secure, ethical oil. We are about to embark on a full, new, green renewable energy initiative across our rural communities. Almost \$80 billion in CapEx is expected and 12,000 new sustainable jobs for our economy.

We've taken several initiatives to position the province with respect to the historic and important fishing industry. We heard their voices; we heard their concerns and we

have acted. They wanted outside buyers, Mr. Speaker; we arranged for outside buyers. They wanted a formula; we went ahead and allowed for a formula with respect to crab prices. Increased capacity and, I'm proud to say, a new loan guarantee program to help harvesters, enterprises, get out from high-interest private loans and help us help them.

Speaker, we are putting in work and these are just some of the examples of how. 2024 is a big year for Newfoundland and Labrador. The Year of the Arts is putting a spotlight on our unique and vibrant arts community that protects our traditions, celebrates them, passes them on to future generations and celebrates them around the world.

It is also the 75th anniversary of Canada joining Newfoundland and Labrador. And where would Canada be without us? It is time to celebrate that milestone throughout the year. We have a variety of programs, as we reflect on all our province has to contribute to the great and proud nation that is Canada.

We will mark the centennial of the Newfoundland National War Memorial. This week, we started our son's travel home. July 1, we will ensure that he is home for reflection of all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians and the service that he provided for the freedoms we enjoy forever more.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: As the Lieutenant Governor said, Mr. Speaker, I encourage every Member of this House and all your constituents to come to the capital city on July 1 and to stand in solemn homage to honour our fallen son.

Speaker, on behalf of the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, a sincere thank you to you; the staff of your office; the staff of the House of Assembly; the Clerk

and the staff in the Clerk's office; Table Officers; the Sergeant-at-Arms; Legislative Library; Hansard; the Broadcast team; and our Pages.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: None of this would be possible without you. We are the ones participating in the debate; you are the ones governing the debate to make sure that the debate concludes in a respectful conclusion for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, and we're eternally grateful for your counsel and your decisions.

Debate on key issues and passing of important legislation, again, requires fulsome debate. It requires framing the question. It requires ensuring that all sides are heard. It does not require getting personal, and I'm happy to say that for the most part both sides of the House respect that. It is incumbent upon us, as future generations look to us as leaders, to provide the correct example of how to reach the right decisions through robust debate, but appropriate and respectful debate.

To the security guards and the Commissionaires who serve at the Confederation Building, thank you for being here every single day. I come in early in the morning, as you know, Mr. Speaker, and they are on guard for us all hours, all days, holidays, weekends. Six in the morning they are here to ensure that we have what we need: a secure and safe work environment.

To every single public servant, your job is so important. The public service is a special calling. One that requires a special person, one who sees the good of the province often ahead of themselves. To each and every person who works in the public service, thank you.

Finally, to all our political staff here and in our districts, regardless of parties, thank you for showing up for all of us in this room. We sit here because you sit there. You stand up

for us, provide us with support and advice, and offer the so needed help to constituents in concern.

Looking forward to the summer months, I'm excited, as I know you all are too, to take in the beautiful sights and advance across our beautiful province and make memories with my family and friends. I hope everybody has time, not just to spend with their family and friends and constituents, but to look after themselves as well.

This job can be taxing, it can be straining, it can be stressful. You can only do your best when you look after yourself as well. So please take the time to do a mental health check on yourself and make sure that you are being healthy as well.

I wish you all a healthy, safe and enjoyable season and I look forward to welcoming you all back in the fall to continue our good work and to hear a good question from Loyola.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

It's my honour and privilege to stand here and talk about the last session. Of course, the end of any sitting is a traditional time when we wish everyone well and talk about the hard work that has been done here. But I want to start off, if I could, to take just a minute to pay tribute to two great individuals that we lost in our province this year – or three, actually.

The first one I want to talk about is Rex Murphy. I don't know if everybody knows, but Rex actually had a supporting role for this House before he actually became a candidate. I've been told that there are documents in the Legislative Library you can sometimes find his name scrawled in the top corner as proof that he was here.

