



Province of Newfoundland and Labrador

FIFTIETH GENERAL ASSEMBLY
OF
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Volume L

SECOND SESSION

Number 88

HANSARD

Speaker: Honourable Derek Bennett, MHA

Wednesday

November 13, 2024

The House met at 10 a.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Government Business

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I call from the Order Paper, Motion 1.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Amend the Public Safety Act, Bill 95, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that the Government House Leader shall have leave to introduce a bill, An Act to Amend the Public Safety Act, Bill 95, and that the said bill be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Amend the Public Safety Act," carried. (Bill 95)

CLERK (Hawley George): A bill, An Act to Amend the Public Safety Act. (Bill 95)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 95 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, for leave to introduce a bill entitled, An Act to Repeal the Financial Services Appeal Board Act and to Amend Various Acts of the Province to Eliminate Appeals to the Financial Services Appeal Board, Bill 96, and I further move that the said bill be now read a first time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 96 be now read a first time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

Motion, the hon. the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL to introduce a bill, "An Act to Repeal the Financial Services Appeal Board Act and to Amend Various Acts of the Province to Eliminate Appeals to the Financial Services Appeal Board," carried. (Bill 96)

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Repeal the Financial Services Appeal Board Act and to Amend Various Acts of the Province to Eliminate Appeals to the Financial Services Appeal Board. (Bill 96)

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

When shall the said bill be read a second time?

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, Bill 96 read a first time, ordered read a second time on tomorrow.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 13.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that An Act to Amend the Medical Act, 2011 No. 2, Bill 83, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 83 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Medical Act, 2011 No. 2." (Bill 83)

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm pleased this morning to discuss a bill, Bill 83, An Act to Amend the Medical Act, 2011 No. 2.

Speaker, as the House is aware, to practise medicine in this province, physicians must

be registered and licensed with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador. The college is mandated by the *Medical Act, 2011* to regulate the practice of medicine in the public interest.

This bill will talk about adding physician assistants, which are advanced practice clinicians who practise medicine under the supervision of a licensed physician. Currently, there is no ability to register or license physician assistants and regulation is recommended because there is a substantial risk to patients if services provided by physician assistants are performed below the expected standard.

The bill will provide, among other things, that a physician assistant be regulated under the act. In order to practise, physician assistants will be required to be registered and licensed with the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Physician assistants are currently a regulated profession in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta and are in the process of becoming a regulated profession in Ontario.

This bill provides for numerous amendments to the *Medical Act, 2011* to appropriately account for the regulation of physician assistant. First, this bill provides amendments that define the practice of physician assisting as meaning the use of physician assisting knowledge, theory and skill to assist the physician in the practice of medicine.

Second, the bill creates a physician assistant licence. Persons eligible for this licence will be those who have completed a post-secondary program in physician assisting and training approved by the council of the college and who possess the other qualifications and requirements prescribed in the regulations.

Third, the amendments provide physician assistants shall be supervised by a

physician and are only entitled to practise in accordance with their education and experience and the terms and conditions the council may, subject to the regulations, attached to the licence.

Fourth, the bill adds title protection for physician assistants by prescribing in the act that only physician assistants registered under the act are entitled to use the title or designation of physician assistant.

And finally, with regard to physician assistants, the bill amends provisions in the act so that in addition to applying to physicians, those provisions apply to physician assistants, where appropriate.

Speaker, this bill also amends the NLMA membership process. This is being done because the current process could cause operational issues. As the *Medical Act, 2011* currently exists, physicians have one month after obtaining the licence to become members of the NLMA. If they do not become members within the prescribed time, their licence is void to the date it was issued.

As the college may be delayed in receiving notification of a physician's failure to pay their NLMA membership fee, this could lead to a scenario where physicians have practised while the licences are voided under the act. The proposed amendments would specify that physicians who receive a licence to practise in this province are automatically NLMA members, leaving it to the NLMA to collect fees and establish other necessary processes.

The proposed amendments give the college the power to void a licence if fees are not paid. In response to feedback from the NLMA, the amendments will clarify that full voting rights in the NLMA are only required to be accorded to physicians who are charged a fee for membership and who pay the fee.

The bill also adds to the list of specifically prescribed objects of the college, including the registration and licensing of physicians, physician assistants and learner; the establishment, maintenance and development of standards for the practice of medicine and the practice of physician assisting; responding and managing complaints and discipline related to the practice of medicine and the practice of physician assisting; and ensuring that the public interest is protected in all matters relating to the practice of medicine and the practice of physician assisting.

Speaker, the bill also amends the composition of the council of the college to reflect requests made by stakeholders including the Professional Association of Residents of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The college is also supportive of these changes and, namely, these changes will include a resident physician on the council; provide that the list of three nominees to the council currently submitted by Memorial University be submitted instead by MUN's faculty of medicine; provide that the council has more regional representation through its elected members and that this elected representation reflects Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services health regions; provide that elected members may be physicians or physician assistants; and provide that two of the public representatives to be named by the council, instead of by the Minister of Health and Community Services.

Speaker, the bill also provides for minor changes to the complaints authorization peer assessment and quality assurance processes and committees, as requested by the college. The bill provides that the complaints authorization committee shall be composed of at least two physicians or physician assistants and at least one member of the council of the college.

Nonetheless, the expectation will remain that the complaints authorization committee

will be formed of council members, where possible, and that non-council members will only be part of the complaints authorization committee when required; for example, when the committee requires specialized knowledge that council members may not have.

The bill also provides that a disciplinary panel shall be composed of at least 10 physicians, at least one physician assistant, where practicable, and at least five persons appointed by the minister to represent the public interest who are not physicians or physician assistants.

(Disturbance.)

AN HON. MEMBER: (Inaudible.)

J. HOGAN: He did. He said the House Leader – I'm going to get it on the record; I never get a chance, but that is the Champions League music.

We can talk about soccer but –

AN HON. MEMBER: Let's put the champion under the table.

J. HOGAN: Liverpool are top of the table. I'm going to send that to all my friends so they know I get to talk about this in the House.

Anyways, back to what's important here today. The bill also provides that a disciplinary panel shall be composed of at least 10 physicians, at least one physician assistant, where practicable, and at least five persons appointed by the minister to represent the public interest who are not physicians or physician assistants. None of the disciplinary panel members can be members of the council.

Additionally, the bill provides that an adjudication tribunal shall consist of three persons, two of whom shall be physicians and physician assistants and one of whom shall be a public interest member.

Where the respondent is a physician, at least one of the persons appointed to the tribunal shall be a physician, where practicable, and when the respondent is a physician assistant, at least one of the persons appointed to the tribunal shall be a physician assistant, where practicable.

In practical terms, during early stages of the regulation, there may not be enough physician assistants to sit on an adjudication tribunal. The proposed language in the bill provides flexibility to the panel to ensure that matters can be scheduled in a timely manner.

The bill also removes the requirement that all members of the peer assessment committee must be physicians and provides that the quality assurance committee may be appointed as the peer assessment committee. The bill specifies that the cost of a reassessment directed by the peer assessment committee shall be paid by the physician and provides that an assessor or member of the peer assessment committee shall not provide information to the council except for information relating to any alleged conduct deserving of sanction.

The amendments would no longer require the peer assessment committee to publish a separate annual report and would provide that the excusing of a witness from supplying information obtained as part of a peer assessment, or from producing documents made by a peer assessment, does apply where the assessment committee refers a matter to the council of the college to be dealt with as a complaint.

In addition to all these changes, Speaker, the bill will remove the requirement that the registrar, deputy registrar and assistant registrars of the college be physicians. The bill will revise the quorum requirement so that it is 50 per cent of the council of the college, plus one member, with a requirement that at least two of those members forming quorum be members appointed to represent the public interest.

The bill provides additional regulation-making power for the college to establish, with the approval of the minister, specific categories of physicians and physician assistants who are licensed in another province or territory but who are not required to be registered and licensed in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The college has advised that it anticipates this new regulation power will be used to provide exceptions to registration and licensing to certain physicians who offer virtual care, work in the armed forces or are visiting instructors and experts.

The bill authorizes the council of the college to determine when a licence issued under the act expires, but will still require that a licence expire no more than one year after being issued.

The bill updates the definition of practice of medicine to better reflect the current practice of medicine, which has evolved since the original definition was drafted and makes other miscellaneous process and language changes, as required. The bill will incorporate consequential amendments for other statutes and regulations to account for the introduction of physician assistants as a regulated profession.

Speaker, significant stakeholder engagement was undertaken in the development of this bill. The Department of Health sought feedback from a variety of stakeholders and received significant feedback from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Newfoundland and Labrador Health Services, the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association and the Canadian Association of Physician Assistants. Where appropriate, changes were made to account for the feedback received.

The coming into force of this bill will be delayed until proclamation and this delay is to allow for the development of new regulations for physician assistants and

amendments to the *Medical Regulations, 2023*, which also come into force when the bill is proclaimed.

In conclusion, Bill 83 will facilitate the registration and licensure of physician assistants in the province, increasing the number of health professions in this province and freeing up physicians to complete other important work. The bill also provides for improvements to the function of the college, therefore improving its public interest mandate.

Speaker, most importantly, these amendments will help improve access to care and facilitate the delivery of health and community services to the people of Newfoundland and Labrador in an efficient way.

I am pleased to present this bill and I ask all hon. Members of this House to join me in supporting it.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's another amendment bill. I guess, for the most part, these bills are presented to us – contentious is not the appropriate word to use because most of this legislation we've dealt with so far this session have been these groups are looking for it. So government is just, basically, making it possible to fulfill their wishes. So there's not a lot of contention to it. There's not a lot of debate that we're going to stand in our place and raise the roof over much of this stuff. These amendments are what they are. They're amendments to an existing piece of legislation to include or exclude and clean up legislation.

So as the minister just said, basically, you're making two changes: to integrate physician assistants to the medical regulatory framework by establishing licensing, registration, oversight structures for their practice. The second is to change the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association membership process so that medical practitioners automatically become members of the NLMA.

These changes in legislation can fit into these categories: permitting the college to regulate physician assistants, the amendments grant the college the authority to regulate physician assistants, include setting standards, licensing requirements, ensuring accountability for physician assistants within the health care system; aims to integrate physician assistants into the regulatory framework for consistent oversight and quality assurance.

Before this legislation was there, there was no regulation for physician assistants, so no ability for them to work in this province. So I guess, on that note, it is well received.

I know that doing work on physician assistants is – I would be remiss if I didn't make this point – too bad they're not doing the same work and attention to the nurse practitioners and their desires to practice privately and take the burden off the health care system as we've advocated for and will continue to advocate for them because I think it's a missed opportunity that government are missing there. I think nurse practitioners could do a lot –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: – and go a long way to alleviate the pressures on our health care system and our family doctor shortage. It's a low-hanging fruit but we'll continue to advocate for it. It's something that we've fought for and will continue to fight for. Who knows, one of these days we'll probably get a chance to fulfill that promise; one of these days soon, hopefully.

Changes to the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association membership process: the amendments modify the membership process for the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, physicians now will automatically become members of the NLMA when registered with the college. If these physicians do not pay their membership fees, the NLMA has the ability to take action including suspending membership.

Changes to the compensation of council and committees: adjustment to the council member compensation is included in amendments and include physician assistants. That's something that I'll be discussing when we go to Committee.

Exemptions: the bill will give the college the ability to outline when someone can practice medicine in this province, without being licensed by the college. This would be when the college is convinced that the individual is safe and competent to practice, i.e. doctor accompanies patient out of the province on transport, a visiting guest lecture in a med school, a content expert in a court proceeding. All important, it's all to be expected, but it's important to include it in the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to speak any further on that. We have numerous questions for Committee, which I think is probably the best place to get some more clarity on it.

On that note, I'll wait for Committee and I'll talk then.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

It's safe to say we will be supporting this. Currently, there is no regulatory body to license or discipline physician assistants in this province. I understand that physician assistants are advanced clinical professionals that operate under a physician who determines their scope of practice, according to the terms and conditions of the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

There are safeguards that are obviously built in with physician assistants that they must complete a university degree. We know that in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, physician assistants are regulated. Obviously, from what we can see, the process of making these changes in the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, the university, the Association of Physician Assistants and other groups were consulted. I'm assuming that they had their input. The NLMA has examined the draft bill and seems to have had no concerns with its content.

Certainly, the amendments in this bill will provide medical practitioners to hold a medical licence. They're members of the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association. Speaker, similar to, I guess, when teaching and learning assistants came into being, they were automatically members of the NLTA. They are governed under those practices within the – it's sort of unified, if nothing else. It also provided a pathway for teacher learning assistants if they wanted to advance to become full-fledged teachers.

So it was also a way of becoming a teacher. In some cases substitute teachers and new teachers, they probably took the path of becoming a TLA, to become a teacher. Maybe in this, there is an option here for the physician assistants to take that approach as well.

For those reasons, it seems like, all around, it's a much more cohesive approach to this. If nothing else, it is going to put more people

– just as TLAs would certainly enhance and aid the teacher in their performance of their duties, this can only benefit the physicians and people who require medical attention.

With that, I'll take my seat.

Thank you, Speaker.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

I, too, will be supporting Bill 83. When you look at the thickness of the bill and you look at the Explanatory Notes, a lot of times we get bills, it might be one or two bullet points. This one here looks fairly substantial. But, at the end of the day, really what we're talking about here is physician assistants, as has already been mentioned. I guess all these other subsequent changes that are required to allow them to fall under the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

I didn't even know there was such a thing as a physician assistant to be honest with you, until I saw this bill. But apparently, in other provinces, they do have physician assistants. I guess, to my mind, a physician assistant was always kind of like the nurse or the licensed practical nurse. I guess as time evolves, as health care evolves, we're starting to see more and more disciplines and are variations of disciplines that are entering into the medical field.

It was only yesterday, of course, that we debated some legislation around psychiatric nurses, which is a discipline in itself that does not exist in Newfoundland but does exist in some of the western provinces. Of course, we've made allowances yesterday for psychiatric nurses to be licensed and to be able to practise in Newfoundland and Labrador and I guess this really is no different.

In terms of the actual details of the changes that are prescribed here, I'm not an expert

in this but if the NLMA and the College of Physicians and Surgeons have been consulted, as the minister says they have, and they all agree with this, then I can't see any reason why we wouldn't support it here in this House. I haven't heard from any physician or anybody who has raised any concerns – certainly not to me – about this legislation, so I don't see a problem with supporting it.

I would say, somewhat related to this, is that it's great that we're making changes here to allow for other disciplines, it's great that the government is working with the College of Physicians and Surgeons, but I would just point out once again, as I have in the past, of one of the issues I do hear about from time to time. It's the issue around there seems to be somewhat of a disconnect between the recruitment office with the Department of Health, Memorial University and the College of Physicians and Surgeons.

I still hear of stories and I've received feedback where there seems to be issues where we have physicians in this province that could be practising but there's extended delays in making that happen because there seems to be this disconnect between those three. We're recruiting them, but they can't go to work until they do this practice-ready assessment through MUN, and MUN only has limited seats available for it.

In other provinces, as I raised to the former minister when he was there, what they've done to try to speed this up, if there wasn't space available in their university to do it, they actually went outside the university with an alternate path to get these physicians licensed. There seems to be, like I say, this disconnect between the three. It's unfortunate if we indeed have doctors here in this province – I guess they would be from other provinces, other parts of the world, whatever the case might be – that may be fully capable of practising here in Newfoundland and Labrador – and I fully understand that we need to have the

College of Physicians and Surgeons; we need to make sure that there are rules and standards in place because we don't want anybody practising medicine here in this province that is not qualified to do so. I think we all understand that. But if we potentially have people in this province that could be practising medicine, but they are waiting for extended periods of time trying to get licensed, then that in itself is a problem.