He loved and served this province and country, as we know, with honour, and it's fitting that we honour him here.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I also want to mention it's hockey playoff time and all of us grew up listening to the voice of hockey, Bob Cole. I know the Premier has made great remarks about Bob Cole here in the House and talked about Bob Cole. I think the Premier said: Oh, baby! I remember also that line, but I also remember the line when the Philadelphia Flyers were playing against the Russians and Bob Cole famously said: They're going home. And now, Bob, you are home. So I just wanted to (inaudible).

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: The other person, again, the Premier also mentioned him, is one of our own colleagues that we lost this year, Derrick Bragg. All of us that knew Derrick appreciated his sense of humour, appreciated his commitment to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the hard work that he did. I'm sure to all his colleagues on the other side of the House, I know they clearly, clearly miss him.

My dad used to say that no one ever dies as long as someone remembers, and Derrick Bragg will be remembered here in this House of Assembly.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Of course, I want to thank the voters of the Stephenville - Port au Port District who have given me the honour to be able to stand here in this House of Assembly and represent them every single day and bring their issues and their concerns here to the House of Assembly and, of course, all of the constituents in all of the districts that we all represent.

We represent the people of Newfoundland and Labrador and the fact that we have the

democratic freedom to be able to do that is not lost on the fact that when you think about what we just did this past week, bringing home someone who had fought for that freedom. So I just wanted to say to all the constituents out there for all the districts, to thank them for the honour of serving them.

Of course, my family, I would never be able to stand here without their support and all of you, as the Premier has alluded to earlier, it would not be possible without the support of your families. It takes a tremendous toll. You are an awful long time away from home, whether it's here in the House of Assembly or just travelling throughout the district. There are some of our districts that are quite large and it takes a lot of time and a lot of effort to go around them and to represent them.

I want to thank, of course, my caucus and our staff, who are my family in the House of Assembly and in government, and to all the people. We oftentimes get a little bit raucous and a little bit heated in debate but that's the role of the Opposition. We have duty to hold the government to account and as much as we do this and sometimes argue back and forth, I think as the Premier alluded to, we should always focus on the issue and not the individual. That's something that I think we always have to keep reminding ourselves to do.

But I also know that there are times when we can get things done, but things just don't happen. I think of the effort that was put in in the last few days to bring the *Limitations Act* to fruition. That took a lot of effort by everyone in this House to make that happen and it was a true sign of what the House of Assembly, in my opinion, was meant to do. We did it and we did it well.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: I would obviously have liked to see the Crown *Lands Act*, the new legislation for that, to had been introduced

and we would be here debating that, but that didn't happen.

We were also united, of course, Speaker, as I just mentioned, in honouring the homecoming of our Unknown Soldier. Again, I want to applaud all the members of the Royal Canadian Legion for propelling and overseeing this historic venture. I want to thank the Premier for representing everyone in the province in bringing our soldier home.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: We look forward to July 1 in this truly historic Memorial Day across this province and certainly down at the Waterfront.

I also want to especially commend my colleague from Terra Nova, himself a veteran, for joining the delegation in Europe and accompanying our soldier back home and for enduring the emotions that washed over him as he experienced this and for some of the most poignant words ever uttered in this House of Assembly straight from the heart.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: But, again, as I said, it's not just politics that happens in this House, this is the people's House. There are issues that are raised when it comes to issues that affect people all over Newfoundland and Labrador. We stand here, we debate them, we go forward with them. Yes, it gets heated at times and animated at times, but it's about what's at stake. Because what we're talking about is people, the people of Newfoundland and Labrador who have put their trust in the 40 of us here in this House of Assembly to represent them and look after their interests. That's exactly what we attempt to do every single day that we sit here in this House.

Of course, the fact that we are leaving the House now, as it's closing, people think that

we're going on vacation. A lot of people think that, oh, you're on holidays now, but we all know the difference. All of us will be on tour this summer, I'm sure, throughout your districts and others and meeting with people and still the work of an MHA does not stop. People still have needs and we are there in our offices to try and help them navigate, whether it's the health system, whether it's the education system or whatever the issue is, that's our job and we continue to do it. All of us who are here today understand that role and we've been doing it and doing it well, I would argue.