I just point that out as part of the debate to the minister, that that's something I would certainly encourage him and his officials to look into. That, again, would be the interaction between recruitment office, Memorial University and the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Are they working together as they should? Is there this cohesive teamwork occurring to try to make sure that we can get physicians who may indeed be qualified, but to get them through the process as soon as possible, to get them working as soon as possible, and to avoid some of the delays which I've been told have been happening?

We know there's a doctor shortage. We know about a third of the province, or a quarter of the province, whatever it is, don't have a family doctor, and that is a big problem for people. A lot of people are being forced – I know on the West Coast – to see licensed practical nurses, but then they've got to pay for that out of pocket, which is another issue. I won't get into that.

But there is still a problem. Anything we can do to not just recruit doctors, because it's pointless to recruit them, if once you recruit them they're told oh, you can't practise here. Now they might be going around driving a taxicab or doing whatever for a year or two, waiting to try to get a medical licence. That is a big problem.

Again, I encourage the minister to pay some attention to that issue as well.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Health and Community Services speaks now, he will close debate.

The hon. the Minister of Health and Community Services.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker, and thanks for the comments and the support from the Members, the Member for CBS, St. John's Centre and Mount Pearl - Southlands.

I look forward to questions in Committee on this very important bill.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 83 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Medical Act, 2011 No. 2. (Bill 83)

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

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

J. HOGAN: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Medical Act, 2011 No. 2," read a second

time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House on tomorrow. (Bill 83)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move seconded by the Deputy Premier, that An Act to Amend the Registered Nurses Act, 2008, Bill 84, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Registered Nurses Act, 2008. (Bill 84)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Registered Nurses Act, 2008," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 84)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that An Act to Repeal the Municipal Financing Corporation Act, Bill 88, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Repeal the Municipal Financing Corporation Act. (Bill 88)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Repeal the Municipal Financing Corporation Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 88)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Deputy Premier, that An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, No. 5 be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, No. 5. (Bill 89)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Revenue Administration Act, No. 5," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 89)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 5.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Justice and Public Safety, that An Act to Amend the Family Relief Act, Bill 91, be now read a third time.

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

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Family Relief Act. (Bill 91)

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

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Family Relief Act," read a third time, ordered passed and its title be as on the Order Paper. (Bill 91)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I call from the Order Paper, Order 18.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I move, seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL, that An Act to Amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008, Bill 92, be now read a second time.

SPEAKER: It is moved and seconded that Bill 92 be now read a second time.

Motion, second reading of a bill, "An Act to Amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008." (Bill 92)

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Speaker.

Welcome back, Speaker, after a week being away from this hon. House, I know you missed it dearly.

Speaker, I move, seconded by the Member for Harbour Grace - Port de Grave, that Bill 92, An Act to Amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008 be now read a second time.

First, I would like to say to the previous minister, thanks to her for her hard work on this piece of legislation and many pieces of legislation that lies within the Department of DGSNL.

Speaker, in Newfoundland and Labrador, we are fostering a competitive environment to support private sector investment and business growth and supporting industries in our province like mining, energy and technology to fuel growth and employment opportunities.

Speaker, under the *Engineers and Geoscientist Act, 2008*, the Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland and Labrador, commonly known as PEGNL, is a self-regulatory organization for engineers and geoscientists working in our province.

PEGNL has approximately 5,000 active members and these individuals work in a variety of diverse industries, contributing significantly to Newfoundland and Labrador's economic success and enhancing the quality of life in communities throughout this province. Under the legislation, any person practising in the professions of engineering or geoscience here in Newfoundland and Labrador must be registered and licensed by PEGNL.

Led by a 12-member board of directors, PEGNL is responsible for ensuring the licensed, competent and ethical practice of engineering and geoscience in Newfoundland and Labrador, and for keeping both the public and government informed of issues relating to the practice of these professions.

PEGNL is also responsible for instituting recourse mechanisms, if required, for those licence holders who choose to conduct themselves in an unethical or unsafe manner. PEGNL's board of directors consists of nine PEGNL members who were elected by the membership and three public interest reps who are not directly affiliated with either profession and who are appointed by the Minister of DGSNL.

Speaker, the board also has established several internal committees, such as its Audit Committee and its Complaints

Authorization Committee, to help them fulfill their mandate and meet the obligations under the *Engineer and Geoscientists Act, 2008*.

The primary regulatory functions of PEGNL can be categorized in three main areas. One: PEGNL is responsible for licensing individuals and companies they want to practise engineering and geoscience in the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Applicants and companies that meet PEGNL's standards for ethical, professional and technical competency, earn the right to practise, receive a licence and are able to use reserved occupational titles and designations. Two: PEGNL is also responsible for ensuring that only licensed individuals and companies are practising these professions in the province. Three: PEGNL is responsible for reviewing and acting upon allegations of conduct deserving of sanction and disciplining licensed individuals and companies if required.

In addition to these responsibilities, PEGNL issues guidelines for its membership and supports its members and permit holders in their professional practice. PEGNL protects the public through nationally recognized educational and certification programs for its members and through a comprehensive regulatory framework that includes regulations established under the legislation and through its bylaws and rules of professional conduct in accordance with the respective authorities under the *Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008*.

PEGNL contacted the department earlier this year in February to request several amendments to the act. Their intent was to request some changes that would further strengthen their board's abilities and that would ultimately make it easier for them to fulfill their mandate as outlined in the legislation and to request some changes that would mirror legislation in other jurisdictions.

We've had the opportunity to work with PEGNL on Bill 92. PEGNL are satisfied with the bill and the proposed changes that would be debated here today.

There are three changes, Speaker, being proposed, and I'll take just a few minutes to outline them. First, Bill 92 provides PEGNL's board of directors with the bylaw-making authority to establish practice standards for the engineering and geoscience professions, which includes standards of professional competence, capacity and fitness to practise. Up to now the act provided for performance standards to be set by the board in regulations, with the approval of the minister. Second, Bill 92 expands the current definition of conduct deserving of sanction to include a breach of practice standards, which will be established under the bylaws. Third, Bill 93 strengthens the legal protections for the board, its committees and all PEGNL members from liability around the good faith performance of duties.

These three changes allow for a swift response to changes in professional standards and to align general bylaw-making authority here in Newfoundland and Labrador with that of most other Canadian jurisdictions.

The changes, Mr. Speaker, will also strengthen legal protection for the board, its committees, as well as PEGNL members, which is a good thing, which, in turn, will also enhance the attractiveness for candidates as public reps on the board.

These changes build on other recent regulatory changes that went into effect this spring, including: establishing a competency framework; allowing the use of a professional electronic stamp or seal; clarifying the registration, renewal and cancellation processes; clarifying the categories of professional membership; and authorizing PEGNL's board to designate a person to perform the duties of the registrar, if needed.

As we are making these changes, Mr. Speaker, those that are required, we're also taking the opportunity, which is consistent with recent drafting in other legislation, to update the act to incorporate gender-neutral language and to replace all references to the Trial Division with the Supreme Court.

I'd like to thank PEGNL, once again, for working with us to ensure we have a robust piece of legislation. I also want to send a thank you to our practising engineers and geoscientists throughout Newfoundland and Labrador for their valuable services and contribution to the provincial economy.

Mr. Speaker, I will leave it at that. I look forward to the debate and any questions that I may be able to answer.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

It is certainly a pleasure to get up and speak on Bill 92. Just an overview on it. This bill will amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act to enable further independence in PEGNL. The professional association is being given the ability to develop their own bylaws and enforcement measures to ensure members adhere to its set out standards.

This bill also strengthens the protection from liability and good faith actions which brings the legislation in line with the standards in other Canadian jurisdictions. These legislative changes followed consultation with PEGNL. PEGNL oversees approximately 5,000 engineers and geoscientists within the province.

Registration with the association is mandatory to work within Newfoundland and Labrador. The board is seeking more

ability to govern the association internally with less red tape. Something we'd love to see, for sure.

The amendments contained within seek to establish or rectify the following: provide bylaw-making authority to PEGNL board, and this will enable the establishment of practice standards and competency; expanding the definition of conduct deserving sanction to enable the breach of practice standards to be enforced by PEGNL; strengthen the protection from liability provisions relating to the good faith performance of duties by persons under this act; and updating gender-neutral language and references into the court.

Speaker, again, when we get into Committee, we will certainly have a couple questions to ask and that's where we are with this.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I won't take too much time on this. It is good to see that we're following in line with other provinces, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and New Brunswick, who have a very similar outline for their engineers and geoscientists. We're in the modern era now and a lot of the changes to a lot of these boards are coming in line. We've seen it in a few other acts today that a lot of these boards of directors and self-governing bodies for professional associations need a bit more changes to meet modern demands.

I went to school with a few engineers who work in the mining industry and it is a very professional organization. My friend always joked that you could pick an engineer out anywhere. So I guess this is the thing there now. They want some more self-

governance and some regulatory but, knowing engineers, they'll be very strict with their rules, and especially with their steel ring.

With that, I'm not belabour this, I got some questions for Committee.

Thank you so much.

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

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

I, too, will be supporting Bill 92. Basically, as has been said really, we have engineers and geoscientists and they are all professionals, of course, a professional organization and they're just looking for more authority, more flexibility to be able to govern their members to ensure the members of their profession are properly licensed and that they're operating in a professional and ethical manner and so on.

I see no reason why we, as a House of Assembly, would not be supporting that approach. So with that said, I will be supporting the bill.

Thank you.

SPEAKER: Seeing no other speakers, if the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL speaks now, he'll close debate.

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

This is an amendment to a bill and an act that, I think, we all support on all sides of the House. I thank the Members for their comments.

Echoing what I just heard in terms of less red tape, we all certainly appreciate that. Words that are used in terms of strengthen, liability protection, allowing the board to do

their work, flexibility, properly licensed, I think they're all good things, the comments that came from the other side, and I appreciate that.

I look forward to questions in Committee.

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

The motion is that Bill 92 be now read a second time.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008. (Bill 92)

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

When shall the said bill be referred to a Committee of the Whole.

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

On motion, a bill, "An Act to Amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008," read a second time, ordered referred to a Committee of the Whole House presently, by leave. (Bill 92)

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I move that this House do now resolve itself into Committee of the Whole to consider Bill

92, An Act to Amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008.

SPEAKER: Did we get a seconder for that?

L. DEMPSTER: Seconded by the Minister of Digital Government and Service NL.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

It is moved and seconded that I do now leave the Chair for the House to resolve itself into a Committee of a Whole to consider Bill 92.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

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

Committee of the Whole

CHAIR (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

We're now considering Bill 92, An Act to Amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008.

A bill, "An Act to Amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008." (Bill 92)

CLERK: Clause 1.

CHAIR: Shall clause 1 carry?

The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Chair.

Will removing the minister's role within the standard setting of the professional

organization cause any concerns regarding government oversight of the board?

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

E. LOVELESS: Simply put, I don't think so.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Has there been any voiced opposition to facilitating more independence for the board?

CHAIR: Can you repeat the question?

E. LOVELESS: I'll have to put my earpiece in.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Has there been any voiced opposition to facilitate any more independence for the board? Any opposition to that?

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

E. LOVELESS: I think the answer to the question is, through the consultation with PEGNL, that independence was certainly heard. I think that's the direction that we're going in but, in terms of opposition, otherwise, not that I'm aware of.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Could this lead to the removal of liability for potential criminal damages from negligent work leading in significant damages?

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

E. LOVELESS: With the changes that are happening here, it certainly does protect the geoscientists and the engineers with liability protection, which is what we heard and

that's the direction we're moving in. So I say yes to the answer to the question.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

No questions?

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Will the proposed change –?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

CHAIR: Order, please!

The minister is having difficulty hearing.

Thank you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Chair.

Will the proposed changes here make it easier to recruit trained specialists among newcomers in the province? I assume that PEGNL will be able to change its standards and guidelines recognizing credentials more quickly than a longer bureaucratic process.

E. LOVELESS: Sorry, I didn't hear the question.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Will the proposed changes make it easier to recruit trained specialist from out of province or other countries, given that PEGNL will be setting standards and guidelines to recognize credentials more quickly now? Will it help?

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

E. LOVELESS: I thank the Member for the question.

With what feedback we had, we believe the answer would be yes.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Related to my last question, has PEGNL or any other group mentioned recognition of foreign credentials being a problem for engineers and geoscientists? Are we facing a shortage in that field right now?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you.

Again, it's a good question but I'll take it under advisement and I'll get an answer back to you.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: These new powers being granted to PEGNL are similar to those in other provinces. How do other new powers compare to the similar bodies in the provinces? We're granting PEGNL even more autonomy, how has it worked out for other provinces who made similar changes in the last couple of years?

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

E. LOVELESS: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Through the jurisdictional scan, we get the feedback that there are successes in other parts of the province and that is why we – and at the end of the day, we are listening to PEGNL. So it's them themselves, and these changes are supported by them, we're really taking direction from them. We look forward to how this will help the industry because we know how important the roles are they play in this province, especially in the rural parts of the province as well.

CHAIR: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Now, given that there's, I guess, new autonomy given to PEGNL, will there be any extra resources put in for oversight or any kind of monitoring given that they are a bit more autonomy? Will there be any monitoring or anything from the department to make sure that everything stays on track, I guess, for lack of a better word?

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

E. LOVELESS: Not financially, but there's always support from the department, as a department, in conjunction with PEGNL. So that will be there, that will be strengthened, always. So we look forward to that relationship and how that will help the industry to do what they do in the province.

If you don't mind, before you had asked in terms of no concerns raised, because we did, in conjunction with BC, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and New Brunswick – they made the changes and they have no concerns that have been raised.

CHAIR: Any further questions?

Seeing no further speakers, shall the motion carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clause 1 carried.

CLERK: Clauses 2 through 23 inclusive.

CHAIR: Shall clauses 2 through 23 inclusive carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, clauses 2 through 23 carried.

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

CHAIR: Shall the enacting clause carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, enacting clause carried.

CLERK: A bill, An Act to Amend the Engineers and Geoscientists Act, 2008. (Bill 92)

CHAIR: Shall the title carry?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

On motion, title carried.

CHAIR: Shall I report the bill without amendment?

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

CHAIR: The Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Chair.

I move that the Committee rise and report Bill 92 carried without amendment.

CHAIR: The motion is that the Committee rise and report Bill 92 carried without amendment.

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIR: All those against, 'nay.'

Carried.

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

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Placentia - St. Mary's and Chair of the Committee of the Whole.

S. GAMBIN-WALSH: Speaker, the Committee of the Whole have considered the matters to them referred and have directed me to report Bill 92 carried without amendment.

SPEAKER: The Chair of the Committee of the Whole reports that the Committee have considered the matters to them referred and directed that Bill 92 be carried without amendment.

When shall the report be received?

L. DEMPSTER: Now.

SPEAKER: Now.

When shall the said bill be read a third time?

L. DEMPSTER: Tomorrow.

SPEAKER: Tomorrow.

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

SPEAKER: The hon. the Deputy Government House Leader.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

This being Wednesday, I move, seconded by the Minister of Industry, Energy and Technology, that this House do now stand in recess.

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 in recess until 2 p.m. today.

Recess

The House resumed at 2 p.m.

SPEAKER (Bennett): Order, please!

Admit strangers.

Before we begin, in the Speaker's gallery today, I'd like to welcome Dave Tiller and Peter Barfoot. They are here today for a Ministerial Statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: In the public gallery, I'd like to welcome Chair, Stephen Walsh, and members of the Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove Development Association. They are visiting us this afternoon for a Member's statement.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Statements by Members

SPEAKER: Today we'll hear statements by the hon. Members for the Districts of Conception Bay South, Exploits, Ferryland, Fogo Island - Cape Freels, Cape St. Francis and, with leave, Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune, Corner Brook and Gander.