I also want, of course, to congratulate all of those people who have actually put their names forward to run for office. We've had two by-elections in this particular session of the House. We had one previously, the previous session, and two in this session. But I want to thank everybody who has put their name forward, because putting your name forward to run for office is a noble thing to do. It takes a lot of courage and it takes a lot of effort. So I think it's not just about the people who have won the seat or occupy the seats, it's all about those who took that time to actually put their name forward and I want to congratulate all of them.

Of course, I particularly want to congratulate the two by-election winners who are sitting here, one in my caucus, Jim McKenna and Lin Paddock who just won the District of Baie Verte - Green Bay.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: And, of course, in order for us to have by-elections, it usually means that somebody is no longer here with us. I also want to pay tribute to those who have left us: David Brazil, Brian Warr, and most recently of course, the Minister of Health and Community Services, Tom Osborne – the longest-serving Member in the House of Assembly.

While it's hard to imagine the House of Assembly without Tom Osborne sitting in it, we will all be haunted in some ways by his picture hanging on the wall to remind us. I wish he was here because I think the province, all of us, owe him tremendous gratitude. To spend that much time representing people in the House of Assembly, it's an amazing record – amazing record – and so, Tom, wherever you are, congratulations.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I want to thank you, because you are the keeper of this House, and you do a great job of keeping us under control. You have that ability to smile at certain times that calms us all down and actually puts that calming influence, but at the same time you have the ability to be firm. Someone once said: What's your Speaker like? I said firm, but fair. And that's exactly what we need in a Speaker, and I appreciate the work that you do in keeping this House in order every single day.

And I want to thank our Clerk and our Table Officers who sit there every day. They're like someone caught in the middle of an exchange going back and forth, but they sit there with such professionalism and dedication to the job that they do that it's amazing that all this work gets done every single day. So again, to everyone, thank you so much.

Our parliamentary Pages, as well, thank you for coming here to the House of Assembly and being part of our team, being part of the House of Assembly team. It's an honour to have you with us, and wherever your careers take you – maybe someday instead of sitting in those chairs, you'll sit in these ones. Good luck in that.

And, of course, down here we've got our Sergeant-at-Arms. How could I forget – can't talk about him, he's now going to be on tour. Someone said: We're going to chase the Mace, as opposed to Chase the

Ace this summer. But it's going to be fun to bring that Mace to our schools and throughout the province and let the people understand the historical significance of it, and of this House of Assembly.

Of course, we've all talked about our Commissionaires, our security staff and the RNC officers who protect us. The Broadcast crews that are behind these cameras, the staff at Hansard, the parliamentary library staff, the staff of the Speaker's and the Clerk's office, and all the staff at Corporate and Members' Services for all of the work they do in supporting us every single day.

Then we have all of our statutory Officers and their staff, including the Commissioner for Legislative; the Office of the Auditor General; the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate; the Office of the Seniors' Advocate; the Office of the Citizens' Representative; the Office of the Information and Privacy Commission; and the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer.

So you can see there's quite a list of people that actually make this Assembly work; that make us able to work here in our Assembly. And, of course, our own caucus staff, all of our constituency assistants who hold our offices down, who do the work, who really work hard for all of us. When we're sitting in here debating, they're out there taking those calls and solving those problems for everyone.

I also want to thank the Government House Leader and all of the ministers, their officials and staff who brief us on legislation, provide us with documents we need and answer questions in Estimates – sometimes. We cannot function without those good, working relationships and we really do appreciate every single briefing, every answered question and every piece of information that we get. I think that that's what we've always talked about; transparency, disclosure is at the heart of every functioning democracy.

We appreciate every ATIPP officer and the amount of work they have to do in responding to ATIPP requests. We know it's not easy and there are lots of them.

I want to commend the hard-working Members of the independent caucus for the work that you guys do in keeping everybody honest in the House of Assembly and bringing those issues forward on behalf of not only your constituents, but others. I want to thank the Third Party and their caucus for the very same reason and, of course, as I said earlier, the government caucus, ministers and the Premier.

I want to conclude the sitting with kind words and best wishes across the aisle, but, of course, you realize that when we come back, we'll be going back to holding you accountable for all of your actions.