The hon. the Member for Conception Bay South.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

On November 8, the 38th annual Darryl Reid Memorial Hockey Tournament was held in Conception Bay South. Sadly, Darryl died tragically on the Ocean Ranger 42 years ago.

Darryl was a former student who attended Queen Elizabeth Regional High School and was a goaltender for the Queen E. Pioneers.

In his honour, during the 1982-83 season, the Darryl Reid Memorial Trophy was established for the winner of the Queen Elizabeth invitational hockey tournament.

Mr. Robert Reid donated the trophy in memory of his son, Darryl, a former Pioneer's goaltender, and the Queen E. Pioneer team donated a plaque in his memory. The trophy is awarded annually to the most spirited player.

This memorial tournament is the longest-running school tournament in the province. All the high school hockey teams in the region attend each year, bringing friendly rivalries and friendships. Myself, a Pioneer, am always a bit biased and very proud of my former high school and community for keeping Darryl in our memories and continuing this memorial tournament each year.

Although the Queen E. Pioneers lost in the final, I congratulate the Mount Pearl Senior High Huskies on their win.

Congratulations to everyone involved on making this past weekend a great success.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Thank you, Speaker.

Today, I would like to recognize Ms. Claire Foss of Botwood. Claire is 18 years old and currently attending the comprehensive arts and science transfer program at the College of the North Atlantic.

She was awarded the Town's Volunteer of the Year Award last spring in Botwood for her work with community groups. Claire also finished second place in the Royal Canadian Legion library contest, the poem category and, as a result, was selected for the Trail of the Caribou trip to France and Belgium this past July.

She is also a recipient of the 2024 Kin Canada bursary and placed second in the 2024 Lions N3 Speak-outs.

Speaker, I would like for all Members of the House of Assembly to join me in congratulating Claire on her achievements and wish this bright individual success in her future endeavours.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Ferryland.

L. O'DRISCOLL: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise in this hon. House today and recognize a resident of Bay Bulls in the District of Ferryland, Edward MacDonald, otherwise known as Eddie Mac.

Eddie is well known in the Bay Bulls and surrounding area for his love of softball. Due to his love for the sport, he has worked hard and relentless hours to rejuvenate softball back to Bay Bulls and Bauline and the surrounding area.

Twenty years ago, the game of softball was almost non-existing in this area; however, today, the sport is in full swing. The Southern Shore Crush Softball organization has hundreds of kids ages five to 17 enrolled each summer. Over the past years, the organization has won several medals and received many awards. Many of the players have been chosen to compete at the national level as part of NL select teams.

He has organized many training camps over the years to allow many of the players to hone their skills. Eddie is well respected and appreciated by the youth in the area for sharing his skills, knowledge and love of the game.

I ask all Members of this House to rise with me to thank and congratulate Eddie Mac on a job well done.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

On October 1, I had the pleasure, I had the pleasure to attend the 2024 Seniors of Distinction Awards. It was an uplifting and rewarding experience to see how seniors give their time and energy contributing to many varied organizations and witnessing the significant impact they have made in the communities.

I had the pleasure to present Mr. Carl Parsons, from Dover, the 75th Anniversary Medal of Confederation. Carl, a former educator, has spent a lifetime collaborating with community organizations, provincially and nationally, helping to better the lives of others.

He is the longest serving member of the local recreation committee, he served two terms as mayor of Dover and he served as president and a board member of the Alzheimer Society of Newfoundland and Labrador and Canada. As president of the Alzheimer Society board, Carl helped to develop a regional representation and participated in the development of a Provincial Strategy for Alzheimer Disease and other Dementias, all this work contributing to the well-being of those suffering and affected by the disease.

It was a pleasure to have been a part of the beautiful rewards ceremony acknowledging so many dedicated seniors. Once again, congratulations to my friend, Carl Parsons, on such an impressive achievement.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. WALL: Speaker, I am fortunate to have many wonderful volunteers throughout my district and, today, I'd like to recognize the members of the Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove Development Association. This awesome group of volunteers is a resident-based, non-profit corporation that develops

economic, cultural, social, recreational and environmental projects which encourage a sense of community and enhance the quality of life for residents of all ages.

Incorporated in 2007, the Development Association has partnered with the municipal town council on many projects, such as the O'Brien Family War Memorial Storyboard, the Peter's Path Revitalization Project, planting tulips at the War Memorial, forget-me-nots with the Grade 6 students from St. Francis of Assisi School and taking part in many town events.

Under the guidance of Chairperson Stephen Walsh, this team is committed to collaborating with town council and residents to build a better community. Their dedication to community is clearly evident, and I'm happy to support them in all their endeavours.

Speaker, I ask my colleagues of this 50th General Assembly to join me in congratulating the Logy Bay-Middle Cove-Outer Cove Development Association and thank them for their continued commitment to community.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Fortune Bay - Cape La Hune with leave.

Does the Member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

E. LOVELESS: Speaker, I rise to recognize Janaya Pittman of Harbour Breton, a first-year Memorial University engineering student who has been awarded a 2024 Schulich Leader Scholarship of \$120,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

E. LOVELESS: In 2012, this \$100-million scholarship fund was established, resulting in Canada's most coveted undergraduate science, technology, engineering and math, or STEM, awards program. One hundred scholarships are awarded annually to entrepreneurial-minded high school graduates enrolling in STEM programs at 20 partner universities in Canada.

Every high school across the country can nominate one graduating student each year to apply. Janaya is an honours high school graduate from King Academy in Harbour Breton and is pursuing an engineering degree with plans to major in electrical engineering. She chose Memorial University because of its renowned engineering program, plus allowing her to stay close to home and her family.

Hard working and passionate, Janaya is deserving of this recognition and represents the next generation of trailblazers in the STEM fields. Her future is bright and there is no doubt in my mind that she will make a positive impact on a local, national and global scale.

I ask all Members to join me in congratulating Janaya and wishing her every success in all her future endeavours.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook with leave.

Does the Member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Corner Brook.

G. BYRNE: Didn't you know, wherever you go
No matter how far, wherever you are

The town that you left, the place where you start
Stays in your heart
Home will always be home.

These are the opening lyrics to one of my favourite songs, penned and performed by a larger-than-life man from our hometown of Corner Brook. These lyrics strike a chord with many Newfoundlanders and Labradorians.

Dave McHugh left the stage on November 8 – far, far too soon – and left us struggling to recapture the music. Dave McHugh, the musician, always his face smiling to the world, and to the world he did travel. From the equator to the North, Dave brought his music and his ballads to stages and fans everywhere.

But Dave McHugh will be remembered best by those who had the joy of travelling with him on his life's journey. He is remembered for the decency that was the score of his own life's lyric. It was his character and his devotion to the people and to the places that were under his protection that mattered most.

Dave has left us. To his friends and partners in the music industry, your bond with him was an encore of his generosity that will always be given. We mourn with you.

To our home, we struggle to fill the void of his presence. His gift of time on the causes that mattered could never be measured.

To his family, Ann, Becky, Evan, Susan, Paula, Brian, Michael, Cathy and to Debbie, you will always stay in his heart because to Dave, home will always be home, and you are his home and you will be the heart that still beats inside them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Gander with leave.

Does the Member have leave?

AN HON. MEMBER: Leave.

SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

The hon. the Member for Gander.

J. HAGGIE: Thank you, Speaker.

I rise today to mark the passing of one of Newfoundland and Labrador's pioneers of aviation and business leader.

Pat White went to work young, meeting his best friend, Florence, and together trying their hand at many small businesses. She supported him as he developed his passion for flying and he supported her while she trained as an RN.

He acquired a small plane to teach his son how to fly and overtime built that into one of Canada's premier flight schools; simultaneously, turning Exploits Valley Air Services into Air Canada's top-performing regional airline.

As an innovator, he began refitting aircraft, designing air ambulances and cargo modifications sought worldwide. He was the province's chief water bomber pilot.

Pat was a staunch advocate for rural Newfoundland. He believed that with hard work and determination, anything, anywhere was possible. He built his business primarily out of Gander, insistent that economic opportunities be available close to home because his first passion was always his family. He spoke of them often, regularly pushing aside business to drive his grandchildren to school and attend their activities.

Even with his hard-nosed approach to business, a walk, a book or good conversation were his relaxation. He often

regaled friends and callers with anecdotes, especially of the old country.

Pat was an Irish rebel at heart. He was as great a friend as a person could wish. I will miss him; we will miss him.

I ask all hon. Members to join me in recognizing the incredible legacy of my friend, a proud Newfoundlander and Labradorian, Pat White.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Statements by Ministers.

Statements by Ministers

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In the noble tradition that defines our existence as a people, every day, thousands of men and women in this province take to the sea to earn their living from the bounty of the fishery.

There's no greater fear for communities and families throughout Newfoundland and Labrador than to hear the news that one of our fishing boats has gone missing.

Yet that was the news we received in July when the *Elite Navigator* and its crew of seven were reported missing. It's last known location about 300 kilometres northeast of Gander.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, this story has a happy ending. Thanks to the efforts of the fishing community, the Canadian Coast Guard, the Canadian Armed Forces and the boat owner Glenn Mouland, who never gave up hope, the *Elite Navigator* was found.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: The crew, Eugene Carter, David Tiller – who is here with us today in the Speaker's gallery – Toby Peddle, Harold

Howell, Andy Hunt, Jordan Lee King and Robbie Firmage, were safely returned to their loving families.

Mr. Speaker, I will never forget the day as we celebrated along with thousands of others in New-Wes-Valley as the Lucky Seven entered their home port.

I want to take this opportunity to recognize the incredible strength and resilience of the crew and once again thank everyone involved in the search and rescue effort for making this an ending we will all remember throughout our province for years to come.

Please join me in giving Dave and the rest of the crew a round of applause.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. MCKENNA: Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. MCKENNA: I would like to thank the Premier for the advance copy of his statement.

Speaker, I rise today to join in recognizing the remarkable story of the *Elite Navigator* and its courageous crew. I know the happiness and excitement that was there because I was on the pier to greet them.

The disappearance of the *Elite Navigator* and its crew was a time of profound fear and uncertainty for their families, friends and the entire province. The relief and overwhelming joy when they were found safe is something we will all carry with us for years to come.

It is difficult to imagine the worry experienced during those days, but the safe return of the crew is a testament to their courage and to the extraordinary efforts of those who never gave up hope.

To the Canadian Coast Guard, the Canadian Armed Forces, the local fishing community and individuals like Glenn Mouland, we extend our deepest gratitude. Your skill and dedication made this rescue possible. And to the crew Eugene Carter, David Tiller, Toby Peddle, Harold Howell, Andy Hunt, Jordan Lee King and Robbie Firmage, you have shown extraordinary determination and perseverance. Your courage inspires us all.

Speaker, this story is a celebration, not just of the safe return of the *Elite Navigator*, but of the enduring strength of our fishers and the unwavering support of their communities and the unshakeable hope that defines Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is a powerful reminder of the risk our fishers face every day to sustain their families and contribute to our way of life. Let us carry this moment forward as a testament to the courage and the unity that makes our province so special.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: I, too, thank the Premier for an advance copy of the statement.

We'd also like to take this opportunity to recognize the bravery and the tenacity of the crew of the *Elite Navigator*. Thank you for making it home safely. Every person in this province celebrated the news of the rescue and was overjoyed to see the crew return to their home port and to their families.

For this positive outcome, we will be forever grateful to all those who took part in the search and rescue effort: the fishing community, family, friends, the Coast Guard, the Canadian Armed Forces and Mr.

Mouland. We can never repay you for the service that you gave.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Further statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister Responsible for WorkplaceNL.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to acknowledge the contributions of WorkplaceNL and those who make a difference in our province by making occupational health and safety a top priority.

I am pleased to share the success stories of our workplace health and safety ambassadors and their accomplishments. On October 10 of this year, WorkplaceNL announced the recipients of its 2024 Safety Leadership Awards during the Health and Safety Learning Symposium at the St. John's Convention Centre.

Employees and employers that receive a Safety Leadership Award take initiative, demonstrate leadership and help to make workplaces in Newfoundland and Labrador safer and healthier.

I am pleased to recognize Kiel Williams as the worker recipient and RothLochston BEL Ltd. as the employer recipient.

Mr. Williams is a Powerline Technician with Newfoundland Power and has been a dedicated provider of aerial device and high-voltage rubber glove training to powerline operators across this province. He has worked tirelessly with coworkers, WorkplaceNL, Digital Government and Service NL, and others, to champion health and safety awareness.

RothLochston, represented here today by Manager Rick Donato, has invested in

robust and integrated safety programs that prioritize education, employee engagement and open communication. Their vision is to ensure the safety and well-being of all its employees by focusing on continuous improvement in their safe work culture.

I thought of a quote, Speaker, by Robert Pelton who once said, “Tomorrow – your reward for working safely today.”

Speaker, I ask my colleagues in this hon. House to stand with me and congratulate them both today.

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 the advanced copy of her statement.

I’ve spent most of my adult life working in construction, exploration and the mining industries. Safety is a way of life for us, yet some lessons are still hard earned.

We here in the Official Opposition, too, want to acknowledge the tremendous contribution that WorkplaceNL plays in increasing safety for all our workers throughout the province. We find leaders and champions of safety throughout the workplace and it’s very important to acknowledge the important role they play in shaping attitudes and behaviours.

Both Kiel Williams and RothLochston BEL are such leaders and champions. I congratulate you on receiving the 2024 Safety Leadership Awards.

Mr. Williams, a powerline technician, has amplified the commitment to workplace safety through his training initiatives, ensuring his colleagues are well equipped

to handle high-risk environments. RothLochston BEL has set a remarkable standard by prioritizing safety through comprehensive safety programs that foster employee engagement and continuous improvement. Their dedication significantly contributes to making the workplace much safer across the entire province.

While we celebrate these achievements, we must also recognize there is still more work to be done in preventing workplace incidents and accidents. It’s essential for us all to work with government, to invest in increasing the number of inspectors throughout the province, much needed, and that will enhance the inspection capacity to better support WorkplaceNL in managing their caseload.

As we see, through the leadership of individuals like Kiel Williams and companies like RothLochston BEL, we, too, have to ensure that they are supported in their initiatives and that we will all come home safely. That’s the most important thing. We applaud you on your leadership and being acknowledged by these awards.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

We also applaud Mr. Williams and RothLochston. RothLochston is well known in Labrador West as a mining service company. I had the pleasure of doing work with them one time, so I know it very well. I would applaud them on their Safety Leadership Awards and their efforts to make workplaces safer for all those around them.

We think that government can do a little more on this front. We, in the Third Party,

call on government to improve transparency around workplace safety by publishing all OHS inspection reports on provincial websites so that people would have a better understanding and to also improve workplace safety in other aspects around government and in the public.

Thank you very much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Other statements by ministers?

The hon. the Minister of Municipal and Provincial Affairs.

J. HAGGIE: Speaker, I stand today to congratulate two of the province's municipal associations on successful annual fall events. In October, the Professional Municipal Administrators had their Fall Training Forum in Corner Brook and last week, Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador held their Conference, Trade Show and AGM in my beautiful home District of Gander.

Each event allowed for municipal councillors, administrators and partners, including departmental staff, to discuss the challenges municipalities face and the opportunities to help our municipalities build vibrant, sustainable communities. Our government will continue to ensure municipal leaders have the supports needed to help their communities and residents thrive.

I was pleased to participate in each event and to present municipal leaders with Long Service Awards for service spanning 12 to 62 years. I was honoured to meet many of these award recipients, including 92-year-old Mayor John Hamlyn, who has been serving as the mayor of Crow Head for an impressive 62 years.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HAGGIE: Speaker, I ask my hon. colleagues to join me in congratulating the recipients of this year's Long Service Awards and recognizing Professional Municipal Administrators and Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador for their considerable efforts which made this year's annual fall events a great success.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

C. TIBBS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I thank the hon. minister for an advance copy of his statement today.

I rise today to recognize the vital contributions of municipal administrators and town councillors across Newfoundland and Labrador. These dedicated individuals play a crucial role in shaping our communities, addressing local needs and fostering sustainable development. Their commitment to public service empowers towns and cities to thrive, ensuring that the voices of residents are heard and represented.

Through recent municipal sessions, including the Professional Municipal Administrators Fall Training Forum and the Municipalities Newfoundland and Labrador conference, we have witnessed the collective effort to tackle challenges head-on. It is clear that our municipalities are the backbone of community engagement and development.

My colleagues and I thoroughly enjoyed our time attending the MNL AGM this weekend past. I would like to thank MNL board members and, particularly, Grand Falls-Windsor's own president, Amy Coady, for her dedication and commitment to municipalities.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. TIBBS: We must also acknowledge the barriers that impede progress of municipalities. Red tape and prolonged processes can hinder the ability of municipal leaders to implement solutions for their communities. Let us commit to reducing bureaucratic hurdles. By doing so, we can empower our municipalities to better serve their residents, fostering vibrant communities that are equipped to meet the challenges of the future and tomorrow.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

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

We congratulate all the recipients of the Long Service Awards for their dedication to local government and a special shout-out to the mayor of Crow Head for 62 years of dedicated service.

Like government, we, too, have discussions with municipal leaders and they tell us the increasing and costly responsibilities they face without the means to fulfill them. Therefore, we call upon the government to do more to address the challenges municipalities face, give them the tools they need to do their jobs, especially with building houses, building infrastructure, maintaining aging infrastructure and all of the other challenges that they face to provide services to their local populations.

Thank you so much.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Oral Questions.

Oral Questions

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, yesterday in the scrum the minister said – and I quote – it was at this point that Mr. Hickman pointed out that he read the news that we were not going to the Grace Hospital and he came forward with the offer.

I ask the Premier: Who took the call?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Let's first take an opportunity to say that this is an exciting development for the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: A brand new hospital, a campus-style hospital that will service not just the people of a growing metro region, but indeed every Newfoundlander and Labradorian. Having come from an antiquated hospital system, this is much needed.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

A. FUREY: There was some discussion here in the House, yesterday, about if this came to the Premier's office. Let me assure the Member opposite that I did not take a call on this, Mr. Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

If the Premier didn't take a call, I repeat the question: Who took the call?

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

F. HUTTON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

While the situation we're talking about – I thank you for the opportunity, by the way, to answer the question. While this predates my arrival in Transportation and Infrastructure, my understanding is that the vendor reached out to the Department of Transportation and Infrastructure after seeing a news report stating that the Grace Hospital would not be used as the site for the new St. Clare's because it was too small.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Now we know there was a call accepted. We're not quite sure who took the call but let me ask this question: Who approved the deal?

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, again, the vendor with H3 reached out to the department. I think that it was clear in the scrum last week when we were announcing the site for the new St. Clare's hospital that he had seen a news report and realized at that point in time that the Grace Hospital was not going to be big enough, that we had determined that. We had expanded the scope. He reached out to the department and requested a meeting at that point in time.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, it was clear from that news conference that the people of Newfoundland and Labrador were led to

believe that the company was donating all the land that was going to be needed for this new hospital, even though they knew well that it required more.

Again, I ask: Who approved the land deal?

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, we announced last week the site of the new St. Clare's hospital, the replacement for the aging infrastructure, which is now trying to service 100,000 more people than lived here –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

F. HUTTON: So what we did last year while the proponent, while the vendors were in town, we wanted to announce their portion, the donation of the 10 acres of land, and at the time I'm pretty sure, because I overheard part of the scrum with the vendors, they discussed with the media that there was a potential for the sale of more.

We still don't have the final purchase and sale agreement done, as I have pointed out to the House of Assembly yesterday and to the media over the last couple of days. When that's done, it will be approved.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: So, Speaker, let me get this right. We've announced that we're building a hospital on this site, but we don't own the land yet and we haven't got it approved through the Cabinet yet.

So, again, I ask: Who approved the land?

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, this begs a couple of questions here and I want to give some examples, because all of a sudden the Opposition, who know different, understand that we do not have to go through the *Public Procurement Act* to get land for anything we're going to build. Anything we're going to build up, we do have to go through the *Public Procurement Act*.

What I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, are prime examples of this. How about the schools that we've announced for Cartwright, for Pilley's Island, for Paradise, the high school for Paradise, the high school for Portugal Cove-St. Philip's, as well the Kenmount Terrace area, Juniper Ridge high school, Paradise school, CBS elementary, Paradise Elementary, Placentia school, long-term care facilities in Corner Brook, Grand Falls and Gander, which we built – and guess what? The hospital in Corner Brook which the other party started but couldn't finish. We did.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I think the minister forgot that very important item, we're talking about spending \$23 million of taxpayers' money. That's what this is about, Mr. Speaker –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: – with no tendering process. You didn't have a tendering process when you announced the new school for Kenmount Terrace but you expropriated the land.

So I ask the minister: Why didn't you expropriate the land here?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, when somebody is willing to sell you the land and they come to you offering to sell it, there's no need for expropriation. We don't need to use expropriation when you have a willing vendor.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: When Members are ready, we'll proceed.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I'm glad the minister stood and made that reference because here's the question: If they're going to pay \$23 million for this land, what is the appraised value of the land?

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, if you go on the site near the area where the land is being used for the new hospital – which is adjacent, by the way, to 130-plus acres of land the Crown already owns, which allows us to expand into that and it allows us to fix some problems that we have transportation-wise heading into Paradise – you will notice that the asking price is \$485,000.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, so we now know –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Order, please!

If Members continue to chat back and forth, Members will be named and lose speaking privileges.

The hon. the Leader of the Official Opposition.

T. WAKEHAM: Thank you, Speaker.

We now know that there's 130 acres of Crown land adjacent to the site.

Again, I ask the minister: Why didn't you expropriate the amount of land you needed to get access to your Crown land?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, the vendors are willing to sell it. You don't have to expropriate when you are doing a negotiation. We don't have to, and the *Public Procurement Act* does not require us.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Do you guys want to waste Question Period chattering back and forth?

The hon. the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, you've got 30 seconds.

F. HUTTON: I'm good, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: You've finished?

F. HUTTON: Yes.

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

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, again, 130 acres of Crown land that we could have built a road to, that we could have used to build this new facility; instead, we're going to spend \$23 million of taxpayers' money and we have no idea whether that's a good deal or a bad deal.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

T. WAKEHAM: Speaker, I ask the minister: Do you have an estimate of how much taxpayers will have to pay for the ground preparation, the road connections and the water and sewer work for this site, or is this another comfort inn, all-inclusive cost agreement?

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, there's a lot to talk about there. Obviously, with respect –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, we are working through that right now. In the last couple of years, since it was announced that we were going to replace the 100-year-old facility, realizing, as I pointed out yesterday, 20 years ago when we had 170,000 people living in this region alone with three hospitals, we're now up to 270,000 people and we have two hospitals. We're down a hospital since then because the Grace is closed and, of course, torn down, so we obviously need this facility.

So again, I ask: Is the Member opposite suggesting we not build a new hospital to service the people of Newfoundland and Labrador, not just in the coming years, but for decades?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll remind the minister, it's not about a need, it's about doing it right.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: This is not being done right.

People of the province deserve better. This is the people's money. It's not their money; it's the people's money.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. PETTEN: Speaker, the Nurses' Union has alleged that the health authority management staff are renting houses to travel nursing agencies for a significant profit. Is this true?

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I looked into this issue when I became minister and, historically, the previous minister had written the Auditor General about these allegations and written the NLHS board, the chair of the board, as well, to bring it to their attention and make sure it was investigated. Throughout the spring and summer, there was correspondence back and forth between the former minister and the NLHS.

In August of 2024, I was advised as the new minister that there were issues under the Conflict of Interest Act and any inappropriate leases has since been terminated. We advised the appropriate authorities, including the Auditor General, and any issues that existed have been taken care of and those leases have been terminated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Speaker, that's a new revelation. Why wasn't that made public? I mean, that's fraud. Were there people charged?

Minister, was there anyone charged for this? Obviously, this was not upfront. You cancelled it. Why weren't they charged, because this is not ethical?

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

J. HOGAN: So just a lesson on ethics and the law, they are two different things. Someone can be unethical and not necessarily breach the *Criminal Code*. They are two different things.

So it was to ensure compliance with the Conflict of Interest Act and the *Public Procurement Act* that NLHS made this decision. Again, I was advised of this back in August and any steps that were taken to make sure that anything that was outside compliance with those two pieces of legislation has been taken care of and those leases have been terminated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Minister, I guess these staff are using an ethical wall. That's what's going on there, I guess.

Speaker, are these the same recruiters who prefer to deal with travel agency nurses as opposed to offering jobs to local nurses, like we just seen with the recent manager in Gander?

Is that a systemic problem within our health care system? Is that the mentality? Is that why we're not hiring local nurses because travel nurses are preferred?

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I think I'm going to just try and understand what the question was. There was an allegation that a member from NLHS made a comment

about preferring agency nurses. That is being looked into and that is unacceptable. I can tell you why everyone knows it's unacceptable, because I've stood here and said that the NLHS has a responsibility to decrease its reliance on agency nursing –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

J. HOGAN: – which, as we know, hearing this week, dates back to 2014.

They're decreasing that. The vacancies for nursing in this province are going down and the reliance on agency nursing is going down. Not only that, the NLHS put out an RFP to make sure that any agency nursing that is being done throughout the province, is being done in the most cost-effective way.

Thank you, Speaker.

SPEAKER: The hon. the Opposition House Leader.

B. PETTEN: Maybe they should hire on some local nurses. Speaker, I spoke to an LPN this morning in my own district who has been 15 months applying and they haven't even got as much as a response, let alone an interview – they haven't got a response.

So I think there is a major disconnect between the top and the bottom of the health care system and I think it needs to be dealt with. The minister is at the top, so I guess he's the one that has to start the ball rolling.

Minister, will you table this letter you received from the Auditor General?

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

J. HOGAN: Yes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, on Friday, instead of releasing the pay equity regulations, the minister said she needed more time. Her words: It must be done the right way, not a rushed way.

Speaker, it was in 2017 that this House unanimously agreed to pay equity legislation – seven years ago. Year after year, delay after delay, when will pay equity regulations be issued? I ask for a specific date.

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

S. COADY: Well, first let me assure this House – let me assure this House – after many, many years, the public service of Newfoundland and Labrador is pay equity compliant.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

S. COADY: And remember, Speaker, we have tens of thousands of employees. We look at skills, effort, responsibility and working conditions.

I am here to tell the House today that the core public service is compliant with pay equity. That should be celebrated.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, the majority of Newfoundland and Labrador women and gender-diverse people are being left behind and are not receiving pay equity. The Minister Responsible for Labour said there's a need for more targeted consultations with employers and labour groups to inform the regulations. Essentially, what this minister is saying is that the consultation processes the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality just carried out were inadequate.

Why does this government continue to give pay equity only lip service when women in our province are being left behind?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

L. DEMPSTER: Thank you, Speaker, and I thank the Member for the question.

I want to be clear – let me very clear on what pay transparency is. Pay transparency is the reporting aspect and that is what I am responsible for. As a government, we committed to the legislation, pay equity and pay transparency. It is a priority for us.

Coming out of the *What We Heard* document, there was very divergent views, Speaker, and I would encourage the Member to read the document. When we implement pay transparency, we will be impacting every employer and employee in this province, so it is very important. It is more important that we get it right than do it quick and so we went through – hopefully, I'll have another opportunity, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Let me very clear, Speaker, three ministers of this Cabinet of this government spoke yesterday in a media event with mere excuses as to why pay equity legislation has not been implemented.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: The ministers blame the delay on low participation in the consultation process, yet the engageNL received more responses than many of the government surveys. These are excuses.

I ask the three ministers: What is the real reason for the delay in implementing pay equity in our province?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Labour.

L. DEMPSTER: Let me be clear, Speaker, if this were easy to do, every province and territory in the country would have done it. You know who has done it?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. DEMPSTER: The Government of Canada and BC who have just now put their first deadline in place of November 1. We are looking to see how things are going to go in BC. We will be talking to BC and we will be learning from them.

But, Speaker, what I can tell you as the Minister Responsible for Labour and from my short time in this portfolio, it's very, very important that we strike a balance when it comes to representing the people of this province and the views from employers, employees, the views from the public sector, the private sector, they were all very, very divergent views and we're taking our time because this is important to the people that we represent. We've made the commitment, but we want to get it right, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, many provinces in our entire country have enacted and have their own proactive pay equity legislation, some going back to the 1980s and 1990s. PEI enacted it in 1988; New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in 1989. We're the only province in Atlantic Canada without pay equity legislation. So women and gender-diverse individuals are waiting for the pay equity regulations, which would only be one step in the right direction.

The St. John's Status of Women Council, they've said that this current legislation is negligent, with a lack of consultation.

I ask the minister: Will your department listen to advocates once and for all and redraft this failed legislation?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister Responsible for Women and Gender Equality.

P. PARSONS: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank the hon. Member, of course, for finally giving this very important topic some attention here. We're into week two here in this session and it's only now that we're hearing about it, of course, led by the media up there.

I will remind the hon. Member and this entire hon. House that we are the government that brought in pay equity legislation.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

P. PARSONS: No other administration has done that but it's this government that has done it.

I will say it is one tool in the tool box to close the gender wage gap. I encourage all Members, including the Member who's over there chirping from Torngat Mountains, to read the document.

Be part of the solution. It's easy to sit and criticize but we are doing everything to close the gender wage gap.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Harbour Main.

H. CONWAY OTTENHEIMER: Speaker, I simply ask the question – the first question I

asked: Can we get a specific date for the passing of the release of the regulations? If this was a priority, this government would have acted on these regulations years ago.

So when is the specific date? Can the minister please at least give us that?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

S. COADY: Just because they say it loudly doesn't make it right.

Speaker, I'm very pleased to say that the public service is compliant with pay equity legislation. I think that's to be celebrated. I can tell you that the former Progressive Conservative government wasn't pay equity compliant. This government has brought in and ensured we are pay equity compliant.

We have been speaking in this House and it's a very important topic. I was around, I can tell you, in business and I can tell you I've been around a long time where we didn't have pay equity. Now we do. I think that's to be celebrated for the public service.

My colleagues are working very diligently with the entire province to make sure that we are getting it right for the rest of the private sector.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, there are a number of my constituents in Bonavista who are registered for Patient Connect and have been on the wait-list for years but are not allowed to visit family doctors in Clarendville.

Speaker, why are these people denied health care?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

Just so the Member knows, of course, if they're on Patient Connect, they do have access to primary care through Teladoc, so I hope he advises them that they can use that.

But as I said in the House, I think either this week or last week, we are working on our Patient Connect numbers and hope to have good news in the very near future about getting those numbers down. It is important that everybody who doesn't have a family doctor and wants a family doctor does register with Patient Connect so we can make sure we know who it is, know the individuals that are still having issues with access so we can address that as soon as possible.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Speaker, these people, mostly seniors, have been on a wait-list that has not moved for years. No need to share names, because it is all of them. We have not had any new family doctor set up in Bonavista, period, but families are strictly not allowed to find their own family doctors to take them on.

Does this make any sense?