I want to wish you good luck and safe travels to those of you that are travelling. Enjoy your time back in your districts. Take some time for yourself, as the Premier has alluded to.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that we, as the PC Party of Newfoundland and Labrador, are committed to making this province a province where life is affordable, where health care is accessible, where no opportunity is left untapped and nobody is left behind; a place where people not only come from but come to, and a place where people want to live, not leave. That's our vision.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm going to start off with, first of all, thanking my wife Michelle, my children and their partners and, probably most of all, my

grandchildren, who probably don't understand the work I do here or the work we do for sure, but they are a source of strength.

To thank, I think, my constituency assistant, or many of us might call our work wife. In many ways, they are the ones here who field the calls when we're down in the House of Assembly, take care of the initial – actually, work through the problems from the beginning to the end and, in some ways, probably know more than – well, I'll speak for my constituency assistant who definitely knows more than I know.

To our caucus staff, our political staff, the researchers, the chief of staff, our communications people, our sessional assistants who basically keep the office humming. And I would say that's the same for all parties.

I do have to say a very profound thank you to my colleagues, and I'll use Lela and Jordan. As I've said before, we sort of form the NDP triad in here. If anything about a triangle, it is very strong. But they are the ones who provide the balance to my townie side. I'm a born-and-bred townie, so it is always good to have people from the far-flung regions who can keep me grounded and make sure I'm focusing on the other issues in this province and in their district.

I would have to say not only to my colleagues, but to my colleagues in this House, there are at least two other colleagues with whom I do have a common bond, and that's the Member for Bonavista and the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development. The three of us come from that teaching background, so we do come from that whole idea of helping people and helping our students succeed.

But here within this House, there is an opportunity on this side to have these discussions on the Committees we serve on to find solutions. And in the debate, if nothing else, it does give you the

opportunity to hear the other sides to things, Speaker.

To my constituents – and I would say this for all constituents – if nothing else, as a teacher, I often learn an awful lot from my students as well. Not just about being corrected factually, but in terms of their life experiences and how they saw things. Often, it's with the engagement with constituents that you get another perspective and a deeper perspective and a deeper understanding.

I definitely want to say a thank you to the Clerk, to the Table Officers who have to listen to the debate and the banter at times and so on and so forth. But thank you for keeping this place on the ball and running.

To Speaker Bennett who I think, yesterday, when I was watching him standing up waiting for everyone to calm down, I said: Man, that's just like being a teacher. It's just waiting until the unruly class settled down and came to order, as simple as that. Although, I think, Speaker, I would have said at some point: That's it; out; down to the principal's office. Trouble is, you're the principal in this case. I think there are a few on this side who probably were to the principal's office.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Never.

J. DINN: Never.

Notice, Speaker, I said few. I didn't identify the Member for Ferryland.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

J. DINN: But thank you for at least keeping some semblance of order and keeping track of the time and making sure we get our opportunity to speak in the House and to rule on points of order and so on and so forth, sort of that independent and fair arbiter of issues.

To the Pages who bring the water, pick up our petitions, bring information to us, and especially to Cody, congratulations on your convocation and best wishes in what you do next.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: Now, I do have to say he's been given a hard time lately by the Sergeant-at-Arms and I just want you to know I've recognized that, Cody, and I'm there with you.

AN HON. MEMBER: His wife was here.

J. DINN: That's right.

To the Broadcast staff, to the people at Hansard who basically make sure, if anything else, a transparency that the debates here, the comments, the questions, the answers are recorded for the public.

To our Sergeant-at-Arms who has done a terrific job and, mind you, has had to endure the commentary from the Member for Paradise and myself about the level of how shiny his shoes are, and done it with good grace, I'll say that. But thank you very much to the Sergeant-at-Arms –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. DINN: – who also, as I understand, might have a walk-on spot in an upcoming movie, maybe as the body or maybe as whatever. I did talk to the author of the books about landing him a spot.

AN HON. MEMBER: He's asleep in it.

J. DINN: You notice I didn't make that comment, but I was thinking it.

To the Commissionaires, to the security who are there to greet us, there to make sure that not only us, but the people who work in the precinct are safe and secure and are able to do their jobs properly.