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

J. HOGAN: Speaker, I don't know what he means by years, the Health Accord is not years old. It's a very new document. It's a plan that I know that the Members opposite have now said it's a good plan. I think I've heard slogans in the last little while that better starts now. Now that they've acknowledged that's a good plan, I think we know that better actually started four years ago when this Premier was elected.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits.

P. FORSEY: Speaker, there is a study from 2019 that recommended two additional RCMP officers for the Grand Falls-Windsor detachment.

Speaker, why has the government ignored the study from five years ago?

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

B. DAVIS: Speaker, I'm very excited to stand up and answer a question on public safety. It's so important in this province and the Opposition hasn't brought it up once in two weeks. It's unbelievable.

What I can say to you is public safety is of paramount importance to this government. That's why we've made announcements of some \$20 million last week for a direct investment for RNC and RCMP officers.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: Previous to that, we announced \$40 million over the last three years for RNC and RCMP officers. It's getting better each and every day. I know it's not perfect, but we're trying our best to fill all those

vacancies that exist. We have a police transformation working group that's working its way through the entire province, bringing forward those recommendations.

I look forward to the next question.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Exploits, no preamble.

P. FORSEY: We've been waiting since 2019, Speaker, in Central Newfoundland.

Speaker, the minister can act in less than five months for additional officers in Labrador, surely the 2019 policing resource studies should not sit on a shelf.

Call volumes are up, caseloads per officer are up. Why is the minister picking and choosing which regions of the province are getting additional services?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will not stand in this House and pick one community versus another community for political gain.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: I will not do it. I won't do it now and I won't do it in the future. I will not do it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

B. DAVIS: What I'm doing is working through a process; we have been doing it for a number of years. We have invested \$40 million –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

B. DAVIS: If they would stop chirping they would get it done.

So we are working through it. We put \$40 million in new investments in the RNC and RCMP. We have put an addition \$20 million into this –

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order!

That's enough.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

Ten more seconds, Minister.

B. DAVIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the protection.

If they would listen, it would be very important. Operational decisions are made by the RCMP and RNC. We're working very closely with them to expand their response times and expand the resources to those organizations. We've done that.

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The hon. minister's time is up.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

In 2011, the former Conservative government acted on the New Democratic call to remove the provincial portion of HST from home heating, with suppliers of residential energy crediting the rebate to customers at the point of sale. Those

suppliers applied to the Crown to have their provincial portion of HST returned to them. Not all seniors heat their homes with oil.

I ask the minister: If the former Conservative government could do it, why can't the Liberal government do it?

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

S. COADY: I certainly find it confusing that the New Democratic Party will want to give a tax cut to the millionaires of this province. It is completely confusing.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Oh, oh!

S. COADY: They have been saying in this House of Assembly: Income testing is so important; don't give tax cuts to the wealthiest; make sure you're supporting the most vulnerable. That's exactly what we've done.

We've put in a program to address the home heating challenges where we can give a \$500 rebate to those that require it for home heating. We've subsidized and supported and helped in electricity development.

I am completely confused that a New Democratic Party would want to give tax cuts to the wealthiest in this province.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Speaker, we continue to hear from seniors in our districts across the province who are living on fixed incomes, who are worried about the rising cost of rent. The no-fault evictions is forcing them out of their homes.

Seeing as there are only a few provinces without this, I ask the minister: When can

we expect to see rent control legislation in this province?

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

E. LOVELESS: Mr. Speaker, it's a good topic, especially with regards to seniors and in terms of the no eviction. I'm still having discussions within the department around that because it is important. The no eviction – there are solutions and the ones that I have on the table right now, I will bring them forward when that time is right, but it's a good question that the Member asked and I will address it.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Speaker, an ATIPP request by our office shows that out of the 2,948 on the wait-list for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing, 20 per cent are seniors. In 2023, 480 seniors were on the NLHC wait-list. Now, in 2024, there are 566. Clearly, government is failing seniors when it comes to housing.

I ask the minister: Does he believe the private market is the answer when it comes to seniors' housing as it's failing so miserably?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

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

First and foremost, the wait-list that he refers to has not grown. What we are seeing, because of affordability issues in the market, more seniors are applying to NLHC for housing. That doesn't mean they don't have housing now. They're coming to us to see if we can cover them.

While we're dealing with that issue, we have out in the market the rent supplements. We are also providing home repairs program and the like.

The large part of our programming, right now, is focused on seniors and we will continue to do that with other measures as time goes on.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Speaker, Route 450 to Bay of Islands is in terrible condition with many unsafe conditions. The Premier drove the road himself and arranged a meeting with his staff to have these serious conditions repaired. There was no action taken, Premier, there are still unsafe roads that you drove.

I ask the minister: Why are you depriving the residents of the south shore of the Bay of Islands safe driving roads and putting their safety at risk, which the Premier, himself, admitted?

SPEAKER: The hon. the Premier.

A. FUREY: Thank you and thank you to the Member for the question.

Certainly, that's something that I'll follow up on. We did drive that road together and saw significant safety issues at risk. I did flag it for the department. Presumably, that's involved in the upcoming roads announcements for next year. I'm happy to have a further discussion on it. The issues that we saw were indeed troublesome and we want to fix them.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

E. JOYCE: Premier, I've been writing for three years. After the meeting I had with your staff, two days later, I got a letter: No such money for roads for the south shore. I'm just letting you know, two days after that meeting.

There was no assessment completed on Route 450. There was \$28.5 million spent in the Premier's district, but the People in the Humber - Bay of Islands, south shore gets road mix. People's safety is at risk. They're in danger, the Premier admitted it.

I ask the minister: Why is it you're putting people's safety at risk? Is it for political purposes?

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

F. HUTTON: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Member opposite for the question.

We have close to 9,500 or 9,600 kilometres of lane road in Newfoundland and Labrador that Transportation and Infrastructure is responsible for. When we do our assessments on what is necessary in terms of what needs to be fixed, we prioritize basically on what roads are the busiest, what roads are the highest speed. As the Premier has said, and I will commit to, we will look at that again in the upcoming year. I'm happy to do that, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER: Time for Oral Questions has expired.

Orders of the Day.

Orders of the Day

Private Members' Day

SPEAKER: This being Wednesday at 3 p.m., I call upon the Member for Labrador West to bring forward his private Member's resolution.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, removing the provincial portion of the HST from home heating.

Speaker, I give notice of the following private Member's resolution, which will be seconded by the Member for St. John's Centre:

WHEREAS inflation has caused the price of goods and services to increase rapidly over the past three years; and

WHEREAS wages have not kept up with the rising costs; and

WHEREAS this situation forces many people to make heart-wrenching choices between necessities such as food, heating or medication; and

WHEREAS the lack of these basic goods negatively impacts the social determinants of health and therefore costs the government more money in the long term;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that this hon. House supports the removal of the provincial portion of the HST from home heating products.

Thank you, Speaker.

This also includes residential electricity and other forms that people heat their homes with because not everybody heats their home with oil; not everybody has the means to do so. The majority of the province are now switched to electricity, which also is very expensive. In some cases, heating your home with electricity does cost a little bit more.

Now we see more and more seniors are falling farther and farther behind. We just talked about the number of seniors who are now applying for Newfoundland and Labrador Housing because of all these extraordinary costs and they can't get by

anymore. Many of them are in rental apartments that they can't afford.

So here's another thing that we can help a broader swath of people in this province to be able to afford to live, to be able to heat their home and to be able to stay comfortable and not have to make choices between food, medication and other things. These are the small things we can do to help a larger group of people. And it was done before.

It's not like it was a new idea pulled out of thin air. It happened in 2011, for similar reasons: because of the cost of living at the time. People shouldn't have to pay sales tax on essentials of life. This has been time and time again, when the HST – or the GST at the time – was brought forward in Canada in the '80s, that was one of the things. It was about trying to differentiate between goods and services and make sure essentials – but you know, heating your home is essential. It shouldn't be considered a luxury and shouldn't be taxed as such.

Food and shelter in our province – home heating during the winter is an essential expense. We have some of the most extreme weather in the entire country. Heating your home is not just a little small thing, it's a major part of your winter. Trust me, I live in Lab West. I know what 40 and 50 below feels like, and I know it's nice to have the heat on.

But a lot of people, even in Labrador West, are cutting back on heat and are cutting back on these things because the cost of living has gotten so high, the cost of housing has gotten so out of control, that even places like that – my neighbours over in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, and the North and South Coast too, life is getting expensive; these are things that we can do to help other people.

There is still the mindset of the cost-of-living prices, you shouldn't let the falling inflation rates fool you. On one hand you say the

inflation rates are falling, but we're not seeing it right in the food, we're not seeing in medication yet and we're not seeing it in heating and electrical costs. So the cost of inflation is having a huge damper on the effects of how far your dollar can go, but we're not seeing it at the point of heating.

Electricity in the province is a fixed rate; we know what it's going to cost, but all the other things that are behind it are exacerbating. But there's something we can do to help a broader scope of people. We don't want to just limit the programs and things to one group of people. I know the minister mentioned the Home Heating rebate. That's great if you heat your home with oil. But not everybody heats their home with oil.

We need to actually make sure that people who are on other forms of heat get a benefit, in a sense, the same way. That they are able to afford to keep their lights on, that they are able to afford to buy food, that they can afford to get their medications. I hear time and time again about seniors pill-splitting. They'll take their heart medication and split it in half so they get twice as much out of it, when they should be taking the full medication as prescribed. But it's not happening. It's because the cost of things is so blown out of proportion.

Food is just unreal, the cost of food right now at the grocery store, and a lot of seniors are having a hard time and making those choices. A lot of them are forgoing meals, a lot of them are making unhealthy choices because the unhealthy choice is cheaper than the healthy alternative, and then once again they have to turn around and still have to pay that hydro bill or pay that fuel bill at the end of the month and sometimes they can't afford it. They can't even actually make that happen.

So that's why we're calling upon government to bring back something that happened, that was in place before, and something that could actually hit a larger swath of people in the province to give more

affordability to a larger group of people, and to try to dampen some of these effects that are hitting individuals, low-income people and seniors especially, because right now they're struggling. We hear it all the time that they're struggling. Anything that we can do to actually help a larger group of people with something like this is the reason we want to see. It was done before.

This is not only with us. It's also our federal cousins in Ottawa that actually put forward a similar thing asking for the federal government to remove their side of the GST off home heating across this country as well for the same reasons. So it's not just NL New Democrats, it's also federal New Democrats who are also asking for the same thing because we want to be able to make sure that people can heat their homes. It's an essential part of life to have shelter, but your shelter also needs to be adequately heated, too. We live in a northern climate and trust me, on this side of the country, we definitely live in a very extreme climate when it comes to weather. Shelter is one part of it, but you have to heat your shelter, too.

This is why, in general and principle, heating your shelter should not be taxed. Just out of principle alone, that should not even be a thing. But it is and this is why we're asking this provincial Liberal government to do the same thing, the same as our cousins in Ottawa are asking for the federal Liberal government to do the exact same thing. It's to remove the taxation on home heating.

The price is affecting many large groups of people in the province. Seniors on a fixed income haven't kept pace with inflation, people working minimum wage, income support recipients and workers in low-paying jobs are the hardest hit when it comes to this. They're paying exorbitant amounts for rent right now and a lot of them is pay your own utilities. So you're paying through the nose for the rent, but on top of that, they're paying through the nose again

to heat that shelter. So they're getting hit twice.

This is another thing, once again, asking this is something we can do to help those people out and make sure they get through because we should be doing the compassionate side of things and help people through this problem. That's what we believe.

Many of those will choose, this winter, whether to pay home heating or rent or groceries or medication because their budgets are limited, wages haven't kept up with inflation and people are struggling. You look at seniors, especially, the same thing. Those who are on a fixed income, probably retired a few years ago before we seen a lot of this rise in inflation, their pensions are not going up but everything around them is going up.

Many have gone back to work, actually. I know a few seniors up my way who went back to work. Back to work in retail and other smaller jobs because they didn't have the luxury of retiring on a mining pension. Many of them retired on other smaller pensions. Just due to the inflationary costs of rent and groceries and medications and things like that up in Labrador West, they had to go back to work.

It's the same thing now, when you think about it, they're worrying about paying their bills. They're worried about paying everything on time, trying to get through. The last thing they want to do is to fall behind on things and trying to figure out how they're going to get by. I know one senior; I was talking to him one time – same thing – he's a widower and he didn't retire on a larger pension. The first thing he was talking to me, he said: I cut my cable. I said: Oh, you cut your cable? He said: Yeah, I just couldn't afford it anymore.

He said: I've got to pay for to heat this home; I've got to pay for medication – he had a lot of medical travel and stuff, and,

unfortunately, his wife that passed, they accumulated a lot of debt for medical travel, and he cut his cable. Because he wanted to save 100 bucks a month so he can pay for food, pay for his medications. He lost his licence unfortunately to medical so then trying to get around, get rides from people and stuff like that.

It was a really sad thing to stop and think about, but there's things that we as a province can do to help those individuals to get by. So it's things like that, that we can try to work out and do. But here's the thing, he doesn't have oil. He doesn't have oil heat, he has electric heat, but he doesn't get the benefits of the current program that's available to everybody else. He unfortunately can't apply for it because he has electric heat.

So this is the thing that we need to try to find a way to make sure that those in need and need the help can do it. I like to hear from the other side on (inaudible) but is there any alternative? Is there any other thing that we could bring to the table that actually makes the program broader, or is it just that we're going to focus on one group of people while others suffer and have no actual access to any heating program that's out there?

So with my time running down, I look forward to hearing other suggestions.

Thank you.

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

S. COADY: Thank you very much, Speaker.

This is very interesting topic today. I find it quite confusing, coming from the New Democratic Party, to remove the provincial portion of HST from the home heating process. Allow me to explain why I find it confusing coming from the NDP on this.

Because if I do this, if we do remove the provincial portion – which we cannot because it is under the federal excise tax, but if we could remove the provincial portion, allow me to say to the Member opposite, we would give a tax cut to the most wealthy in our province. I don't think the NDP would actually support that concept of giving a tax cut to the most wealthy. They don't generally support that tax break to the rich.

I checked *Hansard*, Speaker, when I saw this recommendation, I remember on the \$500 cheque that we gave as a cost of living a couple of years ago, when the cost of living was soaring and we gave a \$500 cheque, you receive \$500 up to a certain level, I think it was \$125,000. I'll quote from the Opposition who said: should have been more focused on those in greater need. This money could have been distributed in a more effective manner. It would be more effective in that, or could it have been more effective? I certainly think it could have. So it's confusing as to why now they think it would be more effective to give tax breaks that would certainly encompass those who are the most wealthy in our province.

Then we did something on the gasoline tax. Again, the Opposition Party said: But the question is on who? Again, we're talking about the eight-cent tax cut that we did at the pump. But the question is on who? On who will this significant impact be? Will it be on the individuals who need it the most? They questioned it even then.

Speaker, I will say to you that what we have done to support people with the cost of living has been significant. We've lowered the gas tax; reduced the cost of registering passenger vehicles; we've provided free medicals to seniors 75 and over; we've eliminated the retail tax on home insurance; we've increased the Income Supplement; the Seniors' Benefit; the Child Benefit. There are many things that we have done; over \$500 million to address the cost of living.

I say to the Member opposite, one of those things, of course, is providing support to those that need it most on maintaining – we maintain the home heating supplement of up to \$500 for those that heat with furnace and stove oil. We're accepting applications to that program right now if you happen to heat your home – and that is income tested, Speaker. That is very important: income tested. Meeting the test of what the New Democratic Party had asked us to do, meeting that test and ensuring that people who need it most.

We've also, for example, Speaker, added a \$500 annual supplement for food and heating for seniors on the Labrador Coast because, of course, we know that the cost of living in the Labrador communities is high. So we added another program, an additional \$500.

Speaker, we're doing a tremendous number of things to target and support where it's needed most. I say to the Members opposite and the New Democratic Party, I don't think giving a tax break across the board – and ensuring that people who make the highest incomes are captured in that – is not the right and proper thing to do. It would cost this province \$85 million that, I would say to the Member opposite, is better distributed in another way.

Speaker, I will also say to the Member opposite – I only have five minutes remaining – that the HST is a feature of the federal-provincial harmonized tax space and it can only be changed by the federal government. If the federal government makes that move, then, of course, it would capture, as I said, all of us in this province, even those that can afford to heat their homes.

Speaker, he mentioned about electricity and how he would like to encompass electricity. Speaker, we know that we are mitigating rates to the tune of \$5.2 billion. We know that if the price of electricity would zoom to – I think it's 24 cents a kilowatt hour, so our

rates don't double, the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador is mitigating those rates. So we're already supporting those that heat their homes with electricity.

Further, we have a \$130-million program, it's a federal-provincial program, to help with anybody who needs to switch their fuel or to make their homes more energy efficient, \$130 million there.

Speaker, all I can say is I'm – again, I'll use the term – confused. Then when I read the preamble, confusing again. It talks about how high the inflation rate is. Well, the inflation rate now is 2.1 per cent – 2.1 per cent. Maybe at the time, a couple of years ago, it was very high. I can say that inflation right now is down to 2.1 per cent. In fact, last month I think it was a 0.7 per cent change here in this province. So we're well within the 2 per cent mark. We're continuing to make sure that goes lower.

They speak that wages have not kept up with costs. Speaker, our household incomes in this province have gone up 6.1 per cent. We said in the budget it was going to be 4.9 per cent. Speaker, it's up even higher than that, 6.1 per cent. I just talked about inflation.

So I say to the Member opposite, our economy is doing very, very well. Inflation pressures are coming down. Our household income is going up. I will say that our capital investment is good, our population is increasing, our employment is increasing. We thought it would increase by 0.9 per cent, it is increasing now by 2.8 per cent.

Speaker, overall, we are doing very well economically in the province. Are there people hurting? Absolutely. That's why we're putting in such targeted programs to ensure we're supporting the most vulnerable. That is generally what the New Democratic Party calls for; it is generally what they ask of government, to make sure that we are very targeted and supportive of those that are most vulnerable.

I say to the Member opposite, putting a carte blanche tax decrease of removing the HST completely is really just giving a tax break to those that can well afford it, while not giving the supports that are really required to those that are most vulnerable. It is better for us, as I just stated, to give a \$500 stipend to those heating their homes with stove oil or with fuel, Speaker; it is better for us to give a \$500 stipend to those on the coast of Labrador; it is better for us to increase the Seniors' Benefit; it is better for us to make strategic, important investments to support the most vulnerable? I say to the Member opposite, I know he is well-intentioned in asking for this; I don't think it's the right mechanism or manoeuvre to make.

I do say to him that I am hearing him, that supporting those most vulnerable is essential. I can say to the Member opposite, we're going to continue to do that. We actually put in, I think, a \$10-million program to support seniors – an additional support for seniors. We have the Seniors' Benefit that we've increased by 15 per cent. Those are targeted, specific programs to help those that are most vulnerable and I say to the Member opposite, that's a better and more effective means.

I'm listening to the New Democratic Party; I've given you two examples of two different speeches they've given in the House where they've said there's a better means and mechanism to do this.

Speaker, unfortunately, I cannot support, and we will not be supporting, this particular motion today, mostly for the reasons we have outlined. It is better to be more targeted in assistance to the most vulnerable; it will give tax cuts to those that do not need it, the most wealthy in our province would have it. We're supporting those that are heating their homes with fuel and we're supporting lower electricity rates. We're also supporting those that need to make their homes more energy efficient.

On that note, my time is running out. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Before we move in to other speakers, I would like for all the Members to help me welcome in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon the Consul General of Japan to Canada, Mr. Akihiko Uchikawa, his spouse Cristina Iori, and the Vice-Consul of Japan, Mr. Yo Ishikawa.

Welcome.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Are there speakers to the –?

The hon. the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

P. LANE: Thank you, Speaker.

I'll take a couple of minutes and give my two cents' worth. I've been in this House a nice while now, a good many years, and I tend to try to look at things in a fair, reasonable, balanced approach to things, and sometimes I agree with my colleagues from the NDP. There's been times that I've stood with them on issues, times I've stood with the Official Opposition and there's been times that I've agreed with the provincial government.

On this particular one, I find myself agreeing with the Minister of Finance, to be honest with you. I agree with her; I honestly believe that the Member from Labrador West – I honestly do believe that his intentions are good. I know they are. I honestly know what he's trying to do with this motion, and I commend him for that.

We all have constituents, I'm sure – I know I've had lots of people reach out to me over the last number of years, particularly in more recent years with the impacts of COVID-19 and everything else, and the impact it had on our economy and the war

in Ukraine and so on, the gas and oil prices and all the inflationary pressures that have come from that, whether it be the price of goods and services, the price of groceries, and certainly a big one – for me at least, in my district – was interest rates.

That was actually probably the biggest issue that I actually got from people in my district, was when the interest rates went up. Much greater than even the grocery calls and everything else. I guess it's because of the nature of my district and the demographic there. But there's no doubt that there have been pressures to varying degrees on people in all of our communities.

So that's why I think even from the onset with COVID-19 and as I said, following that, that there definitely was a need to take actions, take measures to try to assist people throughout our province with the cost of living. Certainly, I know that was something that I can say, as being here, that myself and my colleague from Humber - Bay of Islands kept bringing up in the House. I know the Official Opposition were relentless. The Leader of the Official Opposition was relentless in calling on the government to put in measures to address the cost of living. I know my colleagues in the NDP were relentless as well.

In fairness to the Minister of Finance, in fairness to the government whom I don't always agree with on plenty of things, including some of the stuff we were talking about in Question Period today, but I won't get into that – but, on this one, I think that they did listen and some of the programs that the minister did outline in her response to this PMR, there were a number of measures put in place and, as she said, they were targeted and are targeted towards people with lower income, towards seniors, and as she indicated, I think a special program or programs to people living in the Labrador region and the cost that they have to deal with.

Now, are those programs enough? That's always the million-dollar question. That's always a debatable point. Regardless who is in power, what party is in power, who is in the government, you'll always have that. It was no different when the PC Party were in the government and the Liberals were in the Opposition. It was the same thing asking for this, asking for that. There was always this debate as to what you're doing, is it enough and is it adequate.

Of course, the government, in particular, they have a role. They have to try to keep in mind to balance the books. In addition to delivery of services and programs, you've got to attempt to balance the books. We know in our province that the books have not been balanced now in quite a few years and we have a tremendous provincial debt and we've been having year over year over year deficits.

Albeit in the last couple of years, the degree of the deficit is starting to come down, although we're still borrowing \$1 billion to \$2 billion a year, every year, and growing our provincial debt. That's only going to continue to compound until we get to a point where we're no longer incurring any more debt and we're actually starting to pay off some of the debt that we have.

So I appreciate the Minister of Finance and the government, again, whoever that might be, having to bear in mind what we can afford to do and the obligations that we have. We all have to try to be fair-minded and cognizant of both sides and achieving a reasonable balance.

As the minister has indicated – and I agree with her totally. When I saw the motion, the first thing that came to my mind was if you're going to cut the tax on this across the board, then that means somebody who's a millionaire or a multi-millionaire or whatever, they're all going to get tax breaks, too. I'm sure there's not one person in this province who wouldn't say: Give me a tax break. They're going to take it; I'd take it. There's

no one here who wouldn't take a tax break if it was up there, it was offered. I'm sure it would be a popular thing to do, no doubt about it. I'd love to be able to go to all my constituents and say hey, guess what? We got a tax break. I supported it.

But we also have to be, as I said, cognizant of the bigger picture, and we all have to try to be responsible because we're not elected here always to do the popular thing. But we're here, elected to try to do the right thing and the fair thing and the balanced thing.

With that in mind, unfortunately I'm not going to be able to support this motion. Not because I don't support the notion of tax breaks, not because I don't support the notion of bringing down the cost of living, particularly for those in need. I actually do support the concept of bringing down the costs, particularly to those in need.

But, as the minister has said, there were other mechanisms to target the people that need to be targeted. There are people that absolutely need the help, and there are people that, I'm sure, would like the help. As I said, there's nobody that wouldn't welcome any kind of a tax break, a rebate, whatever it is. If you're going to put more money in my pocket, regardless of your income, nobody is going to say no to that, of course.

I just don't think this is the way that we need to do it. I'm inclined to agree with the Finance Minister that there are some good programs in place. Now, there's a debate – there's always, again, that debate – to say, can we be doing more? Could that \$500 that the government is handing out to seniors for food and groceries and all that stuff, could that be \$600? Could that 15 per cent increase in the Seniors' Benefit be a 20 per cent increase in the Seniors' Benefit?

Those are things that we could legitimately debate if we feel that the most vulnerable amongst us are still, even with the programs in place, if we feel that they're still struggling

and they're still not receiving the benefits that they would need to be able to survive, basically, for some people, then that's a debate that I'm certainly willing to have. I'm sure every Member of this House would be willing to have that discussion and that debate around whether the programs that are currently in place go far enough and if we need to do a little more.

But to simply say we're going to do what we're doing and now we're going to add this program, that does not target – it'll pick everybody up but it does not target the people who need it and the consequence of doing it, not only do we end up providing rebates or cuts to people who don't need those cuts, now we're making our overall financial situation in the province even worse.

That's less money we have for education; that's less money we have for doctors; less money we have for nurses; or it's more money that we're going to have to borrow, one way or the other.

With that in mind, again, I thank the Member for Labrador West. I know why he put it in. I agree with the rationale behind it, why he wants to try to help people. I support him in that, but this is not the way to go, not the right mechanism. So for that reason, to try to be fair, reasonable and balanced, I can't support it.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

S. STOODLEY: Thank you, Speaker.

I didn't mean to take away the spot of the other Member, I'm sure we'll both get a chance to speak.

I want to echo the comments; I wanted to thank the Member for bringing this private

Member's motion forward. It's always very important. I know we all work with a lot of low-income individuals and individuals struggling. I do get calls from residents and seniors. We go through a gamut of government programs to make sure that everyone is getting all the ones that they're eligible for. Usually, there are programs that we're able to help them that they didn't know about.

I certainly believe that we could do a better job of communicating a lot of the programs. It's also great, though, that a lot of our programs and funding, particularly for seniors, are automatic, no one has to opt in. I know the Senior's Benefit is automatically provided to those when they do their taxes and their quarterly GST payments.

Speaker, I guess I concur with all of what the Minister of Finance has said. I have a heat pump – sorry, I have a mini-split, I think I got them interchanged. I have a mini-split, I think I got it in 2016. I didn't get any government programs towards that. This year, I actually had a company come in and do, I guess, an analysis to make sure it was still effective and it hadn't lost any power and it didn't need replacing. They said it was a bullet. So it was still at the same efficiency as in 2016, as when I got the mini-split. I have one mini-split that's able to heat most of my house. So I'm very happy with my mini-split, Speaker.

I guess on that note, I did want to talk about the Oil To Heat Pump Affordability program that the federal government has. I know that provincially we do provide a \$500 stipend, so I guess the provincial \$500 stipend to those with low or moderate incomes goes towards home heating. The federal government program is also quite generous because I do think it's important that we help residents solve this long-term issue. We need to help them get off their oil furnaces, if they so choose. So the federal government's program is very generous in helping people do that. I've sent many residents to that program.

I haven't heard any feedback from people to say it wasn't enough or it was too complicated, but those complaints might be out there. I welcome discussions with that and I'd be happy to take those forward to the federal minister or provincially.

Just some information for anyone listening in terms of the federal government's Oil To Heat Pump Affordability program. There's a table on the TakeCHARGE website. Newfoundland and Labrador is one of the three provinces that works with the federal government under this program and TakeCHARGE is the organization that is administering the program in Newfoundland and Labrador. There are incentives to cover up to 100 per cent of the cost of switching from oil to electric. Some of it is income tested and some of it is not.

For the income-tested portion, for one person, if their annual income is \$37,375 or less, and if you have two individuals, if your income together is under \$73,600 – so I would say that speaks to a lot of those low-income families or seniors that we think would fall under an annual income below those amounts. If that's the case, then there are different amounts of money you can get for different things from the federal government. For example, if you are looking to get an electric furnace or electric boiler and your income falls under those areas, you can get up to the cost of doing that, up to \$10,000. If your income is above that amount, you can get \$5,000.

If you're looking at getting multiple mini-splits, or just one mini-split, you can get up to \$18,000, which would certainly – my mini-split I think was \$4,000 back in 2016, I'm sure they've gone up since then, but I think \$18,000 would be appropriate to cover the cost of one or more mini-splits, Speaker. If your income is not below that, you can get \$6,500 to help cover the cost of your mini-split.

Also, if you're putting in a central heat pump – someone I know has just put in a central

heat pump using funds from the federal government under this program. If your income is, again, below those thresholds, you can get up to \$22,000 to cover the cost to convert you to electric. If your income is above, you can get \$9,000.

I think those federal government programs are sufficient to cover the cost for a lot of people. I certainly welcome feedback. I am certainly happy to take it provincially or federally if those programs need to be more generous or if they're too complicated. If those programs are not what they should be, I would be happy to take that away, Speaker. But my understanding, I guess right now with the information I have, is that they are.

In terms of investing government funds, I think we do need to strategically prioritize helping people longer term transition away from oil on to electric.

I do agree with what other Members have said in terms of we do need to prioritize helping those who need help. Absolutely, Speaker. We prioritize the Seniors' Benefit. There's a fund – I can't remember, I'm in a lot of Facebook groups of all the people who had babies and I'm still in all those groups. I look at all the comments from people all the time and I would say, Speaker, once a week I tell someone about the nutrition program for low-income mother's who are pregnant with children up to five years old. You can get \$150 a month to help with food for those types of programs. I tell a lot of people about that. No one has ever come back and said they couldn't or it was too complicated.

Speaker, another program for our most challenged that I do want to highlight as well is our Disability Benefit program, which we announced this summer. In July 2025, in eight months time, everyone with a disability will – sorry, I don't want to say everyone, I'm pretty sure it's everyone, but I caveat to that – definitely those on low income with a disability will be getting an additional \$400 a month, Speaker. That is something that I

know, when I think about the residents in Mount Scio that I help with a disability and the day-to-day challenges that they have, I feel a lot better knowing that our government are giving them an extra \$400 a month to help them with their daily expenses.

We're also giving them, as of January, \$1,200 in a Registered Disability Savings Program. We've had a lot of very positive feedback from the disability community about those programs. I'm so proud that we're able to help people with disabilities in Newfoundland and Labrador with those extra financial incentives because I am fully supportive of giving extra financial incentives to those who need it.

I also want to highlight, I guess, in the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills, our Working Opportunities Program, Speaker. So if anyone is on income support and they want to get back in the workforce, we have a special program where we can help give them funding to get them back in employment.

So if anyone is listening or if anyone knows of anyone who could benefit from the Working Opportunities Program, we just finished our first class. We are eager to take as many people from income support and help them through this Working Opportunities Program and help them get back to work.

Speaker, as we know, everyone pays – we don't, but most people pay EI, and the federal government takes that EI pot and gives a lot of it back to the provinces. That's the pot of money that the Department of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills gives away in the labour market development funding and the Labour Market Transfer Agreement funding, Speaker. So that money is to help people get back to work.