To the cleaning staff, to the people who come into our office, and I think of it, you know, we take for granted but emptying the trash, keeping the carpets clean, you name it, but they're probably in many ways the unsung heroes, Speaker, and to all the public servants who make this building work.

Speaker, it's been a time – and when I think of the session, I'm thinking very much like a teacher from September until June – I'm including the fall of the year – but it has been a time of transition, time of tremendous change.

The Repatriation of the Unknown Soldier, the 75th anniversary of Confederation, but certainly the repatriation of the Unknown Soldier is a significant milestone of which we get to be part in this House of Assembly. I can't express what this will mean. I can't say that my grandchildren understood it. My oldest was expecting a parade on Saturday and was rather disappointed: What? It's over? But I do think that years down the road, she'll understand the significance.

We've had the passing of Derrick Bragg, and he'll be missed. I loved his sense of humour, his principles. The retirement of David Brazil and Brian Warr, and to Minister Osborne, as well, who I was prepared to offer him an honorary membership in the NDP so that he could say that he sat with all parties in the House. I still might offer that to him at some point.

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. DINN: Probably no.

Welcome to our new Members, too. To Jim McKenna, to Minister Hutton, to Lin Paddock for your new trial by fire, because I still remember the first time that I was elected and I remember the quote I used. It's sort of like riding a bicycle, except you're on fire, the bikes on fire, everything is on fire.

So it's been a tremendous – it's been a historic session in many ways. I will say this: I want to speak to one accomplishment and that's the passing of the *Limitations Act*. Not only because we passed it, but because there was co-operation by all parties and input from the independents, we were able to accomplish something that came as close as possible to helping those children who suffered physical and psychological abuse.

I think in many ways, Speaker, there is something to be said, as we go forward, about how we can accomplish these things before we start trying to debate them in the House. We can actually have these conversations and maybe make the debate and the proceedings more productive. Because I think there are still issues that need to be addressed, that we could employ this. We could start having those discussions, looking at ways in which we can solve them.

We have a two-year date set for the end of travel nurses, but we still need a plan to get there. Housing issues are still significant. We have a stand-alone portfolio for the Housing, but we also need a mandate for the minister, and we also have people who are living in jail, who prefer to stay in jail than to come out because they have no place – they're homeless.

We have, in the education system – it won't be fixed by an Education Accord – about composition and classroom violence. I will say this: Teachers, whatever new initiative has taken place, it's something that every teacher will be in on. They have been modernizing the system as we go.

Basic income, a livable minimum wage, pay equity are all issues, I think, that are still waiting to be resolved and I think if we can take the approach we did with the *Limitations Act*, we can solve these problems too.

Climate change and a just transition: We talk about affordability and we talk about

inflation, but I can tell you if we look at the effects of climate change, if we're worried about inflation, I have a feeling we're going to find that inflation as a result of climate change is already in effect and is growing exponentially. So I think here that we can have a plan that looks at how do we make sure we protect workers who may be in the oil industry, and how to do we transition to an economy that's greener but also benefits the workers and the communities. That's something we can achieve here in this House as well.

With that, Speaker, I'll finish, and I end with saying I wish everyone a safe, happy summer. Enjoy the time with family and friends, and I really do hope to see you back here in the fall session.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Before we conclude, if I could just have a few moments, I have a few words to say. It reminds me of growing up, being the youngest of 15 children, there wasn't much I could do that my siblings didn't do, and in this case there's not much I can say that hasn't already been said by Members before me. But as we finish the spring session, I just wanted to take a moment to recognize all those who assist in the smooth operations of this institution and our Legislature.

As I said last year, we have a small team compared to most jurisdictions, but we are very mighty in the work we do and the resources that we have here.

I would just like to take a moment to say thank you to the staff who support the House of Assembly behind the scenes, our Corporate and Members' Services, the Legislative Library and our Information Management team, also Hansard and the Broadcast team that do a great job in making sure that each day our audio is

being done properly, great video and everything done.

It takes a lot of work. Many of us don't realize lots of times, we have aging equipment here that we do have some errors in equipment and equipment breaking down, but it seems like every time that has happened our staff downstairs are able to resolve the issue rather quickly. So thank you.