So I do implore anyone – it may not be applicable to everyone but if anyone is out there who is on income support, wants to get in the workforce, is on EI and needs to do extra training, please reach out to me, please reach out to our department because we do have a lot of federal government funding from the EI pot to help people upskill and to help people get back to work.

Speaker, I just want to give a shout-out. I do echo the comments of the Minister of Finance, and I do want to thank the Member for bringing in this. It's a great idea. I won't be supporting it, Speaker, but I am fully supportive of helping our most vulnerable in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

J. DINN: Thank you, Speaker.

Speaker, this is ultimately a question of affordability of people at the margins, especially, of society. Now I'm confused, Speaker, that the Minister of Finance is so easily confused. Being so easily confused, I look forward to confusing her more in the future when we bring forward other measures that are going to help the most vulnerable. It's as simple as that.

First of all, gasoline tax works if you can afford to buy a car. It's not helping the people who call me. Home insurance tax, a break on that works if you can afford to buy a home. It's not affecting the people who are paying exorbitant rents, seniors on fixed incomes, people on not even a livable minimum wage.

A 6.1 per cent income increase for household income – wonderful. Tell that to the seniors who I met this week at Dominion who are trying to figure out if they can afford a \$10 bag of apples. So 6.1 per cent worked

– who are we talking about here? Because we're not talking to the seniors who are on a fixed income who have, more or less, seen their retirement income stagnate; people who are working two or three jobs, in some cases, on minimum wage, just to make ends meet for the rent, to put food on the table; people on income support. We've seen an increase in food banks. So it's great to talk about 6.1 per cent. It's a number. It's not a person. It's not people.

Yesterday, the minister said we can't remove the provincial portion of the HST because it's applied to whatever federal portion it's applied to. We're only asking for the provincial portion to be removed. That was done in 2011 with our Conservative colleagues here on this side of the House, when it was our call to remove the provincial HST from home energy in 2011. According to the regulations at the time, suppliers of residential energy credited the rebate to customers at the point of sale. Those suppliers then applied to the Crown to have the provincial portion of the HST returned to them.

At the time, the PC government referred to this energy rebate as the elimination of our portion of the HST on residential energy purchases. Thus it appears as though removal, elimination rebate is just splitting hairs. If anything I know, it's easy enough for the other side to spin things whatever way they want it to, call it what they will and they can justify it. This should be an easy task for them.

The Liberals recently applied such a rebate to large-scale, purpose-built rental projects as part of their five-point housing plan. Now, think about this, because that's to the people who are building it, no guarantee that those savings will actually passed on to the people who are renting. So it's going to probably benefit their supporters, their donors, but there's no guarantee that the people who are renting will find that their rent is any more affordable.

They have done this. Actually, they've done targeted things which obviously benefit their donors. We just have to look up Kenmount Road to find that.

As I said, this is ultimately about affordability. The minister also says, well, this is going to benefit the rich. Well, with multiple houses, properties, people are making a huge amount of money, could they be better targeted?

Now this, yes, will benefit everyone. It will be disproportionately more meaningful, however, to the people I've just spoken about. To those with lower incomes, those on fixed incomes, those who can't even make a decent livable minimum wage.

It operates on the same principle as HST rebates on basic goods like produce. Do we at the checkout say could I see your card or your income tax preparation to see if indeed you qualify to have HST removed from food? No, you go into it and you buy your food produce and you walk out. No one asks are you – we need to target it.

But I can tell you who gets targeted with the food banks. It's not those earning the six-figure salaries. I would say no one in this House. In the school lunch program that I've been that I've been part of – anyone can avail of it, those who can afford it and those who can't. No one needs to know who paid what. It's destigmatizing. If nothing else, Speaker, maybe the minister on the other side should look at this as it is one way of destigmatizing poverty itself. Then again, with this government, when they clawed back CERB from income support recipients, we know just where their targeted approach is.

Now, as I said, this is ultimately a question about affordability. It's not a permanent solution. We've brought up permanent solutions here in the House, only to have them shut down – long-term solutions. I'll get to some of them later on.

We're still in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis. Yes, inflation rates have come down. Incomes may have gone up, but I can tell you that a lot of people's incomes have not gone up. It's about making ends meet, about those on fixed incomes, those on minimum wages, those on the margins of our society who are being hurt and still being hurt the hardest.

I will tell you, we've seen the increase in food banks. We've seen, from our question this morning, earlier today, that more seniors are experiencing homelessness. We have the Canadian Medical Association Journal, which talks about the devastating effect of chronic homelessness on our seniors and on people who are homeless.

The University Health Network talks about those who are homeless – (inaudible) 100 people in the Toronto area accounted for 4,309 emergency-room visits. Why do I bring that up, Speaker? It's because it comes down to being unable to afford a place in which to live, put food on the table, you name it. Those have tragic consequences.

At a town hall we were at, that we hosted in my district, it was made clear by a number of the panelists and by the people sitting there that there's no long-term planning. There seems to be no provincial plan to address poverty. That's from an advocate. No provincial plan to address poverty. We get the one-offs, the ones that we can wave a cheque and get a photo-op. But there's no long-term plan to address poverty.

That's not my words. We've asked for guaranteed basic income – I remind the House that it took two motions and embarrassing the government into doing what it should have done. That's the commitment to a long-term solution: none.

A livable minimum wage: We have to have a balanced approach, a reasonable, balanced approach. Well, that works if you've got money, if you can afford to put

food on the table, but for those who are at the bottom of society, there's no balance there. Those who do not have the income. Those who are struggling to make ends meet. Those who are homeless. Those who cannot afford to pay their rent. Those who have to depend, Speaker, on going to a food bank to put food on their tables. That's what we're talking about here.

So right now, livable minimum wage. Pay equity, we haven't gone anywhere on that. It comes down to rent and vacancy control. All these things could be long-term solutions or a part of a long-term solution. Yet, I have a Minister of Finance who's confused. I have a government who's confused. If nothing else, while this government is busy picking bodies out of the river, we're trying to make sure people do not fall into the river in the first place.

Speaker, 10 years ago an audience member at the town hall – this is a retiree – said \$43,000 was a decent retirement income. He's now paying over one-third of that income in rent. And for government benefits that are supposed to help people that are so bureaucratic, tangly, it comes down to the fact that the threshold hasn't increased and they cannot access some of the benefits that this government's put forward.

Let's talk about at least one measure that could be useful in addressing the affordability issues that many people are facing.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay.

L. PADDOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I want to acknowledge the Member for Labrador West for bringing, I think, an important issue to debate on our floor of the

House of Assembly. I think it's an issue that all of us here, as Members, if we're honest with ourselves and honest with the House, we have residents that are being impacted by it, and a growing number of residents. It's not an issue where all things are rosy in the province. This is a growing issue for all of us.

A year ago, on November 15 last year, the PC Party actually brought forth a targeted measure to have an impact. Now we have a measure that's being brought forward by the NDP and the Liberal government is saying it's too broad. So what is it? Is it an issue that theirs is too broad, where ours was really directed at the individual measures that could impact a large number of our residents and impact our cost of living?

I'll come to really those five clauses in the private Member's bill from Labrador West. First of all, in the first clause, the cost of good and services, particularly the cost of goods, is not just inflation. The Parliamentary Budget Officer noted the impact that the carbon tax is having on the delivery of goods across Canada.

Most of what we have here in this province, Newfoundland and Labrador, is coming in through either Oceanex or Marine Atlantic. The carbon tax is having a disastrous impact on every resident of Newfoundland and Labrador. It must go.

We also see, like I said, a year ago, the PC Party added a targeted measure with regard to additional gas tax relief. Again, a targeted measure (inaudible), a wide net like the NDP is doing, that also was voted down by the Liberal government.

You know, to be able to address some of our food cost here, we need to grow more. We need to develop more of our farms. We need to develop more of our own production.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: Then what happened with Green Valley beef, we can't have it, again, both ways.

Wages: Again, I note what the Member from Labrador West highlighted, it's not just wages, it's income support. Again, a year ago that was a targeted measure from this PC government to have it indexed, and again, voted down by the Liberal government.

I look around this House and I ask: How much could we have done for seniors for \$23 million?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: If you look at indexing, without that indexing, inflation is still increasing, the Minister of Finance highlighted it, so every year, they're losing some. It's a choice seniors are making, as was highlighted by the NDP. It's not just the cost of food, it's a choice between medicine, heating and other costs.

I want to highlight one of those other costs, as I spoke with a senior a few weeks back in her home. She epitomizes the slogan reduce, reuse, recycle. She told me that she no longer now pays insurance on her house. She's taken that risk so she can heat her own home. It's sad; very sad.

I also want to highlight in the last clause about home heating products. You know, a lot of folks here on the Avalon think it's just about electricity. Well, there are three other mediums to heat your own home as well. One is oil, and we saw the impact on not having timely access to oil for those from Random Island. It's propane; we have a number of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians that are using propane to heat their own home. And then a significant number of our residents are using wood. Wood is a renewable resource, just as is hydroelectricity. Many residents, given the nature and fear of being cut off from a blackout, like to have a second source of

heating, particularly in some of our remote communities.

We also looked at it, and the Minister of Population Growth, the MHA for Mount Scio, noted about the various heat pumps and the mediums there. Well, let me tell you, in rural Newfoundland, particularly if they've got a 100-amp service, the cost to upgrading that house is significant. The challenges in upgrading that electrical is probably much more than the grant to do it, itself.

So we are forcing, then, seniors into homes, to leave their own homes and go into retirement centres, at an additional cost then to government itself. We would be smarter to actually increase the thresholds out there for a number of the provincial home repair programs.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: The Minister of Finance highlighted that it is not about giving a tax break to the rich. Then why have you done it? You've done it with the EV, electrical vehicle. A subsidy here that's been principally used by the elite in St. John's. Why? That money could have been used for many seniors across the province to repair their own homes.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. PADDOCK: It's all about choices, Mr. Speaker. I applaud what the NDP are trying to do here. This is debate that we need to have, really, on a regular basis here in this House: How do we help those that are struggling? Many are struggling. We're not all in the same boat. For some, their boat is sinking.

We see that with the numbers increasing for food banks right across the province. As we, particularly now, get closer to the winter months, Christmas, going into the new year, the cost of home heating, again, is going to be a major issue. The cost of groceries and

the like is going to be a major issue. We need to look then at some of the options that we gave this government a full year ago to mitigate the impact on the residents of Newfoundland and Labrador, particularly those that are struggling.

As my time here comes to an end, I like the intent of where things are going. It's just the execution of this right now is not where we need to go. Yes, unfortunately in casting a wide net, with a measure that would be available to all, would be rewarding the rich when we could be using some of that money for provincial home repair, additional grants to seniors and the homeless, et cetera.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Minister of Housing.

J. ABBOTT: Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate on the private Member's motion here this afternoon.

Before I continue, I just want to make a comment in response to the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay in terms of his reference to home repair for seniors and just to advise the House if we haven't recalled that. We have increased the budget for that program and we are expanding that program right across the province, because it is a very effective program for all the reasons the Member suggested we should have such a program.

Obviously, there's been a number of comments made here this afternoon about the ethicality, I guess, of the resolution and particularly around the removal of the provincial portion of the HST from home heating products. The Minister of Finance, I think, spoke quite clearly and specifically on why that probably is not the right thing to do

and supported by the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands.

As I was listening to the Leader of the Third Party and as I was sort of reading this motion in the first clauses, it did speak to the issue around affordability. But the solution recommended here, I think, speaks against the issue or argument around affordability.

So what do we mean by affordability? Well, affordability is do you have the funds in your bank account, in your wallet, to pay for the item that you need. Removing the HST doesn't help those necessarily who are in need, but probably worst-case scenario, it provides a benefit to those who can afford their home heating fuels and the like, such as people in this House.

I think the resolution and the Member's comments speak against their own resolution. So what do we have as a solution? Again, the Members on this side have spoken to the idea and the concepts and programs that we've put in place to target those in need, those who need support.

Speaker, I just want to reference a couple of those. Some have been mentioned already. We've announced a Seniors' Health and Well-Being Plan. In that plan, we're providing an Aging Well at Home Grant of \$400 annually to those who are eligible. We're providing a new Caregiver Benefit of \$400 per month for eligible caregivers to support individuals to stay at home. Again, we've increased the Provincial Home Repair Program and Home Modification Program, and we've added \$500 annual supplement for food and heating for seniors in coastal Labrador communities. Very targeted to those in need.

We have also lifted the fee for residents 75 years and older who are renewing their driver's licence. Again, those in need. For persons with a disability, we have announced a Newfoundland and Labrador

Disability Benefit program to achieve incomes for persons with disabilities. What does that include? It includes \$400 per month to persons with disabilities and \$1,200 to go into a Registered Disability Savings Program, which will begin in January. This applies to those aged 18 to 64 years of age and it is prorated based on income.

A year ago, almost to the day, we announced a new Poverty Reduction Plan for Newfoundland and Labrador. The plan has four key focus areas: reduce childhood poverty, create meaningful and sustainable employment, improving income and supporting seniors. This plan was supported by an investment of \$85 million.

In the previous month, last year, we announced our five-point plan to improve availability of housing that is affordable. We've introduced and allocated \$65 million towards that initiative.

Again, last year, we expanded the Employment Stability Pilot, which the Member spoke to earlier, for people in receipt of income support. In August of last year, as mentioned, we covered the cost of driver's medical for seniors aged 75 years of age.

Last year, we improved and expanded access to healthy food through the Food System Transformation initiative, which we funded by \$386,000 to go to Food First NL. In May of last year again, we provided a new Summer Camp Inclusion Grant to go to support families with children who need that support.

On the housing side, we're obviously expanding our public housing and social housing units across the province with significant investments. We've invested in units in Pleasantville, Gander, Labrador and on the West Coast.

Probably one of the more progressive pieces of work we've done is that we have a

new Basic Income Program for youth, again, targeted for individuals who are coming under the child welfare system. We've increased the income support basic rate by 5 per cent over two years ago and we've expanded the bus program for persons on income support and seniors on GIS, again, targeted initiatives.

Another program that's quite effective is our Canada Housing Benefit, which is a rent supplement for individuals of low income to avail of housing in the private market. We have the Community Transportation Program through the CSSD Department, which supports seniors to move about in their communities where there's no public transportation.

As I think the Minister of Finance referenced, we continue to reduce the tax on gasoline. We are the lowest in the country. Again, that supports all of us in the province. As the Member mentioned earlier, we removed the tax on new rental housing builds. Again, so we can get more housing for other individuals here in the province.

Speaker, I guess the sum total by reciting those initiatives is to say and to suggest to this House that a targeted approach is a more effective approach because it reaches those in need. So if I was to look at the resolution and was to make any comment on it further, it would be that the **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** should have really focused on how to target provincial funding, provincial tax relief for those most in need. That will help them with their purchases of food and heating and other amenities and it would go a long way in making sure we have a more equitable society.

Speaker, with that said, I, like others on this side of the House, cannot support the motion, certainly, as it is presented. But I do believe – knowing my Cabinet colleagues and caucus colleagues – they are in constant conversations internally as to how we should design new policies, new

programs, new services to help those most in need. Because the need is there, the affordability factor is real for those who are on low incomes, particularly seniors with fixed incomes and we, as a government, will continue to stay focused on making sure we can support them to the best of our ability with the resources we have.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Torngat Mountains.

L. EVANS: Thank you, Speaker.

I always say I'm just going to briefly speak, I probably won't use my 10 minutes, but that never seems to be the case, Speaker.

Just looking at the PMR now and the **WHEREASes**. There are four **WHEREASes** before they get to the actual **THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**. I'm going to keep referring back to the **WHEREASes** so I don't get called on relevance.