To Transportation and Infrastructure, thank you again for your support. As Members change, desks have to be reorganized here in the Chamber. Thank you also, we've also done some changes up in the gallery to support persons with disabilities to be able to be here. We're doing further upgrades in the coming months to have closed captioning and video screens up in the gallery to accommodate more persons with disabilities.

Thank you to Sabrina Barnes in the Clerk's office. Sabrina has been a great source of information for us, but also making sure that all the paperwork and everything is here for our day-to-day operations.

In the Chamber, a big thank you to our Sergeant-at-Arms, Robert Escott, and also to our Pages, the Commissionaires up in the galleries, and also to the security that helps us keep this institution safe and making sure that Members can work freely within the building.

To my new Deputy Speaker, thank you very much for all your work and co-operation over the last month or so. It's not easy sitting in this Chair, I can attest to it. It's a big learning experience for anybody that takes on the role of your Speaker or Deputy Speaker or Chair of the Committees. You have to be fair and balanced, but, also, as the Member for St. John's Centre said, you have to be firm. I do want to thank you for the great job you've been doing and I look forward to continuing to work with you. Also, to the Deputy Chair of Committees for your

assistance throughout the year and also your past experience as Speaker and the knowledge that you pass along.

To my table officers, Kim Hawley George, the Clerk; our Law Clerk that's fairly new to the role, Gerrie Smith; as well as Bobbi Russell, who's not here right now, she's in the back doing some other work; Kim Hammond; Mark Jerrett; and Evan Beazley.

I would be remiss if I didn't also acknowledge my constituency assistant, Pamela Foss, who's back in my district office, that makes sure that operations – like every other CA for Members – of our constituency and the work is being done back in our districts when we're here in the House. Also, to my executive assistant, Kala Noel, that you're all very familiar with, for her great work that she's been doing and her assistance.

I would also like to thank all Members, and especially the House Leaders, for your co-operation over the last session. As we said, debate can get heated, words are always exchanged back and forth, and I know it's done in the passion of representing your constituents and representing the province to the best of your ability. As the Premier said earlier, debate is good as long as we don't get personal. I think I can commend all Members for that, for keeping debate respectful to each other.

Also, lastly, I would like to thank my family and my constituents back in the Lewisporte - Twillingate District for your support throughout the year. To my family especially, as previously stated, we would not be able to do our jobs here without the support of family members and our constituents back home. So thank you very much for that.

One last reminder, I'll ask all Members to clean everything off your desk before you leave. We have the youth parliament that's going to be starting here next week. So I respectfully ask that you remove things.

In closing, I just wanted to wish everyone a very happy and safe summer. As you travel back to your districts, visit and take part in many of the great events that are going to be happening throughout your own districts, but also throughout the province.

As we conclude, a little tradition that I started when I became Speaker, we always end our session with the "Ode to Newfoundland," and last year we incorporated the "Ode to Labrador." So we will start with the "Ode to Labrador" and I will call upon our colleague, the Member for Lake Melville, to lead us off in the singing.

I'll ask all Members to rise.

P. TRIMPER: Dear land of mountains,
woods and snow,
Labrador, our Labrador.
God's noble gift to us below,
Labrador, our Labrador.

Thy proud resources waiting still,
Their splendid task will soon fulfill,
Obedient to thy Maker's will,
Labrador, our Labrador.

We love to climb thy mountains steep,
Labrador, our Labrador.
And paddle on thy waters deep,
Labrador, our Labrador.

Our snowshoes scar thy trackless plains,
We seek no city streets nor lanes,
We are thy sons while life remains,
Labrador, our Labrador.

SPEAKER: Now I call upon the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality to lead us in the "Ode to Newfoundland."

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

When sun rays crown thy pine clad hills,
And summer spreads her hand,
When silvern voices tune thy rills,
We love thee, smiling land.

We love thee, we love thee,
We love thee, smiling land.

As loved our fathers, so we love,
Where once they stood, we stand;
Their prayer we raise to Heaven above,
God guard thee, Newfoundland.

God guard thee, God guard thee,
God guard thee, Newfoundland.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government
House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by
the Member for CBS, that this House do
now adjourn to the call of the Chair.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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 adjourned to the call of
the Chair.

On motion, the House adjourned to the call
of the Chair.