Speaker, when anything comes before me, whether it's an amendment to some legislation, a PMR, anything like that, the first thing I look at is what's the purpose of this? What's at the root of this? With this PMR, it's really brought forward to look at the high cost of living, particularly, the impacts to our seniors who are a very vulnerable population with the high cost of living; children in struggling families.

In my district – not just my district, Northern Labrador, but also in Southern Labrador as well – there are struggling families, their children, prices that now we see increase for food, for housing, the cost of heating your house. All of these hit at the heart of, not only families, but any vulnerable person or group, because that's the basic necessities of life.

The Member for St. John's Centre talked about what the Minister of Finance was saying, this was something that couldn't be done, when we looked at removing the provincial portion of the HST from the home heating products. The Member for St. John's Centre said that was done in 2011, removal of the provincial portion.

In 2011, it was actually a PC government at the time. When you look at that, also what's different is the PC Party also had a Poverty Reduction Strategy in place.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

L. EVANS: The PC Party had a Poverty Reduction Strategy in place and, I quote, the best poverty-reduction strategy in the country. We were recognized for that.

So when you look at this PMR, it's about the cost of living, but we just cannot cut certain taxes across the board. The Minister of Finance is right. When you cut the tax across the board, also who benefits is not the vulnerable, or the working middle class, or the families struggling to heat their houses and feed their families. Also, who benefits from that, as the Minister of Finance talked about, is the ultra-rich, right? Because if they're buying fuel instead of electric heat, they're going to benefit as well.

So we have to actually look at making sure what we're doing is benefitting, I guess, the most vulnerable. That's what we're looking at. Because if it's about the high cost of living impacting families and making people more vulnerable, we've got to make sure what we're doing is we're targeting the right programs. So for us, it's not just about taking a certain tax off.

Now just getting back to the PMR. This was the PMR directly from the NDP: "**WHEREAS** inflation has caused the price of goods and services to increase rapidly over the past three years" That's true. We agree with that. We look at inflation;

inflation has risen quite rapidly in the past three years. But in actual fact, we've got to also look at the taxes and fees that have driven up the prices.

I remember back when I was in a different world, working in a totally different industry; I wasn't MHA. I remember the budget of 2016 that was brought in by the Liberal government after they got in power. They got in power in 2015, and what did they do? Speaker, 300-plus taxes and fees raised by the Liberals in 2016. A lot of them are still in place and a lot of them have been increased. Those are the ones that are basically impacting families, impacting low income, impacting our seniors on fixed incomes, all of those taxes. So that's something that needs to be addressed.

Where is their poverty reduction strategy? Speaker, I don't see it. How many times did we call for a plan, whether it's about health care, whether it's about food, whether it's about the cost of living.

For us, we want to look at a poverty reduction strategy. We want to look at all the taxes and see which ones are really harming the most vulnerable. Because if we are to take action to help people who are struggling and look across the province at the people who really need some help, because of inflation, we want to make sure it's done properly. Not just take the provincial portion of the HST off the home heating. Yes, we want people to be able to afford to heat their houses, but we want to do it in a responsible manner. That's why we're here. We're here to actually talk to the government and hold government accountable.

Looking at another wherewithal – sorry, that's a slip of the tongue there.

"**WHEREAS** wages have not kept up with the rising costs" Now, that's true. Wages have not kept up with the rising costs. That is true, especially, particularly for women. If I don't run out of time, I'm going to speak a little bit more on that as well. Because, in

actual fact, we have to look at where people are being impacted and what groups are being greatly impacted.

The other one: “**WHEREAS** this situation forces many people to make heart-wrenching choices between the necessities such as food, heating and medication” That is so true. Why wouldn’t we support a PMR that actually has that in there? At the end of the day, we have to be responsible – heart-wrenching choice between the necessities such as food, heating and medication. We only have to look to my district for the cost of food. On my computer, I have a photograph that’s on my screen and it was taken a few years ago and sent to me when I was first elected as MHA, I think it was in 2020 the picture is and it’s for four fat pork chops, frozen in a freezer for sale for \$28 and that was three or four years ago. Those prices are probably increased.

So for me when you want to look at heart-wrenching choices on the North Coast, what’s this government doing to help my district? Medication – look at the overall health care.

Speaker, I’m not going down that rabbit hole because I could spend another 15 minutes talking about it, but in actual fact we have to make sure we’re making the right choices and we’re supporting the right motions.

The other one: “**WHEREAS** a lack of basic goods negatively impacts the social determinants of health and therefore costs the government more money in the long term” That is so true because the social determinants of health talks about food, housing, being able to heat your house, all of these things – access to education.

All of these things are about quality of life and when they’re impacted, it costs the government more. It costs the government more in health care, it costs the government more in incarceration because a lot of people end up having to turn to crime

because of lack of education, lack of opportunities, and also a lot of people will be forced to turn to crime if they can’t feed their families or if they can’t feed themselves. Basically it’s a trickle-down effect, and we know that. We agree with that. But, at the end of the day, we’re looking at the bigger picture.

So getting to the end of the **WHEREAS**: “**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that this honourable House supports the removal of the provincial portion of HST on home heating products.” In actual fact, we want the people in the province, especially the vulnerable groups, especially our children, to be warm, our elders to be warm. But, at the end of the day, we have to do more.

I’ve got to point out that the PC Party put in a resolution a year ago. They brought forward a PMR and it was: **BE IT RESOLVED** that this hon. House urge the government to order a complete review of all taxes – all taxes and fees –

SPEAKER (Gambin-Walsh): Order, please!

The Member’s time has expired.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

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

B. DAVIS: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I’m so glad that I get the opportunity to stand up and speak for a couple of minutes. I’m only going to take a couple of minutes.

I do want to address something that one of my colleagues on the other side said, the MHA for Baie Verte - Green Bay. He’s new to the House, so I just wanted to let him know a couple of things that he addressed: One, as a former Environment minister, I do want to say that I was a little disappointed that he described electric vehicles as an elitist vehicle. It’s not. It may have started

out that way many, many years ago. But the investments that we have made, both provincially and federally in many jurisdictions across this world, have helped to lower the cost so people can avail of the electric vehicles and they're seeing some savings from that.

We've seen hundreds and hundreds of percent increase in electric vehicles being purchased in this province by a variety of different people. Some, it will be that they have more disposable income. Some, many of whom have reached out to my office when I was the minister of Environment to say this is a great program. This program is only going to be a short term. It was never going to be a long-term program. It was just to help mitigate some of that cost increase for the electric vehicles.

The second thing – and I think I may have misheard him – he talked about the mini-splits being installed in homes. I know the MHA for Bonavista spoke very highly and we worked very closely on some of the infrastructure that has seen positive benefits for the individuals in their home heating.

We've seen changes to the program based on conversations that we've had across the House from here, many occasions – and I will say that the MHA for Bonavista has mentioned that to me on many occasions when we tried to expand the accessibility of that fund to the point at which it went from somewhere around \$11,000 to \$22,000 in the end. Not everyone gets \$22,000. It is based on a sliding scale of income, which is an important piece. So I know that thousands of people across this province are seeing in excess of 60 per cent savings on their home electricity cost because of those changes that were made.

So I am happy about those things. We talk about choices in this House of Assembly. I know that many times the Opposition get very upset when we talk about Muskrat Falls, but there are \$500 million worth of choices that we make every year that we

could have done, had we not had to reduce electricity rates. But that is the single biggest investment that we had to make each and every year because of a poor decision and a mismanaged project.

I'm not saying it was the fault of everyone on that side. For sure it wasn't. It is not the fault of everyone on this side when the decisions are made. But what I can say is that we've had to lower electricity rates in this province to ensure and make investments of some \$500 million a year to the people of this province so the electricity rates do not double. This is an important piece which I think we need to at least celebrate from what we've tried to accomplish.

It is not easy, I understand that; I know people are hurting in many places in my district. It is not lost on me in this House of Assembly that there are challenges in districts with the cost of living and things like that, but we're making targeted investments in this administration. We're making targeted investments. We're having to fix some of the problems that previous administrations made and we're going to continue to do those things and make those investments for the people of this province.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: The hon. the Member for Bonavista.

C. PARDY: Thank you, Speaker.

I'm glad to be able to rise and chime in on this PMR. I think it was said by a couple of speakers that are here that we do have a cost-of-living crisis. I think we all acknowledge in the House that we do have it. Do we know that the household income is increased? Yes, it has. All I can speak from my district is that we still have people who can't make ends meet. These are the ones I think that we'll need to focus on.

I'm looking forward to standing here and the minister who spoke before me was quite clear that we had lots of conversations in the House on a program. The program was tweaked to better serve those people that we were talking about and I'd like to be able to throw out three other things that I think we, in the House, ought to adhere to.

To just say that we're going to knock off the HST on home heating fuel, I would think is pretty vague. We need a broader scope, and that is where we stand here. Anything that would provide relief for those who need it, we're all for it. I think our previous PMR that we had here, we had more detail and more meat on our PMR, that was a little more expansive with some details.

But let me take the short amount of time that I've got left to throw some things out. One-quarter of the children who reside in Newfoundland and Labrador live in food-insecure homes. Think about that. Just think about, one-quarter of the children in Newfoundland and Labrador live in food-insecure homes.

They don't ask the Opposition what you're going to do, but I'm going to throw a couple of things out to you. I've said it before in the House, I've stood here, in fact, I've said it twice in the House, we have 4,492 households in Newfoundland and Labrador which depend on child support payments. I don't know how many of those homes that the support payments are being paid on a regular basis. The last time I stood and spoke about that, I talked about the young lady, who's got roots in my district, who now lives in the Member for Grand Falls-Windsor's District, and her instalment came at the first of the month, when she likes to get her groceries and pay her rent, \$40 of the \$580 came in.

Because our policy is that you don't have to pay it all, you've got 30 days to pay it, but it doesn't help that mom and that child. What we proposed was that government would pay that support payment and when that

money trickles in, it comes back to replenish the coffers. It's just an operational issue to make sure that that young mom and that young child have got their money at the start of the month to be able to provide and care for themselves.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: We don't need to increase taxation; we just need to operationalize to make sure that that mom and that child, in the 4,492 households, get their money at the start of the month so they can provide for themselves. That's not too much to ask. We're not raising taxes for that, so that's not too much to ask. I would say that is something on an operational issue we ought to be doing.

We're talking about the Oil to Electric Rebate Program. We've talked about firefighters. We talked about those not-for-profits out there who do great yeoman work in our community trying to help out those who can't make ends meet, but we left them off that Oil to Electric Rebate Program. They're not residential.

Just think about Five Coves in Newman's Cove, the fire department that burns oil. Reg Durdle who oversees that would like to be able to replace the oil to heat pump to save money to better serve the community in off Route 235 but it's not there.

Leslie Hicks, the fire chief, would say he would love to do it. They'd have less fundraising and it would make it easier for them to help others.

Gary Patten in Port Rexton who runs the food bank out of the Lions centre in Port Rexton, he would love to have a heat pump so that the money he saves in burning oil can help those people in that area achieve to make ends meet.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: I would suggest that those are two tangible measures that you can easily do because they're operational measures. We're not talking about increasing taxes. So let's just make it better, operationally.

It was mentioned earlier about the threshold. I remember we talked about this, too, we tripled the Child Benefit in Newfoundland and Labrador. That is a good news story. Everyone, 40 of us, said good news, fantastic news, but we've got the lowest threshold for eligibility in the country – the lowest threshold in the country.

Now, someone can stand tomorrow and correct me if I'm wrong on that, but the last time I checked that we had the lowest threshold. I would say the easiest thing would be to bump it up because just above that threshold there are hundreds that could avail of support because one-quarter of our children live in food-insecure homes and adjusting the threshold would certainly help it.

We talked about a Poverty Reduction Plan, we've got four points, but you know with any plan it's got to be comprehensive – it's got to be comprehensive.

I was in a school, as was the Minister of Children, Seniors and Social Development, and I know that we took advantage of the Canadian Tire fund, the Jumpstart fund and, boy, did that get children involved in sports. We invested in that fund, matched by the Canadian Tire Foundation, to allow children to be active in sports with their peers.

This government withdrew that. This government withdrew that amount and that was one of the pillars which I know our previous leader had spoke about, how instrumental it was. I can raise my right hand now to say, it served us well in the Clarenville area, in the Clarenville school system and even on that peninsula, that Jumpstart program.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

C. PARDY: But government didn't see the merit in that. That is an operational issue that you can make a difference. That's where that is.

I am generally very optimistic and, I think, anybody who ever knew me they would say, he's pretty optimistic. My wife figures I can walk into a crowd with everyone having a lot of dislike for me, but I wouldn't see it. She's probably right. I could probably feel it here.

The only thing I would say is that I just want to throw out one name to you, I have her permission to throw out the name. Sandra Cooper is a young lady in her 60s who lives by herself in Bonavista. She burns oil. She's trying to avail of the oil to electric rebate which will catch up to her because there's a big demand on it and the process takes a bit of time, so she's got to go through another winter.

She has no access to transportation. I had a discussion with the minister and we talked about that today at a very insightful meeting, but she absolutely cannot make ends meet on what she gets. She can't afford to get from her house to the bank or the grocery store because she can't afford to do it. She depends on the food bank, and that's where it is. But I would say even with the food bank, she can't make ends meet.

What does she do? She looks for government to make sure to make it better for her. That's what a lot of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, because it's on government to make it better for those Newfoundlanders and Labradorians who can't make ends meet. That is your responsibility.

Thank you.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Order, please!

The Member's time is expired.

Seeing no other speakers, if the Member for Labrador West speaks now, we'll close debate.

The hon. the Member for Labrador West.

J. BROWN: Thank you, Speaker.

I thank my colleagues for this debate: the Minister of Finance; the Member for Mount Pearl - Southlands; the Minister of Immigration, Population Growth and Skills; my colleague, the Leader of the Third Party; the Member for Baie Verte - Green Bay; the Minister of Housing; the Member for Torngat Mountains; the Minister of Justice and Public Safety; and the hon. Member for Bonavista. I thank you all for this debate.

I'm disappointed, obviously, that we couldn't come to a consensus on this. But I think at the end of the day we did have a wholesome debate on poverty and poverty reduction and the betterment we can actually do to help people in this province.

I know that we don't agree with our PMR on this, but I think at the end of the day if we all leave here and think about how we can do things better, how we can actually help more people and how to help those in need.

Food bank usage is up. Housing insecurity is up. Food insecurity is up. These things are, no doubt, causing a massive impact on all our constituents. At the end of the day, we want to do what is absolutely best for them. This is just one suggestion thrown out there amongst many that we could possibly do.

I don't want to belabour it much longer than that. But I do want to thank my fellow Members for a wholesome debate on poverty and poverty reduction and how we can better serve our constituents. At the end of the day, I think that's the most we can do.

I know we couldn't come to consensus on this PMR, but I think when we all leave here today maybe we can have a talk on what we

can do, as a group, as a House, to improve the lives of Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, to improve those lives who need us and to reach out and help those who are facing insecurity, facing food insecurity, those seniors who can't afford medication, those who are in need and maybe the best that we can do for them.

At the end of the day, I think that's what we should all walk away doing. But I do thank my hon. colleagues for debate and maybe we can all reflect upon the best way to help everybody in this province to the best of our abilities.

Thank you, Speaker.

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

SPEAKER: Is the House ready for the question?

All those in favour of the private Member's resolution, please say 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against the resolution?

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Nay.

SPEAKER: The resolution is defeated.

The hon. the Government House Leader.

J. HOGAN: Thank you, Speaker.

I move, seconded by the Deputy Government House Leader, that this House do now adjourn.

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

All those in favour, 'aye.'

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Aye.

SPEAKER: All those against, 'nay.'

Motion carried.

This House do stand adjourned until 1:30
p.m. tomorrow.